

A NIGHT OF STARS WITH
TENNESSEE WILLIAMS
(sample)

by Maxim Vinogradov

(If interested in reading the
full script, please go to the
CONTACT section of the website
and request a free copy.)

GRAPHIC: A BLACK-AND-WHITE "A NIGHT OF STARS WITH TENNESSEE WILLIAMS" ACCOMPANIED BY '40S FANFARE AND A CELESTIAL LOGO. THE MUSIC GRADUALLY BECOMES DISTORTED AS THE IMAGE FLICKERS.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Black-and-white camera on him, we see TENNESSEE WILLIAMS (40) sitting in a comfy chair as crew members faintly discuss something off screen. Tenn stares absently off.

Tenn's clutching a BOTTLE as if loosening his grip will make the bottle explode into shrapnel. He's mustached, his lungs adopting New York but clearly born of a Mississippi drawl. Tenn, unblinking, raises the bottle, then lowers it.

Behind him is a decadent living room, clean and tastefully stained, complete with a bar, bar stools, and connecting his to kitchen. One

would think it was a studio set rather than his house, which is exactly what Tenn would've wanted.

Tenn looks up, as if addressing a different camera. He doesn't speak at all like he's intoxicated, but pleasant:

TENN

Memory... 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 --

An off screen crew member says
something to Tenn, but it's
DISTORTED and INDECIPHERABLE.

TENN
(looking behind
our camera)
Mm?

The off screen crew member repeats
the phrase.

TENN
We're not...?

The off screen crew member says
something quickly.

TENN
Who's running this?
Who do I -- ?
(pointing at
our camera)
Is it this one?

EDWINA (O.C.)
Don't worry -- I got
him.

TENN

(looking behind
himself)

She...? We're...?

(looking back
at different
camera)

All stars have their
final bow and they
spread across the
cosmos to make our
atoms --

CUT TO:

GRAPHIC: A BLACK-AND-WHITE "A NIGHT
OF STARS WITH TENNESSEE WILLIAMS"
ACCOMPANIED BY '40S FANFARE AND A
CELESTIAL LOGO. THE MUSIC IS
TRIUMPHANT AND PERFECT.

EDWINA (V.O.)

Hello, ladies and
gentleman! Thank you
for tuning in again!
Tonight shall be a
tour of the stars
with a man that
knows the stars

better than anybody
alive or dead:
Tennessee Williams!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

In the last moment of the dissolve,
Tenn drops the bottle and smiles at
our camera.

TENN

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.

Tenn looks behind himself. After a
moment, the lights FLICKER, then GO
OUT. Tenn sighs as a PROJECTION OF

THE NIGHT SKY hums to life across the living room behind him.

TENN

(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

--

Tenn plucks up his spilling bottle and SIPS instead of finishing the sentence.

TENN

Right-o! Lil' Edwina! Where do we wanna launch off tonight?

Tenn looks to his side and waits. Nothing happens.

EDWINA (O.C.)

(whispered)

More introduction!

TENN

(turning back
to camera)

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...

(back to the
side)

Lil' Edwina, why do
these things happen?

EDWINA (O.C.)

More introduction!

TENN

(back to
camera)

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 (O.C.)
Sufficient
introduction!

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

Tenn looks around, then back to the
side. After a moment, EDWINA (60s)
briefly enters the shot, produces a
laser pointer, and hands it to him.
Edwina leaves the shot.

TENN
Thank you. This,
right here, is the
universe! Now, to

begin our tour, we'd
like to start -- Oh,
meet Lil' Edwina!
She... Come on, just
--

Tenn physically PATS at the camera
till it turns to face Edwina.
Edwina's in a sequin dress and
pleasant as peaches, manning the
STAR MACHINE. She's the assistant
you'd expect to be the Vanna White
type, but, again, in her 60s.

TENN (O.C.)
Meet Edwina!
She's...

EDWINA
(shyly)
I'm a student.

TENN (O.C.)
(surprised by
the answer)
A student...? Yes!
She's a student of
astrology.

EDWINA
Astronomy.

Tenn pulls the camera back to focus on him.

TENN

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

EDWINA (O.C.)

(chuckling)

It's gonna be necessary!

TENN

We're starting!

(laser pointing vaguely back)

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.

Tenn peeks back and laser points at
a star.

TENN

This star here...
this is... Polaris.

Tenn peeks at the out of frame
Edwina, moving his pointer.

TENN

This one's
Polaris...
(moving again)
Polaris?

EDWINA (O.C.)

Oh, heavens...

TENN

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 --

Tenn drinks instead of finishing
the sentence. Edwina comes and
SNATCHES THE BOTTLE.

TENN
That's my dancing
juice, goddamn it!

EDWINA (O.C.)
Language!

TENN
(cooling)
I...! All right...

Tenn looks back to the camera and
tries to put on his best televised
persona.

TENN
(pointing)
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...

The thought forces Tenn to pause at a memory.

TENN

Mm...

The screen FLICKERS as Tenn keeps thinking.

CUT TO:

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

FRANK MERLO (20s) smokes a cigarette on a balcony above a mass of SAND DUNES. He's disarmingly handsome, his eyes gently exploring every star.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - HALF A SECOND LATER

Tenn smiles, then sees the camera and shakes the memory off.

TENN

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. Now,
this --

QUICK SHOT:

The screen FLICKERS AGAIN, giving
another moment of Frank under the
stars.

BACK TO SCENE:

Tenn stares at the camera, wide-
eyed.

TENN

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.

Tenn pauses again, smiling at a
thought.

TENN

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 (O.C.)

What's wrong with
the lights in here?

The camera shifts to see MARLON
BRANDO (20s) in the living room.
He's young, thin, and playful,
flipping a LIGHT SWITCH to no
avail.

TENN

That young!

Tenn smiles at the camera and stands to greet Brando, the camera smoothly following after him.

TENN

Hello, sir I've never met!

BRANDO

Why don't your lights work?

TENN

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

BRANDO

Mmm... Where's your box?

TENN

(winking to camera)

Excuse yourself.

BRANDO

In here?

Brando OPENS A DOOR, seemingly looking down to a basement, heading down the stairs to locate the electrical box.

TENN

(to camera)

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

The lights go back up again.

TENN

Goodness, the lights work.

Brando enters, hitting the light switch to turn them off.

BRANDO

I liked it like this anyways.

(extending hand)

Bud.

TENN

(shaking hands)

Bud? Your name's --
? No, what's the one
on the paper?

(re: camera)

The one they know.

Brando confusingly looks to where
Tenn pointed, not seeing any camera
or people.

BRANDO

Marlon?

TENN

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 a drawer, producing
AUDITION SIDES.

TENN

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!

TENN

(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.

TENN

Oh my, well I guess
this read's gonna

just smart, isn't
it? You look nothing
like Stanley
Kowalski!

(to camera)
Stanley is supposed
to be 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.

TENN
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...?

Brando stands still as Tenn
inspects the paper.

TENN

Laurette Taylor read
off these sides...

Tenn reads the sides, smiling.

EDWINA (O.C.)

Eh-hem.

TENN

Right, uh. I just --
hold on.

(to Edwina)

Laurette Taylor read
off these sides...

(to camera)

I wanted Greta
Garbo, but she
denied me flatly.

EDWINA (O.C.)

Finish the Brando
memory!

TENN

Uh...?

EDWINA (O.C.)

We'll get to Garbo
later!

TENN

(still looking
at sides;
uncaring)

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.

(to camera)

Wadn't that fun?

(to Edwina)
I'm sorry, but I
remember Garbo and I
had this excellent
conversation about
celebrities; the
audience'd love to
hear it.

(to camera)
We were at this
party, or, no it was
a bar --

EDWINA (O.C.)
You can't leave the
memory until Brando
agrees to read.

The camera backs itself up, now
trying to include Edwina in the
shot. Edwina sees this, trying to
shoo it away, but as soon as her
face is in the shot, smiles kindly.

TENN
Oh, right.
(to Brando)
Would you like to
read?

EDWINA

(fake smiling)

That isn't what you
say to him. Come on.

TENN

Uh...

(remembering)

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.

TENN

(to Brando)

What, you can't
confront your fears?
Life needs these

ugly things; that's
what makes it so
beautiful! Be the
ugly man and for as
long as you have
stamina you can run
from the later
consequences!

Brando stares for a moment, then
tentatively takes the sides and
studies them.

BRANDO
You Blanche?

The screen FLICKERS and BRANDO
DISAPPEARS.

TENN
Wonderful,
wonderful! Wadn't
that trivial.

Tenn goes back to the chair as the
camera resets to just him.

TENN
(to camera)
Now, I'd always
admired Greta Garbo

-- even as a young
boy. She was a
Virgo.

GRETA GARBO (20s) enters in a huff,
blazing through the room.

TENN

Ahh... Greta!

GARBO

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

Tenn gets up and follows Garbo, the
camera quickly chasing him too.

As they round the corner of the
living room, Garbo is gone, giving
no time to look at her. Tenn's
filled with glee.