AMANDA,TOM

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

AMANDA [peering anxiously after her]: If anyone breaks a leg on those fire-escape steps, the

landlord ought to be sued for every cent he possesses ! [She shuts door. Remembers she isn't

speaking and returns to other room.]

[As TOM enters listlessly for his coffee she turns her back to him and stands rigidly facing the

window on the gloomy gray vault of the areaway. Its light on her face with its aged but childish

features is cruelly sharp, satirical as a Daumier print.

MUSIC UNDER: 'AVE MARIA'.

TOM glances sheepishly but sullenly at her averted figure and slumps at the table. The coffee is

scalding hot; he sips it and gasps and spits it back in the cup. At his gasp, AMANDA catches her

breath and half turns. Then catches herself and turns back to window.

Tom blows on his coffee, glancing sidewise at his mother. She clears her throat. TOM clears his.

He starts to rise. Sinks back down again, scratches his head, clears his throat again. AMANDA

Coughs. TOM raises his cup in both hands to blow on it - his eyes staring over the rim of it at his

mother for several moments. Then he slowly sets the cup down and awkwardly and hesitantly

rises from the chair.]

TOM [hoarsely]: Mother. ! - I apologize, Mother. [AMANDA draws a quick, shuddering breath.

Her face works grotesquely. She breaks into childlike tears.] I'm sorry for what I said, for

everything that I said; I didn't mean it.

AMANDA [sobbingly]: My devotion has made me a witch and so I make myself hateful to my

children !

TOM: NO, you don't.

AMANDA: I worry so much, don't sleep, it makes me nervous!

TOM [gently]: I understand that.

AMANDA: I've had to put up a solitary battle all these years. But you're my right-hand bower !

Don't fall down, don't fail !

TOM [gently]: I try, Mother.

AMANDA [with great enthusiasm]: Try and you will suCCEED ! [ The notion makes her

breathless] Why, you -you're just full of natural endowments ! Both of my children - they're

unusual children ! Don't you think I know it? I'm so proud! Happy and - feel I've - so much to be

thankful for but - Promise me one thing, Son !

TOM: What, Mother?

AMANDA: Promise, Son, you'll - never be a drunkard !

TOM [turns to her grinning]: I will never be a drunkard, Mother.

AMANDA: That's what frightened me so, that you'd be drinking ! Eat a bowl of Purina !

TOM: Just Coffee, Mother.

AMANDA: Shredded wheat biscuit?

Tom: No. No, Mother, just coffee.

AMANDA: You can't put in a day's work on an empty stomach. You've got ten minutes - don't

gulp ! Drinking

too hot liquids makes cancer of the stomach. Put cream in.

TOM: No, thank you.

AMANDA: To cool it.

TOM . No! No, thank you, I want it black.

AMANDA: I know, but it's not good for you. We have to do all that we can to build ourselves

up. In these trying times we live in, all that we have to cling to is - each other. . . . That's why it's

so important to - Tom, ! - I sent out your sister so I could discuss something with you. If you

hadn't spoken I would have spoken to you. [Sits down.]

TOM [gently]: What is it, Mother, that you want to discuss?

AMANDA: Laura!

[Tom puts his cup down slowly.

LEGEND ON SCREEN: 'LAURA.'

MUSIC: ' THE GLASS MENAGERIE']

TOM: - Oh. - Laura ...

AMANDA [touching his sleeve] You know how Laura is. So quiet but - still water runs deep !

She notices things and I think she - broods about them. [Tom looks up.] A few days ago I came

in and she was crying.

TOM: What about?

AMANDA: YOU.

TOM: Me?

AMANDA: She has an idea that you're not happy here

TOM: What gave her that idea?

AMANDA: What gives her any idea? However, you do act strangely. ! - I'm not criticizing,

understand that! I know your ambitions do not lie in the warehouse, that like everybody in the

whole wide world - you've had to make sacrifices, but - Tom - Tom - life's not easy, it calls for -

Spartan endurance ! There's so many things in my heart that I cannot describe to you ! I've never

told you but - I loved your father. . . .

TOM [gently] : I know that, Mother.

AMANDA: And you - when I see you taking after his ways ! Staying out late - and - well, you

had been drinking the night you were in that - terrifying condition ! Laura says that you hate the

apartment and that you go out nights to get away from it! Is that true, Tom?

TOM: No. You say there's so much in your heart that you can't describe to me. That's true of me,

too. There's so much in my heart that I can't describe to"you! So let's respect each other's -

AMANDA: But, why - why, Tom - am you always so restless? Where do you go to, nights?

TOM: I - go to the movies.

AMANDA: Why do you go to the movies so much, Tom?

TO M: I go to the movies because - I like adventure

Adventure is something I don't have much of at work, so I go to the movies.

AMANDA: But, Tom, you go to the movies entirely too much !

TOM: I like a lot of adventure.

[AMANDA looks baffled, then hurt As the familiar inquisition resumes he becomes hard and

impatient again. AMANDA SLIPS back into her querulous attitude towards him.

IMAGE ON SCREEN: SAILING VESSEL WITH JOLLY ROGER.]

AMANDA: Most young men find adventure in their careers.

TOM: Then most young men are not employed in a warehouse.

AMANDA: The world is full of young men employed in warehouses and offices and factories.

TOM: Do all of them find adventure in their careers?

AMANDA: They do or they do without it! Not everybody has a craze for adventure.

TOM: Man is by instinct a lover, a hunter, a fighter, and none of those instincts are given much

play at the warehouse !

AMANDA: Man is by instinct! Don't quote instinct to me! Instinct is something that people have

got away from ! It belongs to animals ! Christian adults don't want it !

TOM: , What do Christian adults want, then, Mother?

AMANDA: Superior things! Things of the mind and the spirit ! Only animals have to satisfy

instincts ! Surely your aims are somewhat higher than theirs ! Than monkeys - pigs

TOM: I reckon they're not.

AMANDA: You're joking. However, that isn't what I wanted to discuss.

TOM [rising] I haven't much time.

AMANDA [pushing his shoulders] Sit down.

TOM: You want me to punch in red at the warehouse, Mother?

AMANDA: You have five minutes. I want to talk about Laura.

[LEGEND: 'PLANS AND PROVISIONS'.]

TOM: All right! What about Laura?

AMANDA: We have to be making some plans and provisions for her. She's older than you, two

years, and nothing has happened. She just drifts along doing nothing. It frightens me terribly how

she just drifts along.

TOM: I guess she's the type that people call home girls.

AMANDA: There's no such type, and if there is, it's a pity ! That is unless the home is hers, with

a husband !

TOM: What?

AMANDA: Oh, I can see the handwriting on the wall as plain as I see the nose in front of my

face ! It's terrifying ! More and more you remind me of your father ! He was out all hours

without explanation ! - Then left ! Good-bye ! And me with the bag to hold. I saw that letter you

got from the Merchant Marine. I know what you're dreaming of. I'm not standing here

blindfolded.

Very well, then. Then, do it ! But not till there's somebody to take your place.

TOM: What do you mean?

AMANDA: I mean that as soon as Laura has got somebody to take care of her, married, a home

of her own, independent ?- why, then you'll be free to go wherever you please, on land, on sea,

whichever way the wind blows you !

But until that time you've got to look out for your sister. I don't say me because I'm old and don't

matter - I say for your sister because she's young and dependent.

I put her in business college - a dismal failure ! Frightened her so it made her sick at the stomach.

I took her over to the Young Peoples League at the church. Another fiasco. She spoke to nobody,

nobody spoke to her. Now all she does is fool with those pieces of glass and play those worn-out

records. What kind of a life is that for a girl to lead?

TOM: What can I do about it?

AMANDA: Overcome Selfishness ! Self, self, self is all that you ever think of !

[Tom springs up and crosses to got his coat. It is ugly and bulky He pulls on a cap with

earmuffs.]

Where is your muffler? Put your wool muffler on ! [He snatches it angrily from the closet and

tosses it around his neck and pulls both ends tight.] Tom ! I haven't said what I had in mind to

ask you.

TOM: I'm too late to

AMANDA [catching his arm - very importunately. Then shyly]: Down at the warehouse, aren't

there some - nice young men?

TOM: No !

AMANDA: There must be - some

TOM: Mother [Gesture.]

AMANDA: Find out one that's clean-living - doesn't drink and - ask him out for sister !

TOM: What?

AMANDA: For sister ! To meet ! Get acquainted

TOM [stamping to door]: Oh, my go- osh !

AMANDA: Will you? [He opens door. Imploringly.] Will you? [He starts down.] Will you? Will

you, dear?

TOM [calling back]: YES !

[AMANDA closes the door hesitantly and with a troubled but faintly hopful expression.