

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

BY

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

ANNOTATED

BY

SHOICHI SAEKI

AND

YASUKI SAEKI

THE SIGN OF



A GOOD BOOK

THE EIHÔSHA LTD.

— Tokyo —

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

by

Tennessee Williams

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格別変わった事件が起るわけではない。

いや、しごく有りふれた話とさえ言えようか。しっかり者で、口やかましい母親、脚が不自由で婚期を逸しかけている内気な娘、それに詩人志望でひそかに家出を夢みる息子と、この三人のささやかな家庭生活が中心だ。ぼくらのつい鼻先にも転がっていそうな、きわめて日常的な題材である。

全体の構成もいわゆる‘episodic’、いくつかのエピソードを積み重ねてゆくやり方で、一番重要な劇的な動きというのも、息子の勤め先の友人の訪問といった出来事にすぎない。しかもこの訪問さえ一応の波紋をよび起した上で、結局期待はずれに終わってしまう。

といえば、読者はいかにも散文的な、手がたい写実劇を予期なさるだろうか。だが、大違いである。こうした、いわば型通りの自然主義戯曲の素材を取り上げて、これに、作者自身の言葉を借りれば、‘transformation’をほどこすこと、惨めったらしい日常生活を劇的次元にまで「変容」し、高めて見せるところに、作者の願いはかけられている。この戯曲を読む愉しみの一つは、有りあわせの材料で見事な劇的世界を構築して見せる、作者の「錬金術」にじかに触れ得るところにある。

そこで、批評的な読者は、まず何よりも、この鮮やかな「錬金術」の秘密の内側にわけ入りたい、その正体を明らかにしたいと望むだろう。つまり、この戯曲で駆使されている手法の特異性に注目なさるに違いない。まず、劇の冒頭から「語り手」が登場する。しかも彼はたんに傍観的な第三者ではなくて、重要な作中人物の一人でもある。彼はその後、何度か「解説役」を引き受けるが、こうした特異で大胆な手法が、劇全体の効果の上で、どういう働きをなしているかを十分吟味する必要がある。ぼくらは彼の「説明」に導かれて、「過去」の中へ誘いこまれていく。これは作者のいわゆる‘a memory play’であり、ぼくらは「過去」の中にとけこみながら、同時に「語り手」

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と共に、離れた「現在」から、これを眺め直すことを求められる。いわば、二重の視点を強いられるのだ。

のみならず、「語り手」は、一見劇中の出来事とはまるで無縁の、社会的、時代的な背景にくり返し言及する。このささやかな「家庭悲劇」のうちに、スペインの革命やヒトラーやチェンバレーンの名前を平気でひびかせる。狭苦しいアパートにとじこめられた劇中の出来事を、広いパースペクティブからもう一度眺め直せと求めているように見える。

さらに舞台の構造も一風変っている。区切りの壁はとりはずされ、ぼくらは建物の縦断図でも眺めるように、自由にアパートの奥まで見通すことができる。いわゆるナマナマしい現実再現をめざした戯曲においてなら、効果のブチこわしになりかねない、こうしたやり方の積み重ねは、何をねらったものなのか。ただの新奇な試みという以上に、有機的な全体を形作り得ているかどうかを考えてほしい。ぼくには、こうした「現実離れ」が、この戯曲の場合、かえって立体的な奥行と厚味を増し、さらには狭い「特殊」を広やかな「普遍」の中に位置づけるのに役立っていると思えるのだが、どうだろうか。

いや、そんな細かい事は小うるさくていやだとおっしゃる読者は、素直に劇の世界にとけこんでいただければよい。快い音楽の流れのような「回想」の展開のうちに身をまかせ、口うるさい母親に反撥を感じたり、詩作や映画にやっとなげ口を見つける息子のやり切れなさに共感したり、身体障害の娘の孤独な夢に惹かれたりなさればよい。積み重ねられてゆくエピソードのうちに自ずと彼らの人間像が浮び上ってきて、遠いアメリカの片隅の出来事とは思えぬ身近さを覚えられるに違いない。

というのも、この劇は、きわめて普遍的なテーマでつらぬかれているのだ。題名の“The Glass Menagerie”はもちろん、孤独な娘が愛玩してやまぬガラス細工を意味し、現実直面するに耐えない彼女が閉じこもる内的な夢想の世界の象徴となっているが、この「ガラスの動物園」は果して彼女一人のものであろうか。息子には詩作があり、また「映画」という冒険の代用品がある。勝気で実行力に富む母親も、華やかな娘時代の思い出、群がる求愛者たちに囲まれて遊び暮した昔の夢を捨てかねている。さらには、「外界か

らの使者」としてこの一家を訪れる息子の友人でさえも、高校時代のヒーローという「去年(こぞ)の雪」を追いつづけている人間ではないか。

この劇に登場するすべての人物が、内なる幻影にたよって、現実から逃れようとしている。しかも、皮肉なことに、こうした人物同士のぶつかり合いが、きわめて強烈な現実の衝撃を生み出すのだ。夢と現実との相剋——いかにも古臭いテーマだと言われるだろうか。たしかに、あのラマンチャの「憂い顔の騎士」ドン・キホーテと共に古い、いやおよそ文学そのものと共に古い主題と言えるかも知れぬ。だが、そうなれば、古風というよりもむしろ「普遍的」と言い直した方がよい。ぼくら、いやあなた方もまた、それぞれの「ガラスの動物園」を内にいだいて生きつづけているのではあるまいか。

Tennessee Williams は本名 Thomas Lanier Williams. 彼の祖先に古く Tennessee 州に乗りこんだ pioneer がいたというところからきた学生時代のあだ名をそのまま筆名にしたのだという。1914年、Mississippi 州 Columbus に生れ、後にこの劇の舞台となっている St. Louis に移り住んだ。父親は靴会社のセールスマンで、母親は南部の旧家の出であった。さらに彼自身も一時靴会社に勤めたことがあるというところからすると、この劇には多分に自伝的な要素がもりこまれていると察せられる。気にそまぬ勤務のかたわら、詩作にはげむ Tom の姿は多分に「若き日の芸術家の肖像」でもあろう。この劇の時代背景となっている30年代半ばには、彼自身が経済不況のあおりで大学を途中で退き、今ふれた靴会社勤めを余儀なくされたのであった。

その後、再び学業に戻り、Iowa 大学で B. A. を取った後、倉庫の番人、ホテルのボーイ、劇場の案内人、ナイトクラブの詩の朗誦役など、さまざまな職業を転々としながらも、劇作にはげんだ。彼の最初の長編戯曲は *Battle of Angels* (1940) だが、華々しい名声が一举に彼を訪れたのは、1944年暮、シカゴで *The Glass Menagerie* が上演された際である。シカゴで三ヵ月、さらにニューヨークに移って実に一年半と、long-run がつづき、1944-45年の最優秀戯曲として、「劇評家賞」を受けた。彼自身の言葉を借りれば“I was snatched out of virtual oblivion and thrust into sudden prominence”であった。

以後の彼については、詳しくのべるにも当るまい。 *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), *The Rose Tattoo* (1951) と相ついで映画化されて評判をよび、 (*The Glass Menagerie* も映画化された), とくに前者はわが国でも「文学座」によって上演された。最近作の *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955) は Pulitzer 賞を受けたし、今日アメリカの代表的な劇作家は、ときかれて、彼と Arthur Miller の名前を逸する人はないはずだ。(近代劇の流れを大ざっぱにイブセン系とチェホフ系とに分けることができようが、彼ら二人は期せずしてこの両系を代表し得ていると思う。もちろん、Miller がイブセン系、Williams がチェホフ系である。興味ある読者は、*The Glass Menagerie* と、たとえばチェホフの『三人姉妹』あたりを比較して見られるとよい。)

彼の作品には、ほかに *Summer and Smoke* (1948), *Camino Real* (1953), *27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other One-Act Plays* (1946) などの戯曲の他、*The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1950) という小説(邦訳あり), *One Arm and Other Stories* (1948), *Hard Candy, a Book of Stories* (1954) の短篇集がある。

以上の「はしがき」を書いたのが、じつはもう三十六年前、何とも息の長い編著となってくれたのは、うれしい限りで、改めてこの戯曲の「錬金術」の見事さよ、と眩かずにいられない。今回、改版という運びになった機会に、テキストも New Direction 版を底本として大幅に改め、注解も手直しをした。この改訂作業には、佐伯泰樹の助力を得、またテキストその他のことで、沼澤治治氏の好意ある助言を得たことに謝意を表したい。著者の Williams は、1983 年に亡くなったが、彼の長く、かなり多産的だった生涯をふり返ってみて、結局後世に残る作品の筆頭といえ、まず本書と *A Streetcar Named Desire* の二作ではあるまいか。1959 年初めて来日した彼にたまたま会う機会を得たのも今は懐かしい思い出だが、ちょうど *The Night of the Iguana* (1961) の執筆中だった。‘Iguana?’ と聞き馴れない言葉に途惑った当方に、「ほら、lizard だよ、メキシコの」と、壁をほうよなゼスチュアをしてくれた姿も鮮かに残っている。その席でこのテキストの話も出て、「有難いことに、毎年よく売れています」と告げたら、その時ばかりは、

あのいかにも sensitive, いや神経質そうな彼の表情が一瞬あけっぴろげな笑顔に変わったことも忘れ難い。Williams の霊よ, その眠りの安らかならんことを!

1992 年 9 月 編注者

(なお, この戯曲とほぼ同じ時期に物された短篇に “Portrait of a Girl in Glass” があり, 作中人物から筋立てまでそっくり, 大いに自伝的といえる本書のモチーフの根ざしの深さが改めて迫ってくる。New Direction 版の *Collected Stories* に収められているので, 関心ある向きに併読をおすすめしたい。)

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

THE CHARACTERS

AMANDA WINGFIELD (*the mother*)

A little woman of great but confused vitality clinging frantically to another time and place. Her characterization must be carefully created, not copied from type. She is not paranoiac, but her life is paranoia. There is much to admire in Amanda, and as much to love and pity as there is to laugh at. Certainly she has endurance and a kind of heroism, and though her foolishness makes her unwittingly cruel at times, there is tenderness in her slight person. 5

LAURA WINGFIELD (*her daughter*)

Amanda, having failed to establish contact with reality, continues to live vitally in her illusions, but Laura's situation is even graver. A childhood illness has left her crippled, one leg slightly shorter than the other, and held in a brace. This defect need not be more than suggested on the stage. Stemming from this, Laura's separation increases till she is like a piece of her own glass collection, too exquisitely fragile to move from the shelf. 10
15

TOM WINGFIELD (*her son*)

And the narrator of the play. A poet with a job in a warehouse. His nature is not remorseless, but to escape from a trap he has to act without pity. 20

JIM O'CONNOR (*the gentleman caller*)

A nice, ordinary, young man.

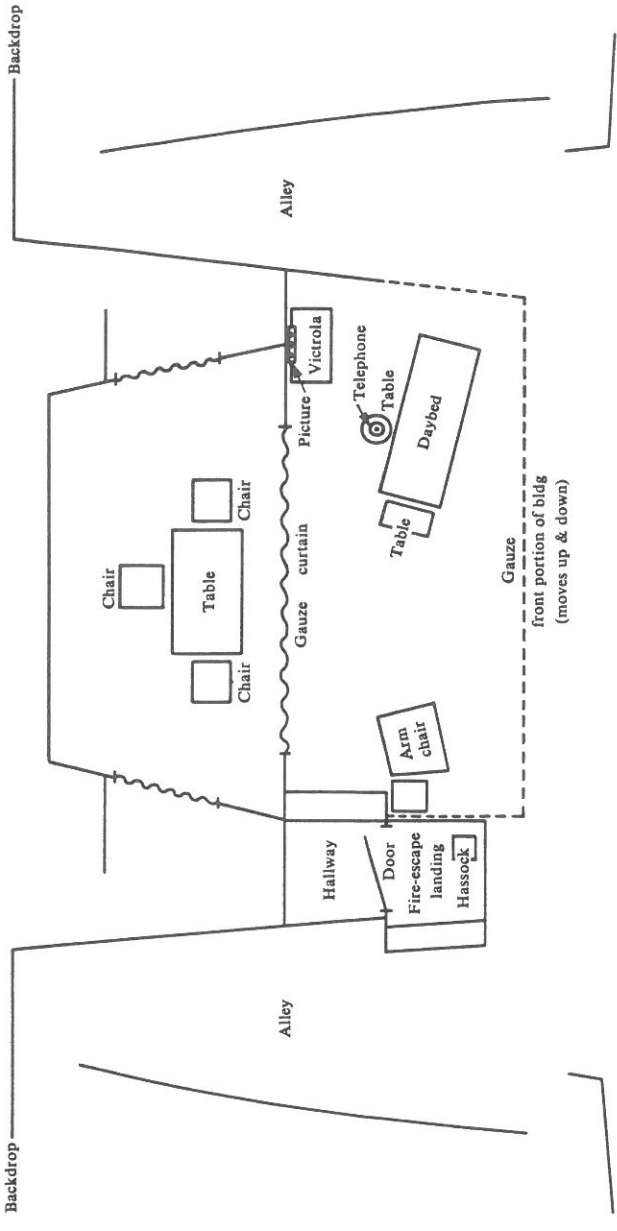
S C E N E

AN ALLEY IN ST. LOUIS.

PART I. Preparation for a Gentleman Caller.

PART II. The Gentleman Calls.

Time: Now and the Past.



THE GLASS MENAGERIE

SCENE ONE

The Wingfield apartment is in the rear of the building, one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living-units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centers of lower middle-class population and are symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society to avoid fluidity and differentiation 5 and to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism.

The apartment faces an alley and is entered by a fire escape, a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth, for all of these huge buildings are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation. The fire escape is part of what we see—that is, the 10 landing of it and steps descending from it.

The scene is memory and is therefore nonrealistic. Memory takes a lot of poetic license. It omits some details; others are exaggerated, according to the emotional value of the articles it touches, for memory is seated predominantly in the heart. The interior is therefore rather dim and 15 poetic.

At the rise of the curtain, the audience is faced with the dark, grim rear wall of the Wingfield tenement. This building is flanked on both sides by dark, narrow alleys which run into murky canyons of tangled clothes-lines, garbage cans, and the sinister latticework of neighboring fire 20 escapes. It is up and down these side alleys that exterior entrances and exits are made, during the play. At the end of TOM's opening commentary, the dark tenement wall slowly becomes transparent and reveals the

interior of the ground-floor Wingfield apartment.

Nearest the audience is the living room, which also serves as a sleeping room for LAURA, the sofa unfolding to make her bed. Just beyond, separated from the living room by a wide arch or second proscenium with transparent faded portieres (or second curtain), is the dining room. In an old-fashioned whatnot in the living room are seen scores of transparent glass animals. A blown-up photograph of the father hangs on the wall of the living room, to the left of the archway. It is the face of a very handsome young man in a doughboy's First World War cap. He is gallantly smiling, ineluctably smiling, as if to say "I will be smiling forever."

Also hanging on the wall, near the photograph, are a typewriter keyboard chart and a Gregg shorthand diagram. An upright typewriter on a small table stands beneath the charts.

The audience hears and sees the opening scene in the dining room through both the transparent fourth wall of the building and the transparent gauze portieres of the dining-room arch. It is during this revealing scene that the fourth wall slowly ascends, out of sight. This transparent exterior wall is not brought down again until the very end of the play, during TOM's final speech.

The narrator is an undisguised convention of the play. He takes whatever license with dramatic convention is convenient to his purposes.

* * * * *

TOM enters dressed as a merchant sailor, and strolls across to the fire escape. There he stops and lights a cigarette. He addresses the audience.

TOM: Yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.

To begin with, I turn back time. I reverse it to that quaint period, the thirties, when the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind. Their eyes had failed them, or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy.

In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion. In Spain there was Guernica. Here there were disturbances of labor, sometimes pretty violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Saint Louis. . . .

This is the social background of the play.

(Music begins to play.)

The play is memory. Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic. In memory everything seems to happen to music. That explains the fiddle in the wings.

I am the narrator of the play, and also a character in it. The other characters are my mother, Amanda, my sister, Laura, and a gentleman caller who appears in the final scenes. He is the most realistic character in the play, being an emissary from a world of reality that we were somehow set apart from. But since I have a poet's weakness for symbols, I am using this character also as a symbol; he is the long-delayed but always expected something that we live for.

There is a fifth character in the play who doesn't appear except in this larger-than-life-size photograph over the mantel. This is our father who left us a long time ago. He was a telephone man who fell in love with long

distances; he gave up his job with the telephone company and skipped the light fantastic out of town . . .

The last we heard of him was a picture postcard from Mazatlan, on the Pacific coast of Mexico, containing a message of two words: “Hello—
5 Goodbye!” and no address.

I think the rest of the play will explain itself. . . .

(AMANDA’S voice becomes audible through the portieres.)

(LEGEND ON SCREEN : “OU SONT LES NEIGES.”)

(TOM divides the portieres and enters the dining room. AMANDA
10 and LAURA are seated at a drop-leaf table. Eating is indicated by
gestures without food or utensils. AMANDA faces the audience.
TOM and LAURA are seated in profile. The interior has lit up softly
and through the scrim we see AMANDA and LAURA seated
at the table.)

15 AMANDA (calling): Tom?

TOM: Yes, Mother.

AMANDA: We can’t say grace until you come to the table!

TOM: Coming, Mother. (He bows slightly and withdraws, reappear-
ing a few moments later in his place at the table.)

20 AMANDA (to her son): Honey, don’t push with your fingers. If you
have to push with something, the thing to push with is a crust of bread.
And chew—chew! Animals have secretions in their stomachs which
enable them to digest food without mastication, but human beings are
supposed to chew their food before they swallow it down. Eat food
25 leisurely, son, and really enjoy it. A well-cooked meal has lots of delicate
flavors that have to be held in the mouth for appreciation. So chew your
food and give your salivary glands a chance to function!

(TOM deliberately lays his imaginary fork down and pushes his

chair back from the table.)

TOM: I haven't enjoyed one bite of this dinner because of your constant directions on how to eat it. It's you that make me rush through meals with your hawk-like attention to every bite I take. Sickening—spoils my appetite—all this discussion of—animals' secretion—sali- 5
vary glands—mastication!

AMANDA (*lightly*): Temperament like a Metropolitan star! (TOM rises and walks toward the living room.)

You're not excused from the table.

TOM: I'm getting a cigarette. 10

AMANDA: You smoke too much.

(LAURA rises.)

LAURA: I'll bring in the blanc mange.

(TOM remains standing with his cigarette by the portieres.)

AMANDA (*rising*): No, sister, no, sister—you be the lady this time 15
and I'll be the darky.

LAURA: I'm already up.

AMANDA: Resume your seat, little sister—I want you to stay fresh and pretty—for gentlemen callers!

LAURA (*sitting down*): I'm not expecting any gentlemen callers. 20

AMANDA (*crossing out to the kitchenette, airily*): Sometimes they come when they are least expected! Why, I remember one Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain—

(*She enters the kitchenette.*)

TOM: I know what's coming! 25

LAURA: Yes. But let her tell it.

TOM: Again?

LAURA: She loves to tell it.

(AMANDA returns with a bowl of dessert.)

AMANDA : One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain—your mother received — *seventeen!* — gentlemen callers! Why, sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all. We had to send the
5 nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish house.

TOM (*remaining at the portieres*) : How did you entertain those gentlemen callers?

AMANDA : I understood the art of conversation!

TOM : I bet you could talk.

10 AMANDA : Girls in those days *knew* how to talk, I can tell you.

TOM : Yes?

(IMAGE ON SCREEN : AMANDA AS A GIRL ON A PORCH, GREETING CALLERS.)

AMANDA : They knew how to entertain their gentlemen callers. It
15 wasn't enough for a girl to be possessed of a pretty face and a graceful figure—although I wasn't slighted in either respect. She also needed to have a nimble wit and a tongue to meet all occasions.

TOM : What did you talk about?

AMANDA : Things of importance going on in the world! Never any-
20 thing coarse or common or vulgar.

(*She addresses TOM as though he were seated in the vacant chair at the table though he remains by the portieres. He plays this scene as though reading from a script.*)

My callers were gentlemen—all! Among my callers were some of the
25 most prominent young planters of the Mississippi Delta—planters and sons of planters!

(TOM motions for music and a spot of light on AMANDA. Her eyes lift, her face glows, her voice becomes rich and elegiac.)

(SCREEN LEGEND : "OU SONT LES NEIGES D'ANTAN?")

There was young Champ Laughlin who later became vice-president of the Delta Planters Bank. Hadley Stevenson who was drowned in Moon Lake and left his widow one hundred and fifty thousand in Government bonds. There were the Cutrere brothers, Wesley and Bates. Bates was one of my bright particular beaux! He got in a quarrel with that wild Wainwright boy. They shot it out on the floor of Moon Lake Casino. Bates was shot through the stomach. Died in the ambulance on his way to Memphis. His widow was also well provided-for, came into eight or ten thousand acres, that's all. She married him on the rebound—never loved her—carried my picture on him the night he died! And there was that boy that every girl in the Delta had set her cap for! That beautiful, brilliant young Fitzhugh boy from Greene County!

TOM : What did he leave his widow?

AMANDA : He never married! Gracious, you talk as though all of my old admirers had turned up their toes to the daisies!

TOM : Isn't this the first you've mentioned that still survives?

AMANDA : That Fitzhugh boy went North and made a fortune—came to be known as the Wolf of Wall Street! He had the Midas touch, whatever he touched turned to gold! And I could have been Mrs. Duncan J. Fitzhugh, mind you! But—I picked your *father!*

LAURA (*rising*) : Mother, let me clear the table.

AMANDA : No, dear, you go in front and study your typewriter chart. Or practice your shorthand a little. Stay fresh and pretty!—It's almost time for our gentlemen callers to start arriving. (*She flounces girlishly toward the kitchenette.*) How many do you suppose we're going to entertain this afternoon?

(TOM *throws down the paper and jumps up with a groan.*)

LAURA (*alone in the dining room*): I don't believe we're going to receive any, Mother.

AMANDA (*reappearing, airily*): What? No one—not one? You must be joking!

5 (LAURA *nervously echoes her laugh. She slips in a fugitive manner through the half-open portieres and draws them gently behind her. A shaft of very clear light is thrown on her face against the faded tapestry of the curtains. Faintly the music of "The Glass Menagerie" is heard as she continues, lightly:*)

10 Not one gentleman caller? It can't be true! There must be a flood, there must have been a tornado!

LAURA: It isn't a flood, it's not a tornado, Mother. I'm just not popular like you were in Blue Mountain. . . .

15 (TOM *utters another groan. LAURA glances at him with a faint, apologetic smile. Her voice catches a little:*)

Mother's afraid I'm going to be an old maid.

(*The scene dims out with the "Glass Menagerie" music.*)

SCENE TWO

On the dark stage the screen is lighted with the image of blue roses. Gradually LAURA's figure becomes apparent and the screen goes out. The music subsides.

LAURA is seated in the delicate ivory chair at the small claw-foot table. She wears a dress of soft violet material for a kimono—her hair is tied 5
back from her forehead with a ribbon. She is washing and polishing her collection of glass. AMANDA appears on the fire-escape steps. At the sound of her ascent, LAURA catches her breath, thrusts the bowl of ornaments away and seats herself stiffly before the diagram of the type- 10
writer keyboard as though it held her spellbound. Something has happened to AMANDA. It is written in her face as she climbs to the landing: a look that is grim and hopeless and a little absurd. She has on one of those cheap or imitation velvety-looking cloth coats with imitation fur collar. Her hat is five or six years old, one of those dreadful cloche hats 15
that were worn in the late Twenties and she is clutching an enormous black patent-leather pocketbook with nickel clasps and initials. This is her full-dress outfit, the one she usually wears to the D. A. R. Before entering she looks through the door. She purses her lips, opens her eyes very wide, rolls them upward and shakes her head. Then she slowly lets herself in the door. Seeing her mother's expression LAURA touches her 20
lips with a nervous gesture.

LAURA : Hello, Mother, I was— (*She makes a nervous gesture toward the chart on the wall. AMANDA leans against the shut door and stares at LAURA with a martyred look.*)

AMANDA : Deception? Deception? (*She slowly removes her hat and gloves, continuing the sweet suffering stare. She lets the hat and gloves fall on the floor— a bit of acting.*)

LAURA (*shakily*) : How was the D. A. R. meeting?

(*AMANDA slowly opens her purse and removes a dainty white handkerchief which she shakes out delicately and delicately touches to her lips and nostrils.*)

Didn't you go to the D. A. R. meeting, Mother?

AMANDA (*faintly, almost inaudibly*) : —No.—No. (*then more forcibly*;) I did not have the strength— to go to the D.A.R. In fact, I did not have the courage! I wanted to find a hole in the ground and hide myself in it forever! (*She crosses slowly to the wall and removes the diagram of the typewriter keyboard. She holds it in front of her for a second, staring at it sweetly and sorrowfully—then bites her lips and tears it in two pieces.*)

LAURA (*faintly*) : Why did you do that, Mother?

(*AMANDA repeats the same procedure with the chart of the Gregg Alphabet.*)

Why are you—

AMANDA : Why? Why? How old are you, Laura?

LAURA : Mother, you know my age.

AMANDA : I thought that you were an adult; it seems that I was mistaken. (*She crosses slowly to the sofa and sinks down and stares at LAURA.*)

LAURA : Please don't stare at me, Mother.

(AMANDA closes her eyes and lowers her head. There is a ten-second pause.)

AMANDA : What are we going to do, what is going to become of us, what is the future?

(There is another pause.)

LAURA : Has something happened, Mother?

(AMANDA draws a long breath, takes out the handkerchief again, goes through the dabbing process.)

Mother, has—something happened?

AMANDA : I'll be all right in a minute, I'm just bewildered—(She hesitates.)—by life. . . .

LAURA : Mother, I wish that you would tell me what's happened!

AMANDA : As you know, I was supposed to be inducted into my office at the D.A.R. this afternoon.

(SCREEN IMAGE : A SWARM OF TYPEWRITERS.)

But I stopped off at Rubicam's Business College to speak to your teachers about your having a cold and ask them what progress they thought you were making down there.

LAURA : Oh. . . .

AMANDA : I went to the typing instructor and introduced myself as your mother. She didn't know who you were. "Wingfield," she said, "We don't have any such student enrolled at the school!"

I assured her she did, that you had been going to classes since early in January.

"I wonder," she said, "if you could be talking about that terribly shy little girl who dropped out of school after only a few days' attendance?"

"No," I said, "Laura, my daughter, has been going to school every day for the past six weeks!"

“Excuse me,” she said. She took the attendance book out and there was your name, unmistakably printed, and all the dates you were absent until they decided that you had dropped out of school.

I still said, “No, there must have been some mistake! There must have
5 been some mix-up in the records!”

And she said, “No—I remember her perfectly now. Her hands shook so that she couldn’t hit the right keys! The first time we gave a speed test, she broke down completely—was sick at the stomach and almost had to be carried into the washroom! After that morning she never showed up
10 any more. We phoned the house but never got any answer”—While I was working at Famous-Barr, I suppose, demonstrating those—

(She indicates a brassiere with her hands.)

Oh! I felt so weak I could barely keep on my feet! I had to sit down while they got me a glass of water! Fifty dollars’ tuition, all of our plans—
15 my hopes and ambitions for you—just gone up the spout, just gone up the spout like that.

(LAURA draws a long breath and gets awkwardly to her feet. She crosses to the Victrola and winds it up.)

What are you doing?

20 LAURA : Oh! *(She releases the handle and returns to her seat.)*

AMANDA : Laura, where have you been going when you’ve gone out pretending that you were going to business college?

LAURA : I’ve just been going out walking.

AMANDA : That’s not true.

25 LAURA : It is. I just went walking.

AMANDA : Walking? Walking? In winter? Deliberately courting pneumonia in that light coat? Where did you walk to, Laura?

LAURA : All sorts of places—mostly in the park.

AMANDA : Even after you'd started catching that cold?

LAURA : It was the lesser of two evils, Mother.

(SCREEN IMAGE : WINTER SCENE IN A PARK.)

I couldn't go back up. I—threw up—on the floor!

AMANDA : From half past seven till after five every day you mean to
tell me you walked around in the park, because you wanted to make me
think that you were still going to Rubicam's Business College?

LAURA : It wasn't as bad as it sounds. I went inside places to get
warmed up.

AMANDA : Inside where? 10

LAURA : I went in the art museum and the bird houses at the Zoo. I
visited the penguins every day! Sometimes I did without lunch and went
to the movies. Lately I've been spending most of my afternoons in the
Jewel Box, that big glass house where they raise the tropical flowers.

AMANDA : You did all this to deceive me, just for deception? 15

(LAURA looks down.) Why?

LAURA : Mother, when you're disappointed, you get that awful suf-
fering look on your face, like the picture of Jesus' mother in the museum!

AMANDA : Hush!

LAURA : I couldn't face it. 20

(There is a pause. A whisper of strings is heard.)

(SCREEN LEGEND : "THE CRUST OF HUMILITY.")

AMANDA (*hopelessly fingering the huge pocketbook*) : So what are
we going to do the rest of our lives? Stay home and watch the parades go
by? Amuse ourselves with the glass menagerie, darling? Eternally play 25
those worn-out phonograph records your father left as a painful reminder
of him? We won't have a business career—we've given that up because
it gave us nervous indigestion! (*She laughs wearily.*) What is there left

but dependency all our lives? I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared to occupy a position. I've seen such pitiful cases in the South—barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister's husband or brother's wife! —stuck away in some
 5 little mouse-trap of a room—encouraged by one in-law to visit another—
 little birdlike women without any nest—eating the crust of humility all their life!

Is that the future that we've mapped out for ourselves? I swear it's the only alternative I can think of! (*She pauses.*) It isn't a very pleasant al-
 10 ternative, is it? (*She pauses again.*)

Of course—some girls *do* marry.

(LAURA *twists her hands nervously.*)

Haven't you ever liked some boy?

LAURA : Yes. I liked one once. (*She rises.*) I came across his picture
 15 a while ago.

AMANDA (*with some interest*) : He gave you his picture?

LAURA : No, it's in the yearbook.

AMANDA (*disappointed*) : Oh—a high school boy.

(SCREEN IMAGE : JIM AS THE HIGH SCHOOL HERO BEARING A
 20 SILVER CUP.)

LAURA : Yes. His name was Jim. (*She lifts the heavy annual from the claw-foot table.*) Here he is in *The Pirates of Penzance*.

AMANDA (*absently*) : The what?

LAURA The operetta the senior class put on. He had a wonderful
 25 voice and we sat across the aisle from each other Mondays, Wednesdays
 and Fridays in the Aud. Here he is with the silver cup for debating! See his grin?

AMANDA (*absently*) : He must have had a jolly disposition.

LAURA : He used to call me—Blue Roses.

(SCREEN IMAGE : BLUE ROSES.)

AMANDA : Why did he call you such a name as that?

LAURA : When I had that attack of pleurosis—he asked me what was the matter when I came back. I said pleurosis—he thought that I said Blue 5
Roses! So that’s what he always called me after that. Whenever he saw me, he’d holler, “Hello, Blue Roses!” I didn’t care for the girl that he went out with. Emily Meisenbach. Emily was the best-dressed girl at Soldan. She never struck me, though, as being sincere. . . . It says in the Personal Section—they’re engaged. That’s—six years ago! They must be married 10
by now.

AMANDA : Girls that aren’t cut out for business careers usually wind up married to some nice man. (*She gets up with a spark of revival.*) Sister, that’s what you’ll do!

(LAURA utters a startled, doubtful laugh. She reaches quickly for 15
a piece of glass.)

LAURA : But, Mother—

AMANDA : Yes? (*She goes over to the photograph.*)

LAURA (*in a tone of frightened apology*) : I’m—crippled!

AMANDA : Nonsense! Laura, I’ve told you never, never to use that 20
word. Why, you’re not crippled, you just have a little defect—hardly noticeable, even! When people have some slight disadvantage like that, they cultivate other things to make up for it—develop charm—and vivacity—and—*charm!* That’s all you have to do! (*She turns again to the photograph.*) One thing your father had *plenty of*—was *charm!* 25

(*The scene fades out with music.*)

SCENE THREE

SCREEN LEGEND : “AFTER THE FIASCO—”

TOM *speaks from the fire escape landing.*

TOM : After the fiasco at Rubicam’s Business College, the idea of getting a gentleman caller for Laura began to play a more and more
5 important part in Mother’s calculations. It became an obsession. Like some archetype of the universal unconscious, the image of the gentleman caller haunted our small apartment. . . .

(SCREEN IMAGE : A YOUNG MAN AT THE DOOR OF A HOUSE WITH FLOWERS.)

10 An evening at home rarely passed without some allusion to this image, this specter, this hope. . . . Even when he wasn’t mentioned, his presence hung in Mother’s preoccupied look and in my sister’s frightened, apologetic manner—hung like a sentence passed upon the Wingfields!

Mother was a woman of action as well as words. She began to take
15 logical steps in the planned direction. Late that winter and in the early spring—realizing that extra money would be needed to properly feather the nest and plume the bird—she conducted a vigorous campaign on the telephone, roping in subscribers to one of those magazines for matrons called *The Homemaker’s Companion*, the type of journal that features the
20 serialized sublimations of ladies of letters who think in terms of delicate cuplike breasts, slim, tapering waists, rich, creamy thighs, eyes like wood smoke in autumn, fingers that soothe and caress like strains of music,