

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.