

## The Glass Menagerie, SCENE VIII

(A hypothetical added scene to the Tennessee Williams play written by Trent McDonald)

*(Reunion)*

*Exterior of the Wingfield's old apartment. The apartment is dark and all we can see is the exterior wall and fire escape, similar to the opening of the play. Tom enters the stage from an alley way and stands at the base of the fire escape. He is wearing a nice suite with the tie loose and the top button undone. He is carrying a large military style duffle.*

**Tom:** A bitter wind has blown through this country and me along with it. I had been blown like a leaf on that wind, going helter-skelter around the world until the wind turned into a tempest and I thought I'd be blown away for good. When the wind died down I somehow landed in New York City. I was living in a small apartment in the Village, scratching out a living as a poet, putting words to a new era. I had gained some fame as a poet and was considered, at least for the moment, a national treasure. It seems some troops were caught behind enemy lines.

*(Music: "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy of Company B")*

In a bombed out building they found a shoebox. There was a poem written on that shoebox that was so inspiring and full of hope that the soldiers beat the odds, broke through to allied territory, and made it out and eventually back home. Amazingly all of them survived the war. When Lt. Jim O'Connor made it home, he reported the story to the papers. He had recognized the poem that had gotten me fired from my old job. So I was war hero.

*(Music: "As Time Goes by")*

But that is all water under the bridge now. I returned to St. Louis in 1950. America had graduated from its school of the blind by then but perhaps could see all too well. Not only were we finding plenty of enemies overseas, but some insisted on seeing enemies behind every American with a different point of view. A witch-hunt had begun.

I had not seen or heard from Amanda or Laura since I had left a decade before. It was time I made my peace and laid the ghost of the old Laura to rest. I was finally ready.

*Tom goes to the door at the fire escape and Laura answers.*

*Laura is wearing an evening dress. She looks tired and a little suspicious until she recognizes Tom.*

*As the light comes up on the apartment it looks different. The first thing we notice is the picture of Mr. Wingfield is gone and a copy of Andrew Wyeth's "Christina's World" is in its place. The apartment is much more modern and has a feeling of being richer.*

**Laura:** So, the prodigal son returns. Have you been out to Amanda's house yet?

**Tom:** Amanda's house? Did she finally catch one of the young planters from her youth? And what's with you? Do you have a date with prince charming?

**Laura:** The mayor is having a formal dinner tonight. I was supposed to go but had to cancel since Jimmy is sick. Jim is out of town on business so I have to stay and take care of him. I can't trust the baby sitter with this. I was just ready to go when... Oh well, he inherited my stomach. And the governor was going to be there.....

**Tom:** (*surprised*) Jimmy?

**Laura:** Stay here a second while I see if he's asleep yet. He's such a light sleeper; I don't want to disturb him. Remember how I was?

*Laura goes back into the apartment leaving Tom at the fire escape landing looking stunned.*

*Tom turns to the audience.*

**Tom:** Yes, it was quite the homecoming. Although the world had metamorphosis in the last decade somehow in my mind's eye I still saw Amanda and Laura totally unchanged, as if they had been stuck in amber.

*(Legend on Screen: "a mother's work is never done")*

*Amanda enters the stage. She is nicely dressed in contemporary (for 1950) cloths. She nervously rushes past Tom and then stops and slowly turns to look at him.*

**Amanda:** I always said you were just like your father. I've changed my mind: you are worse. At least he wrote, telling us goodbye. What did you mean, leaving us like that? Selfish as always. Did you think once about your sister? She had to work at the factory. *(Image on Screen: old factory belching smoke.)* I had to work too, but I'm not important. *(Image on Screen: old photo of rows of women sewing.)* You never thought of anyone except yourself. When the men came home from the war and took all of the jobs we would have starved to death if my Great Aunt Gertie hadn't passed on, leaving me everything. And the whole time you are running around with Hollywood stars not caring if your aging mother and poor crippled sister are dead or alive. I've seen the Newsreels. You're as selfish as they are. When I was your age.....

*Laura enters during Amanda's tirade, looks at Tom as if to say, "some things never change", and then interrupts Amanda.*

**Laura:** Mother, please. You'll wake Jimmy. *(Image on Screen: Laura's glass collection)*

**Amanda:** I knew you'd be home. You're spoiling that child. You have to think of yourself and go to these functions once in a while. I'll stay and watch Jimmy. You might not remember, but after your father left I had to leave the two of you alone while I

went off and worked. (*Image on Screen: rows of women sewing*) That didn't kill you, did it? And you didn't have a grandmother to look after you the way Jimmy does.

**Laura:** I'm not going to leave now that Tom is here. You know how much I hate going to those things without Jim. Besides, Jimmy needs his mother. Well, come on inside before the whole neighborhood knows all of our family's business.

*They enter the apartment.*

**Amanda:** I don't know why you still live in this old neighborhood. It's not a place to raise a child.

**Laura:** It didn't kill us, did it? (*Laura looks at the old Victrola still in its place, then back to Amanda.*) Mother, you know I have to present myself as a "woman of the people". It's how I got elected. It's what's going to get me into the state senate next year, maybe the US Senate someday.

**Amanda:** Woman of the People indeed. Your enemies are calling you a Communist. (*Image on Screen: Lenin*) If you don't watch out you will go to the Senate to answer to Senator McCarthy.

*(Legend on screen: "a calling")*

**Tom:** How did my sister, who couldn't stomach being in front of people, get into politics?

*A spot on Laura. She seems to glow as she talks, almost as if lit from within. (Music: "In the Mood")*

**Laura:** I met the president. President Roosevelt. (*Image on Screen: president Roosevelt*) He came to the factory where we made parts for aircraft for the war. He was in a wheelchair. I didn't talk to him, but I know he saw me. That night in his radio address he mentioned a young lady overcoming her handicaps to work in an ammunition factory for the war effort. (*Laura seems to listen to a distant voice and smiles.*)

**Tom:** I thought you said you worked in an aircraft parts factory. (*Image on Screen: factory belching smoke*)

**Laura:** (*ignoring Tom*) (*Image on Screen: president Roosevelt*) He became president and he was in a wheelchair! How could I look at myself as crippled when the greatest man of our time ran the free world from a wheelchair?

**Tom:** Churchill?

*Amanda hits Tom.*

**Laura:** My life changed. I had a calling. I started taking night classes. It was hard, but I received my Law degree. I even passed the Bar, but I don't want to be a lawyer. I got elected onto the city council two years ago. Just a little over a year after Jimmy was born.

*Amanda looks at Laura for a minute with a mixture of pride and disapproval for Laura's chosen career path. She then turns to Tom.*

**Amanda:** So, Tom. Tell me - to what do we owe the pleasure of your visit? Why did you decide to grace us with your presence after so many years?

**Tom:** I've been reborn. *(Image on Screen: Lilies)*

**Amanda:** Don't tell me you've found religion!

*Tom is a little embarrassed.*

**Tom:** No. It's something else.

*Laura, looking at Tom realizes he is not ready to discuss it.*

**Laura:** Jim says he owes his life to you. He says he would have given up hope if he hadn't found that shoebox. He also says I helped him through the hardest times. *(Image on Screen: blue roses)* When he was on the battlefield facing death I was all he thought about. He even carried my glass unicorn into battle. Isn't that romantic? Throughout the war he kept wondering about me and never once thought of Betty. He says he is lucky he decided to wait to marry until he got back from the war.

**Amanda:** She married her optometrist during the war. The first man to truly see her.

*(Legend on Screen: "and the blind to see")*

**Tom:** Jim O'Connor? He more than paid off his debt to me.

**Amanda:** There you go again with your selfish ways. So you think being part of the in-set, hob-knobbing with screen actors, is more important than Jim's life? That's what you just said. He is your brother-in-law and has done more for our family than you ever did.

*Tom doesn't listen to Amanda but turns to Laura. (Music: "Blue Skies")*

**Tom:** Are you happy? *(Image on Screen: blue roses)* Does he treat you well? Do you love him?

**Laura:** Yes. And we have little Jimmy. *(Image on Screen: Laura's glass collection)* Jim is a manager at the local TV station. He is looking to invest in an affiliate in Springfield and so has been spending a lot of time there lately. The only time I'm unhappy is when he's away. Oh, speaking of Jimmy, I should check on him.

*Laura exits to a room off stage.*

**Amanda:** She spends all of her time with that child. She spoils him and always finds an excuse not to leave him with a babysitter. She even brings him to Council meetings. Jimmy is three and a half and Laura treats him like a newborn – she is always fawning over him and never lets him do anything for himself. She doesn't have time for Jim anymore. I've heard rumors that it isn't just a TV station that keeps Jim in Springfield. I see Laura withdrawing again. I've told her a thousand times she needs to free herself a little, get out on her own. She needs to reserve some special time with Jim. Husbands don't always stay around forever. She doesn't listen to me. You're her brother. Talk to her. She'll listen to you.

**Tom:** Mother, it's you I need to talk to. I have a surprise for you, but I want to prepare you a little first. (*Image on Screen: Lilies*) Things have been going well for me. As you know, some of the young actors and actresses think my poetry speaks for their generation. It's been exciting, but is wearing thin. I don't want to be a symbol but a man. I have finally found what I have been looking for.

**Amanda:** What on earth are you talking about?

*As if in answer to Amanda's question a young African American woman (Lily) walks onto the stage, looks around and then goes to the door at the top of the fire escape. She looks at a piece of paper, at the door again and then hesitates for a second. She is dressed very nicely, as if she had just left a business meeting. Laura reenters, unnoticed, simultaneously with Lily and watches Tom as he speaks. (Music: "Take the A Train")*

**Tom:** Things are different in New York. Ideas you grew up with are no longer true. (*He gets caught up in his speech.*) It's a new world and we are in for some major changes. Changes that should have occurred long ago. Changes that will shake this country to its core. Americans have shed blood for Freedom. It's about time they finally taste Freedom. All Americans.

**Amanda:** You are still speaking in riddles.

*Lily knocks and Tom answers the door. He hugs Lily and gives her a quick kiss. Amanda is shocked. (Legend on Screen: "American subcultures") (Music: "Someone to Watch Over Me")*

**Tom:** This is my Fiancée, Lily.

**Amanda:** (*as if muttering to herself*) Lily indeed!

*Laura watches everything closely, but hides herself from view, though the audience can still see her through the transparent walls of the apartment.*

**Tom:** She is a professor at the University and a world renowned Anthropologist.

**Amanda:** *(again, as if to herself)* I bet she studies primitive tribes in Africa.

**Tom:** Lily, this is my mother, Amanda. *(Tom gives Amanda a quick warning look)*

*Amanda, with a forced smile, shakes Lily's hand.*

**Amanda:** Please to meet you.

*Lily looks genuinely pleased.*

**Lily:** My pleasure. I've heard a lot about you. I really look up to the way you were able to raise your children on your own through the Depression. It took a strong and brave person.

**Amanda:** Oh, I'm sure Tom has told you all about me. I'm sometimes surprised I haven't seen a book of poems entitled "Mother" filled with verse after verse about how I ruined his life.

**Lily:** *(smiling)* Not at all. Although he may have a hard time telling you, Tom really does love you.

**Amanda:** He sometimes has a funny way of showing it.

**Tom:** *(Embarrassed and wanting to change the subject.)* I've been taking some classes down at the University for a while now and have also been giving lectures. I know, a student who is a guest lecturer. Anyway, I began to notice Lily's face in the audience every time I spoke and finally got the courage up to talk to her.

**Lily:** Actually, I introduced myself to him. But he did ask me to join him for some coffee.

**Tom:** I found Lily easier to talk to than anyone I had ever met in my life. Well, maybe Laura.....

**Amanda:** And when was the last time you talked to Laura? You know fragile Laura is. It was hard on her when you left suddenly. First her father abandoned her, then you.

**Tom:** I did talk to her right before I left. She knew exactly why I was leaving. It didn't have anything to do with her.

**Lily:** *(trying to avoid the inevitable fight)* For somebody who makes a living through communication, Tom sure seems to have a hard time expressing himself to those he holds most dear. Of course that is why he writes so well. He has such deep feelings and is embarrassed to talk about them verbally. He has to release them somehow. You never

read his poem “To Those Most Dear”? It’s in the last collection he published. Read it. I think you’ll recognize who he is talking about. Of course, I’ve helped draw him out of his shell a little. He can even be down right sociable on occasion.

**Tom:** (smiling at Lily) How can I be a suffering artist if you make me too comfortable? If I do express myself verbally will my poems all dry up? You’ll have to marry me to keep me from starving.

**Amanda:** He sure didn’t get his reserve from me! That’s his father all the way. Where I came from nobody had any problems expressing themselves. Tom can be moody and quiet, just like his dad. (*Amanda involuntarily looks to where Mr. Wingfield’s picture used to hang.*)

**Lily:** Oh yes, you grew up in the Deep South around the turn of the century. A place out of time.

**Amanda:** (*drawing herself up*) It was a very genteel, polite society. We could use a little more Southern hospitality in this world a little less of the New York rudeness.

**Lily:** I know. There is a lot that can be said for the Southern culture, though don’t underestimate the capacity of New Yorkers to show their feelings. Oh, by the way, since you seemed to be wondering about my field of specialization earlier, I make a study of different American subcultures. It’s very fascinating.

*Amanda is a little embarrassed that her comment was heard and seems to wonder if she is currently being studied. Feeling like she is under the lens of a microscope she withdraws into a corner.*

(*Legend on Screen: “A Sister!”*) (*Music: “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring”*)

*Laura has been following everything with growing fascination. She had slowly left the other room unnoticed as everyone was talking and was now standing just slightly behind Tom and Lily. Lily notices her and turns to greet her. As Lily turns to her, Laura seems to finally understand something inside of herself, as if the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle finally have come together. She ignores Lily’s outstretched hand and instead gives Lily a big hug. She then holds Lily out at arms length and takes a long look at her before hugging her again. Lily is a little surprised by the first hug but initiates the second. (Image on Screen: blue roses on one side and Lilies on the other)*

**Laura:** A sister! Why has Tom been hiding you? Welcome to our family!

*Tom walks to the front of the stage. As he speaks, Lily and Laura talk and giggle like a couple of schoolgirls. They seem natural together, as if they have known each other their whole lives. Towards the end Laura starts showing Lily her old glass collection. A young child can be heard softly crying in the background, but Laura, for once, chooses to ignore it. Amanda at first stares at the two ladies before slowly coming to grips with*

*herself. She straightens herself up and then seems to relax, even smiles at Laura and Lily, before walking off the stage to look after Jimmy.*

**Tom:** A part of me never gave up looking for Laura. She seemed to always be there. At first I thought that was what attracted me to Lily. She seemed so different from Laura, almost like a negative image. And yet as I got to know her I grew to love her because she is just like Laura in so many ways. Despite appearances they could be sisters. They are both pioneers, forging new ground for those that will follow. Lily has come further and has gained a lot of respect. I know Laura. She has found a new strength, but working in a cutthroat world she has needed an escape. When the soldiers returned, Laura was reminded that it is still a man's world. Roosevelt may have overcome his disabilities, but he was still a man. Now Laura has Lily. Not some high and mighty image, nor an authority looking after her life disapprovingly, but a sister. Amanda, be a grandmother, for your job as mother has ended. *(Amanda exits)* And Laura, you can live your life and be free. Maybe now you will give me some peace and stop haunting my dreams. As for myself, I have found happiness and can finally stop running.

*Tom walks over and puts his arm around Lily. The light dies down with a soft spot on Laura as she watches Tom and Lily. She has a very satisfied look. It becomes obvious that Laura has been haunted by Tom, that now she too can be at peace. Spot fades leaving images of blue roses and lilies, which slowly fade leaving the stage dark.*