

LOVERS AND OTHER STRANGERS

by Renée Taylor and Joseph Bologna

SCENE 2

Lovers and Other Strangers is composed of four comic scenes. Each in its own way focuses on the age-old battle of the sexes set in the most contemporary situations.

The second scene takes place in the bedroom of Johnny and Wilma, a married couple. Wilma has become quite modern: she demands rights traditionally reserved for men—including the right to initiate lovemaking. Unfortunately, Johnny, an old-fashioned type, will not cooperate. What follows is a battle over who really wears the pants in the family.

A man is watching television in bed. A woman enters, looks at him, goes to the dressing table, perfumes herself and then goes to bed. As she crosses in front of the TV, he moves violently to see. She crawls into bed. The show that's been on ends. He yawns, turns it off, and turns the light off. After a long pause, she speaks in the dark.

SHE: Are you going to make love to me, or not? *No response, so she turns on the lamp.* Are you going to make love to me, or not?

HE: Huh? Wah? Come on, I was just falling asleep. Turn the light off. *She shakes him again.* What?

SHE: It's your turn to make love to me.

HE, *thinks:* I owe you one.

SHE: You owe me two already.

HE: How do you figure I owe you two?

SHE: Last Friday and the Wednesday before when Ron stayed over and you didn't want to make noise.

HE, *thinks*: All right, three. Leave me alone. I'm good for it.

SHE: Johniee.

HE: Wilma! I'm just not in the mood now.

SHE: All right, if you don't want to. I don't want you to do anything you don't want to do. *She turns the light out and after a long pause in the dark we hear: Don't you ever touch me again! She lights a cigarette in the dark.*

HE: Put the cigarette out and go to sleep.

SHE: I can't sleep when I'm like this.

HE: It's all in your mind.

SHE: It is not. I feel sexy.

HE: It's just nerves. Have a sandwich. *His mumbles trail off and in the darkness we hear: Wilma, cut it out. In the morning, in the morning.*

SHE: I'm not interested in the morning. It's not romantic in the morning. It's romantic now.

HE: To me it's work.

SHE, *turns the light on*: Johnny, when I owe you, you pick the time. But you owe me, so I pick now.

HE: Who are you kidding? *Rising up.* I never pick the time. Last night when we were driving home from Jersey, I offered to pull off the Pulaski Skyway and get something going, and you said no.

SHE: I'm a married woman with two children. I am not going to make love in the back seat of a Volkswagen.

HE: Then don't complain to me any more about lack of variety. *Lies down again.*

SHE: Johnny, it's Saturday night. We haven't made love in ten days. We've both worked very hard to make love at least twice a week and if we don't tonight, there's going to be a lot of pressure on us to catch up.

HE: Wilma, I had an unusually upsetting week. I was dizzy at a meeting Wednesday and I didn't want to go out tonight because it was too hot and I felt flushed at the party, and I am physically—*(he goes to bathroom and gets a glass of water)* and emotionally exhausted.

SHE: Do you know, you're beginning to sound exactly like my mother complaining to my father.

HE: Oh, yeah? Well, you're beginning to sound exactly like my father making sexual demands on my mother.

SHE: That's all right with me, if he's the sexy one in your family.

HE: I am sexier than you will ever be.

SHE: So, why are you hoarding it?

HE: If you didn't nag me about it, maybe I wouldn't.

SHE: Nag? *Crosses to look in mirror.* I have done everything but nag. I have suggested, implied, rubbed against you while passing, worn provocative nightgowns, perfumed my underwear. I have tried every subtle way to reach you except showing stag films.

HE: Wilma—*(sits up)* I get the feeling you're trying to make my virility look impotent.

SHE: When did that feeling first hit you?

HE: The day I married you. I was dynamite with other women.

SHE: Well, sure. They were lucky just to be there with the holder of the world's championship three-second record in intercourse. *She brushes her hair.*

HE: Out of all the women in the world, I had to marry an equal-time orgasm fanatic! You read a couple of *Ladies Home Journals* and all you know now is, "Me too!"

SHE: And why not me too?

HE: Look, stop trying to castrate me. There's too much man here. You and your "me too's" and your cockamamie career. Me and the children aren't enough for you. No, you need "creative fulfillment" to give meaning to your existence. We could have managed very well on one salary.

SHE: So quit your job.

HE: You really want to take over, don't you? *She turns back to mirror.* Don't think I haven't noticed your new wardrobe with the suits with the pants and the ties and—your butch haircut!

SHE, *turns to him*: Butch! . . . I'm more feminine than you'll ever be.

HE, *kneels on bed, left knee*: You want to know how feminine you are? Whenever we go out, I light your cigarette, I hold your chair, I rise when you come back from the little girls' room, so you can go, "Waiter, check!" That's feminine? Then I look for a cab in a snowstorm while you stand under an awning because "Your feet are cold" and "You don't want to get your hair wet." But if I don't get a cab in two minutes, you run out in the street and yell—*(he makes a loud whistle)* "Taxi-i-i." Whenever

I try to treat you like a lady, you respond like—Rocky Graziano.

SHE: Oh, shit. *He gets back in bed.* All I want is a little tenderness.

HE: Look who wants tenderness! ... Miss Locker Room Mouth. You better decide whether you want to be a man or a woman, and then talk tenderness to me. Do you understand, Wilma, or is it Willy?

SHE: I'll tell you what. You decide what you want to be first and I'll be what's left. *Puts brush on chest.* You think you're so masculine because whenever we have a problem you roll over and go to sleep, or you go out and get drunk with the boys, or you try to act rough with me. But I got a flash for you. Those tough Marine drill sergeants are the biggest fags in the world.

HE, *sits*: Watch what you say about the Corps!

SHE: Okay. *Crosses left to head of bed.* They're the biggest latent fags in the world, but they're not real men. A real man is warm and understanding and gentle and sweet and sensitive and kind and loving and—

HE: Oh, yeah. Then what's a woman?

SHE: A woman is strong and brave and—

HE: And what?

SHE, *trying to regain the initiative*: A woman should be brave and strong in certain situations—like—when her husband is tough toward her, then she has to be tough toward him. But otherwise, a woman should be worshipped and admired and put up on a pedestal, but she should have the freedom to come down off the pedestal because she wants to be independent, but then she could go back up on the pedestal because she is not a slave any more because a woman wants to be taken care of—

HE: Excuse me, is that taken care of up on the pedestal, or down off the pedestal?

SHE: I don't know what a woman is. I don't even see any difference between us any more. *She breaks down and cries, lying on bed.*

HE: Okay, I'll tell you what I'll do for you. Next week for your birthday I'll take you down for some hormone shots.

There's a long pause.

SHE: What you need is a major transplant!

HE, *sits*: You want to know why you're so confused? Because you forgot who I am and who you are. I'm the man and you're just the woman, and the man is the boss. You said so yourself when we got married.

SHE: I was just humoring you. I said, "If it was so important to you, I would let you be the boss."

HE: What do you mean, "Let me be the boss"? I am the boss.

SHE: Don't be juvenile. There is no boss.

HE: I am the boss and you know it.

SHE: There is no boss and that's final. I don't want to hear another word about it. We are equals. *Sits on bed.*

HE, *his frustration is building*: Oh, we're equal, huh? *Standing up on bed.*

SHE: Yes! We're equal.

HE: All right, let's just see how equal we are. *Pulls her up.* Come on, equal. Let's go a couple of rounds.

SHE: Cut it out, you big jerk! *He dazzles her with his footwork. She punches him in stomach and tries to run away from him. He catches her. He grabs her arms and holds them behind her back. She can't move. She struggles to get free, but he is too strong for her. Let me go.*

HE: You're my equal. Why don't you let yourself go?

SHE: Stop it.

HE: Who's the boss?

SHE: There's no boss.

HE: Who's the boss?

SHE: I am!

HE: Who's the boss?

SHE: Stop it. You're hurting me. You're going to wake the children.

HE, *lowers his voice but he says it more intensely*: Who's the boss?

SHE: You can torture me, but I won't say it.

HE: Who's the boss?

SHE: You are.

HE: And who won?

SHE, *meek and reluctant*: You did. *He releases her, proud of himself.* Shithead.

HE: That doesn't bother me because the fight's all over and I

won and I'm the boss. So be a good little loser and let's go to bed. Good night, loser.

SHE: Excuse me. I'm sleeping on the couch. She takes the pillow and covers and goes into the other room.

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

by Tennessee Williams

SCENE 10

Blanche DuBois is a relic, trapped in a time and place in which she cannot survive. She is a romantic forced to seek shelter in the hard-edged world of her younger sister, Stella, and Stella's working-class husband, Stanley. She is almost thirty years old, her delicate beauty fading more from adversity than from time. From a wealthy young southern belle—beautiful, willful, charming, flirtatious—to her current condition on the edge of hysteria, she witnessed her family members die off in protracted illnesses, the wealth disappear, and the family home and estate lost to creditors. She sought solace in liquor and strange men, and in lies and self-delusion. Fired from her job as a teacher, homeless and penniless, she comes to her sister for "a visit." In manner and sensibilities, Stanley is the antithesis of Blanche. He is practical and direct; suspicious of and repelled by her pretensions to gentility. He doubts Blanche's description of the loss of the family property, resents her intrusion into his household, and uncovers and confronts her with her lies.

Just before the following scene, Blanche had an ugly encounter with Mitch, Stanley's friend. Mitch had fallen in love with her, and had fallen for all the lies and illusions. He had courted her like a young southern gentleman (which he is not), and hoped to marry her. After Stanley tells him about her sexual

past, Mitch comes to the house. Hurt and enraged, he demands sex with her, and derides the idea of marriage. She screams and he flees. She is left alone in the house. (Stella is about to have a baby and Stanley has taken her to the hospital.)

She has dragged her wardrobe trunk into the center of the bedroom. It hangs open with flowery dresses thrown across it. As the drinking and packing went on, a mood of hysterical exhilaration came into her and she has decked herself out in a somewhat soiled and crumpled white satin evening gown and a pair of scuffed silver slippers with brilliants set in their heels.

Now she is placing the rhinestone tiara on her head before the mirror of the dressing-table and murmuring excitedly as if to a group of spectral admirers.

BLANCHE: How about taking a swim, a moonlight swim at the old rock quarry? If anyone's sober enough to drive a car! Ha-ha! Best way in the world to stop your head buzzing! Only you've got to be careful to dive where the deep pool is—if you hit a rock you don't come up till tomorrow . . .

Tremblingly she lifts the hand mirror for a closer inspection. She catches her breath and slams the mirror face down with such violence that the glass cracks. She moans a little and attempts to rise.

Stanley appears around the corner of the building. He still has on the vivid green silk bowling shirt. As he rounds the corner the honky-tonk music is heard. It continues softly throughout the scene.

He enters the kitchen, slamming the door. As he peers in at Blanche, he gives a low whistle. He has had a few drinks on the way and has brought some quart beer bottles home with him.

BLANCHE: How is my sister?

STANLEY: She is doing okay.

BLANCHE: And how is the baby?

STANLEY, grinning amiably: The baby won't come before morning so they told me to go home and get a little shut-eye.

BLANCHE: Does that mean we are to be alone in here?