**SCENE: AMANDA, LAURA**

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

By Tennessee Williams

[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 tied 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

typewriter 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 that were worn in the late

twenties and she is eloping 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 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.]

A M A N D A: 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 DAR. 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 DAR. meeting, Mother?

AMANDA [faintly, almost inaudibly]: - No. - No. [Then more forcibly.] I did not have the

strength - to go to the DAR. In fact, I did not have the courage! I wanted to find a hole in the

ground and hide myself in it for ever ! [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 into 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. Count ten.]

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

[Count ten.]

LAURA: Has something happened, Mother? [AMANDA draws a long breath and takes out the

handkerchief again. Dabbing process.] Mother, has - something happened?

AMANDA: I'll be all right in a minute, I'm just bewildered [Count five.] - by life. ...

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

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

afternoon. [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 I There must have 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 wash-room! After that morning she never showed

up any more. We phoned the house but never got any answer' -while I was working at Famous

and Barr, I suppose, demonstrating those - 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 - my hopes and ambition 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?

LAURA: Oh I [She releases the handle and returns to her seat.]

AMANDA: Laura, where have you been going when you've gone on pretending that you were

going to business college ?

L A U RA: I've just been going out walking.

AMANDA: That's not true.

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. [IMAGE: WINTER SCENE IN 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?

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? [LAURA looks down.] Why?

LAURA: Mother, when you're disappointed, you get that awful suffering look on your face, like

the picture of Jesus' mother in the museum !

AMANDA: Hush !

LAURA: I couldn't face it.

[Pause. A whisper of strings.

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 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 ! [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 little mousetrap 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 !

It isn't a very pleasant alternative, is it? Of course - some girls do marry!

[LAURA twists her hands nervously.]

Haven't you ever liked some boy?

LAURA: Yes. I liked one once. [Rises.] I came across his picture a while ago.

AMANDA [with some interest]. He gave you his picture?

LAURA: No, it's in the year-book.

AMANDA: [disappointed]: Oh - a high-school boy.

[SCREEN IMAGE: JIM AS HIGH-SCHOOL HERO BEARING A SILVER CUP.]

LAURA: Yes. His name was Jim. [LAURA 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 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.

[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 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 by now.

AMANDA: Girls that aren't cut out for business careers usually wind up married to some nice

man. [Gets up with aspark of revival.] Sister, that's what you'll do !

[LAURA utters a startled, doubtful laugh. She reaches quickly for a piece of glass.]

LAURA: But, Mother

AMANDA: Yes ? [Crossing to photograph.]

LAURA [in a tone of frightened apology]: I'm - crippled !

[IMAGE: SCREEN.]

AMANDA: Nonsense ! Laura, I've told you never, never to use that 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!