

A Night of Stars with Tennessee Williams

(7F, 7M—multi-casting recommended)

by Maxim Vinogradov

CAST (in order of appearance)

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS	(M, 30s)
EDWINA	(F, older)
FRANK MERLO	(M, 20s)
MARLON BRANDO	(M, 20s)
GRETA GARBO	(F, 20s)
DIANA BARRYMORE	(F, teens)
ELIZABETH TAYLOR	(F, 20s)
ROSE WILLIAMS	(F, 20s)
TRUMAN CAPOTE	(M, 40s)
BETTE DAVIS	(F, 20s)
KATHARINE HEPBURN	(F, 20s)
ANDY WARHOL	(M, 20s)
POLICEMAN	(M, 20s)
PAUL NEWMAN	(M, teens)

All alterations to gender or age are not only permitted but celebrated.

Stage directions are to be entirely ignored. Shred them. Cook them. Eat them with marinara. Lines should be tailored to suit actors. Improvisations and ad-libs are encouraged. If the lights, set, props, etc., written here are not to your liking, happily explore. This play now belongs to you.

If you produce this play with at least half a cast of non-male actors, at least half a cast of actors of color, and have a seat occupancy of 50 or less, please inquire about having your rights' fees waived by the playwright.

The set has a chair in the center for anecdotes. On the left side, there's a dining area with two stools and a telephone. On the right side there's a functioning window, a bar with a wine rack, and another two stools. Near the window is a drawer, be it in a dresser, nightstand, etc., to be filled with various objects. Behind the center stage is a room covered with a scrim. To the far right is a seat near a "Star Machine": an old projector to be pointed at the scrim.

At lights TENNESSEE WILLIAMS enters clutching a bottle tightly—as though loosening his grip will make the bottle explode into shrapnel. He's in his thirties, mustached, his lungs adopting New York but clearly born of a Mississippi drawl.

TENNESSEE

Memory: (*beat*) it's like youth. Elusive. A luxury that one forfeits when one submits himself to the eroticism that is alcohol. I think I have more memories that have been stolen by the bottle than I have stowed around my attic. And the ones that persist only do so hazily. They're more dreams than memories. And when you wake up, you haven't the slightest idea of what they meant. You remember a boy and a girl and... All stars have their final bow and they spread across the cosmos to make our atoms.

EDWINA enters, heading to her seat manning the Star Machine. She's in her sixties and pleasant as peaches. Turning on the Star Machine, she fills the scrim with connected constellations.

EDWINA

Hello, ladies and gentleman! Welcome to our one night engagement; running only this month! Tonight shall be a tour of the stars

with a man that knows the stars better than anybody alive or dead: Tennessee Williams!

TENNESSEE

Hello, hello, hello! Hello. Folks, my name is Thomas “Tennessee” Williams and I’m here to take you on a tour of the stars! This is what happens now. This is what we do. You get to a certain age, and then you have to give people tours of the universe. (*pointing*) This, right here, is the universe! It’s got stars... And we’re gonna look at ‘em... If any of you thought that we would be looking at actual stars tonight, (*drinks instead of finishing the sentence*). Right-o! Lil’ Edwina! Where do we wanna launch off tonight?

EDWINA

With more introduction!

TENNESSEE

More introduction! My name is Thomas “Tennessee” Williams and I am seventy-one years of age. (*referring to his youth*) My secret is wine. Yes, you’re gonna pretty quickly

understand that things don't look how they happen. It's fantasia... Lil' Edwina, why do these things happen?

EDWINA

More introduction!

TENNESSEE

More introduction! My name is Thomas "Tennessee" Williams, I write plays, I make people famous, I grew up in Mississippi so I didn't masturbate till I was twenty-six—

EDWINA

Sufficient introduction!

TENNESSEE

Wonderful! (*pats his pockets*) Where the hell's my point-point?

EDWINA produces a laser pointer and hands it to him.

TENNESSEE

Thank you. This, right here, is the universe!
Now, to begin our tour, we'd like to start—
Oh, meet Lil' Edwina! She...?

EDWINA

I'm a student.

TENNESSEE

A student. She's a student of astrology.

EDWINA

Astronomy.

TENNESSEE

Forgive her: she's a Scorpio. Now, I don't
know a whole ton about anything I see in
front of me right now, so Lil' Edwina's gonna
correct me whenever necessary.

EDWINA

It's gonna be necessary!

TENNESSEE

We're starting! This, right here, is the
universe! The universe is full of stars. There
are some you know. There are some only

some know. We neglect the ones that no one knows because they're so goddamn boring. We like to begin with one everyone knows. *(laser pointing)* This star here... this is... Polaris. *(off EDWINA's reaction; different star)* This one's Polaris... *(different)* Polaris?

EDWINA

Oh, heavens...

TENNESSEE

Well, I don't know! I know if you draw lines between these ones y'get Aries! I'm an Aries. Typically Aries have tempers, but, *(drinks instead of finishing the sentence)*.

EDWINA takes the bottle away.

TENNESSEE

That's my dancing juice, goddamn it!

EDWINA

Language!

TENNESSEE

I...! All right... (*cooling*) This here's Aries: these four. Aries are born between March 21st and April 20th. They are adventurous, courageous, maybe a bit unable to express their emotions in a conservative manner. We do not punish them for this; they are incapable of change. Let's start tonight with one of the first stars I made... His name, at the time, was Bud. He was also an Aries. That's why I'm thinking 'bout him; ol' Tenn idn't just defective in the attention span. Now, I had just written and'd had produced *The Glass Menagerie*. This was a play about my growing up... I... (*thinking*) Mm...

Lights up in the scrim room, revealing FRANK MERLO, standing where TENN doesn't notice him. The room is seemingly lit by a sky full of stars. FRANK is in his 20s and disarmingly handsome, his eyes gently exploring every surface of the room.

TENNESSEE

That play went really well. It took me a while to write the next one, surrounding a woman named Blanche. This was *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Lights down on FRANK.

TENNESSEE

Now, this—

TENN looks behind himself, confused.

TENNESSEE

Did something just... just—okay, well. Streetcar. I'd wanted John Garfield for the lead male. We could not get this man. Instead, a no-name was referred to me by the great Elia Kazan, hereafter "Gadg," whom Gadg called one of the best young actors he'd ever seen. Best anybody had... But memory is elusive. Everything I remember, I remember it with a rum-soaked filter. When I remember them all, they're beautiful. They're young. Did

you ever notice that? As soon as a star dies, all their pictures become young again.

BRANDO

What's wrong with the lights in here?

Lights up on MARLON BRANDO, young, thin, and playful. He flips a switch to no avail.

TENNESSEE

That young. Hello, sir I've never met!

BRANDO

Why don't your lights work?

TENNESSEE

Because when you flip the switch they don't turn on.

BRANDO

Mmm... Where's your box?

TENNESSEE

Excuse yourself.

BRANDO

In here?

BRANDO leaves to locate the electrical box.

TENNESSEE

Now, everyone, this was way before anyone had ever heard the name... Hold on, what was his name...?

Lights turn on.

TENNESSEE

Goodness, the lights work.

BRANDO enters, turning the lights off again.

BRANDO

I liked it like this anyways. (*extending hand*)
Bud.

TENNESSEE

Bud? Your name's—? No, what's the one on the paper? The one they know.

BRANDO

Marlon?

TENNESSEE

Marlon! Everyone, this is—Marlon, is that you?! Jesus God, were you ever this thin...?! Oh! (*putting on an act*) You're the no-name actor who wants to take on the role of Stanley Kowalski. How reasonable.

TENN opens the drawer, producing audition sides.

TENNESSEE

I'm not interested in a no-name like "Marlon Brando." That sounds more like a canned tuna company.

BRANDO

I don't wanna read either! Gadg gave me twenty bucks to do this, and then I'm outta here!

TENNESSEE

(looking at sides) Oh my, well—Wait, this is Menagerie...

TENN crumples up the paper and throws it in another drawer. He gets the correct sides.

TENNESSEE

Oh my, well I guess this read's gonna just smart, isn't it? You look nothing like Stanley Kowalski! He was a middle-aged man, you know.

BRANDO

Well, I'm not too sure about this part either! I figure I'm a pretty decent guy and this is just... a harsh guy.

TENNESSEE

Then I guess that's that! Good day to you, Starkist! (*throwing the sides back in a drawer*) Oh, all right! If you insist! (*pulling out sides*) But only because Gadg—Wait, this is Menagerie again. Who put Menagerie in here? Hey, who put...? (*after reading some*) Laurette Taylor read off these sides...

EDWINA

(*after BRANDO doesn't respond*) Eh-hem.

TENNESSEE

Right, uh. I just—hold on. Laurette Taylor read off these sides... I wanted Greta Garbo, but she denied me flatly.

EDWINA

Finish the Brando memory!

TENNESSEE

Uh...

EDWINA

We'll get to Garbo later!

TENNESSEE

Brando's nervous and sweet on the inside but reads so well as a bad man that it redirects both of our histories; really, all of entertainment history. He fixes my plumbing and sleeps on my floor and in the morning we walk up and down the beach in total silence. Wadn't that fun? I'm sorry, but I remember Garbo and I had this excellent conversation about celebrities; the audience'd love to hear it. We were at this party, or, no it was a bar—

EDWINA

You can't leave the memory until Brando agrees to read.

TENNESSEE

Oh, right. (*to BRANDO*) Would you like to read?

EDWINA

(*after BRANDO doesn't respond*) That isn't what you say to him. Come on.

TENNESSEE

Uh... Toughen up! Be a barrel-chested behemoth and read this! What, you can't confront the—*(to EDWINA)* Sorry, Charlie; this is no fun to say. He was avoiding becoming his father.

EDWINA

Wow, maybe we should just skip Garbo tonight.

TENNESSEE

(to BRANDO) What, you can't confront your fears? Life needs these ugly things; that's what makes it so perfect! Be the ugly man and for as long as you have stamina you can run from the later consequences!

BRANDO takes the sides and studies them for a moment.

BRANDO

You Blanche?

Blackout on BRANDO.

TENNESSEE

Wonderful, wonderful! Wadn't that trivial. Now, I'd always admired Greta Garbo—even as a young boy. She was a Virgo.

GRETA GARBO enters in a huff.

TENNESSEE

Ahh... Greta!

GARBO

Sorry, sir! I'm so sorry: rush!

GARBO blazes past and exits.

TENNESSEE

And that, folks, is how I met Greta Garbo! She was hurrying down the street as I was trying to get her to see a play of mine: Small Craft Warnings, but the Swedish tend to keep their distance. Don't worry: we'll see her again... Now... the next... uh... Jesus, what was it... This, right here, is the universe?

EDWINA

(whispered) Pisces!

TENNESSEE

Next was a Pisces! Pisces are sweet as caramels but oh so sensitive.

DIANA BARRYMORE enters, permanently clutching her luxurious purse. She's smaller than the others in every way that one can be—her voice desperate to overcome its squeak.

TENNESSEE

Now, I met Elizabeth Taylor a long—Who the hell are you?

DIANA

Um... I'm sorry. Diana Barrymore.

TENN looks to EDWINA, who looks to the Machine.

DIANA

Are you Mr. Williams? I've—I'm sorry, I've been meaning to ask you about reading for—

Blackout on DIANA.

EDWINA

There we go.

TENNESSEE

Who the hell was that?

EDWINA

I don't know. Machine misfired a bit—Wrong Pisces I guess? Just give me a second. Tell a joke or something.

TENNESSEE

Uh... Where do animals go when their tails fall off?

EDWINA

Fixed it!

TENNESSEE

Good; don't remember the punchline.

ELIZABETH TAYLOR enters, pacing.

TENNESSEE

Ah! Now that looks more like Elizabeth Taylor, doesn't it? She was pleasant as peaches that day, as we—

TAYLOR shrieks—absolute disarray.

TENNESSEE

No, no, no. Lil' Edwina?

EDWINA

Yeah, I'm working on it. What is up with this thing tonight?

TENNESSEE

Pardon me for a moment, Liz, we're having some technical—

TAYLOR

They're gonna find out... They're gonna find out about Eddie.

TENNESSEE

Eddie...

TAYLOR

Debbie's husband. The singer.

TENNESSEE

Debbie...

TAYLOR

Reynolds. The dancer.

TENNESSEE

Eddie Fisher...? What about him?

TAYLOR

We're involved. They're gonna find out. I'm done for, Tenn. I'm finally becoming Maggie.

TENNESSEE

Oh, I'd recommend that one avoid becoming my female characters. Lil' Edwina, this is way after she and I met!

EDWINA

My favorite part was when I said I was working on it.

TENNESSEE

What should I do?!

EDWINA

Whatever you did right then! I don't know!

TAYLOR

First the divorce... then Mike...

TENNESSEE

Yes, Mike... Divorces... People get divorced to Mike—I don't know what I'm doing—I don't remember what I said to her! Should I tell another joke?

EDWINA

It's fascinating how much easier it is to fix the Machine while I also talk to you.

TENNESSEE

Mike... Mike. Mike? (*remembering*) Helicopter crash, train—plane crash! Mike died in a plane crash. We were discussing you being unable to do Suddenly, Last Summer. I probably have to stay here until you agree to doing it. (*to EDWINA*) Yes? (*off her glare*) Let's try that. (*to TAYLOR*) I'm sorry about your new dead husband.

TAYLOR

Ha. God, you should write yourself more. I'm sure the rest of us are becoming stale stimulus. Dried up... You're in a queer mood today. I don't know what you started taking, but I'm in need. You got anything?

TENNESSEE

Pills...? I don't know. I'm not sure if I'm there yet.

EDWINA

Shh! The kids don't need to hear about that!

TAYLOR

You can just say no. I like that you care about me. You're a better friend than you need to be... I'm going to do it.

TENNESSEE

Wow, that was easy! Are we done here?

TAYLOR

I expected... resistance.

TENNESSEE

Why? I did want you to do it!

TAYLOR

Oh, that's good to hear... I know you care about me. I felt terrible.

TENNESSEE

Stop worrying about others. Worry about yourself.

TAYLOR

Thanks for stopping by, you have no idea what you've done for me. It'll be good to see Mike again.

TENNESSEE

Yes—I'm sorry, what?

TAYLOR gets a gun from the drawer.

TENNESSEE

Liz, what is that!? What are you doing!?

TAYLOR

Did you want to leave the room? I can wait; I don't want to scar you.

TENNESSEE

Don't do that!

EDWINA

I don't know how to fix it!

TAYLOR

I'm doing it. I'm finally doing it. This is for me. I deserve it.

TENNESSEE

You don't! Don't do that! (*after LIZ takes a step away*) Hold on... No, hold on... I don't think you can actually kill yourself here, 'cause you don't kill yourself here, right...? (*to EDWINA*) Right? Liz Taylor doesn't (*pantomime gunshot*), right? Liz... you don't kill yourself. I have... nothing to worry about.

After a moment, TAYLOR crumbles to the ground, crying.

TENNESSEE

Well, I certainly understand remembering this one.

TAYLOR

You of all people don't deserve this right now... I'm sorry...

TENNESSEE

What are you talking about?

TAYLOR

Bette told... I heard about Frank.

TENNESSEE

You what?

TAYLOR

I'm sorry; I heard about Frank and you don't need more of this than you've got; I'm sorry. I'm so sorry...

*Lights up on FRANK in the scrim room,
smoking and staring up at the stars.*

TAYLOR

I'll do Summer, just... don't let this be Liz. Don't let this be...

TENN moves to the room. Blackout on TAYLOR.

EDWINA

Uh, Tenn, I didn't... He's not 'cause of me so... So... Frank. This is Sinatra?

TENN enters the scrim room.

EDWINA

Kapra.

TENNESSEE

Merlo... Have you ever heard such a stupidly pretty name? Frankie Merlo. He was a Capricorn. *(to FRANK)* Anybody ever told you you're the most gorgeous thing to ever strike upon his life?

FRANK

I'm sure you say that to every boy you meet out here.

TENNESSEE

No, I don't... If I did, that was stupid; I meant it with you.

FRANK

And I'm sure that's never been the accompanied explanation.

TENNESSEE

You speak like... somebody who's good at words.

FRANK

You seem like the village idiot.

TENNESSEE

Yes.

FRANK

Which village?

TENNESSEE

Mississippi. Well, New York now. Now... Look at you... It's really now again... Oh, I'm Thomas. They like calling me Tennessee. I'm fond on it too.

FRANK

Tennessee from Mississippi, now New York?
Frank Merlo.

TENNESSEE

Look how beautiful your skin is.

FRANK

Sicilian.

TENNESSEE

Sicilians make for exciting actors.

FRANK

You're an actor too?

TENNESSEE

I gave that up a while ago. Writer.

FRANK

Ah, life was too banal in the frying pan... As in now you're in fire. Frying pan, fire.

TENNESSEE

I don't remember you being so intellectually stimulating, Frankie Merlo.

EDWINA

(reminding) Tour.

TENNESSEE

We were standing on a Massachusetts sand dune, looking up at the stars, and, all I could think was... I really want to sleep with you.

FRANK

I thought I was Frank.

TENNESSEE

(becoming a puddle) That is such a stupid pun! Excuse me, why have you not kissed me yet? I'm very sure that at this point you and I should have kissed.

TENN pulls out a nasal spray and takes a sniff.

TENNESSEE

My nasal spray! Oh, it's just preventative; I'm not sick. I was real sick when I was a boy. But I'm not now! And it wasn't contagious. It still isn't, because I don't have it anymore. I'm not sick; you won't get sick.

FRANK

Never been a day in my life.

This strikes a nerve in TENN.

EDWINA

What have I seen him in?

TENNESSEE

Uh... What did we talk about?

FRANK

Your plays?

TENNESSEE

No, next topic, if you would.

FRANK

Your plays?

TENNESSEE

We're skipping that. Let's let the folks get to know you.

EDWINA

If you talked about your plays then...

FRANK

Your plays?

TENNESSEE

I don't want to talk about my plays.

FRANK

Why?

A ghostly spot lights up ROSE WILLIAMS stage right, whom TENN sees over FRANK's shoulder. She's a burnt up shell and there's blood all over her hands. TENN exits the scrim room to look at her.

TENNESSEE

(terrified) Okay! Lil' Edwina, that's enough!

EDWINA

What do you mean?

Blackout on ROSE.

TENNESSEE

He's not a star! We shouldn't be here; I'm sorry!

EDWINA

He just said he was an actor!

TENNESSEE

He didn't become a star; we should go!

EDWINA

What happened to him?

TENNESSEE

I said that we should go! I... She's...

TENN goes back into the scrim room.

TENNESSEE

April Is The Cruellest Month! That one's from when I just started college; it's an odd one! (*no response*) Battle of Angels: first one to actually be staged somewhere: Boston. Critics hated it. (*no response*) Stairs to the Roof: that was back in... (*beat; knowing what the answer has to be*) The Glass Menagerie.

FRANK

What's it about?

TENNESSEE

It's a very cruel play...

FRANK

It has a plot, doesn't it?

TENNESSEE

An abused child and her brother... and... and
a gentleman caller.

*Blackout in the scrim room. TENN reenters
the main stage.*

TENNESSEE

I... I need to... When's Capote?

EDWINA

Why?

TENNESSEE

Capote always cheered me up! I need to see
Truman Capote! He was a Libra!

EDWINA

Truman Capote isn't next on the schedule!

TENNESSEE

Goddamn it, Edwina!

EDWINA

Language!

TENNESSEE

I'm sorry, just... please.

EDWINA

You'll be fine! Here, let's get back on track.

GARBO enters.

GARBO

Let's go where it isn't so loud.

TENNESSEE

Greta! (*hugging her*) We're... we're at the party?

GARBO

And I'd love for us to be elsewhere.

TENNESSEE

Yes. I'd love to talk to you, yes.

GARBO

(*window area*) Up here?

TENNESSEE

Wait—!

GARBO

What, are we afraid of heights all of a sudden?

GARBO goes to the window and opens it, putting her back to it and enjoying the breeze. She's in her twenties and looks around the room with a similar absorption as FRANK, but with much more desperation: every room she's in is her last ever.

GARBO

You remember the first time we met?

TENNESSEE

You ignored me on the street.

GARBO

I don't recall that. Well, I'm sorry.

TENNESSEE

You wouldn't do a... a play I wrote.

GARBO

I don't remember that either. My age must be doing its damage, isn't it? It's so peculiar what our judges choose to remember; I'm referring to when Streetcar just opened. That parlor at the Ritz. You had a new screenplay and wanted me in it. Five years ago...? My, how time vanishes.

TENNESSEE

Yes... Yes! You should be in one of my screenplays. They're excellent.

GARBO

My... the room is stifling.

TENNESSEE

(can't remember) We had a conversation about... something... *(trying to move back to the tour)* We talked about the nature of celebrity. Who made you interesting rather than what.

GARBO

(stopping him) I love the way you talk, Tenn, but I'm going to need you to stop it. I'm

interesting because I'm interesting. I don't want to be... this anymore.

TENNESSEE

(agreeing) Celebrity is a disease!

GARBO

Not celebrity, darling... Acting.

TENNESSEE

Hah?

GARBO

I love walking into a room, not making a first impression. I love it. I resent acting.

TENNESSEE

I don't remember our conversation going like this... You're an actress.

GARBO

Actress is a disease, my dear. It's made me unholy.

TENNESSEE

This isn't right. This can't be what we discussed.

GARBO

This breeze is sensational...

TENNESSEE

What are you talking about?

GARBO

I can't be in your work, Tenn. I hadn't felt anything in ages until I resigned as an actress. *(leaning back out the window, looking down)* I love the way the cars all together make a gold and a red stripe, like a Chinese dragon. And then the ones way in the distance... the ones that shine 'cause they're separated from the herd, the cars that look like lightning bugs, like birds that don't fit in the V. Those sweet birds...

TENNESSEE

(nerve struck) Those sweet birds...

*Lights up on ROSE. She's different.
Lively. Clean. She has a parakeet.*

GARBO

When you die... what do you want to be?

TENN shuffles to ROSE, trying to get a look at her hands.

GARBO

I think I want to be one of those cars...

Lights down on GARBO. ROSE reveals a hand to be clean.

ROSE

We were wondering when you were going to show up. Well, I was wondering. Antoine's incapable of recognizing objects outside his spacial awareness. (*babbling parakeet*) Yes! Yes, you are!

TENNESSEE

How... How old are you?

ROSE

Are you drunk?

TENNESSEE

(nodding) How old are you?

ROSE

Nineteen.

TENNESSEE

Oh, my goodness. Rose. *(hugging her)* You haven't even had the stomachaches.

ROSE

I don't know if I've told you this enough, but I don't like drunk you. You become far too sentimental and even condescending. It's obstructive to conversation.

TENNESSEE

Can we have one? At nineteen you were the most wonderful person with which to have a conversation.

ROSE

What shall we talk about?

TENNESSEE

Anything. Anything, anything, anything.

ROSE

Let's talk about mother not being able to accept that my uterus is my own uterus, and any desire she has to lay partial claim to it simply won't be entertained.

TENNESSEE

She was an old bat.

ROSE

Pretend you don't adore her.

TENNESSEE

No, I have never once adored that woman.

ROSE

Yes, you're so rebellious in the shadows. You do everything she says; did you even want to apply for college?

TENNESSEE

I hate that woman with everything in me.

ROSE

Ha! Have you ever said that to her?

TENNESSEE

Of course not.

ROSE

I have. She screamed and scolded then tried to tell me a story about when she was sixteen. Ah, how I loved not listening to it.

TENNESSEE

I do not enjoy her!

ROSE

Well, she enjoys you. Men can be bunny rabbits. Women... women need to be— You're going to college, what animal am I looking for?

TENNESSEE

I haven't the faintest idea.

ROSE

Oh! Parakeets! Very pretty and entirely useless. (*babying*) Yes! Yes, you are pretty and useless!

TENNESSEE

She didn't take kind to my nature either.

ROSE

The woman's got horse blinders on. She hasn't an idea.

TENNESSEE

Not yet, at least.

ROSE

She'll be in the ground before she even has a passing thought about it. Now then, while you're at college, it's important that you have sex with as many men as possible. As many. As possible.

TENNESSEE

I'm not like you are.

ROSE

Mm... No, you're discovering alcohol—a much more rotten habit. At least mine is social.

TENNESSEE

You're so full of life.

ROSE

Stop being so sentimental; it's ruining our discussion.

TENNESSEE

I can't help it. You're so beautiful.

ROSE

Now, I'll only tolerate your perversions to a certain level. What I liked most about them was that I was left out of it.

TENNESSEE

You're so... full of language.

ROSE

You and your obsession with language.

TENNESSEE

You had one once, too.

ROSE

I currently am obsessed with language.

TENNESSEE

Exactly... (*re: parakeet*) How do you like him?

ROSE

You're typically god-awful at gift giving, but he's a darling. I believe you've awoken the maternity in me. I'll always hate you for it... I just want to squeeze his little cheeks!

TENNESSEE

(same nerve struck as earlier) I... I need to go. I'm sorry.

ROSE

I know; don't miss your train. Go get an education. Become even more pretentious.

TENNESSEE

I need to go—I have to—I'm not abandoning you.

ROSE

You don't think I know that? Of course you'll be back; you're obsessed with me. You'd never leave me alone with the Wicked Witch longer than I can handle her. And I can handle her for a long time. *(off his reaction)* Go to your train, you big crybaby. I'll always be here.

TENN bugs her.

ROSE

Yes, yes, you're so very blubbery.

TENNESSEE

I don't remember if this is the last time I saw you like this...

ROSE

Dearest, you're drunk. (*bugging him back for a few moments*) I believe we're suffocating Antoine. (*they release*) Don't worry. I'll be here, Tomcat.

*TENN taps his temple in agreement.
Blackout on ROSE.*

EDWINA

What happened to her?

TENNESSEE

I need to see Capote.

EDWINA

He isn't next on the—

TENNESSEE

I don't give a damn about the schedule! Take me to Capote!

EDWINA

Just hold on... Look, the Machine's—!

DIANA BARRYMORE enters.

DIANA

Are you Mr. Williams? Diana Barrymore... I was... I...

EDWINA

I don't know how to fix it; just figure out who this is and get rid of her!

TENNESSEE

(to DIANA) What do you want?

DIANA

To read. Sweet Bird of Youth. West End production. If you'll have me.

TENNESSEE

You need sides?

DIANA

If you have ‘em.

TENN fishes through the drawer and pauses, pulling out a bottle of pills.

TENNESSEE

The sleeping pills... Now that’s why I can’t remember anything... Why in the world would I remember you? *(no response)* I’ve auditioned a million actors... One fixed my plumbing and became my friend. You did neither. Why do I remember this? *(no response)* Sides.

TENN produces them and hands them to her.

DIANA

(re: sides) No, sorry... No, it’s fine... No, it isn’t—I was reading for Princess.

TENNESSEE

And?

DIANA

I don't... These aren't...

TENNESSEE

Read whatever I gave you. You were probably too old for Princess. How old are you?

DIANA

Thirty-eight.

TENNESSEE

Thirty-eight?! You're so young! Princess is, what—?

DIANA

I'm well old enough in actress years. This is the right time for me. I... relate to her, Mr. Williams.

TENNESSEE

Don't relate to my female characters; please can this stop being a thing?

DIANA

Oh, certainly!

TENNESSEE

Don't agree with me.

DIANA

Right!

TENNESSEE

You want to read for Princess? (*getting new sides*) Blow me out of the water.

TENN sits on a stool as DIANA reads, trying to keep the script steady in her hands. She's horrible:

DIANA

“The face of Franz Albertzart, a face that tomorrow's sun will touch without mercy. Of course, you were—” (*readjusting; retrying*) “The face of Franz Albertzart, a face that tomorrow's sun will touch without mercy. Of course, you were crowned with laurel in the beginning, your gold hair was wreathed with laurel, but the gold is thinning and the laurel has withered—”

TENNESSEE

Stop... (*to EDWINA*) Tell me I can leave now.

EDWINA

Nope... Guess she's reading more!

TENNESSEE

(*to DIANA*) How long did you say you've been doing this? Acting?

DIANA

I've had my heydays. But I've got another one coming up.

TENNESSEE

Yes. Look, Princess Kos is dried jerky. She doesn't have the energy to be nervous. Do exhausted.

DIANA

Exhausted? No, I'm... Yes, I think I'm exhausted but what true daughter of the stage sleeps?

TENNESSEE

Sure! Now we're talking! Use that drive and just read it.

DIANA

Oh, with pleasure...! Am I driven or am I exhausted?

TENNESSEE

Surprise me!

DIANA

(terrified) “Face it—pitiful monster... Of course, I know I'm one too. But one with a difference. Do you know what the difference is? No, you don't know. I'll tell you. We are two monsters”... “We are two monsters”... “We”... “But with this difference between us. Out of the passion and torment of my existence... I have created a thing that I can unveil, a sculpture, almost heroic, that I can unveil, which is true. But you? You've come back to the town you were born in, to a girl that won't see you because you put such rot in her body she had to be gutted and hung on a

butcher's hook, like a chicken dressed for Sunday." (*off his reaction*) I can do it again.

TENNESSEE

(*to EDWINA*) Please tell me she doesn't do it again.

EDWINA

No, you need to... give her something. I don't know what.

TENNESSEE

There's no way it's the part.

EDWINA

I don't know what.

TENNESSEE

I am not giving you the part.

DIANA

Right...

TENNESSEE

(*to DIANA*) Oh... I'm sorry, you're a phenomenal actress; this is not the part for you.

DIANA

(beat) Thank you, Mr. Williams. This was an absolute honor that I'm glad I did. I... I'd love for you know... that I wanted this role— Oh! I didn't mean it like that!

TENNESSEE

The role doesn't go to who wants it the most—

DIANA

Yes! Right! I know that. I know—I'm... I'm very, very good at... Believe me, this is just... Stupid. I'm stupid—I'm so sorry.

TENNESSEE

You'll be fine. It's all right. Get some sleep.

DIANA

My father's John—! I... Yes. I will. I'll go. Thank you for being so... *(beat)* I can read it again. I would like to do that.

TENNESSEE

I'm in a rush.

DIANA

I can rush! I'm a daughter of the... I'm...

TENN looks around, producing the sleeping pills and handing them to her.

TENNESSEE

Darling, you need sleep. I have helped you.
Mm?

DIANA

Mr. Williams.

TENNESSEE

Mrs. Barry...? Barry...? You did your read.
This isn't your part. You've been in this
business long enough to understand that
you'll just have to deal with booking the next
one.

DIANA

(beat) Oh, certainly! I'll get the next one, just
you...! You'll see me in the next one! Don't
you come knocking once I've...! Because I'll
be...!

TENNESSEE

You will. You're an excellent actress and an absolute darling. You'll break their hearts next time. Thank you for coming in, Mrs...

DIANA

"Darling..." That was just my favorite word for the longest time... I don't know why I had to say that aloud—my apologies.

TENNESSEE

Queer thing to say. That why I remember you?

DIANA

I just don't think anybody knew that about me... What my favorite word used to be...

DIANA puts the pill bottle in her purse and moves away.

TENNESSEE

Bless her dainty heart.

EDWINA

(looking through Machine) Huh... I'm not seeing her again. I think you got rid of her!

TENNESSEE

Okay. Sorry, folks. Small detours; not gonna happen again. Who's next on the schedule?

TENN puts the sides back in the drawer. DIANA pulls the pill bottle out of her purse, opens it, and peeks at its contents. Looking to TENN, she exhales and lets all the pills tumble down her throat.

TENNESSEE

(re: EDWINA's reaction) What? What are you—?

TENN sees what DIANA's doing and gasps.

TENNESSEE

What?! No... no, no, no...

DLANA exits, stumbling.

TENNESSEE

Oh, no... We gotta go back.

EDWINA

I...

TENNESSEE

We're doing that one again.

EDWINA

What did she...?! Oh, Tenn, no matter!
Don't—You can't change what—

TENNESSEE

I don't give a shit!

EDWINA

What happened to—?!

TENNESSEE

I don't rem—no, I...! I get a call a week later
from her manager saying—apparently—she
really wanted to be the Princess! And that isn't
my goddamn fault! I auditioned a thousand
actors and one kills herself; that isn't my fault!

Plenty of them took it great! Took it professionally...! I was not too hard on her; this is a hard business... And it wasn't like I killed Audrey fucking Hepburn! It was Diane Barry... Diane Baritone... Bari...

TENN lets what he just said sink in.

TENNESSEE

Again...

EDWINA

What?

TENNESSEE

Please, just try to find her again.

EDWINA

I'm sorry about the Machine.

TENNESSEE

Find her again! Just... Put her back!

EDWINA

We're gonna—here. (*before TENN can interrupt*) It's all right. It's all right...

TRUMAN CAPOTE enters holding a pair of wingtips. He's in his forties and pompously dismissive of any and all things in sight.

CAPOTE

You know, I was thinking that I was going to be on this big boat with not a single interesting soul and my goodness gracious here's the great Tennessee Williams.

TENN hugs CAPOTE, who doesn't respond to it at all.

TENNESSEE

Truman Capote. Why, I don't remember you being young and beautiful at all.

CAPOTE

And you're porcelain swamp trash, but it's only polite to keep certain observations to ourselves.

TENNESSEE

You and I still get along, don't we?

CAPOTE

We get along famously. You're by far the silliest person I've ever known. Now, the captain ordered that until we reach New York I'm not to be served one more drop of liquor, so it'd be wonderful for you to find somewhere in your black heart to sneak me a bottle of something ancient. Something that rotted.

TENNESSEE

I forgot you used to be charming.

CAPOTE

I'm the most exciting thing on the Atlantic.

TENNESSEE

Whose shoes?

CAPOTE

Well, I found them outside a gentleman's room, so I assumed he was sick of them. It's not like they smell or anything.

TENNESSEE

And he didn't want them shined?

CAPOTE

Well, of course he wanted them shined, you goof, why on Earth are you trying to derail my act? I've spent the whole morning taking people's shoes and putting them elsewhere. It's just a malicious activity and I think it might replace alcohol.

TENNESSEE

When did you stop being funny?

CAPOTE

I'm hilarious. I'm also dry as a fingernail and want something rotten.

TENNESSEE

(remembering) Bleached wine.

CAPOTE

Oh, I know what that is—but you should still describe it.

TENNESSEE

Winemakers bleach their corks cause it looks better. Sometimes, bleach filling in the cork

holes doesn't allow necessary aeration, and the wine is tainted. Smells like soil.

CAPOTE

Stop it. We're searching this entire boat—

CAPOTE drops the shoes and leaves, halting at the nearby wine rack.

CAPOTE

Oh, my goodness—how convenient. (*inspecting bottles*) This here is a Burgundy bottle. It's got these shoulders 'cause this wine throws sediment like it's paint. It's a horrid vintage. I would not once put this inside me.

TENNESSEE

This is a Bordeaux bottle.

CAPOTE

Please stop this slander. I know that I'm a fraud. You're a writer; you should find the adventure in playing along. I'm going to see your play as soon as I get the chance, by the

way. I hear you've found some kind of acting demigod. Is he a homosexual?

TENNESSEE

He isn't opposed. (*off his reaction*) We haven't. He would never do it for a role.

CAPOTE

That's such a pity.

TENNESSEE

You've got roles to give out now?

CAPOTE

Well, they're certainly making *Other Voices, Other Rooms* into a film someday. I'm not sure if I'm in need of a brute, but if I'm doing the adaptation, I'll write one.

TENNESSEE

He isn't a brute.

CAPOTE

More pities. None of these corks are—I feel so betrayed! If I have to drink regular wine now I'm going to throw myself into the Atlantic, and I want you to speak at my

funeral and explain to them that it's all your fault.

TENNESSEE

That's fine.

CAPOTE

(beat) How's your friend doing?

TENNESSEE

I'm sorry?

CAPOTE

You're right. "I'm sorry for asking, but" how's your friend doing?

TENNESSEE

Which?

CAPOTE

Am I wrong? Was it not you? Who's the one with the...?

Lights up on FRANK in the scrim room, smoking.

TENNESSEE

(going cold) Someone else.

CAPOTE

Oh, well that's good. I'm wretched at grief. If I ever get cancer, the thing that's gonna kill me is all the people crying. People are so oily when they cry. I'm going to my cabin. *(grabbing a bottle from the rack)* This is going to have to do, but I promise you that I'm hysterical.

CAPOTE exits.

FRANK

Tommy Williams...? Long time no see. What are you doing in Cape Town?

TENNESSEE

(going to scrim room) You recognized me after years. After only seeing me one time on a sand dune, my face only lit by starlight. And you recognized it. Why would you do that? *(no response)* Why didn't you try to reach me?

FRANK

Streetcar made you golden, and I'm not one for hopping on bandwagons.

TENN kisses FRANK with force, surprising him.

FRANK

Wow... I've been thinking about you since as well. Glad that's settled.

TENNESSEE

This... I can't do it to you again. *(no response)*
It'd be very polite of you to stop looking at me like that; it's intoxicating and unfair. *(no response)* Do you want to see a show with Bette Davis in it?

FRANK

You know Bette Davis?

TENN grabs FRANK's hand and the scrim room goes black. TENN reenters the stage not holding anybody anymore.

TENNESSEE

What? Where did he—?

BETTE DAVIS enters, drunk. She's visually in her twenties but behaviorally senile.

TENNESSEE

Bette! Where's Frank?

DAVIS

Ugh. I hate his name, Tenn. Don't even whisper him around me.

TENNESSEE

What!? What are you talking about?! (*taking bottle*) Where's Frank?!

DAVIS

Hopefully New York, back to that Actor's Studio he crawled out of.

TENNESSEE

What...? Frank Corsaro! Right, he's directing *Night of the Iguana*, uh-huh?

DAVIS

And I'm not starring.

TENNESSEE

Yes, you are—'cause I brought Frankie to opening night!

DAVIS

Not a whisper!

TENNESSEE

Frank Merlo. That's why I'm here. It was before anything bad happened and I think I deserve to relive one good memory from my wretched personal life!

DAVIS

I'm not going on while that fucker claims to be a director!

TENNESSEE

You can't switch director night of—that defeats the purpose!

DAVIS

No.

TENNESSEE

God fucking damn it, Bette!

EDWINA

Language!

TENNESSEE

She just said the fuck word too! Bette, what's his problem?

DAVIS

The problem is that you told me Gadg was directing, not this Method creep!

TENNESSEE

Tell me what you want. Whatever gets you onstage.

DAVIS

I want him gone!

TENNESSEE

He's not going!

DAVIS

I want to have sex with Jimmy!

TENNESSEE

Farentino? Who doesn't?!

DAVIS

Put in a good word—I want you to do one mean thing to Tallulah Bankhead.

TENNESSEE

Gladly.

DAVIS

I should've been your Blanche. Oh! I want to play Amanda Wingfield.

TENNESSEE

What? How old are you?

DAVIS

People have been playing her as sixty!—Fifty!—I'm thirty-seven!

TENNESSEE

Why does Amanda keep getting older?

DAVIS

Next Menagerie; West End, Hollywood, nickelodeon smut; I'm your girl.

*KATHARINE HEPBURN enters,
vibrantly twenty but dressed for her seventies.*

KATHARINE

Bette! Marvelous work!

DAVIS

Kat! You're still alive!

KATHARINE

Mr. Williams, I would like to ask you for something.

TENNESSEE

Katharine, I'm not giving you anything, I'm not waiting till you agree to anything; you get the hell out of this room.

KATHARINE

I would like your blessing to play Amanda Wingfield.

DAVIS

Uh-huh.

TENNESSEE

God. Damn it. (*to EDWINA*) How do I get Frank in here?

EDWINA

Bette Davis just needs to go onstage and you need to watch your language.

TENNESSEE

I am not giving her to Katharine Hepburn! (*to KATHARINE*) No!

KATHARINE

You didn't like my work in Suddenly?

TENNESSEE

Everything about it was terrible. Especially you. You spit in Mankie's face.

KATHARINE

You never sent me a thank you note for that one.

TENNESSEE

You're not Amanda Wingfield. Congrats, Bette!

KATHARINE

Mankiewicz bullied Montgomery Clift, and I don't take kind to watching the abuse of others artists.

TENNESSEE

You being Amanda would abuse me.

KATHARINE

You hated Mankiewicz.

TENNESSEE

Mrs. Hepburn—

KATHARINE

Ms.

TENNESSEE

I'm gay.

KATHARINE

I'm widowed. The studio won't have me if you don't want me. It's a television movie; it's beneath me.

DAVIS

Wait, so they're already planning one? Tenn!

KATHARINE

The only reason I would have to do it would be because... to have your script—and especially your blessing.

TENNESSEE

The script can be acquired with a library card.

KATHARINE

What other reasons do you have to detest me?

TENNESSEE

I promised it to Bette.

DAVIS

He did.

KATHARINE

You hate Bette.

DAVIS

You hate Bette?

TENNESSEE

Bette's my favorite. I hate your acting.

KATHARINE

Four Oscars.

TENNESSEE

You hate my favorite people.

KATHARINE

Who? Bette? You like her because you hate her—I've read your work.

TENNESSEE

Why can't you just die already?! God! I'm in a rush! It's yours!

KATHARINE

You surprise me.

KATHARINE exits.

DAVIS

In my presence you give Amanda to Katharine Hep—?

TENNESSEE

I'm writing a play called Sweet Bird of Youth. *(using hand signals)* Jimmy Farentino's got the part if he rides the D-Train right into Broadway.

DAVIS

I can perform tonight.

TENNESSEE

A thousand blessings.

FRANK enters.

FRANK

That was really something incredib—

TENN jumps and kisses FRANK passionately.

TENNESSEE

Hi.

FRANK

Hi. Wonderful work again, Bette.

DAVIS

Mm. (*pretending to see something offstage*) Would you look at that? Oh, it's so interesting.

DAVIS exits coyly.

TENNESSEE

We go to my place now. (*smiling*) No, wait! We have to play through it, don't we? Frank Merlo, would you like to see my apartment? (*no response*) What? No, wait... what did I say? I know I said something adorable and he went to my apartment. It was...

EDWINA

I don't think this is your first date...

TENNESSEE

Yes, it is! What? (*to FRANK*) How'd you like Bette?

FRANK

Two's Company was better. She's gotta stick to the screen, honestly. Never tell her I said that. But tell Tally I said that, if you could.

TENNESSEE

You know Tallulah Bankhead?

EDWINA

I went to your next memory with Frank!

TENNESSEE

No, no. Frank. Capricorn.

EDWINA

Yeah... This is the next thing you remember with him.

TENNESSEE

What are you talking about? I wouldn't have introduced him to Tally until... God, years in.

EDWINA

This is... well, I don't know. This is just the next thing you remember.

TENNESSEE

There's... that... no.

Lights up on dining area. CAPOTE stands with WARHOL and a POLICEMAN.

CAPOTE

Tenn, please explain to this man that you know who we are.

TENNESSEE

No... no, no, no.

CAPOTE

(*to POLICEMAN*) That doesn't bode well for my claim, but he knows me.

FRANK

We know him! It's fine!

TENNESSEE

What are you doing here?!

CAPOTE

I couldn't get in the front door so me and my painter friend climbed up the balcony. This policeman thought it was appropriate to intervene on our visit. I think it's improper to allow yourself in uninvited like that, but I'm being funny right now and no one is laughing.

POLICEMAN

Do I have reason to believe there are narcotics in this apartment?

FRANK

There are no narcotics in this apartment.

CAPOTE

Of course there aren't...

WARHOL

Of course, no...

POLICEMAN

(exiting) I'm searching the toilet tank.

TENNESSEE

No...

FRANK

(once he's out of earshot, whispered) You brought narcotics?!

CAPOTE

Well, I know you don't keep any in your apartment and my friend here brought enough to ruin our careers twice.

FRANK

Where are they?!

WARHOL

(fidgeting) A safe place.

POLICEMAN

(entering with the sleeping pill bottle) What are these?

TENNESSEE

Oh, Christ... It's fine!

POLICEMAN

Why were they in the bathroom?

CAPOTE

Bathroom pills are a delicacy that is our right as Americans to enjoy.

POLICEMAN

I'm sorry; did you want to say something?

WARHOL

Don't say anything, they have long memories.

TENNESSEE

Christ, just please get them out of here. (*no response*) Take the sleeping pills away from here, could you just...

TENN nervously takes a sniff of the nasal spray. The POLICEMAN snatches it.

TENNESSEE

It's nasal spray! It can't get you high! Believe me, by this point I've tried.

The POLICEMAN smacks the pill bottle and spray around in his hands then hands them to TENN. Unable to use anything, the POLICEMAN exits with a buff.

CAPOTE

(beat; re: spray) A friend of mine once inhaled the cap from one of those things. Got caught in his glottal. Took him hours to totally asphyxiate. I'm almost positive he cried the whole time and I'm being funny again because these silences do things to me and no one is laughing again and let's please get settled.

WARHOL

(patting pants) I have it, and soundly too.

All but TENN go to sit.

TENNESSEE

Go to a different memory with Frank. A good one. Just us.

EDWINA

Okay, let me look... (*frowning at Machine*)

Uh... I only have one more memory with just you two.

TENNESSEE

That's bullshit.

EDWINA

Hey...! Now look here: there's still one with just you two.

TENNESSEE

One...?

EDWINA

You wanna go?

TENNESSEE

No! Have you not figured out that the random bits I'm remembering was 'cause it was too fucked up to forget!?

EDWINA

Language! We'll skip through the sniff-sniff—'cause the kids don't need to see that—and

just jump an hour! Frank's still here and we get our stars in! Who wins? Everybody wins!

TENNESSEE

You don't get it! This isn't a good memory. This is where... I am not meeting him.

EDWINA

Who?

CAPOTE

Oh! Tenn, have you met my friend, Angel? Of course his real name isn't Angel, that's just what I've been calling him out of spite. Andy Warhol, Tennessee Williams; Tennessee Williams, Andy Warhol.

Lights go dark on all but TENN. Beat. TENN walks towards the table and sits, relighting it. An hour has passed and they're in a drunken conversation. WARHOL is, as always, seemingly dead sober. He observes TENN as a casual predator, his eyes cold and uncaring in who discovers them staring.

CAPOTE

And I hate this cat with every precious fiber in me! I want it dead. I can't write because I spend all day fantasizing about shoving it in a freezer or burning it alive and the two are very mutually exclusive, so every time I get home I can't do a thing but seethe at it in indecision!

FRANK

What's its name?

CAPOTE

It doesn't deserve one.

WARHOL

So. Tennessee, you write plays? That's riveting.

CAPOTE

We don't need to hear about that. We need to hear about this novel I'm almost done writing—novella. Novella and three short stories. It's about a prostitute who doesn't have sex with the men—maybe—they call these girls “call girls”—and that's how I know its going to make a dapper film as soon as it's

published—and the woman, this woman’s name is Holly—I’ll tell you who’s playing her, fantastic actress if I get my way: Monroe. Have you met her?

WARHOL

Tell me about your Sweet Bird of Youth. Right? That’s such a nice name.

TENNESSEE

How ‘bout I don’t talk to you. (*no response*) We just sit here and don’t go past this point and (*to FRANK*) why aren’t you holding my hand back? Or did I not even grab yours that night? ‘Cause that blond kept looking at me with his hungry eyes. (*no response*) Did you even once look at me that night? Or were you drooling at meeting another star...?

EDWINA

Tenn, is ev—

TENNESSEE

Sweet Bird of Youth is a play.

FRANK

It's an amazing play; my favorite so far.

WARHOL

What's it about?

TENNESSEE

No! God...! It was that goddamn painter I go to Key West with, then... then that dinner where you leap across the table, and I call the police... It's a play about a man heading to Hollywood to pursue his glossy-eyed dreams, but romance obstructs.

CAPOTE

Stories about Hollywood are the next big thing. Good on you.

FRANK

Regular people can't help but get starstruck.

TENNESSEE

There's you admitting it! Maybe that's why I don't have good memories of just us together? 'Cause you just wanted to go stargazing. Oh, shut up!

WARHOL

Oh, finally some photogénie.

CAPOTE

I want Holly Golightly to sweep people off their feet.

TENNESSEE

I am choosing to blaze through these great memories with these fabulous people to try to spend them with you, and you don't look at me during them. You always look at them. You're right, Angelboy: photo-gentry.

CAPOTE

Breakfast is going to be on my tombstone. I adore it.

TENN grabs a bottle off the table and leaves, blacking the dining area. After a bit, WARHOL follows him.

EDWINA

Where are you going?

TENNESSEE

What if we only remember past loves as being magical 'cause our brains pick the most self-sabotaging things to remember? He always wanted to see the stars and I always obliged. Like I do everything. And now I gotta renegotiate that... he only kept me around as a magnet... and then I kept him around to keep me warm. To give me a home base in every starlet-studded evening. To tell me my life had some purity in it.

WARHOL

Excuse me, mustache man, have you ever been to Florida? I think you'd like it; it's hot.

TENN grabs WARHOL's hand and leads him. WARHOL gets ahead of TENN, letting go and exiting, smiling back.

EDWINA

You ran?

TENNESSEE

I... Look, I...

NEWMAN

So I'm in the running?

PAUL NEWMAN enters, trying to stay charming through his nervousness.

NEWMAN

Look, that's all I'm asking... I... I know I'm nobody; but you specialize in nobodies! Look at Brando and Tandy and just... give me a shot.

TENNESSEE

How many random actors off the street only came to me for parts?

NEWMAN

This is different! I'm perfect for it!

TENNESSEE

And that was always the accompanied explanation.

NEWMAN

Just... I just want to work with you.

TENNESSEE

Oh, was that ever true?

NEWMAN

No, I want to work with Liz Taylor. But I know that you can't have good acting without good writing! Ask anyone; I have always said that!

TENNESSEE

I don't care. I don't care about any of it.

NEWMAN

I'm a failure, I've certainly recognized that other men can be attractive, I'm not the most keen on the bottle but I'm willing to make further inquiries; I'm Brick! I'm perfect for this! I know it wasn't written for me—

TENNESSEE

I don't care!

NEWMAN

(full stop) You... I... I'm sorry I wasted your time.

TENN shakes his head and goes still, finding the bottle of sleeping pills still in his pocket. He looks to NEWMAN, hiding the pills.

TENNESSEE

What do you even want out here? Why do you want to be in this place? You're a failed actor? Great! Save up and go buy an ice cream shop; sell ice cream. You know who gets betrayed in the ice cream business? Fucking nobody.

EDWINA

Language.

TENNESSEE

(to EDWINA) I—! I'm sorry... *(after cooling)*
Where are you from?

NEWMAN

Nowhere. Ohio.

TENNESSEE

Go home to Nowhere, Ohio. Nobody wants to hurt you in Ohio.

NEWMAN

Look! Okay, yes, that's what everyone's told me, but when you were in my shoes, and if somebody like Tennessee Williams told you not to chase it—told you to keep your distance—would you have listened to him?

TENNESSEE

(beat) No... But I wasn't after the chase.

NEWMAN

(agreeing) I ran away for as long as I—

TENNESSEE

I didn't run! I left! There's a difference! You're too young to know what you're talking about.

NEWMAN

Maybe I'm always gonna be a failure, that's... I can't go back there... I don't even

remember what my mom looks like and my...
There's just some things I can't face yet.

Lights up on ROSE. We can't see her hands.

NEWMAN

Maybe someday, if I'm ever able to be you.

TENN moves to ROSE.

TENNESSEE

Yes, you're in the running, Mr. Newman.

NEWMAN

(smiling; exciting) Call me Paul.

Before TENN can reach her, blackout on ROSE.

WARHOL

(in darkness) I was getting worried.

Lights up on WARHOL, who goes to kiss TENN. TENN averts.

WARHOL

Don't worry, I won't do it when Frank's here. I'm a simple monster; we both are, you know. Now, I'm not one for things being healthy, but this seems like a very healthy thing for everyone. Get the stink out in the open. Ease Frank into it, the poor boy.

CAPOTE

(entering with a very sick FRANK) My goodness, I thought I'd be spending this whole evening bored to tears, but look who arrived. I'm going to get the wine.

CAPOTE exits. FRANK immediately goes to sit, the occasional cough curling him like a pill bug.

WARHOL

How are you feeling, sweetie?

WARHOL sits, TENN staring only at FRANK. CAPOTE enters with wine and a corkscrew.

CAPOTE

Angel, this cork is milk white. How did you know?

WARHOL

Because you don't shut up.

CAPOTE

This bottle's only for me. And maybe a sip for Tenn: pallet royalties.

TENNESSEE

No. (*no response*) No, of course I'm drinking.

WARHOL

Frankie, would you like some soup?

CAPOTE

Soup?! It's a thousand degrees outside!

WARHOL

The Arabs drink hot tea on hot days. Eases the blood.

CAPOTE

(*popping cork out*) I'll keep mine cold, thank you.

WARHOL

I know you will—I was asking Frankie. (*to FRANK*) You like it hot, don't you?

CAPOTE

Oh, speak of the fucking devil! Guess who's Holly Golightly, my call girl: Audrey fucking Hepburn.

WARHOL

Yes, congrats.

CAPOTE

I'm beside myself! I ask for Marilyn and they give me the least Southern, least gritty actress on the entire market! They all want me to overdose! Imagine that woman as Holly; it's going to spoil the entire thing! (*beat; to FRANK*) I noticed you weren't smoking, Frankie. How's your lung?

WARHOL

Oh, gosh!

CAPOTE

What! When it's quiet too long I play "I Spy"
with the room's elephants!

FRANK

My lung isn't good.

CAPOTE

I'm sorry to hear that. I... *(beat)* I love my
lungs. I don't know what I'd do without them.

WARHOL

This is becoming divine.

FRANK

(filling with rage) You think this is funny?

WARHOL

Not funny, but the photogénie is delicious.

TENNESSEE

Frankie...

CAPOTE

This is fine soil. Just my kind. Mazel tov,
Angel.

WARHOL

I'm an artist; I notice beautiful things. And all I was saying is this is simply a moment, albeit heartbreaking.

TENNESSEE

I'm sorry.

WARHOL

I'm sorry. I shouldn't be talking. I've done enough to you.

FRANK

What? What did you do?

WARHOL

(looking to TENN) He doesn't know?

FRANK looks to TENN, who can't look away. FRANK turns back to WARHOL, leaps, and strangles WARHOL. CAPOTE jumps out of his seat, crying out "Stop! Stop it!" again and again as TENN watches.

TENNESSEE

Frankie, stop... Please just... (*shaking his head*)
STOP!

*EDWINA slams the machine and the scene
freezes.*

TENNESSEE

This is the last time I saw my boyfriend Frank when he was strong enough to leap across a table. Look at those arms. I remember when they were still that thick... God, just one more—just of us lying around on a beach together, but I don't have it. I poisoned all of them. I'll never feel 'em again... Frankie, we went together like two jagged edges... I hoped you loved it like I did. (*bugging FRANK*) When you see me next, say something sweet to me.

TENN goes to the phone and dials.

TENNESSEE

(struggling to put on the act) A man I don't know... A man I don't know is strangling my boyfriend. Take him far away from here.

FRANK lets go, succumbing to a coughing fit. WARHOL falls to the ground, gasping. Blackout on the dining scene. Lights up on ROSE, hands still unseen. TENN begins to hurry to her, then cautiously slows. Upon reaching ROSE, TENN discovers her hands to be clean.

ROSE

And here I was believing you'd never return.

TENNESSEE

Oh, my God... *(bugging her)* Oh, my God; you're still in there.

ROSE

Ah. You're drunk again.

TENNESSEE

I didn't think I had anything left of you.
You're still in there.

ROSE's "ghostly spot" flashes.

TENNESSEE

What was that?

ROSE

(to EDWINA) Is everything all right?

EDWINA

It's acting up again! I don't know how much longer we're gonna be staying here.

TENNESSEE

(to ROSE) Look here, if you and I were to have only—

ROSE

(rapid) I would get the point quicker. Have you had sex with men?

TENNESSEE

Yes. You?

ROSE

More. Have you been drinking?

TENNESSEE

Too much.

ROSE

Ask me about Antoine.

TENNESSEE

How's Antoine?

ROSE

He's beautiful. The parakeet heartbreaker.
How was the play?

TENNESSEE

God, I don't want to talk about the play; it
was cruel.

ROSE

Despite its title, it wasn't at all.

TENNESSEE

What? Menagerie should be given to folks on
death row!

ROSE

Menagerie...?

TENNESSEE

Which play did you read?

ROSE

April Is The Cruellest Month.

TENNESSEE

April... What year is it?

ROSE

I'm gradually understanding that you've climbed the booze ladder since we last spoke. Is this absinthe?

TENNESSEE

Do... do you have stomachaches?

ROSE

Who told you?

TENNESSEE

So this is the last one then... I don't suppose it would do me any good to tell you to run away from home, would it?

ROSE

It would be a marvelous idea.

TENNESSEE

You don't though... And to never let mother discover your promiscuity.

ROSE

I'm sure she'd throw me in the loony bin for it.

TENNESSEE

That she would... That she would. And should there ever be a discussion about solving your promiscuity with a lobotomy, you stick a hot iron in her face and run away from here... You're the most perfect thing there ever—

Blackout on ROSE. Immediate lights up on WARHOL screen-printing.

WARHOL

Oh, why didn't you tell me you were coming down?

WARHOL goes to kiss TENN, who averts.

TENNESSEE

No... No, no, no.

WARHOL

(still trying to kiss) Yes, yes, yes!

TENNESSEE

(throwing WARHOL off) NO...! No, that wasn't the end. There was more!

WARHOL

Sounds like you're on something fun.

TENNESSEE

There was more... I had her; I know I have more of her...

WARHOL

Switching teams again? I don't think they'll take you back.

TENNESSEE

Get away! Get away; I don't want to see you!

WARHOL stands, staring at TENN thinking.

WARHOL

Well, ouch, Tommy; that wasn't very kind.

TENNESSEE

Shut up! (*to EDWINA*) That wasn't the last of her. I remember more when she was... When she was...

WARHOL wraps himself around TENN from behind; gently, romantically.

WARHOL

That wasn't very kind... I'll excuse you on account of... whatever you're on. Do you know where we are?

TENN doesn't shove him away, ashamedly soaking in WARHOL on him.

TENNESSEE

Don't... We're... warm... I came down here because it was warm...

WARHOL

Warm's a cute word for it; I'm sweltering down here. I wasn't meant for Florida humidity—probably why I love it so much.

WARHOL leaves TENN, who doesn't move. WARHOL takes notice.

WARHOL

You don't like me asking, so I won't... Yes, I will: is this about Frankie?

TENNESSEE

About...?

WARHOL

I won't ask... Bedroom?

TENNESSEE

No.

WARHOL

All right, but let me get out a visqueen—

TENNESSEE

No! I don't...!

WARHOL

It sounds like you're gonna need convincing and my head's in my print—so just take the Yellow Snakes. (*re: TENN's confusion*) Drawer.

TENN goes to the drawer, finding pills. WARHOL holds his hand out. TENN doesn't move. WARHOL looks back up to TENN.

WARHOL

If you take them, I can pretend to be Frankie.

TENN doesn't move.

TENNESSEE

Why was I here?

WARHOL

Frankie's just about gone... You don't deserve that; you deserve me.

TENNESSEE

No, I don't.

WARHOL

You deserve someone who cares about you. I can be Frankie for you. We can do it right here—I hated this print anyways; Truman wouldn't shut up about her. Let's ruin her right here.

TENNESSEE

I don't want to ruin anyone... not her...

WARHOL

(pulling TENN) Come on!

TENNESSEE

(throwing him off) NO! God, no!

WARHOL

(pulling again) Tommy! Just do it!

TENNESSEE

(throwing) You didn't love me! You just pretended!

WARHOL

(grabbing TENN) What's the fucking difference to you, huh? What's the difference? Who actually loves you and can get it hard—

‘cause Frankie barely fits half that bill. You wanna feel whole again? You want love. I’m the best thing you have... (*softening grip*) Stop blaming yourself for Frankie being sick. You blame yourself for everything.

TENNESSEE

I... I do blame myself for everything.

TENN stops resisting.

WARHOL

You deserve this.

TENNESSEE

I deserve this.

WARHOL kisses TENN, then stops, TENN limp in his arms. WARHOL takes the pill bottle from TENN, popping a pill, then handing one to TENN. TENN slowly puts it in his mouth.

WARHOL

(smiling) If you left me, where else could you even go?

TENNESSEE

Nowhere.

WARHOL

Right. You'd just run till you're back the starting line. And you don't want that, right?

TENNESSEE

The starting line.

WARHOL

Back in Mrs. Mississippi's arms.

TENNESSEE

The starting line...

EDWINA

(looking at Machine) Tenn, I'm gonna try to get us out of here!

WARHOL

You still think I'm a monster, don't you? No, you think I'm an even bigger monster than you?

TENNESSEE

I guess I'm just used to you...

WARHOL goes for a love bite as DIANA enters, clutching her purse.

DIANA

Are you Mr. Williams? Diana Barrymore... I was... I...

EDWINA gasps. TENN squirms in WARHOL's arms, who stops.

WARHOL

Why do you always look away?

TENNESSEE

Edwina, make this stop!

EDWINA

(looking through Machine) I... I...!

DIANA

To read. Sweet Bird of Youth. West End production. If you'll have me.

WARHOL

I'm exhausting everything that usually works. Can you just for once not need this bullshit moral foreplay?

DIANA

If you have 'em.

WARHOL

(holding out pills) Just take another.

TENNESSEE

(to WARHOL) Get those away! *(running to DIANA)* Run away from me, sweet child!

DIANA takes the pills from TENN, who snatches them back.

TENNESSEE

No!

DIANA

This is the right time for me. I relate to her,
Mr. Williams.

TENNESSEE

(*to EDWINA*) Edwina, get her out of here!

EDWINA

I'm sorry about the machine! It isn't me!

WARHOL

Are you kidding me? What disease do I need
to get for you to just fuck me?

TENNESSEE

(*to EDWINA*) Edwina! Please!

DIANA

The face of Franz Albertzart—

*DLANA pulls another pill bottle out of her
purse, to which TENN runs and grabs.*

TENNESSEE

No!

DIANA

—a face that tomorrow’s sun will touch
without mercy—

WARHOL

Why do you always look away?!

DIANA

Of course, you were crowned with laurel in
the beginning, your gold hair was wreathed
with laurel—

*DIANA pulls another pill bottle out of her
purse; TENN grabs it. WARHOL hisses
into TENN’s ear, driving him the opposite
way from DIANA.*

TENNESSEE

STOP! Frankie—help me!

WARHOL

I don’t need to look like him—I look like me!

DIANA

(another pill bottle)—but the gold is thinning
and the laurel has withered—

TENNESSEE

(running to her; grabbing it) STOP! FRANKIE!
HELP!

DIANA

Out of the passion and torment of my
existence—

WARHOL

And I paint him—How many times do I need
to paint him?

DIANA

I have created a thing that I can unveil, a
sculpture, almost heroic—

*TENN falls to his knees, arms filled with
pill bottles.*

TENNESSEE

Stop... Frank... Frankie...

EDWINA

(getting up) It wasn't me! *(exiting)* I didn't do
this! I'm sorry!

WARHOL

Why can't you just write me, Tenn?! The wicked need to find holes too!

DIANA

(another pill bottle)—you put such rot in her body she had to be gutted and hung on a butcher's hook, like a chicken dressed for Sunday.

TENNESSEE

FRANK!

DLANA empties the pill bottle down her throat. BRANDO runs in, clutching a trembling TENN, as DLANA and WARHOL slither away.

BRANDO

Can you tell me your name?

TENNESSEE

Frankie...

BRANDO

Tell me your name.

TENNESSEE

Thomas “Tennessee” Williams.

BRANDO

Birthday.

TENNESSEE

No.

BRANDO

What’s your birthday...? Hey! Hey!

TENNESSEE

Aries! And we have that in common, Bud. Let me go.

BRANDO

You’re quitting these pills. (*re: TENN crying*)
Hey... stop doing that. Where’s your barrel-
chest?

TENNESSEE

Dead... He’s dead.

BRANDO

You’re still crying about that? God, it’s been years.

BRANDO picks TENN up and sits him on a stool. This older BRANDO is no playful Stanley—bearing the black weight of some aging trauma in every movement and facial expression. TENN indecipherably cries some words into BRANDO's shirt.

BRANDO

Hah?

TENNESSEE

I did it to you too. You... You raped someone... You raped a girl, Bud...

Beat. BRANDO tries to say something but doesn't.

TENNESSEE

Do you remember when we first met? We walked on the beach and talked and talked and talked about how your father raped your mother and she wasn't able to stop drinking and he let her because it meant she wasn't able to stop him... And you'd never put

yourself somewhere where you could become your father and Stanley was that... I gave him to you. I took you here and you raped a woman with a stick of butter... I gave him to you.

BRANDO

No... No, I took him... And when we didn't talk on that beach, you wouldn't ever become your mother. And look at you.

TENNESSEE

I can't remember what she looks like... I can't remember the face that my muse away from me.

BRANDO

(feeling his face) Lucky you... *(aggressive)* I can't sleep either, but you know why I don't take these goddamn sleeping pills?! You know why!?

TENNESSEE

I can't—

BRANDO

Your boyfriend is dead! You did not kill him but you tortured him because you're an ugly man! Accept it! We're ugly men! What, you can't confront your fears? Life needs these ugly things; that's what—!

TENNESSEE

That was bullshit, Bud! I just wanted you to be Stanley!

BRANDO

Stop dismissing everything that scares you as bullshit! Your mother ruined your sister after you ran; you ruined Frank and ran!

TENNESSEE

Why did I do that?

BRANDO

Stop crying! Face what happened! You're not gonna stomach you—your skin won't even fit—until you accept what you did and separate it from Tom!

TENNESSEE

That's all I was though! That was me running!
Tom ran!

BRANDO

(gripping TENN's collar and tugging him in) You are not what you've done, but what you do!

TENN stares into BRANDO's wrathful eyes, revealing unrestrained fear of them. BRANDO sees this and closes his eyes, placing his forehead against TENN's.

BRANDO

God, I hope that's right.

BRANDO releases TENN and exits. Lights up on a bar, where GARBO sits with a glass of milk. TENN crawls to her with CAPOTE's bottle of wine and sits.

TENNESSEE

Greta...

GARBO

I've been waiting for you. The great Tennessee Williams...

TENNESSEE

I don't know... You're still beautiful.

GARBO

Ah, who cares? How's life been treating you?

TENNESSEE

Like I killed its puppy with a lawnmower.

GARBO

(choking on her milk) Goodness, you never liked subtlety.

TENNESSEE

You never looked so dapper. What did you need?

GARBO

What?

TENNESSEE

A role? Spoiled booze? What did you need?

GARBO

I wanted to say hello... It's all right. You never were very good with people.

TENNESSEE

This is an absolute lie. I'm practically a savant.

GARBO

You're fantastic with... celebrities. Not people.

TENNESSEE

(remembering) This is where we have that conversation; I really need to stop with these.

GARBO

You do. Switch. *(replacing his bottle with her milk)*
Try this.

TENNESSEE

(sipping milk) What is this? Virgin eggnog?

GARBO

Yeah, people call it "milk."

TENNESSEE

Ugh, God... (*“go on”*) I was good with celebrities.

GARBO

You look at the shiniest nickel and dismiss the others as somehow being worth less.

TENNESSEE

Did I do that?

GARBO

I was surprised at you not dating a star. Figured the boy would be neglected.

TENNESSEE

Oh, I didn't neglect him.

GARBO

Of course you did. He tells me about it—all the time.

TENNESSEE

Frank talked to you?

GARBO

He talks to me—all the time. I feel as though he always resents being in those rooms, but thinks I'm nice. I'm not sure.

TENNESSEE

I didn't neglect him; I was helping him do everything for the last month. He's already lying in the bed he never walks out of... This is the last month... I stopped seeing Angel, but Frank doesn't care. Like always.

GARBO

Ha! I'm sorry... Like always? That boy's been your secretary, accountant, arranges meetings and calls, makes sure you get to see all your stars.

TENNESSEE

What? No, I don't—Well, I don't remember it like that.

GARBO

Oh my; I never would've guessed. Drink more milk. (*as TENN does*) No bias here:

Frank takes care of you. Practically raises you.
He's allowed to die first because of it.

TENNESSEE

That isn't how I recall it.

GARBO

You couldn't. Every time he takes care of you,
you're filled with everything behind a
bathroom mirror.

TENNESSEE

No... No, well, it's his word against mine.

GARBO

He's much better at words.

*TENN stops and thinks, looking to
GARBO.*

TENNESSEE

I'm the one who wanted to see the stars?

GARBO

I don't know if you realized it, but that's all
you ever care about: words and stars. He's like

a charity you keep close; he owes you everything for spending time with a no-name.

TENNESSEE

No... No, I've always said that his name alone—

GARBO

'Cause it's a pretty word. His name isn't what makes him. Yes, you were what made him interesting, but you didn't make him. Drink the milk.

TENNESSEE

(after drinking) The only thing I can remember is his deathbed... We fight, then he says, "I guess I'm just used to you." Then I leave and he dies. That was the last thing he said. "I guess I'm just used to you." Like I'm no more or less than a disease... *(re: milk)* This is disgusting, by the way.

TENN places the milk down. Then gives it a little push out of reach.

TENNESSEE

Why are you drinking that?

GARBO

(deciding) No one in my family went to primary school and we worked all day. We couldn't afford anything so my mother bought milk. It was the cheapest thing and it "lasted the longest." My father got sick and died when I was fourteen... When I came here and learned how quickly milk spoils, I grew this rage at my mother, at how she killed my father because she didn't know anything. *(shivering memory away; smiling)* I hate telling stories. Do you understand why I'm saying this to you?

TENNESSEE

It doesn't pertain. My mother lobotomized my sister out of wrath, not ignorance.

GARBO

The devil never had a more loyal advocate.

TENNESSEE

I, never a more respectable critic.

GARBO

A role I'll gladly accept.

GARBO uses the bottle to go to clink glasses, remembers TENN pushed his away, and clinks with that resting glass.

GARBO

I'm saying visit your mother.

TENNESSEE

Oh, absolutely not.

GARBO

You might find something resembling yourself.

TENNESSEE

You don't think that's what I'm afraid of?

GARBO

Can you remember her?

TENNESSEE

No.

GARBO

Wishful thinking?

TENNESSEE

(*re: milk*) If this is what caused you all the hardship, why are you drinking it?

GARBO

What are you talking about?

TENNESSEE

I would've sworn off milk forever... How can you drink that?

GARBO

Mm... Because I know that milk's very good for you.

Blackout on the bar. Lights up on ROSE sitting on the floor, her hands hidden.

TENNESSEE

Rose?

She's a zombie. Completely incapable of speech or a fully conscious facial expression.

TENNESSEE

Where are we then? The asylum? (*no response*)
The old bat did it... Well, I remember you
had a garden here. Pleasant for walks. Are you
at the point where you can walk? (*no response*) I
remember you still being fond on Antoine.
Always giddy whenever I visited and you
dragging me to his cage. I know you'd want
me to ask how he's doing.

*After a moment, ROSE reveals her hands to
be soaked in blood.*

TENNESSEE

Rose... What did you do?

She presses them together and squeezes.

TENNESSEE

Christ... Why did you do that to the poor
fellow?

*She starts blubbering up as she shrugs.
TENN bugs her.*

TENNESSEE

You beautiful star, why would you do that? (*as she cries*) Why would you do that...? Why would you... Hug me back, Rose.

She cries and keeps her arms at her sides.

TENNESSEE

Hug me—Please, just hug me...

EDWINA enters. TENN lets go of ROSE, taking in EDWINA.

TENNESSEE

And here I was thinking I'd forgotten what you looked like... Couldn't handle the fact that your daughter was fucking boys so you scrubbed her brain clean?! You lunatic! Look at her: is this better? This is what you wanted? This doesn't stain your reputation like your gay, alcoholic son, huh?

EDWINA

Your alcoholism can be fixed—

TENNESSEE

You shut your mouth... You know what would've happened if you weren't the way you were? None of it. I wouldn't have met any of them because I wouldn't have run. Rose wouldn't have spent her life in a fucking monkey cage. It's you.

EDWINA

Are you finished?

ROSE

(terrified) Yes!

Both freeze and look to ROSE. It's clear that random speaking spells have occurred, but are infrequent enough for EDWINA to cover her mouth with her hand.

TENNESSEE

(fuming) Leave. Go. You're supposed to be a coward. You always ran away from arguments.

EDWINA

I've gotten too old to run. You'd know that if you visited more often than once or twice a lifetime. Thomas, Rose had a train ticket. She has neither the intellectual capacity nor the access to a telephone that would find her with a train ticket. Did you give it to her?

TENNESSEE

I don't remember.

EDWINA

Who was going to take care of her in New York? You were...? Do you remember me taking care of you when you were sick, Thomas? Did you never appreciate that I took care of you all those years?

TENNESSEE

You didn't take care of me.

EDWINA

I did. I didn't know how to but I did it. Your father couldn't handle the fact that you'd never be a strong, capable boy—if the diphtheria didn't take you, he was going to.

How many times did I take your beatings so he couldn't kill you...? And all I could think was... if I had let him do that, you never would've had the chance to grow up and be a sinner. The Lord would smite me for standing idly by but you would spend eternity in paradise. That's all I ever wanted for you. But you were stubborn and all you ever wanted to do was hate me... And I suppose I didn't help... I just wanted you and Rose to be safe during your time on this earth. Rose was running away with boys—

TENNESSEE

So you clipped her wings—

EDWINA

I made her safe! Will I go to hell because of it? Yes and I carry that! The important thing is that she won't! Am I paranoid? Am I a lunatic...? But are my children safe?

TENNESSEE

I... I don't remember you saying any of this.

EDWINA

Every single day I wonder if I did the right thing. You know how highly I hold your opinion, so I need you to tell me I did.

TENNESSEE

You didn't!

EDWINA

(nodding) The things you choose to remember... When you have children, you'll understand why I'm so terrible. I know you will... You just need to find a nice girl first.

TENNESSEE

(almost ready to chuckle) Did you ever love anybody?

EDWINA

My children.

TENNESSEE

No... No. Romantically.

EDWINA

Romance is sin.

TENNESSEE

Of course it isn't.

EDWINA

When it wasn't with your father, it is.

TENNESSEE

Well, you never did that in your life.

*EDWINA sits in the chair TENN uses
for anecdotes, ROSE looking her in the eye.
EDWINA doesn't hide from it.*

EDWINA

It was before I met your father... Women weren't supposed to go on trips alone in those days... I wanted to see a college that was a few days away, told my parents I was visiting my mother's sister, when a boy knocked on my hotel room door. Told me there was no vacancy and he'd pay for mine twice over. I told him that if there were no vacant rooms I obviously wasn't leaving. He agreed that was reasonable... I was just a girl. I was sixteen and every boy was terrified of my father's

sermons. But this town and this boy didn't know my father; I couldn't dare let him leave... I wouldn't let him sleep in the same bed as me, which he understood, but we talked all night. Just about everything. The night sky. The cattails growing on the road. How much we hated horse apples—

ROSE

(as if trying to finish story) Goodnight, dreamer...
(beat) Goodbye.

EDWINA

(staring at ROSE) When I woke up midday all my things were gone. My money, my bags, my ticket home: gone. Took me forever to get home, and even longer to recover from my father's wrath. *(beat)* If I knew what I know now, would I have let that boy sleep in my room again? *(beat; holding back)* Yes...

EDWINA rises from the chair.

EDWINA

I don't know how much time I have left; be gentle when you remember me. (*goes to exit, stopping herself*) But more than anything, I wished I never knew what I know now.

EDWINA goes to exit again, but TENN stops her and hugs her. She nods and exits. TENN goes to ROSE.

TENNESSEE

My God... You know what's the difference between a plastic and a glass figurine? A glass one is pretty because of how easy it is to break the goddamn thing. (*kissing ROSE's head*) I'll write you so they name every constellation after you. You'll look up and point and say "Rose" and no matter which you point to, you'll only be right always.

ROSE points to the scrim room.

TENNESSEE

(correcting her finger to the sky) "Rose."

She shakes her head. ROSE points to the room again, lighting it full of its stars—revealing FRANK on his deathbed. TENN hugs ROSE a final time.

TENNESSEE

Thank you for fueling my adventurous heart.
I'm sorry for the sentiment.

She points again. TENN backs away to the scrim.

TENNESSEE

I won't be far. Just right here.

ROSE points to her temple, tapping it twice, as her spotlight goes out. TENN arrives at FRANK and caresses his arms. He scans around the room, settling indefinitely on FRANK's closed eyes.

TENNESSEE

This right here is the universe...

*TENN wraps himself around FRANK.
The stars fade to black.*