A Streetcar Named Desire

By Tennessee Williams

BLANCHE:

He was a boy, just a boy, when I was a very young girl. When I was sixteen, I made the discovery--love. All at once and much, much too completely. It was like you suddenly turned a blinding light on something that had always been half in shadow, that's how it struck the world for me. But I was unlucky. Deluded. There was something different about the boy, a nervousness, a softness and tenderness which wasn't like a man's, although he wasn't the least bit effeminate looking--still--that thing was there.... He came to me for help. I didn't know that. I didn't find out anything till after our marriage when we'd run away and come back and all I knew was I'd failed him in some mysterious way and wasn't able to give the help he needed but couldn't speak of! He was in the quicksands and clutching at me--but I wasn't holding him out, I was slipping in with him! I didn't know that. I didn't know anything except I loved him unendurably but without being able to help him or help myself. Then I found out. In the worst of all possible ways. By coming suddenly into a room that I thought was empty--which wasn't empty, but had two people in it... the boy I had married and an older man who had been his friend for years....

*[A locomotive is heard approaching outside. She claps her hands to her ears and crouches over. The headlight of the locomotive glares into the room as it thunders past. As the noise recedes she straightens slowly and continues speaking.]*

Afterwards we pretended that nothing had been discovered. Yes, the three of us drove out to Moon Lake Casino, very drunk and laughing all the way.

*[Polka music sounds. In a minor key faint with distance.]*

We danced the Varsouviana! Suddenly in the middle of the dance the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out of the casino. A few moments later--a shot!

*[The polka stops abruptly.]*

*[Blanche rises stiffly. Then, the polka resumes in a major key.]*

I ran out--all did!--all ran and gathered about the terrible thing at the edge of the lake! I couldn't get near for the crowding. Then somebody caught my arm. "Don't go any closer! Come back! You don't want to see!" See? See what! Then I heard voices say--Allan! Allan! The Grey boy! He'd stuck the revolver into his mouth, and fired--so that the back of his head had been--blown away!

*[She sways and covers her face.]*

It was because--on the dance-floor--unable to stop myself--I'd suddenly said--"I saw! I know! You disgust me..." And then the searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again and never for one moment since has there been any light that's stronger than this--kitchen--candle...