

Chapter IV

IV. Human's endurance: To confront the vicious or callous characters in their adverse circumstances

A. Tom continues to seek the dream of his life's dream

Kings, a critic, opines that the play is not namely about Amanda. Amanda is a striking and powerful character, but, in fact, the play is about Tom (Thomas 86). In fact, Tom introduces the play and closes it. Many Tom's recollections are focused on the conflict between Amanda and himself. Whenever Tom tries to escape from the family, he faces the dilemmas of supporting his family or the sacrifice his dreams to support them. At times, he struggles with these feelings and expresses them to his mother. Although his mother and his sister live under the reduced circumstances afforded by Tom's monthly salary of sixty-five dollars, his mother believes that most young men can find adventures in their works:

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 (*Understanding* 118).

Tom explains that a man has the instinct to become a lover, a hunter, and a fighter, and none of those instincts are given much play at the warehouse. Amanda wants Tom to know his duty for the family, so she wants him save money and take care of his health:

AMANDA: You smoke too much. A pack a day at
fifteen cents a pack. How much would that
amount to in a month? Thirty times fifteen

is how much, Tom? Figure it out and you
 will be astounded at what you could save.
 Enough to give you a night-school course in
 Accounting at Washington U.! (*Understanding* 120)

Although Amanda and Tom have many conflicts, Tom still manages to keep his dream alive. He is not a selfish dreamer; instead he is idealistic and sometimes practical. He designs to realize his dreams for the future. On the other hand, Amanda never forgets her experience about seventeen gentlemen callers, and one of them has become rich later:

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*! (*Understanding* 110)

From above, we learn that Amanda could have a very opulent life with Mr. Fitzhugh; she regrets having picked Tom's father as her husband. As a result, she has to face the facts of life by sometimes selling subscriptions for the family. One of the Marxist critics, Poggi, expresses that economic pressure exists in the bourgeoisie (Wetherly a: 43).

Since Laura is slightly crippled and unable to cope with her life, she seeks refuge and “lives in a world of her own—a world of little glass ornaments” (*Understanding* 123). With Laura's disadvantage, Tom's support is imperative.

Amanda asks Tom to find a decent nondrinking suitor for Laura, because she thinks that maybe a son-in-law can release Tom from his burden, and until then Tom can have his own adventures. Sigini, a critic, says that Amanda tries with grim feminine energy to change Laura into a pretty trap (Falk a: 83). With his mother's wish, finally, Tom invites Jim

O'Connor, his coworker at the warehouse, to his house to dinner. Tom reveals his plan:

Tom is searching for in his pockets and holds out a paper

to Jim) Look—

JIM: What?

TOM: I'm a member.

JIM (reading): The Union of Merchant Seamen.

TOM: I paid my dues this month, instead of the

light bill (*Understanding* 128).

Tom's first step to realize his own dream is to be a member of the Union of merchant seaman. After using his money to buy the membership, Tom does not have enough money to pay for the light bill, which makes the electric company to shut off the current at the dinner time. In fact, after the lights go off, Amanda immediately asks Tom about the light bill." That light bill I gave you several days ago. The one I told you we got the notices about?" (*Understanding* 130) Without Tom's explanation, Amanda mentions that she should have known better to trust Tom with it.

The famous psychologist, Sigmund Freud, suggests that the dream affords proof that the suppressed material continues to exist even in the normal person and remains capable of psychic activity (Freud 441). According to this theory, dreams are suppressed materials. Regardless of whether or not Tom's dreams of adventures can be realized, but only parts can be satisfied by going to the movies:

TOM:

Yes, until there's a war. That's when adventure becomes available to the masses! *Everyone's* dish, not only Gable's! Then the people in the dark room come out of the dark room to have

some adventures themselves---goody, goody!
 It's our turn now, to go to the South
 Sea Island—to make a safari—to be exotic, far-
 off! But I'm not patient. I don't want to wait till
 then. I'm tired of the movies and I am about to *move*!
 (*Understanding* 127)

So Tom decides to move on with the Merchant Seamen. Freud also says in his *The Interpretation of Dreams* that there is a whole class of dreams in which the incitement originates mainly or even exclusively from the residues of the day; and the motive-power needed by the dream had to be contributed by a wish (Freud 399). Tom joins the Union of Merchant Seamen only hoping to have many adventures in different places.

After Jim told Amanda that he plans to get married in June, Amanda says sarcastically to Tom about his ignorance:

AMANDA: That's right, now that you've had us
 make such fools of ourselves. The effort, the
 preparations, all the expense! The new floor
 lamp, the rug, the clothes for Laura! All for
 what? To entertain some other girl's finance!
 Go to the movies, go! Don't think about us,
 a mother deserted, an unmarried sister
 who's crippled and has no job! Don't let
 anything interfere with your selfish plea-
 sure! Just go, go, go—to the movies! (*Understanding* 139)

Tom knows that the more his mother shouts about his selfishness to him, the faster he must leave. Finally, Tom decides to leave the factory and his family for good:

TOM: I didn't go to the moon, I went much further
 —for time is the longest distance between two places
 (*Understanding* 139).

B. Chance lives under the stressful condition

Chance hopes that Princess can help him break into the show business to impress the people or hopefully he can get back together again with his old girlfriend, Heavenly Finley. Chance was a good looking and bright young man, but he wasted his youth on trifles. Chance and Heavenly were lovers since high school, but Heavenly's father, Boss Finley, wants his daughter to marry a wealth person not a poor boy like Chance. Chance is eager to pursue success, partly for impressing her father. Boss, a powerful politician in St. Cloud did not want his daughter to be connected with Chance, so he decided to drive him away.

In the following conversation with Princess, we learn that Chance did try to change his life in order to be worthy of Heavenly:

CHANCE:

I sang in the chorus of the biggest show in New York, in
Oklahoma, and had pictures in LIFE in a cowboy outfit,
 tossin' a ten-gallon hat in the air! YAP... EEEEEEE! Ha-ha
 And at the same time pursued my other vocation.... (*Sweet* 47)

Even though he has had some success, and he dreamed of marrying her, but, actually, he never seriously pursued his goal. He had no discipline to work hard, so he changed jobs again and again. In fact, his lifestyle promiscuous is:

CHANCE:

Maybe the only one I was truly meant for, love-making...
 Slept in the social register of New York! Millionaires' widows

and wives and debutante daughters of such famous names as Vanderbrook and Masters and Halloway and Connaught, names mentioned daily in columns, whose credit cards are their faces (*Sweet* 47).

With his sexual promiscuity, he could never arrive at what he desired. When the Korean War came along, he was enlisted to the Navy. He regrets that the time has passed by so quickly, and he tells Princess: “I was twenty-three, that was the peak of my youth and I knew my youth wouldn’t last long“ (*Sweet* 48). Now he is back in St. Cloud and still wishes that his girl, Heavenly, is waiting for him in his hometown.

Briski, a critic, says that Chance really behaves like an absolutely immature little boy. He has lost his youth, but has never developed character (Bauer c: 316). Although he has his own plans, he lacks maturity to carry them through. He tells Princess he didn’t want to go into the Army because a sailor’s uniform suited him better. His behavior was very immature, as he says: “after each disappointment, each failure at something, I’d come back to her like going to a hospital....” (*Sweet* 50). Once, when Chance went back to his hometown again he and Heavenly met at Diamond Key. Heavenly rejected him, as he tells Princess what Heavenly said:

CHANCE: Things like, “Chance, go away, “ “Don’t come back to St. Cloud.” “Chance, you’re a liar.” “Chance, I’m sick of your lies!” “My father’s right about you!” “Chance, you’re no good any more.” “Chance, stay away from St. Cloud” (*Sweet* 51).

After he told his story, he wants Princess to help him to get a movie contract. Princess is a realistic person, and knows that Chance will not follow his plan to have a successful career. She feels that Chance is still a lost little boy:

CHANCE [*posturing*]: I’m pretentious. I want to be seen

in your car on the streets of St. Cloud. Drive all around town in it, blowing those long silver trumpets and dressed in the fine clothes you bought me....Can I?

PRINCESS: Chance, you're a lost little boy that I really would like to help you find himself (*Sweet 53*).

At the same time, Boss learns that Chance has come back, he asks his son, Tom Junior, to think a way to get Chance and Princess out of the town:

BOSS: Okay, you think of a way. My daughter's no whore, but she had a whore's operation after the last time he had her. I don't want him passin' another night in St. Cloud. Tom Junior.

TOM JUNIOR: Yes, sir.

BOSS: I want him gone by tomorrow—tomorrow commences at midnight (*Sweet 59*).

With power and money, Boss believes that he can control the whole situation. He wants Heavenly to find a wealthy man, but she doesn't agree with him:

HEAVENLY: Don't give me your Voice of God speech.

Papa, there was a time when you could have saved me, by letting me marry a boy that was still young and clean, but instead you drove him away, drove him out of St. Cloud.

And when he came back, you took me out of St. Cloud, and tried to force me to marry a fifty-year-old money bag that you wanted something out of—

BOSS: Now, honey—

HEAVENLY:....

so Chance went away. Tried to compete, make himself big
as these big shots you wanted to use me for a bond with.

He went. He tried. The right doors wouldn't open, and so
he went in the wrong ones, and —Papa, you married for love,
why wouldn't you let me do it, while I was alive, inside,
and the boy still clean, still decent? (*Sweet* 68)

Previously, Chance was handsome, clean, and young but he knew the right doors weren't being opened for him, so he adopted wrong methods to achieve his goal quickly, unfortunately, he ends up becoming a gigolo.

In the Royal Palms Hotel, Chance meets again with Finley's mistress, Miss Lucy, and the sister of Boss, Aunt Nonnie:

AUNT NONNIE:...

Oh, Chance, why have you changed like you've changed?
Why do you live on nothing but wild dreams now,
and have no address where anybody can reach you in time to
—reach you?

CHANCE: Wild dreams! Yes. Isn't life a wild dream? I
never heard a better description of it (*Sweet* 79).

He asks Nonnie to look at the movie contract which Princess gave him, but she considers his behavior ridiculous. She refuses to see it, and she tells him: "I don't want to see false papers" (*Sweet* 82). She disapproves of the way he lives. In fact, Chance's wild dreams have caused him to lose everything, especially Heavenly.

Chance always remembers his goal of winning back Heavenly. Briski, a critic, points out that Chance realizes that there will be no common future for them, because he is solely responsible for Heavenly's misery. As there is nothing he can do to redeem himself, he at

least submits to the punishment which awaits him (Bauer c: 321). However, defeated and destroyed at the end, he has realized what he has to do, so he refuses to leave with Princess. Princess tries to get Chance to give up his illusions of winning back Heavenly, but Chance refuses to do so. Before, Chance could do nothing to help Heavenly when he learned that he had infected Heavenly with a disease. Now, with guilty conscience, he wants to responsible for Heavenly's disease, Chance chooses to stay in St. Cloud. In the end, Princess has to leave without him:

PRINCESS: Come on, Chance, we're going to change trains
at this station... So, come on, we've got to go on...

Chance, please...

[CHANCE *shakes his head and the PRINCESS gives up. She weaves out of sight with the trooper down the corridor.*]

(*Sweet* 124)

His only reason for staying in St. Cloud is for Heavenly. If he leaves his hometown, he feels that he will lose his sense of life. Chance knows that he has wasted many opportunities and realizes that his life has gradually faded away, and he now tries to keep his memories with Heavenly. Williams once spoke in *The New York Times* about how the sympathetic feeling of the audiences is produced: "People are humble and frightened and guilty at heart, all of us, no matter how desperately we try to appear otherwise. We have very little conviction neither of our essential dignity nor even of our essential decency, and consequently we are more interested in characters on the stage who share our hidden shames and fears (Brook 159-160). People have many dreams to achieve, like Chance. When we want to get some success, we will face many obstacles at the same time. So, the condition Chance lives is full of stress.

C. Brick is striving to make up with his family

Big Daddy is the head of the family, but he is dying of cancer. His elder son is lusting after his father's estate, while Brick, on the other hand, his father's beloved son, has no interest in such matters. When Margaret says to him, "Big Daddy dotes on you, honey." (*Cat 22*), Brick makes it known that he doesn't care.

Margaret tries to capture Brick's attention by getting close to him, changing her clothes before the mirror, and preparing the party for Big Daddy; however, Brick is totally indifferent to her. She reminds Brick about that she is so lonely and lusts for him, "You know, if I thought you would never, never, *never* make love to me again—I would go downstairs to the kitchen and pick out the longest and sharpest knife I could find and stick it straight into my heart, I swear that I would!" (*Cat 30*) In order to win Brick's heart back, Margaret has to keep finding opportunities to draw near to him.

Brooks, a scenarist-director, explains that Brick's rejection of Margaret is an immature behavior, because the reason behind this behavior is his emotional refusal to grow up and face the responsibilities of adult life (Brook 144). Brick tries to deal with his immature emotions by drinking. Margaret explains to Brick that if they can interests money from Big Daddy's estate then they can afford better things in life: "Two people in the same boat have got to take care of each other. At least you want money to buy more Echo Spring when this supply is exhausted, or will you be satisfied with a ten-cent beer?" (*Cat 53*)

This rejection of Margaret was when Brick found out Margaret had an unusual relationship with Skipper. In fact, Skipper had made a drunken confession to him. And Margaret only explain to him: "Skipper and I made love, if love you could call it, because it made both of us feel a little bit closer to you" (*Cat 55*). Margaret went to bed with Skipper because she doubts that she and Brick could never get any closer and perhaps Skipper is the reason.

The Act two, Big Daddy has a long talk with Brick. Big Daddy interrogates Brick and determines to get the truth regarding his drinking problem and why he doesn't sleep with his wife. In the conversation with Big Daddy, Brick begins to reveal what had happened to his father about Skipper, Skipper also wanted to prove to Margaret that he was not gay: "He, poor, Skipper, went to bed with Maggie to prove it wasn't true, and when it didn't work out, he thought it *was* true! —Skipper broke in two like a rotten stick—nobody ever turned so fast to a lush—or died of it so quick... (Cat 123) So when Big Daddy repeatedly asks about why he drinks, and throws his life away. Brick tells Big Daddy: "Mendacity is a system that we live in. Liquor is one way out an' death's the other..." (Cat 127-28) Brick apologizes for distressing his father: "I'm sorry, Big Daddy. My head don't work any more and it's hard for me to understand how anybody could care if he lived or died or was dying or cared about anything but whether or not there was liquor left in the bottle and so I said what I said without thinking. In some ways I'm no better than the others, in some ways worse because I'm less alive. Maybe it's being alive that makes them lie, and being almost not alive makes me sort of accidentally truthful—I don't know but—anyway—we've been friends..." (Cat 127-8)

Near the end of the play, after they finish their conversations, Margaret announces that she and Brick are going to have a child. Brick is shocked by this news:

MARGARET:

I have an announcement to make.

GOOPER:

A sports announcement, Maggie?

MARGARET:

Brick and I are going to—*have a child!* (Cat 158)

After hearing the announcement, Big Mama is happy, she even calls Brick "My son, Big

Daddy's boy! Litter father" (*Cat* 165). Margaret feels that without a child her place in the family is not secure. Margaret's announcement brings a dramatic impact on the whole family and gives a resolution to the play. Even though Brick makes no efforts to deal with his family problems, we are, nonetheless, given some clues that he wants to solve his marital marriage's problems. Happily, Brick adapts to his circumstances with his wife, and becomes more accepting of his wife's existence. Brick does not expose Margaret's lie, and believes that he can develop a good relationship with Margaret, he doesn't reject Margaret's plan to make the lie come true. Brick is going to face the real world. He recognizes that he can not live with the truth:

MARGARET:

And so tonight we're going to make the lie true, and when that's done, I'll bring the liquor back here and we'll get drunk together, here, tonight, in this place that death has come into....

—What do you say?

BRICK:

I don't say anything. I guess there's nothing to say (*Cat* 165).

The conversation continues, and Brick says with a smile to Margaret: "Wouldn't it be funny it that was true?" (*Cat* 166)

Margaret knows that in order to develop a good relationship with Brick, she has to lock up his liquor. Although the ending of the play is inconclusive, the reality is that Margaret tries hard to win her husband's heart. Despite the uncertainty surrounding the couple's future child, we learn that Brick and Margaret's relationship is entering a new beginning. Briski, a critic, explains that Margaret longs for children due to the values of the society she lives in, values people are judged by (Bauer b: 258-59). Margaret always tries to cope with

reality, and in this way, she is different from Laura in *The Glass Menagerie*. Margaret doesn't have illusions about life. She knows exactly what she wants to pursue eagerly.

