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1-800-799-7233, the National Domestic Violence Hotline phone number. It is almost scary and hard to believe that this option hasn’t always been available to women. It was only officially established in 1995, after President Bill Clinton passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994, that created the hotline (National). Since then, major companies like Verizon and the NFL have partnered with the hotline and other presidents like Obama have added provisions to VAWA. It wasn’t until the 1970s that domestic violence was getting recognized and looked upon. Before then, it was kind of like an unspoken understanding between women to not speak and acknowledge intimate partner violence. Throughout time, women’s struggles and concerns have been brought to light and slowly, women are getting protection and treatment they deserve. A critical theme of the 1947 play, A *Streetcar Named Desire,* is domestic violence, which has been described as “ignored by literary critics” (Koprince).

*A Streetcar Named Desire* takes place in the late 1940s, post-World War II, as women were refiguring out their lives and their role in society, after the return of their husbands and men from serving in the war. Some women were returning to kitchen and home, after taking laboring jobs, during their husband absence. It follows Blanche DuBois, who is going to visit her sister, Stella in the French Quarter of New Orleans from Mississippi. Stella’s husband, Stanley Kowalski, who had previously served in the U.S. military, seems like the perfect husband but is far from it. Blanche finally arrives in town and reveals to her sister, Stella, that she lost their family home, Belle Reve. Stella and Blanche come from an upper class, more elite family rather than Stanley, who is a polish immigrant and lower class. During Blanche’s visit, a series of events and shocking revelations are disclosed. Blanche faces a lot of dilemmas, reality checks, and ends up with kind of a gloomy ending.

Has domestic violence been overlooked or ignored in the past? Susan Koprince, an English professor at the University of North Dakota, states that domestic violence was “virtually ignored” until the 70s and it was considered a “family matter” instead of a crime (Koprince). It was never normalized, but just accepted and seen as inevitable by some people in the earlier half of the 1900s. Today, most U.S states have laws prohibiting domestic violence between different relationships like intimate partners, adult siblings, or adults who take care of their parents (Kramer and Finley). This shows the seriousness of domestic violence and the zero tolerance in today’s society whether it be between spouses or family members.

Stella and Stanley’s relationship is the overall example of intimate partner violence in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and accurately depicts physical abuse in an intimate relationship. Men are usually the aggressor in a domestic violence situation (Fuller). For instance, Stanley Kowalski first appears as a charming, attractive guy, but is revealed to be an aggressive, sensual, abusive man underneath the surface. Throughout the story, Stanley does some disgraceful acts towards Stella, like giving “a loud whack of his hand on her thigh” while Stanley and some other guys are playing a game of Poker (Williams 48). Later, after some alcoholic drinks, Stanley attacks his pregnant wife, Stella, which is described as the “sound of a blow” and Blanche tries to protect her (Williams 57). Stanley expects Stella to respect and obey him as he wants control, power, and superiority over her. He sees himself as the dominant figure and knows the psychological hold he has on Stella, even after his violent outbursts and abuse. After hitting Stella, he begs her to come back by yelling, “Stell-*lahhhhh...*I want my baby down here. Stella, Stella” (Williams 59). This line is deemed as the most famous line in the play and movie. Just as expected, Stella stays with him and excuses his violent acts.

Stanley isn’t just physically abusive towards Stella, but his aggressive, controlling behavior is asserted onto his sister-in-law, Blanche. Just as Stella is giving birth to the new baby, in scene 10, it is implied and inferred that Stanley rapes Blanche. This ultimately is revealed to be true as his own anger, sexual frustrations, and insecurities may have overtaken him. Before the attack, Blanche smashes a bottle and threatens to smash it into Stanley’s face, which infuriates him even more. From the beginning of the play, Stanley doesn’t care for Blanche, as she acts prestigious and comes off like she’s better than everyone. She refers to him, using words like “common”, “sub-human”, and “bestial.” This leads him to have suspicions about her being dishonest and untrustworthy. With her arrival, Stella has to split her time up between Stanley and Blanche, which he doesn’t like either; he wants her all to himself. After Blanche reveals this encounter between her and Stanley to her sister, Stella uses Blanche’s accusations as further evidence that her sister has gone insane and lost her mind. The story begins with Blanche’s happy arrival and ends with her miserable departure.

*A Streetcar Named Desire* has a lot of vulnerable moments between characters, where scandalous events are revealed. The 1947 play incorporates a lot of social issues, that were shunned and considered to be taboo during this period in America. One of those issues would be domestic violence, which was disregarded by critics and readers. Stanley Kowalski is the main domestic abuser and aggressor in this situation, especially in his relationship with Stella. Blanche enters the story smoothly and leaves with her life turned upside down than ever. Throughout the story, nothing really changes in the dynamic between Stella and Stanley’s relationship, which shows the view of domestic violence back then and Stella’s unspoken acceptance of it in her relationship.

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