TENNESSEE
WILLIAMS

Collected Stories

With an introduction by
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Preface:
The Man in the Overstuffed Chair

He always enters the house as though he were entering it with the intention of tearing it down from inside. That is how he always enters it except when it's after midnight and liquor has put out the fire in his nerves. Then he enters the house in a strikingly different manner, almost guiltily, coughing a little, sighing louder than he coughs, and sometimes talking to himself as someone talks to someone after a long, fierce argument has exhausted the anger between them but not settled the problem. He takes off his shoes in the living room before he goes upstairs where he has to go past my mother's closed door, but she never fails to let him know she hears him by clearing her throat very loudly or saying, "Ah, me, ah, me!" Sometimes I hear him say "Ah, me" in response as he goes on down the hall to where he sleeps, an alcove sunroom connected to the bedroom of my young brother, Dakin, who is at this time, the fall and winter of 1943, with the Air Force in Burma.

These months, the time of this story, enclose the end of the life of my mother's mother.

My father's behavior toward my maternal grandmother is scrupulously proper but his attitude toward my grandfather Dakin is so insulting that I don't think the elderly gentleman could have endured it without the insulation of deafness and near-blindness.

Although my grandmother is dying, she is still quite sound of sight and hearing, and when it is approaching the time for my father to return from his office to the house, my grandmother is always downstairs to warn her husband that Cornelius is about to storm in the front door. She hears the Studebaker charging up the drive and cries out to my grandfather, *"Walter, Cornelius is coming!"* She cries out this warning so loudly that Grandfather can't help but hear it. My grand-

father staggers up from his chair by the radio and starts for the front stairs, but sometimes he doesn't make them in time and there is an awkward encounter in the downstairs hall. My grandfather says, "Good evening, Cornelius" and is lucky if he receives, in answer, a frigid "Hello, Mr. Dakin" instead of a red-eyed glare and a grunt.

It takes him, now that he's in his eighties with cataracts on both eyes, quite a while to get up the stairs, shepherded by his wife, and sometimes my father will come thundering up the steps behind them as if he intended to knock the old couple down. What is he after? A drink, of course, from a whiskey bottle under his bed in the sunroom, or the bathroom tub.

"Walter, watch out!"

"Excuse me, Mrs. Dakin," my father grunts breathlessly as he charges past them on the stairs.

They go to their bedroom, close the door. I don't hear just what they say to each other, but I know that "Grand" is outdone with Grandfather for lingering too long downstairs to avoid this humiliating encounter. Of course Grandfather finds the encounter distasteful, too, but he dearly loves to crouch by the downstairs radio at this hour when the news broadcasters come on, now that he can't read newsprint.

They are living with us because my grandmother's strength is so rapidly failing. She has been dying for ten years and her weight has dropped to eighty-six pounds. Any other person would be confined to bed, if not the terminal ward of a hospital, but my grandmother is resolved to remain on her feet, and actively helpful about the house. She is. She still does most of the laundry in the basement and insists on washing the dishes. My mother begs her to rest, but "Grand" is determined to show my father that she is not a dependent. And I have come home, this late autumn of 1943, because my mother wrote me, "Your grandmother has had to give up the house in Memphis because she is not strong enough to take care of it and your grandfather, too."

Between the lines of the letter, I read that my mother is expecting the imminent death of her mother and I ought to stop in Saint Louis on my bus trip between the West and East coasts, so I have stopped there.

I arrive there late one night in November and as I go up the front walk I see, through the curtains of the front room windows, my grandmother stalking across the living room like a skeleton in clothes. It shocks me so that I have to set down my luggage on the front walk and wait about five minutes before I can enter the house.

Only my grandmother has stayed up to receive me at this midnight hour, the others thinking that I had probably driven on through to New York, as I had so often before after promising to come home.

She makes light of her illness, and actually she manages to seem almost well for my benefit. She has kept a dinner plate on the stove for me over a double boiler and a low flame, and the living room fire is alive, and no reference is made to my failure in Hollywood, the humiliating termination of my six-months option as a screenwriter at MGM studios.

"Grand" says she's come here to help Edwina, my mother, who is suffering from nervous exhaustion and is very disturbed over Cornelius's behavior. Cornelius has been drinking heavily. Mother found five empty bottles under his bed and several more under the bathtub, and his position as sales manager of a branch of the International Shoe Company is in jeopardy due to a scandalous poker fight in which half of his left ear was bitten off, yes, actually bitten off, so that he had to go to a hospital and have a plastic-surgery operation, taking cartilage from a rib to be grafted onto the ear, and in spite of elaborate precautions to keep it under wraps, the story has come out. Mr. J., the head executive and my father's immediate superior, has at last lost all patience with my father, who may have to retire in order to avoid being dismissed. But otherwise everything is fine, she is telling me about these things because Edwina may be inclined to exaggerate the seriousness of the family situation when we talk in the morning. And now I ought to go up to bed after a long, hard trip. Yes, I ought to, indeed. I will have to sleep in brother Dakin's old room rather than in my usual retreat in the attic, since the bed in the attic has been dismantled so that I won't insist on sleeping up there and getting pneumonia.

I don't like the idea of taking Dakin's room since it adjoins my father's doorless appendage to it.

I enter the bedroom and undress in the dark.

Strange sounds come from my father's sunroom, great sighs and groans and inebriate exclamations of sorrow such as, "Oh, God, oh, God!" He is unaware of my sleepless presence in the room adjoining. From time to time, at half-hour intervals, he lurches and stumbles out of bed to fetch a bottle of whiskey from some place of naive concealment, remarking to himself, "How terrible!"

At last I take a sleeping pill so that my exhaustion can prevail over my tension and my curiously mixed feelings of disgust and pity for my

father, Cornelius Coffin Williams, the Mississippi drummer, who was removed from the wild and free road and put behind a desk like a jungle animal put in a cage in a zoo.

At supper the following evening an awful domestic scene takes place.

My father is one of those drinkers who never stagger or stumble but turn savage with liquor, and this next evening after my homecoming he comes home late and drunk for supper. He sits at one end of the table, my mother at the other, and she fixes on him her look of silent suffering like a bird dog drawing a bead on a covey of quail in the bushes.

All at once he explodes into maniacal fury.

His shouting goes something like this: "What the hell, why the hell do you feel so sorry for yourself? I'm keeping your parents here, they're not paying board!"

The shout penetrates my grandfather's deafness and he says, "Rose, let's go to our room." But my grandmother Rose remains at the table as Edwina and Grandfather retire upstairs. I stay as if rooted or frozen to the dining-room chair, the food turning sick in my stomach.

Silence.

My father crouches over his plate, eating like a wild beast eats his kill in the jungle.

Then my grandmother's voice, quiet and gentle: "Cornelius, do you want us to pay board here?"

Silence again.

My father stops eating, though. He doesn't look up as he says in a hoarse, shaky voice: "No, I don't, Mrs. Dakin."

His inflamed blue eyes are suddenly filled with tears. He lurches up from the table and goes to the overstuffed chair in the living room.

This overstuffed chair, I don't remember just when we got it. I suspect it was in the furnished apartment that we took when we first came to Saint Louis. To take the apartment we had to buy the furniture that was in it, and through this circumstance we acquired a number of pieces of furniture that would be intriguing to set designers of films about lower-middle-class life. Some of these pieces have been gradually weeded out through successive changes of address, but my father was never willing to part with the overstuffed chair. It really doesn't look like it could be removed. It seems too fat to get through a doorway. Its color was originally blue, plain blue, but time has altered the blue to

something sadder than blue, as if it had absorbed in its fabric and stuffing all the sorrows and anxieties of our family life and these emotions had become its stuffing and its pigmentation (if chairs can be said to have a pigmentation). It doesn't really seem like a chair, though. It seems more like a fat, silent person, not silent by choice but simply unable to speak because if it spoke it would not get through a sentence without bursting into a self-pitying wail.

Over this chair still stands another veteran piece of furniture, a floor lamp that must have come with it. It rises from its round metal base on the floor to half a foot higher than a tall man sitting. Then it curves over his head one of the most ludicrous things a man has ever sat under, a sort of Chinesey-looking silk lamp shade with a fringe about it, so that it suggests a weeping willow. Which is presumably weeping for the occupant of the chair.

I have never known whether Mother was afraid to deprive my father of his overstuffed chair and weeping-willow floor lamp or if it simply amused her to see him with them. There was a time, in her younger years, when she looked like a fairy-tale princess and had a sense of style that exceeded by far her power to indulge it. But now she's tired, she's about sixty now, and she lets things go. And the house is now filled not only with its original furnishings but with the things inherited from my grandparents' house in Memphis. In fact, the living room is so full of furniture that you have to be quite sober to move through it without a collision . . . and still there is the overstuffed chair.

A few days after the awful scene at the dinner table, my dearly loved grandmother, Rose Otte Dakin, bled to death in the house of my parents.

She had washed the dinner dishes, had played Chopin on the piano, which she'd brought with her from Memphis, and had started upstairs when she was overtaken by a fit of coughing and a lung hemorrhage that wouldn't stop.

She fought death for several hours, with almost no blood left in her body to fight with.

Being a coward, I wouldn't enter the room where this agony was occurring. I stood in the hall upstairs. My grandmother Rose was trying to deliver a message to my mother. She kept flinging out a wasted arm to point at a bureau.

It was not till several days after this death in the house that my mother found out the meaning of that gesture.

My grandmother was trying to tell my mother that all her savings were sewn up in a corset in a drawer of the bureau.

Late that night, when my grandmother had been removed to a mortuary, my father came home.

"Cornelius," said Mother, "I have lost my mother."

I saw him receive this announcement, and a look came over his face that was even more deeply stricken than that of my mother when she closed the eyelids of "Grand" after her last fight for breath.

He went to his overstuffed chair, under the weeping-willow floor lamp, like a man who has suddenly discovered the reality in a nightmare, and he said, over and over again, "How awful, oh, God, oh God, how awful!"

He was talking to himself.

At the time of my grandmother's death I had been for ten years more an irregular and reluctant visitor to the house than a member of the household. Sometimes my visits would last the better part of a year, sometimes, more usually, they would last no more than a week. But for three years after my years at college I was sentenced to confinement in this house and to hard labor in "The World's Largest Shoe Company" in which my father was also serving time, perhaps as unhappily as I was. We were serving time in quite different capacities. My father was the sales manager of that branch that manufactures, most notably, shoes and booties for kiddies, called "Red Goose Shoes," and never before and probably not to this day has "The World's Largest" had so gifted a manager of salesmen. As for me, I was officially a clerk-typist but what I actually did was everything that no one else wanted to do, and since the boss wanted me to quit, he and the straw boss made sure that I had these assignments. I was kept on my feet most of the time, charging back and forth between the office and the connecting warehouse of this world's largest wholesale shoe company, which gave me capable legs and a fast stride. The lowliest of my assigned duties was the one I liked most, dusting off the sample shoes in three brightly mirrored sample rooms each morning; dusting off the mirrors as well as the shoes in these rooms that were intended to dazzle the eyes of retailers from all over the States. I liked this job best because it was so private. It was performed before the retailers came in: I had the rooms

and the mirrors to myself, dusting off the sample shoes with a chamois rag was something that I could do quickly and automatically, and the job kept me off the noisy floor of the office. I regretted that it took only about an hour, even when I was being most dreamily meticulous about it. That hour having been stretched to its fullest, I would have to take my desk in the office and type out great sheaves of factory orders. It was nearly all numerals, digits. I made many mistakes, but for an amusing reason I couldn't be fired. The head of the department had gotten his job through the influence of my father, which was still high at that time. I could commit the most appalling goofs and boners and still I couldn't be fired, however much I might long to be fired from this sixty-five-dollar-a-month position. I left my desk more often than anyone else. My branch of "The World's Largest" was on the top floor but I had discovered a flight of stairs to the roof of the twelve-story building and every half hour or so I would go up those stairs to have a cigarette, rather than retiring to the smelly men's room. From this roof I could look across the Mississippi River to the golden wheat fields of Illinois, and the air, especially in autumn, was bracingly above the smog of Saint Louis, so I used to linger up there for longer than a cigarette to reflect upon a poem or short story that I would finish that weekend.

I had several enemies in the office, especially the one called "The Straw Boss," a tall, mincing creature who had acquired the valuable trick of doing nasty things nicely. He was not at all bright, though. He didn't realize that I liked dusting the shoes and running the errands that took me out of "The World's Largest." And he always saw to it that the sample cases that I had to carry about ten blocks from "The World's Largest" to its largest buyer, which was J.C. Penney Company, were almost too heavy for a small man to carry. So did I build up my chest and slightly damage my arterial system, a damage that was soon to release me from my period of bondage. This didn't bother me, though. (I've thought a good deal about death but doubt that I've feared it very much, then or now.)

The thing I most want to tell you about is none of this, however; it is something much stranger. It is the ride downtown that my father and I would take every morning in his Studebaker. This was a long ride, it took about half an hour, and seemed much longer for neither my father nor I had anything to say to each other during the ride. I remember that I would compose one sentence to deliver to my father, to break just once the intolerable silence that existed between us, as intolerable to him, I suspect, as it was to me. I would start composing

this one sentence during breakfast and I would usually deliver it halfway downtown. It was a shockingly uninteresting remark. It was delivered in a shockingly strained voice, a voice that sounded choked. It would be a comment on the traffic or the smog that enveloped the streets. The interesting thing about it was his tone of answer. He would answer the remark as if he understood how hard it was for me to make it. His answer would always be sad and gentle. "Yes, it's awful," he'd say. And he didn't say it as if it was a response to my remark. He would say it as if it referred to much larger matters than traffic or smog. And looking back on it, now, I feel that he understood my fear of him and forgave me for it, and wished there was some way to break the wall between us.

It would be false to say that he was ever outwardly kind to his fantastic older son, myself. But I suspect, now, that he knew that I was more of a Williams than a Dakin, and that I would be more and more like him as I grew older, and that he pitied me for it.

I often wonder many things about my father now, and understand things about him, such as his anger at life, so much like my own, now that I'm old as he was.

I wonder for instance, if he didn't hate and despise "The World's Largest Shoe Company" as much as I did. I wonder if he wouldn't have liked, as much as I did, to climb the stairs to the roof.

I understand that he knew that my mother had made me a sissy, but that I had a chance, bred in his blood and bone, to some day rise above it, as I had to and did.

His branch of "The World's Largest" was three floors down from the branch I worked for, and sometimes an errand would take me down to his branch.

He was always dictating letters in a voice you could hear from the elevator before the door of it opened.

It was a booming voice, delivered on his feet as he paced about his stenographer at the desk. Occupants of the elevator, hearing his voice, would smile at each other as they heard it booming out so fiercely.

Usually he would be dictating a letter to one of his salesmen, and not the kind of letter that would flatter or please them.

Somehow he dominated the office with his loud dictation. The letters would not be indulgent.

"Maybe you're eating fried chicken now," he'd boom out, "but I reckon you remember the days when we'd go around the corner for a cigarette for breakfast. Don't forget it. I don't. Those days can come back again . . ."

His boss, Mr. J., approved of C.C.'s letters, but had a soundproof glass enclosure built about his corner in "The World's Largest". . .

A psychiatrist once said to me, You will begin to forgive the world when you've forgiven your father.

I'm afraid it is true that my father taught me to hate, but I know that he didn't plan to, and, terrible as it is to know how to hate, and to hate, I have forgiven him for it and for a great deal else.

Sometimes I wonder if I have forgiven my mother for teaching me to expect more love from the world, more softness in it, than I could ever offer?

The best of my work, as well as the impulse to work, was a gift from the man in the overstuffed chair, and now I feel a very deep kinship to him. I almost feel as if I am sitting in the overstuffed chair where he sat, exiled from those I should love and those that ought to love me. For love I make characters in plays. To the world I give suspicion and resentment, mostly. I am not cold. I am never deliberately cruel. But after my morning's work, I have little to give but indifference to people. I try to excuse myself with the pretense that my work justifies this lack of caring much for almost everything else. Sometimes I crack through the emotional block. I touch, I embrace, I hold tight to a necessary companion. But the breakthrough is not long lasting. Morning returns, and only work matters again.

Now a bit more about my father whom I have come to know and understand so much better.

My mother couldn't forgive him. A few years after the years that I have annotated a little in this piece of writing, my mother became financially able to cut him out of her life, and cut him out she did. He had been in a hospital for recovery from a drunken spree. When he returned to the house, she refused to see him. My brother had returned from the latest war, and he would go back and forth between them, arranging a legal separation. I suspect it was not at all a thing that my father wanted. But once more he exhibited a gallantry in his nature that I had not then expected. He gave my mother the house and half of his stock in the International Shoe Company, although she was already well set up by my gift to her of half of my earnings from *The Glass Menagerie*. He acquiesced without protest to the terms of the separation, and then he went back to his native town of Knoxville, Tennessee, to live with his spinster sister, our Aunt Ella. Aunt Ella wasn't able to live with him, either, so after a while he moved into a hotel at a resort called Whittle Springs, close to Knoxville, and some-

how or other he became involved with a widow from Toledo, Ohio, who became his late autumn love which lasted till the end of his life.

I've never seen this lady but I am grateful to her because she stuck with Dad through those last years.

Now and then, during those years, my brother would be called down to Knoxville to see Dad through an illness brought on by his drinking, and I think it was the Toledo Widow who would summon my brother.

My brother, Dakin, is more of a Puritan than I am, and so I think the fact that he never spoke harshly of the Toledo Widow is a remarkable compliment to her. All I gathered from his guarded references to this attachment between Dad and the Toledo Widow was that she made him a faithful drinking companion. Now and then they would fly down to Biloxi and Gulfport, Mississippi, where Dad and Mother had spent their honeymoon, and it was just after one of these returns to where he had been happy with Mother, and she with him that he had his final illness. I don't know what caused his death, if anything caused it but one last spree. The Toledo Widow was with him at the end, in a Knoxville hospital. The situation was delicate for Aunt Ella. She didn't approve of the widow and would only go to my father's deathbed when assured there would be no encounter between the widow and herself in the hospital room. She did pass by her once in the hospital corridor, but she made no disparaging comment on her when I flew down to Knoxville for the funeral of my father.

The funeral was an exceptionally beautiful service. My brother, Aunt Ella, and I sat in a small room set apart for the nearest of kin and listened and looked on while the service was performed.

Then we went out to "Old Gra[illegible]", as they called the Knoxville Cemetery, and there we sat in a [illegible] of tent with the front of it open, to witness the interment of the [illegible] of the overstuffed chair.

Behind us, on chairs in the open, was a very large congregation of more distant kinfolk and surviving friends of his youth, and somewhere among them was the Toledo Widow, I've heard.

After the interment, the kinfolk all came up to our little tent to offer condolences that were unmistakably meant.

The widow drove off in his car which he had bequeathed to her, her only bequest, and I've heard of her nothing more.

He left his modest remainder of stock in the International Shoe Company in three parts to his sister, and to his daughter, and to my brother, a bequest which brought them each a monthly income of a hundred dollars. He left me nothing because, as he had told Aunt Ella, it didn't seem likely that I would ever have need of inherited money.

I wonder if he knew, and I suspect that he did, that he had left me something far more important, which was his blood in my veins? And of course I wonder, too, if there wasn't more love than hate in his blood, however tortured it was.

Aunt Ella is gone now, too, but while I was in Knoxville for Dad's funeral, she showed me a newspaper photograph of him outside a movie house where a film of mine, *Baby Doll*, was being shown. Along with the photograph of my father was his comment on the picture.

What he said was: "I think it's a very fine picture and I'm proud of my son."

Tennessee Williams
c. 1960 (Published 1980)

Introduction

I

Thirty-seven years ago, to the day that I am writing this note, Tennessee Williams and I celebrated his thirty-seventh birthday in Rome, except that he said that it was his thirty-*fourth* birthday. Years later, when confronted with the fact that he had been born in 1911 not 1914, he said, serenely, "I do not choose to count as part of my life the three years that I spent working for a shoe company." Actually, he spent ten months not three years in the shoe company, and the reason that he had changed his birth date was to qualify for a play contest open to those twenty-five or under. No matter. I thought him very old in 1948. But I was twenty-two that spring of the *annus mirabilis* when my book *The City and the Pillar* was a bestseller and his play *A Streetcar Named Desire* was taking the world by storm; as it still does.

In 1973 Tennessee wrote a book called *Memoirs* (published 1975). He was not, as he was quick to warn us, at his best mentally or physically when he wrote the book, and though he purported to tell the story of his life, he chose, instead, to write about sexual adventures and glancing encounters with the great, ignoring entirely the art and inner life of one Tennessee (born Thomas Lanier) Williams. Fortunately, in "The Man in the Overstuffed Chair" (which I hope you have just read), he has given as dry and precise an account of his early life as we will ever have. Here he introduces most of the characters that he will continue to write about for the rest of his life. The introverted sister, Rose, on whom a lobotomy is performed, erasing her as a person. Whose fault? He blames their mother, Edwina, who gave the order for the lobotomy—on the best medical advice, or so she says. Then there is the hard-drinking, extroverted father, Cornelius, at odds with relentlessly genteel wife, sissy son, Tom, and daughter, Rose, who may or may not have accused him of making sexual advances to her, which he may or

may not have made. There is the grandfather, Reverend Dakin, who gave to strangers all the money that he had put by for reasons not made clear (though Tennessee once told me that his grandfather had been blackmailed because of an encounter with a boy); and, finally, the grandmother, yet another Rose, known as Grand, the survivor, the generous, the non-questioning. The son, Tom, is shadowy here: after all, he is creator. But, as he has just told us, over the years his sympathy shifted from mother to father while he was never to be out of love with Rose or Rose. As you are about to see, he will spend a lifetime playing with the same vivid, ambiguous cards that life dealt him.

The stories are arranged in chronological order. The first was published (in *Weird Tales*, no less: a sister avenges her brother) when Tom was seventeen; the last was written when Tennessee was seventy-one. These stories are the true memoir of Tennessee Williams. Whatever happened to him, real or imagined, is here. Except for an occasional excursion into fantasy, he sticks close to life as he experienced or imagined it. No, he is not a great short story writer like Chekhov but he has something rather more rare than mere genius. He has a narrative tone of voice that is totally compelling. The only other American writer to have this gift was Mark Twain, a very different sort of writer (to overdo understatement); yet Hannibal, Missouri, is not all that far from Saint Louis, Missouri; and each was a comic genius. In any case, you cannot stop listening to either of these tellers no matter how tall or wild their tales.

Over the decades I watched Tennessee at work in Rome, Paris, Key West, New Haven. . . . He worked every morning on whatever was at hand. If there was no play to be finished or new dialogue to be sent round to the theater, he would open a drawer and take out the draft of a story already written and begin to rewrite it. I once caught him in the act of revising a short story that had just been published. "Why," I asked, "rewrite what's already in print?" He looked at me, vaguely; then said, "Well, obviously it's not finished." And went back to his typing.

Many of these stories were rewritten a dozen or more times, often over as many years. The first story that he ever showed me was "Rubio y Morena." I didn't like it (and still don't). So fix it, he said. He knew, of course, that there is no fixing someone else's story or life but he was curious to see what I would do. So I reversed backward-running sentences, removed repetitions, simplified the often ponderous images. I was rather proud of the result. He was deeply irritated. "What you have done is remove my *style*, which is all that I have." He was right.

It has been suggested that many of the stories are simply preliminary sketches for plays. The truth is more complicated. Like most natural writers, Tennessee could not possess his own life until he had written about it. This is common. But what is not common was the way that he went about not only recapturing lost time but then regaining it in a way that far surpassed the original experience. In the beginning, there would be, let us say, a sexual desire for someone. Consummated or not, the desire ("Something that is made to occupy a larger space than that which is afforded by the individual being") would produce reveries. In turn, the reveries would be written down as a story. But should the desire still remain unfulfilled, he would make a play of the story and then—and this is why he was so compulsive a working playwright—he would have the play produced so that he could, like God, rearrange his original experience into something that was no longer God's and unpossessable but *his*. The frantic lifelong desire for play-productions was not just ambition or a need to be busy, it was the only way that he ever had of being entirely alive. The sandy encounters with the dancer Kip on the beach at Provincetown and the dancer's later death ("an awful flower grew in his brain") instead of being forever lost were forever his (and ours) once translated to the stage where living men and women could act out his text and with their immediate flesh close, with art, the circle of desire. "For love I make characters in plays," he wrote; and did.

I called him the Glorious Bird. I had long since forgotten why until I reread the stories. The image of the bird is everywhere. The bird is flight, poetry, life. The bird is time, death: "'Have you ever seen the skeleton of a bird? If you have you will know how completely they are still flying. . . .'"

There are some things of a biographical nature that the reader should know. Much has been made of Tennessee's homosexual adventures (not least, alas, by himself); and, certainly, a sense of other-ness is crucial to his work. Whether a woman, Blanche, or a man, Brick, the characters that most intrigue him are outsiders, part of "that swarm of the fugitive kind." Although there is no such thing as a homosexual or a heterosexual person, there are, of course, homo- or heterosexual acts. Unhappily, it has suited the designers of the moral life of the American republic to pretend that there are indeed two teams, one evil and sick and dangerous, and one good and normal and—that word!—straight. This is further complicated by our society's enduring hatred of women, a legacy from the Old Testament, enriched, in due course, by St. Paul. As a result, it is an article of faith among simple folk that any man who performs a sexual act with another man is behaving just like a