

A streetcar named
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Streetcar Named Desire Essay

In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, written by Tennessee Williams, Blanche DuBois, a seemingly extravagant and sensual woman, visits her sister and brother-in-law after losing her family fortune and estate, only to find despair, heartbreak, and violence. She hoped to start a new life, one in which she could have found a wealthy gentleman to marry and live happily with.

Blanche instead finds herself as a heartbroken, penniless victim of rape. She struggles to stay strong, to no avail, and is pushed into insanity as a result of rape as well as her disastrous relationships with the men in her life.

Throughout the course of the play, Blanche is haunted by her tragic past life with her ex-husband, consequently causing her to go subtly mad. Prior to arriving in Elysian Fields, Blanche was happily married to a handsome young man by the name of Allen. However, her life took a turn for the worse when she discovered her husband in bed with another man. Her husband later ended up committing suicide. From that moment on, Blanche struggles to find happiness in her crumbling life. Memories of the night continue to haunt her and when she is alone, “the rapid, feverish polka tune, the “Varsouviana” is heard. The music is in her mind; she is drinking to escape it and the sense of disaster closing in on her” (139). That last night with her husband, when they danced the Varsouviana, haunts her throughout the play, and she cannot seem to forget the horror she felt that night. The memories from that dance, which signal her last moments with her husband, continue to burden her. She continues to feel helpless, lonely, and unsafe, without the presence of her husband around. As strong and confident as she

tries to make herself appear, Blanche is a weak woman still horrified by the tragic suicide of her ex-husband.

Blanche's relationship with Mitch also contributed to her descent into insanity. After Blanche lost her family estate, she gallivanted around infamous hotels, flirting with men and utilizing her sexuality. However, when she finally meets Mitch, a sweet, kind man, she chooses to hide the scandalous half of her past, therefore creating an unstable and untruthful relationship with him. When Mitch ultimately learns the truth about Blanche's past, he is horrified and almost disgusted with her. He says to her, "you lied to me Blanche...lies, lies, inside and out, all lies" (147). Blanche, who had started to believe that she and Mitch needed each other and could help each other, is shocked, insulted, and crushed by Mitch's accusations. This complete disappointment also drove her to the brink of madness, as all Blanche wanted was to be able to reconcile her past by starting a relationship and ultimately marrying another man. However, she has now come to the conclusions that she will never be able to free herself of her haunting past, nor will she ever have a welcome home or family to return to.

This realization has left her humiliated and helpless. Combined with the violent rape that occurs, Blanche completely collapses in on herself, retreating to the corners of her mind, and giving in to her mad thoughts and hallucinations. Ever since Blanche has arrived at Stella's house, she has been locked in a never-ending battle with Stanley, her brother-in-law, in which he goes on to physically abuse her. However, the final shock that causes Blanche to spiral downward is Stella's obvious disbelief, and lack of support.

Stella says to Eunice, "I couldn't believe her story and go on living with
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Stanley” (165). Although Blanche is shaken by Stanley’s violent action towards her, the final ‘ straw’ that ultimately pushes her into the abyss of mental breakdown is her own sister’s refusal to believe her story, as well as Stella’s betrayal of Blanche.

Blanche Dubois arrives at her sister’s house in the hope of finding a caring family, marriage opportunities, hope, and desire. Instead, she is trapped in the vice-like grip of her haunting past and thoughts of guilt, as well as the new horrors she has come to face in her stay in Elysian Fields, all of which are to blame for Blanche’s final breakdown.