CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF
by TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

MARGARET

BRICK

MAE, sometimes called Sister Woman

BIG MAMA

DIXIE, a little girl

BIG DADDY

REVEREND TOOKER

GOOPER sometimes called Brother Man

DOCTOR BAUGH, pronounced "Baw"

LACEY, a Negro servant

SOOKEY, another

CHILDREN

{Cat on a Hot Tin Roof} was originally presented at the Morosco Theatre in New York on March 24, 1955. On July 10, 1974, it was restaged by the American Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford, Connecticut, with the third act completely re-written, along with other substantial revisions. The play reopened in New York on September 24 at the ANTA Theatre. Both 1974 productions were directed by Michael Kahn; the stage setting were designed by John Conklin, the lighting by Marc B. Weiss, and the costumes by Jane Greenwood. The cast was as follows:

MARGARET                  ELIZABETH ASHLEY
BRICK                     KEIR DULLEA
DIXIE                     DEBORAH GROVE
MAE                       JOAN PAPE
GOOPER                    CHARLES SIEBERT
BIG MAMA                  KATE REID
SOOKEY                    SARAELLEN
BIG DADDY                 FRED GWYNNE
REVEREND TOOKER           WYMAN PENDLETON
DOCTOR BAUGH              WILLIAM LARSEN
The set is the bed-sitting-room of a plantation home in the Mississippi Delta. It is along an upstairs gallery which probably runs around the entire house; it has two pairs of very wide doors opening onto the gallery, showing white balustrades against a fair summer sky that fades into dusk and night during the course of the play, which occupies precisely the time of its performance, excepting, of course, the fifteen minutes of intermission.

Perhaps the style of the room is not what you would expect in the home of the Delta's biggest cotton-planter. It is Victorian with a touch of the Far East. It hasn't changed much since it was occupied by the original owners of the place, Jack Straw and Peter Ochello, a pair of old bachelors who shared this room all their lives together. In other words, the room must evoke some ghosts; it is gently and poetically haunted by a relationship that must have involved a tenderness which was uncommon. This may be irrelevant or unnecessary, but I once saw a reproduction of a faded photograph of the verandah of Robert Louis Stevenson's home on that Samoan Island where he spent his last years, and there was a quality of tender light on weathered wood, such as porch furniture made of bamboo and wicker, exposed to tropical suns and tropical rains, which came to mind when I thought about the set for this play, bringing also to mind the grace and comfort of light, the reassurance it gives, on a late and fair afternoon in summer, the way that no matter what, even dread of death, is gently touched and soothed by it. For the set is the background for a play that deals with human extremities of emotion, and it needs that softness behind it.

The bathroom door, showing only pale-blue tile and silver towel racks, is in one side wall; the hall door in the opposite wall. Two articles of furniture need mention: a big double bed which staging should make a functional part of the set as often as suitable, the surface of which should be slightly raked to make figures on it seen more easily; and against the wall space between the two huge double doors upstage: a monumental monstrosity peculiar to our times, a huge console combination of radiophonograph (hi-fi with three speakers)
TV set and liquor cabinet, bearing and containing many glasses and bottles, all in one piece, which is a composition of muted silver tones, and the opalescent tones of reflecting glass, a chromatic link, this thing, between the sepia (tawny gold) tones of the interior and the cool (white and blue) tones of the gallery and sky. This piece of furniture (!?!), this monument, is a very complete and compact little shrine to virtually all the comforts and illusions behind which we hide from such things as the characters in the play are faced with.

The set should be far less realistic than I have so far implied in this description of it. I think the walls below the ceiling should dissolve mysteriously into air; the set should be roofed by the sky; stars and moon suggested by traces of milky pallor, as if they were observed through a telescope lens out of focus.

Anything else I can think of? Oh, yes, fanlights (transoms shaped like an open glass fan) above all the doors in the set, with panes of blue and amber, and above all, the designer should take as many pains to give the actors room to move about freely (to show their restlessness, their passion for breaking out) as if it were a set for a ballet.

An evening in summer. The action is continuous, with two intermissions.

ACT ONE

{At the rise of the curtain someone is taking a shower in the bathroom, the door of which is half open. A pretty young woman, with anxious lines in her face, enters the bedroom and crosses to the bathroom door.}

MARGARET {{shouting above roar of water}}: One of those no-neck monsters hit me with a hot buttered biscuit so I have t' change!

{{Margaret's voice is both rapid and drawling. In her long speeches she has the vocal tricks of a priest delivering a liturgical chant, the lines are almost sung, always continuing a little beyond her breath so she has to gasp for another. Sometimes she intersperses the lines with a little wordless singing, such as "Da-da-daaaa!"}}

{{Water turns off and Brick calls out to her, but is still unseen. A tone of politely feigned interest, masking indifference, or worse, is characteristic of his speech with Margaret.}}
BRICK:
Wha'd you say, Maggie? Water was on s' loud I couldn't 
hearya. . . .

MARGARET:
Well, I!--just remarked that!--one of th' noneck monsters 
messed up m' lovely lace dress so I got t'--cha-a-ange. . . .

{{She opens and kicks shut drawers of the dresser.}}

BRICK:
Why d'ya call Gooper's kiddies no-neck monsters?

MARGARET:
Because they've got no necks! Isn't that a good enough 
reason?

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BRICK:
Don't they have any necks?

MARGARET:
None visible. Their fat little heads are set on their fat little 
bodies without a bit of connection.

BRICK:
That's too bad.

MARGARET:
Yes, it's too bad because you can't wring their necks if they've 
got no necks to wring! Isn't that right, honey?

{{She steps out of her dress, stands in a slip of ivory satin 
and lace.}}

Yep, they're no-neck monsters, all no-neck people are mon-
sters . . .

{{Children shriek downstairs.}}

Hear them? Hear them screaming? I don't know where their 
voice boxes are located since they don't have necks. I tell you 
I got so nervous at that table tonight I thought I would throw 
back my head and utter a scream you could hear across the 
Arkansas border an' parts of Louisiana an' Tennessee. I said 
to your charming sister-in-law, Mae, honey, couldn't you feed 
those precious little things at a separate table with an oilcloth 
cover? They make such a mess an' the lace cloth looks {so} 
pretty! She made enormous eyes at me and said, "Ohhh, 
nooooo! On Big Daddy's birthday? Why, he would never 
forgive me!" Well, I want you to know, Big Daddy hadn't
been at the table two minutes with those five no-neck monsters slobbering and drooling over their food before he threw down his fork an' shouted, "Fo' God's sake, Gooper, why don't you put them pigs at a trough in th' kitchen?"--Well, I swear, I simply could have di-ied!

Think of it, Brick, they've got five of them and number six is coming. They've brought the whole bunch down here like animals to display at a county fair. Why, they have those children doin' tricks all the time! "Junior, show Big Daddy how you do this, show Big Daddy how you do that, say your little piece fo' Big Daddy, Sister. Show your dimples, Sugar. Brother, show Big Daddy how you stand on your head!"--It goes on all the time, along with constant little remarks and innuendos about the fact that you and I have not produced any children, are totally childless and therefore totally useless! --Of course it's comical but it's also disgusting since it's so obvious what they're up to!

BRICK [[without interest]]:
What are they up to, Maggie?

MARGARET:
Why, you know what they're up to!

BRICK [[appearing]]:
No, I don't know what they're up to.

{{He stands there in she bathroom doorway drying his hair with a towel and hanging onto the towel rack because one ankle is broken, plastered and bound. He is still slim and firm as a boy. His liquor hasn't started tearing him down outside. He has the additional charm of that cool air of detachment that people have who have given up the struggle. But now and then, when disturbed, something flashes behind it, like lightning in a fair sky, which shows that at some deeper level he is far from peaceful. Perhaps in a stronger light he would show some signs of deliques-

cence, but the fading, still warm, light from the gallery treats him gently.}}

MARGARET:
I'll tell you what they're up to, boy of mine!--They're up to cutting you out of your father's estate, and--

{{She freezes momentarily before her next remark. Her voice drops as if it were somehow a personally embarass-}}
--Now we know that Big Daddy's dyin' of--{cancer.} . . .

{[There are voices on the lawn below: long-drawn calls across distance. Margaret raises her lovely bare arms and Powders her armpits with a light sigh.]}

{[She adjusts the angle of a magnifying mirror to straighten an eyelash, then rises fretfully saying]}:

There's so much light in the room it--

BRICK {[softly but sharply]}:
Do we?

MARGARET:
Do we what?

BRICK:
Know Big Daddy's dyin' of cancer?

MARGARET:
Got the report today.

BRICK:
Oh . . .

MARGARET {[letting down bamboo blinds which cast long, gold-fretted shadows over the room]}:

Yep, got th' report just now . . . it didn't surprise me, Baby.

{[Her voice has range, and music,- sometimes it drops low as a boy's and you have a sudden image of her playing boy's games as a child.]}  

I recognized the symptoms soon's we got here last spring and I'm willin' to bet you that Brother Man and his wife were pretty sure of it, too. That more than likely explains why their usual summer migration to the coolness of the Great Smokies was passed up this summer in favor of--hustlin' down here ev'ry whipstitch with their whole screamin' tribe! And why so many allusions have been made to Rainbow Hill lately. You know what Rainbow Hill is? Place that's famous for treatin' alcoholics an' dope frends in the movies!

BRICK:
I'm not in the movies.
MARGARET:
No, and you don't take dope. Otherwise you're a perfect candidate for Rainbow Hill, Baby, and that's where they aim to ship you--over my dead body! Yep, over my dead body they'll ship you there, but nothing would please them better. Then Brother Man could get a-hold of the purse strings and dole out remittances to us, maybe get power of attorney and sign checks for us and cut off our credit wherever, whenever he wanted! Son-of-a-bitch!--How'd you like that, Baby?--Well, you've been doin' just about ev'rything in your power to bring it about, you've just been doin' ev'rything you can think of to aid and abet them in this scheme of theirs! Quittin' work, devoting yourself to the occupation of drinkin'! --Breakin' your ankle last night on the high school athletic field: doin' what? Jumpin' hurdles? At two or three in the morning? Just fantastic! Got in the paper. {Clarksdale Register} carried a nice little item about it, human interest story about a well-known former athlete stagin' a one-man track meet on the Glorious Hill High School athletic field last night, but was slightly out of condition and didn't clear the first hurdle! Brother Man Gooper claims he exercised his influence t' keep it from goin' out over AP or UP or every goddam "P."

But, Brick? You still have one big advantage!

{[During the above swift flood of words, Brick has reclined with contrapuntal leisure on the snowy surface of the bed and has rolled over carefully on his side or belly.]}  

BRICK {[wryly]}:
Did you {say} something, Maggie?

MARGARET:
Big Daddy dotes on you, honey. And he can't stand Brother Man and Brother Man's wife, that monster of fertility, Mae. Know how I know? By little expressions that flicker over his face when that woman is holding fo'th on one of her choice topics such as--how she refused twilight sleep!--when the twins were delivered! Because she feels motherhood's an experience that a woman ought to experience fully! --in order to fully appreciate the wonder and beauty of it! HAH!--and how she made Brother Man come in an' stand beside her in the delivery room so he would not miss out on the "wonder and beauty" of it either!--producin' those no-neck mon-sters. . . .

{[A speech of this kind would be antipathetic from almost anybody but Margaret; she makes it oddly funny, because her eyes constantly twinkle and her voice shakes with laughter which is basically indulgent.]}
--Big Daddy shares my attitude toward those two! As for me, well—I give him a laugh now and then and he tolerates me. In fact!—I sometimes suspect that Big Daddy harbors a little unconscious "lech" fo' me.

BRICK:
What makes you think that Big Daddy has a lech for you, Maggie?

MARGARET:
Way he always drops his eyes down my body when I'm talkin' to him, drops his eyes to my boobs an' licks his old chops! Ha ha!

BRICK:
That kind of talk is disgusting.

MARGARET:
Did anyone ever tell you that you're an ass-aching Puritan, Brick?

I think it's mighty fine that that ole fellow, on the doorstep of death, still takes in my shape with what I think is deserved appreciation!

And you wanta know something else? Big Daddy didn't know how many little Maes and Goopers had been produced! "How many kids have you got?" he asked at the table, just like Brother Man and his wife were new acquaintances to him! Big Mama said he was jokin', but that ole boy wasn't jokin', Lord, no!

And when they infawmed him that they had five already and were turning out number six!—the news seemed to come as a sort of unpleasant surprise . . .

{[Children yell below.]} {Scream, monsters!}

{[Turns to Brick with a sudden, gay, charming smile which fades as she notices that he is not looking at her but into fading gold space with a troubled expression.]} {[It is constant rejection that makes her humor "bitchy." ]}

Yes, you should of been at that supper-table, Baby.
Y'know, Big Daddy, bless his ole sweet soul, he's the dearest ole thing in the world, but he does hunch over his food as if he preferred not to notice anything else. Well, Mae an' Gooper were side by side at the table, direckly across from Big Daddy, watchin' his face like hawks while they jawed an' jabbered about the cuteness an' brillance of th' no-neck monsters!

And the no-neck monsters were ranged around the table, some in high chairs and some on th' {Books of Knowledge,} all in fancy little paper caps in honor of Big Daddy's birthday, and all through dinner, well, I want you to know that Brother Man an' his partner never once, for one moment, stopped exchanging pokes an' pinches an' kicks an' signs an' signals! --Why, they were like a couple of cardsharps fleecing a sucker.--Even Big Mama, bless her ole sweet soul, she isn't th' quickest an' brightest thing in the world, she finally noticed, at last, an' said to Gooper, "Gooper, what are you an' Mae makin' all these signs at each other about?"--I swear t' goodness, I nearly choked on my chicken!

Y'know--your brother Gooper still cherishes the illusion he took a grant step up on the social ladder when he married Miss Mae Flynn of the Memphis Flynns.

But I have a piece of Spanish news for Gooper. The Flynns never had a thing in this world but money and they lost that, they were nothing at all but fairly successful climbers. Of course, Mae Flynn came out in Memphis eight years before I made my debut in Nashville, but I had friends at Ward-Belmont who came from Memphis and they used to come to see me and I used to go to see them for Christmas and spring vacations, and so I know who rates an' who doesn't rate in Memphis society. Why, y'know ole Papa Flynn, he barely escaped doing time in the Federal pen for shady manipulations on th' stock market when his chain stores crashed, and as for Mae having been a cotton carnival queen, as they remind us so often, lest we forget, well, that's one honor that I don't
envy her for!--Sit on a brass throne on a tacky float an' ride
down Main Street, smilin', bowin', and blowin' kisses to all
the trash on the street--

{[She picks out a pair of jeweled sandals and rushes to the
dressing table.]}

Why, year before last, when Susan McPheeters was singled
out fo' that honor, y' know what happened to her? Y'know
what happened to poor little Susie McPheeters?

BRICK {[absently]}:
No. What happened to little Susie McPheeters?

MARGARET:
Somebody spit tobacco juice in her face.

BRICK {[dreamily]}:
Somebody spit tobacco juice in her face?

MARGARET:
That's right, some old drunk leaned out of a window in the
Hotel Gayoso and yelled, "Hey, Queen, hey, hey, there,
Queenie!" Poor Susie looked up and flashed him a radiant
smile and he shot out a squirt of tobacco juice right in poor
Susie's face.

BRICK:
Well, what d'you know about that.

MARGARET {[gaily]}:
What do I know about it? I was there, I saw it!

BRICK {[absently]}:
Must have been kind of funny.

MARGARET:
Susie didn't think so. Had hysterics. Screamed like a banshee.
They had to stop th' parade an' remove her from her throne
an' go on with--

{[She catches sight of him in the mirror, gasps slightly,
wheels about to face him. Count ten.]}

--Why are you looking at me like that?

BRICK {[whistling softly, now]}:
Like what, Maggie?

MARGARET {[intensely, fearfully]}:
The way y' were lookin' at me just now, befo' I caught your
eye in the mirror and you started t' whistle! I don't know how t' describe it but it froze my blood!--I've caught you lookin' at me like that so often lately. What are you thinkin' of when you look at me like that?

BRICK:
I wasn't conscious of lookin' at you, Maggie.

MARGARET:
Well, I was conscious of it! What were you thinkin'?

BRICK:
I don't remember thinking of anything, Maggie.

MARGARET:
Don't you think I know that--? Don't you--?--Think I know that--?

BRICK {[coolly]}:
Know {what,} Maggie?

MARGARET {[struggling for expression]}:
That I've gone through this--{hideous!--transformation,} become--{hard! frantic!}

{[Then she adds, almost tenderly:]} 

--{cruel!!}

That's what you've been observing in me lately. How could y' help but observe it? That's all right. I'm not--thin-skinned any more, can't afford t' be thin-skinned any more.

{[She is now recovering her power.]} 

--But Brick? Brick?

BRICK:
Did you say something?

MARGARET:
I was {goin'} t' say something: that I get--lonely. Very!

BRICK:
Ev'rybody gets that . . .

MARGARET:
Living with someone you love can be lonelier--than living
entirely {alone!--) if the one that y' love doesn't love you. . . .

{[There is a pause. Brick hobbles downstage and asks, wish-
out looking at her:]}!

BRICK:
Would you like to live alone, Maggie?

{[Another Pause: then--after she has caught a quick, hurt
breath:]}!

MARGARET:
{No!--God!--I wouldn't!}

{[Another gasping breath. She forcibly controls what must
have been an impulse to cry out. We see her deliberately,
very forcibly, going all the way back to the world in which
you can talk about ordinary matters.]}!

Did you have a nice shower?

BRICK:
Uh-huh.

MARGARET:
Was the water cool?

BRICK:
No.

MARGARET:
But it made y' feel fresh, huh?

BRICK:
Fresher. . . .

MARGARET:
I know something would make y' feel {much} fresher!

BRICK:
What?

MARGARET:
An alcohol rub. Or cologne, a rub with cologne!

BRICK:
That's good after a workout but I haven't been workin' out,
Maggie.

MARGARET:
You've kept in good shape, though.
BRICK {[indifferently]}:
You think so, Maggie?

MARGARET:
I always thought drinkin' men lost their looks, but I was plainly mistaken.

BRICK {[wryly]}:
Why; thanks, Maggie.

MARGARET:
You're the only drinkin' man I know that it never seems t' put fat on.

BRICK:
I'm gettin' softer, Maggie.

MARGARET:
Well, sooner or later it's bound to soften you up. It was just beginning to soften up Skipper when--

{{She stops short.}}

I'm sorry. I never could keep my fingers off a sore--I wish you {would} lose your looks. If you did it would make the martyrdom of Saint Maggie a little more bearable. But no such goddam luck. I actually believe you've gotten better looking since you've gone on the bottle. Yeah, a person who didn't know you would think you'd never had a tense nerve in your body or a strained muscle.

{{There are sounds of croquet on the lawn below: the click of mallets, light voices, near and distant.}}

Of course, you always had that detached quality as if you were playing a game without much concern over whether you won or lost, and now that you've lost the game, not lost but just quit playing, you have that rare sort of charm that usually only happens in very old or hopelessly sick people, the charm of the defeated.--You look so cool, so cool, so enviably cool.

REVEREND TOOKER {[off stage right]}:
Now looka here, boy, lemme show you how to get outa that!

MARGARET:
They're playing croquet. The moon has appeared and it's
white, just beginning to turn a little bit yellow. . . .

You were a wonderful lover. . . .

Such a wonderful person to go to bed with, and I think mostly because you were really indifferent to it. Isn't that right? Never had any anxiety about it, did it naturally, easily, slowly, with absolute confidence and perfect calm, more like opening a door for a lady or seating her at a table than giving expression to any longing for her. Your indifference made you wonderful at lovemaking--{strange?--}but true. . . .

REVEREND TOOKER:
Oh! That's a beauty.

DOCTOR BAUGH:
Yeah. I got you boxed.

MARGARET:
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!

REVEREND TOOKER:
Watch out, you're gonna miss it.

DOCTOR BAUGH:
You just don't know me, boy!

MARGARET:
But one thing I don't have is the charm of the defeated, my hat is still in the ring, and I am determined to win!

{{[There is the sound of croquet mallets hitting croquet balls.]}}

REVEREND TOOKER:
Mmm--You're too slippery for me.

MARGARET:
--What is the victory of a cat on a hot tin roof?--I wish I knew. . . .

Just staying on it, I guess, as long as she can. . . .

DOCTOR BAUGH:
Jus' like an eel, boy, jus' like an eel!

{{[Sore croquet sounds.]}}
MARGARET:
Later tonight I'm going to tell you I love you an' maybe by that time you'll be drunk enough to believe me. Yes, they're playing croquet.

Big Daddy is dying of cancer.

What were you thinking of when I caught you looking at me like that? Were you thinking of Skipper?

{[Brick takes up his crutch, rises.]} 31
Oh, excuse me, forgive me, but laws of silence don't work!
No, laws of silence don't work.

{[Brick crosses to the bar, takes a quick drink, and rubs his head with a towel.]} 31
Laws of silence don't work.

When something is festering in your memory or your imagination, laws of silence don't work, it's just like shutting a door and locking it on a house on fire in hope of forgetting that the house is burning. But not facing a fire doesn't put it out. Silence about a thing just magnifies it. It grows and festers in silence, becomes malignant.

{[He drops his crutch.]}

BRICK:
Give me my crutch.

{[He has stopped rubbing his air dry but still stands hanging onto the towel rack in a white towel-cloth robe.]} 31

MARGARET
Lean on me.

BRICK:
No, just give me my crutch.

MARGARET:
Lean on my shoulder.

BRICK:
{I don't want to lean on your shoulder, I want my crutch!}

{[This is spoken like sudden lightning.]}

Are you going to give me my crutch or do I have to get down on my knees on the floor and--
MARGARET:
{Here, here, take it, take it!}

{[She has thrust the crutch at him.]}

BRICK {[hobbling out]}:
Thanks . . .

MARGARET:
We mustn't scream at each other, the walls in this house have ears. . . .

{[He hobbles directly to liquor cabinet to get a new drink.]}--but that's the first time I've heard you raise your voice in a long time, Brick. A crack in the wall?--Of composure?

--I think that's a good sign. . . .

A sign of nerves in a player on the defensive!

{[Brick turns and smiles at her coolly over his fresh drink.]}---

BRICK:
It just hasn't happened yet, Maggie.

MARGARET:
What?

BRICK:
The click I get in my head when I've had enough of this stuff to make me peaceful. . . .

Will you do me a favor?

MARGARET:
Maybe I will. What favor?

BRICK:
Just, just keep your voice down!

MARGARET {[in a hoarse whisper]}:
I'll do you that favor, I'll speak in a whisper, if not shut up completely, if {you} will do {me} a favor and make that drink your last one till after the part.

BRICK:
What party?

MARGARET:
Big Daddy's birthday party.

BRICK:
Is this Big Daddy's birthday?

MARGARET:
You know this is Big Daddy's birthday!

BRICK:
No, I don't, I forgot it.

MARGARET:
Well, I remembered it for you. . . .

{{They are both speaking as breathlessly as a pair of kids after a fight, drawing deep exhausted breaths and looking at each other with faraway eyes, shaking and panting together as if they had broken apart from a violent struggle.}}

BRICK:
Good for you, Maggie.

MARGARET:
You just have to scribble a few lines on this card.

BRICK:
You scribble something, Maggie.

MARGARET:
It's got to be your handwriting; it's pour present, I've given him my present; it's got to be your handwriting!

{{The tension between them is building again, the voices becoming shrill once more.}}

BRICK:
I didn't get him a present

MARGARET:
I got one for you.

BRICK:
All right You write the card, then.

MARGARET:
And have him know you didn't remember his birthday?

BRICK:
I didn't remember his birthday.

MARGARET:
You don't have to prove you didn't!

BRICK:
I don't want to fool him about it.

MARGARET:
Just write "Love, Brick!" for God's--

BRICK:
No.

MARGARET:
You've {got} to!

BRICK:
I don't have to do anything I don't want to do. You keep forgetting the conditions on which I agreed to stay on living with you.

MARGARET {[out before she knows it]}:
I'm not living with you. We occupy the same cage.

BRICK:
You've got to remember the conditions agreed on.

SONNY {[off stage]}:
Mommy, give it to me. I had it first.

MAE:
Hush.

MARGARET:
They're impossible conditions!

BRICK:
Then why don't you--?

SONNY:
I want it, I want it!

MAE:
Get away!

MARGARET:
HUSH! Who is out there? Is somebody at the door?

{[There are footsteps in hall.]}

MAE {[outside]}:
May I enter a moment?
MARGARET:
Oh, {you!} Sure. Come in, Mae.

{[Mae enters bearing aloft the bow of a young lady's archery set.]

MAE:
Brick, is this thing yours?

MARGARET:
Why, Sister Woman--that's my Diana Trophy. Won it at the intercollegiate archery contest on the Ole Miss campus.

MAE:
It's a mighty dangerous thing to leave exposed round a house full of nawmal rid-blooded children attracted t'weapons.

MARGARET:
"Nawmal rid-blooded children attracted t'weapons" ought t'be taught to keep their hands off things that don't belong to them.

MAE:
Maggie, honey, if you had children of your own you'd know how funny that is. Will you please lock this up and put the key out of reach?

MARGARET:
Sister Woman, nobody is plotting the destruction of your kiddies. --Brick and I still have our special archers' license. We're goin' deer-huntin' on Moon Lake as soon as the season starts. I love to run with dogs through chilly woods, run, run leap over obstructions--

{[She goes into the closet carrying the bow.]

MAE:
How's the injured ankle, Brick?

BRICK:
Doesn't hurt. Just itches.

MAE:
Oh, my! Brick--Brick, you should've been downstairs after supper! Kiddies put on a show. Polly played the piano, Buster an' Sonny drums, an' then they turned out the lights an' Dixie an' Trixie puhfawmed a toe dance in fairy costume with {spahkluhs!} Big Daddy just beamed! He just beamed!

MARGARET {[from the closet with a sharp laugh]}:
Oh, I bet. It breaks my heart that we missed it!
But Mae? Why did y'give dawgs' names to all your kiddies?

MAE:  
[Dogs'] names?

MARGARET {[sweetly]}:  
Dixie, Trixie, Buster, Sonny, Polly!—Sounds like four dogs and a parrot . . .

MAY:  
Maggie?

{[Margaret turns with a smile.]}  
Why are you so catty?

MARGARET:  
Cause I'm a cat! But why can't {you} take a joke, Sister Woman?

MAY:  
Nothin' pleases me more than a joke that's funny. You know the real names of our kiddies. Buster's real name is Robert. Sonny's real name is Saunders. Trixie's real name is Marlene and Dixie's—

{[Gooper downstairs calls for her. "Hey, Mae! Sister Woman, intermission is over!"—She rushes to door, saying:]}

Intermission is over! See ya later!

MARGARET:  
I wonder what Dixie's real name is?

BRICK:  
Maggie, being catty doesn't help things any . . .

MARGARET:  
I know! WHY!—Am I so catty?—Cause I'm consumed with envy an' eaten up with longing?—Brick, I'm going to lay out your beautiful Shantung silk suit from Rome and one of your monogrammed silk shirts. I'll put your cuff links in it, those lovely star sapphires I get you to wear so rarely. . . .

BRICK:  
I can't get trousers on over this plaster cast.
MARGARET:
Yes, you can, I'll help you.

BRICK:
I'm not going to get dressed, Maggie.

MARGARET:
Will you just put on a pair of white silk pajamas?

BRICK:
Yes, I'll do that, Maggie.

MARGARET:
{Thank} you, thank you so {much!}

BRICK:
Don't mention it.

MARGARET:
{Oh, Brick!} How long does it have t' go on? This punishment? Haven't I done time enough, haven't I served my term, can't I apply for a--pardon?

BRICK:
Maggie, you're spoiling my liquor. Lately your voice always sounds like you'd been running upstairs to warn somebody that the house was on fire!

MARGARET:
Well, no wonder, no wonder. Y'know what I feel like, Brick?

{I feel all the time like a cat on a hot tin roof!}

BRICK:
Then jump off the roof, jump off it, cats can jump off roofs and land on their four feet uninjured!

MARGARET:
Oh, yes!

BRICK:
Do it! --fo' God's sake, do it . . .

MARGARET:
Do what?

BRICK:
Take a lover!

MARGARET:
I can't see a man but you! Even with my eyes closed, I just
see you! Why don't you get ugly, Brick, why don't you please get fat or ugly or something so I could stand it?

{[She rushes to hall door, opens it, listens.]} 
The concert is still going on! Bravo, no-necks, bravo!

{[She slams and locks door fiercely.]} 

BRICK: What did you lock the door for?

MARGARET: To give us a little privacy for a while.

BRICK: You know better, Maggie.

MARGARET: No, I don't know better. . . .

{[She rushes to gallery doors, draws the rose-silk drapes across them.]} 

BRICK: Don't make a fool of yourself.

MARGARET: I don't mind makin' a fool of myself over you!

BRICK: I mind, Maggie. I feel embarrassed for you.

MARGARET: Feel embarrassed! But don't continue my torture. I can't live on and on under these circumstances.

BRICK: You agreed to--

MARGARET: I know but--

BRICK: --Accept that condition!

MARGARET: {I CAN'T! CANT! CAN'T!} 

{[She seizes his shoulder.]}
BRICK:
Let go!

{[He breaks away from her and seizes the small boudoir chair and raises it like a lion-tamer facing a big circus cat.]}  

{[Count five. She stares at him with her fist pressed to her mouth, then bursts into shrill, almost hysterical laughter. He remains grave for a moment, then grins and Puts the chair down.]}  

{[Big Mama calls through closed door.]}  

BIG MAMA:
Son? Son? Son?

BRICK:
What is it, Big Mama?

BIG MAMA {[outside]}:
Oh, son! We got the most wonderful news about Big Daddy. I just had t' run up an' tell you right this--  

{[She rattles the knob.]}

--What's this door doin', locked, faw? You all think there's robbers in the house?

MARGARET:
Big Mama, Brick is dressin', he's not dressed yet.

BIG MAMA:
That's all right, it won't be the first time I've seen Brick not dressed. Come on, open this door!

{[Margaret, with a grimace, goes to unlock and open the hall door, as Brick hobbles rapidly to the bathroom and kicks the door shut. Big Mama has disappeared from the hall.]}  

MARGARET:
Big Mama?

{[Big Mama appears through the opposite gallery doors behind Margaret, huffing and puffing like an old bulldog. She is a short, stout woman; her sixty years and 170 pounds have left her somewhat breathless most of the time; she's always tensed like a boxer, or rather, a Japanese wrestler.]}
Her "family" was maybe a little superior to Big Daddy's, but not much. She wears a black or silver lace dress and at least half a million in flashy gems. She is very sincere.}

BIG MAMA {{loudly, startling Margaret}}:

Here! come through Gooper's and Mae's gall'ry door. Where's Brick? {Brick--}Hurry on out of there, son, I just have a second and want to give you the news about Big Daddy.-- I hate locked doors in a house. . . .

MARGARET {{with affected lightness}}:
I've noticed you do, Big Mama, but people have got to have {some} moments of privacy, don't they?

BIG MAMA:
No, ma'am, not in {my} house. {{without pause}} Whacha took off you' dress faw? I thought that little lace dress was so sweet on yuh, honey.

MARGARET:
I thought it looked sweet on me, too, but one of m' cute little table-partners used it for a napkin so--!

BIG MAMA {{picking up stockings on Poor}}:
What?

MARGARET:
You know, Big Mama, Mae and Gooper's so touchy about those children--thanks, Big Mama . . .

{{Big Mama has thrust the picked-up stockings in Margaret's hand with a grunt.}}

--that you just don't dare to suggest there's any room for improvement in their--

BIG MAMA:
Brick, hurry out!--Shoot, Maggie, you just don't like children.

MARGARET:
I do SO like children! Adore them!--well brought up!

BIG MAMA {{gentle--loving}}:
Well, why don't you have some and bring them up well, then, instead of all the time pickin' on Gooper's an' Mae's?

GOOPER {{shouting up the stairs}}:
Hey, hey, Big Mama, Betsy an' Hugh got to go, waitin' t' tell yuh g'by!
BIG MAMA:
Tell 'em to hold their hawses, I'll be right down in a jiffy!

GOOPER:
Yes ma'am!

{[She turns to the bathroom door and calls out.]}

BIG MAMA:
Son? Can you hear me in there?

{[There is a muffled answer.]}

We just got the full report from the laboratory at the Ochsner Clinic, completely negative, son, ev'rything negative, right on down the line! Nothin' a-tall's wrong with him but some little functional thing called a spastic colon. Can you hear me, son?

MARGARET:
He can hear you, Big Mama.

BIG MAMA:
Then why don't he say something? God Almighty, a piece of news like that should make him shout. It made {me} shout, I can tell you. I shouted and sobbed and fell right down on my knees! --Look!

{[She pulls up her skirt.]}

See the bruises where I hit my kneecaps? Took both doctors to haul me back on my feet!

{[She laughs--she always laughs like hell at herself.]}

Big Daddy was furious with me! But ain't that wonderful news?

{[facing bathroom again, she continues:]} After all the anxiety we been through to git a report like that on Big Daddy's birthday? Big Daddy tried to hide how much of a load that news took off his mind, but didn't fool {me.} He was mighty close to crying about it {himself!}

{[Goodbyes are shouted downstairs, and she rushes to door.]}

GOOPER:
Big Mama!
BIG MAMA:
{Hold those people down there, don't let them go!--}Now, git
dressed, we're all comin' up to this room fo' Big Daddy's
birthday party because of your ankle.--How's his ankle,
Maggie?

MARGARET:
Well, he broke it, Big Mama.

BIG MAMA:
I know he broke it.

{[A Phone is ringing in hall. A Negro voice answers: "Mis-
tuh Polly's res'dence."]} 45

I mean does it hurt him much still.

MARGARET:
I'm afraid I can't give you that information, Big Mama.
You'll have to ask Brick if it hurts much still or not.

SOOKEY {[in the hall]}:
It's Memphis, Mizz Polly, it's Miss Sally in Memphis.

BIG MAMA:
Awright, Sookey.

{[Big Mama rushes into the hall and is heard shouting on
the phone.]}

Hello, Miss Sally. How are you, Miss Sally?--Yes, well, I
was just gonna call you about it. {Shoot!--}

MARGARET:
Brick, don't!

{[Big Mama raises her voice to a bellow.]}

BIG MAMA:
{Miss Sally? Don't ever call me from the Gayoso Lobby, too
much talk goes on in that hotel lobby, no wonder you can't
hear me!} Now listen, Miss Sally. They's nothin' serious wrong
with Big Daddy. We got the report just now, they's nothin'
wrong but a thing called a--spastic! SPASTIC!--colon . . .

{[She appears at the hall door and calls to Margaret.]}
--Maggie, come out here and talk to that fool on the phone.
I'm shouted breathless!

MARGARET {[goes out and is heard sweetly at Phone]}:
Miss Sally? This is Brick's wife, Maggie. So nice to hear your
voice. Can you hear {mine?} Well, {good!—}Big Mama just wanted you to know that they've got the report from the

Ochsner Clinic and what Big Daddy has is a spastic colon. Yes. Spastic colon, Miss Sally. That's right, spastic colon.
{G'bye, Miss Salty, hope I'll see you real soon!}

{[Hangs up a little before Miss Sally was probably ready to terminate the talk. She returns through the hall door.]}

She heard me perfectly. I've discovered with deaf people the thing to do is not shout at them but just enunciate clearly. My rich old Aunt Cornelia was deaf as the dead but I could make her hear me just by sayin' each word slowly, distinctly, close to her ear. I read her the {Commercial Appeal} ev'ry night, read her the classified ads in it, even, she never missed a word of it. But was she a mean ole thing! Know what I got when she died? Her unexpired subscriptions to five magazines and the Book-of-the-Month Club and a LIBRARY full of ev'ry dull book ever written! All else went to her hellcat of a sister . . . meaner than she was, even!

{[Big Mama has been straightening things up in the room during this speech.]}

BIG MAMA {[closing closet door on discarded clothes]}:

{Miss Sally sure is a case!} Big Daddy says she's always got her hand out fo' something. He's not mistaken. That poor ole thing always has her hand out fo' somethin'. I don't think Big Daddy gives her as much as he should.

GOOPER:
Big Mama! Come on now! Betsy and Hugh can't wait no longer!

BIG MAMA {[shouting]}:
I'm comin'!

{[She starts out. At the hall door, turns and jerks a forefinger, first toward the bathroom door, then toward the liquor cabinet, meaning: "Has Brick been drinking?" Margaret pretends not to understand, cocks her head and raises her brows as if the pantomimic performance was completely mystifying to her.]}

{[Big Mama rushes back to Margaret:]}

{Shoot! Stop playin' so dumb!—}I mean has he been drinkin' that stuff much yet?
MARGARET {{with a little laugh}}:
Oh! I think he had a highball after supper.

BIG MAMA:
Don't laugh about it!—Some single men stop drinkin' when they git married and others start! Brick never touched liquor before he--!

MARGARET {{crying out}}:
{THAT'S NOT FAIR!}

BIG MAMA:
Fair or not fair I want to ask you a question, one question: D'you make Brick happy in bed?

MARGARET:
Why don't you ask if he makes {me} happy in bed?

BIG MAMA:
Because I know that--

MARGARET:
{It works both ways!}

BIG MAMA:
Something's not right! You're childless and my son drinks!

GOOPER:
Come on, Big Mama!

{{Gooper has called her downstairs and she has rushed to

the door on the line above. She turns at the door and points

at the bed.}}

--When a marriage goes on the rocks, the rocks are {there,}
right {there!}

MARGARET:
{That's--}

{{Big Mama has swept out of the room and slammed the
door.}}

--not--{fair} . . .

{{Margaret is alone, completely alone, and she feels it. She draws in, hunches her shoulders, raises her arms with fists clenched, shuts her eyes tight as a child about to be stabbed with a vaccination needle. When she opens her eyes again,
what she sees is the long oval mirror and she rushes straight to it, stares into it with a grimace and says: "Who are you?"--Then she crouches a little and answers herself in a different voice which is high, thin, mocking: "I am Maggie the Cat!"--Straightens quickly as bathroom door opens a little and Bricks calls out to her.]

BRICK:
Has Big Mama gone?

MARGARET:
She's gone.

{{He opens the bathroom door and hobblies out, with his liquor glass now empty, straight to the liquor cabinet. He is whistling softly. Margaret's head pivots on her long, slender throat to watch him.}}

{{She raises a hand uncertainly to the base of her throat, as if it was difficult for her to swallow, before she speaks:}}

You know, our sex life didn't just peter out in the usual way, it was cut off short, long before the natural time for it to, and it's going to revive again, just as sudden as that. I'm confident of it. That's what I'm keeping myself attractive for. For the time when you'll see me again like other men see me. Yes, like other men see me. They still see me, Brick, and they like what they see. Uh-huh. Some of them would give their--

Look, Brick!

{{She stands before the long oval mirror, touches her breast and then her hips with her two hands.}}

How high my body stays on me!--Nothing has fallen on me --not a fraction. 

{{Her voice is soft and trembling.-- a pleading child's. At this moment as he turns to glance at her--a look which is like a player passing a ball to another Player, third down and goal to go--she has to capture the audience in a grip so tight that she can hold it till the first intermission without any lapse of attention.}}

Other men still want me. My face looks strained, sometimes, but I've kept my figure as well as you've kept yours, and men admire it. I still turn heads on the street. Why, last week in Memphis everywhere that I went men's eyes burned holes in my clothes, at the country club and in restaurants and department stores, there wasn't a man I met or walked by that didn't just eat me up with his eyes and turn around when I passed
him and look back at me. Why, at Alice's party for her New York cousins, the best-lookin' man in the crowd--followed me upstairs and tried to force his way in the powder room with me, followed me to the door and tried to force his way in!

BRICK:
Why didn't you let him, Maggie?

MARGARET:
Because I'm not that common, for one thing. Not that I wasn't almost tempted to. You like to know who it was? It was Sonny Boy Maxwell, that's who!

BRICK:
Oh, yeah, Sonny Boy Maxwell, he was a good end-runner but had a little injury to his back and had to quit.

MARGARET:
He has no injury now and has no wife and still has a lech for me!

BRICK:
I see no reason to lock hu- n out of a powder room in that case.

MARGARET:
And have someone catch me at it? I'm not that stupid. Oh, I might sometime cheat on you with someone, since you're so insultingly eager to have me do it!--But if I do, you can be damned sure it will be in a place and a time where no one but me and the man could possibly know. Because I'm not going to give you any excuse to divorce me for being unfaithful or anything else.

BRICK:
Maggie, I wouldn't divorce you for being unfaithful or anything else. Don't you know that? Hell. I'd be relieved to know that you'd found yourself a lover.

MARGARET:
Well, I'm taking no chances. No, I'd rather stay on this hot tin roof.

BRICK:
A hot tin roof's 'n uncomfo'table place t' stay on.

[[He starts to whistle softly.]]

MARGARET [[through his whistle]]:
Yeah, but I can stay on it just as long as I have to.
BRICK:
You could leave me, Maggie.

{}[[He resumes whistle. She wheels about to glare at him.]]

MARGARET:
{Don't want to and will not!} Besides if I did, you don't have a cent to pay for it but what you get from Big Daddy and he's dying of cancer!

{}[[for she first time a realization of Big Daddy's doom seems to Penetrate to Brick's consciousness, visibly, and he looks at Margaret.]]

BRICK:
Big Mama just said he {wasn't,} that the report was okay.

MARGARET:
That's what she thinks because she got the same story that they gave Big Daddy. And was just as taken in by it as he was, poor ole things. . . .

But tonight they're going to tell her the truth about it. When Big Daddy goes to bed, they're going to tell her that he is dying of cancer.

{}[[She slams the dresser drawer.]]

--It's malignant and it's terminal.

BRICK:
Does Big Daddy know it?

MARGARET:
Hell, do they {ever} know it? Nobody says, "You're dying." You have to fool them. They have to fool {themselves.}

MARGARET:
{Why?} Because human beings dream of life everlasting, that's the reason! But most of them want it on earth and not in heaven.

{}[[He gives a short, hard laugh at her touch of humor.]]

Well. . . . {}[[She touches up her mascara.]] That's how it is, any-how. . . . {}[[She looks about.]] Where did I put down my cigar-ette? Don't want to burn up the home-place, at least not with Mae and Gooper and their five monsters in it!

{}[[She has found it and sucks at it greedily. Blows out smoke and continues:]]
So this is Big Daddy's last birthday. And Mae and Gooper, they know it, oh, {they} know it, all right. They got the first information from the Ochsner Clinic. That's why they rushed down here with their no-neck monsters. Because. Do you know something? Big Daddy's made no will? Big Daddy's never made out any will in his life, and so this campaign's afoot to impress him, forcibly as possible, with the fact that you drink and I've borne no children!

{{He continues to stare at her a moment, then mutters something sharp but not audible and hobbles rather rapidly out onto the long gallery in the fading, much jaded, gold light.}}

MARGARET {{continuing her liturgical chant}}:

Y'know, I'm {fond} of Big Daddy, I am genuinely fond of that old man, I really {am,} you know. . . .

BRICK {{faintly, vaguely}}:
Yes, I know you are. . . .

MARGARET:
I've always sort of admired him in spite of his coarseness, his four-letter words and so forth. Because Big Daddy {is} what he {is,} and he makes no bones about it. He hasn't turned gentleman farmer, he's still a Mississippi redneck, as much of a redneck as he must have been when he was just overseer here on the old Jack Straw and Peter Ochello place. But he got hold of it an' built it into th' biggest an' finest plantation in the Delta.--I've always {liked} Big Daddy. . . .

{{[She crosses to the proscenium.]}}

Well, this is Big Daddy's last birthday. I'm sorry about it. But I'm facing the facts. It takes money to take care of a drinker and that's the office that I've been elected to lately.

BRICK:
You don't have to take care of me.

MARGARET:
Yes, I do. 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?

Mae an' Gooper are plannin' to freeze us out of Big Daddy's estate because you drink and I'm childless. But we can defeat that plan. We're {going} to defeat that plan!
Brick, y'know, I've been so God damn disgustingly poor al
my life!--} That's the {truth,} Brick!

BRICK:
I'm not sayin' it isn't.

MARGARET:
Always had to suck up to people I couldn't stand because they had money and I was poor as Job's turkey. You don't know what that's like. Well, I'll tell you, it's like you would feel a thousand miles away from Echo Spring!—And had to get back to it on that broken ankle . . . without a crutch!

That's how it feels to be as poor as Job's turkey and have to suck up to relatives that you hated because they had money and all you had was a bunch of hand-me-down clothes and a few old moldly three-per-cent government bonds. My daddy loved his liquor, he fell in love with his liquor the way you've fallen in love with Echo Spring!—And my poor Mama, having to maintain some semblance of social position, to keep appearances up, on an income of one hundred and fifty dollars a month on those old government bonds!

When I came out, the year that I made my debut, I had just two evening dresses! One Mother made me from a pattern in {Vogue,} the other a hand-me-down from a snotty rich cousin I hated!

--The dress that I married you in was my grandmother's weddin' gown. . . .

So that's why I'm like a cat on a hot tin roof!

[[Brick is still on the gallery. Someone below calls up to him in a warm Negro voice, "Hiya, Mistuh Brick, how yuh feelin'?" Brick raises his liquor glass as if that answere} the question.]]

MARGARET:
You can be young without money, but you can't be old without it. You've got to be old {wish} money because to be old without it is just too awful, you've got to be one or the other, either {young} or {with money,} you can't be old and {without} it.—That's the {truth,} Brick. . . .

[[Brick whistles softly, vaguely.]]

Well, now I'm dressed, I'm all dressed, there's nothing else for me to do.
I'm dressed, all dressed, nothing else for me to do.

What am I--? Oh!--my bracelets.

I've thought a whole lot about it and now I know when I made my mistake. Yes, I made my mistake when I told you the truth about that thing with Skipper. Never should have confessed it, a fatal error, tellin' you about that thing with Skipper.

BRICK:
Maggie, shut up about Skipper. I mean it, Maggie; you got to shut up about Skipper.

MARGARET:
You ought to understand that Skipper and I--

BRICK:
You don't think I'm serious, Maggie? You're fooled by the fact that I am saying this quiet? Look, Maggie. What you're doing is a dangerous thing to do. You're--you're--you're--foolin' with something that--nobody ought to fool with

MARGARET:
This time I'm going to finish what I have to say to you. Skipper and I made love, if love you could call it, because it made both of us feel a little bit closer to you. You see, you son of a bitch, you asked too much of people, of me, of him, of all the unlucky poor damned sons of bitches that happen to love you, and there was a whole pack of them, yes, there was a pack of them besides me and Skipper, you asked too goddam much of people that loved you, you--superior creature!--you godlike being!--And so we made love to each other to dream it was you, both of us! Yes, yes, yes! Truth, truth! What's so awful about it? I like it, I think the truth is--yeah! I shouldn't have told you.

BRICK {[folding his head unnaturally still and uptilted a bit]}:
It was Skipper that told me about it. Not you, Maggie.
MARGARET:
I told you!

BRICK:
After he told me!

MARGARET:
What does it matter who--?

DIXIE:
I got your mallet, I got your mallet.

TRIXIE:
Give it to me, give it to me. IT's mine.

{[Brick turns suddenly out upon the gallery and calls:]}

BRICK:
Little girl! Hey, little girl!

LITTLE GIRL {{at a distance}}:
What, Uncle Brick?

BRICK:
Tell the folks to come up!--Bring everybody upstairs!

TRIXIE:
It's mine, it's mine.

MARGARET:
I can't stop myself! I'd go on telling you this in front of them all, if I had to!

BRICK:
Little girl! Go on, go on, will you? Do what I told you, call them!

DIXIE:
Okay.

MARGARET:
Because it's got to be told and you, you!--you never let me!
{[She sobs, then controls herself, and continues almost calmly.]} It was one of those beautiful, ideal things they tell about in the Greek legends, it couldn't be anything else, you being you, and that's what made it so sad, that's what made it so awful, because it was love that never could be carried through to anything satisfying or even talked about plainly.

BRICK:
Maggie, you gotta stop this.
MARGARET:
Brick, I tell you, you got to believe me, Brick, I {do} understand all about it! I--I think it was--{noble!} Can't you tell I'm sincere when I say I respect it? My only point, the only point that I'm making, is life has got to be allowed to continue even after the {dream} of life is --all--over. . . .

{[Brick is without his crutch. Leaning on furniture, he crosses to pick it up as she continues as if possessed by a will outside herself:]} 58

Why I remember when we double-dated at college, Gladys Fitzgerald and I and you and Skipper, it was more like a date between you and Skipper. Gladys and I were just sort of tagging along as if it was necessary to chaperone you!--to make a good public impression--

BRICK {[turns to face her, half lifting his crutch]}:

Maggie, you want me to hit you with this crutch? Don't you know I could kill you with this crutch?

MARGARET:
Good Lord, man, d' you think I'd care if you did?

BRICK:
One man has one great good true thing in his life. One great good thing which is true!--I had friendship with Skipper.-- You are naming it dirty!

MARGARET:
I'm not naming it dirty! I am naming it clean.

BRICK:
Not love with you, Maggie, but friendship with Skipper was that one great true thing, and you are naming it dirty!

MARGARET:
Then you haven't been listenin', not understood what I'm saying! I'm naming it so damn clean that it killed poor Skipper!--You two had something that had to be kept on ice, yes, incorruptible, yes! --and death was the only icebox where you could keep it. . . .

BRICK:
I married you, Maggie. Why would I marry you, Maggie, if I was ?

MARGARET:
Brick, let me finish!--I know, believe me I know, that it was

only Skipper that harbored even any {unconscious} desire for
anything not perfectly pure between you two!--Now let me skip a little. You married me early that summer we graduated out of Ole Miss, and we were happy, weren't we, we were blissful, yes, hit heaven together ev'ry time that we loved! But that fall you an' Skipper turned down wonderful offers of jobs in order to keep on bein' football heroes--pro-football heroes. You organized the Dixie Stars that fall, so you could keep on bein' teammates forever! But somethin' was not right with it! --{Me included!--} between you. Skipper began hittin' the bottle . . . you got a spinal injury--couldn't play the Thanksgiving game in Chicago, watched it on TV from a traction bed in Toledo. I joined Skipper. The Dixie Stars lost because poor Skipper was drunk. We drank together that night all night in the bar of the Blackstone and when cold day was comin' up over the Lake an' we were comin' out drunk to take a dizzy look at it, I said, "SKIPPER! STOP LOVIN' MY HUSBAND OR TELL HIM HE'S GOT TO LET YOU ADMIT IT TO HIM!"--one way or another!

HE SLAPPED ME HARD ON THE MOUTH!--then turned and ran without stopping once, I am sure, all the way back into his room at the Blackstone. . . .

--When I came to his room that night, with a little scratch like a shy little mouse at his door, he made that pitiful, ineffectual little attempt to prove that what I had said wasn't true. . . .

{[Brick strikes at her with crutch, a blow that shatters the gemlike lamp on the table.]}  

--In this way, I destroyed him, by telling him truth that he and his world which he was born and raised in, yours and his world, had told him could not be told?

--From then on Skipper was nothing at all but a receptacle for liquor and drugs. . . .

--{Who shot cock robin? I with my--}

{[She throws back her head with right shut eyes.]}  

--{merciful arrow!}

{(Brick strikes at her, misses.]}  

Missed me!--Sorry,--I'm not tryin' to whitewash my be- havior, Christ, no! Brick, I'm not good. I don't know why people have to pretend to be good, nobody's good. The rich or the well-to-do can afford to respect moral patterns, conventional moral patterns, but I could never afford to, yeah, but--
I'm honest! Give me credit for just that, will you {please?--} Born poor, raised poor, expect to die poor unless I manage to get us something out of what Big Daddy leaves when he dies of cancer! But Brick?!--{Skipper is dead! I'm alive!} Maggie the cat is --

{[Brick hops awkwardly forward and strikes at her again with his crutch.]}

{alive! I am alive, alive! I am} . . .

{[He hurls the crutch at her, across the bed she took refuge behind, and pitches forward on the floor as she completes her speech.]}

{alive!}

{[A little girl, Dixie, bursts into the room, wearing an Indian war bonnet and firing a cap pistol at Margaret and shouting.- "Bang, bang, bang!"]}

{[Laughter downstairs floats through the open hall door. Margaret had crouched gasping to bed at child's entrance. She now rises and says with cool fury:]}

Little girl, your mother or someone should teach you--{[gasp]--}to knock at a door before you come into a room. Otherwise people might think that you--lack--good breed-ing. . . .

DIXIE:
Yanh, yanh, yanh, what is Uncle Brick doin' on th' floor?

BRICK:
I tried to all your Aunt Maggie, but I failed--and I fell. Little girl, give me my crutch so I can get up off th' floor.

MARGARET:
Yes, give your uncle his crutch, he's a cripple, honey, he broke his ankle last night jumping hurdles on the high school athletic field!

DIXIE:
What were you jumping hurdles for, Uncle Brick?

BRICK:
Because I used to jump them, and people like to do what they used to do, even after they've stopped being able to do it. . . .

MARGARET:
That's right, that's your answer, now go away, little girl.
Dixie fires cap pistol at Margaret three times.

Stop, you stop that, monster! You little no-neck monster!

She seizes the cap pistol and hurls it through gallery doors.

Dixie [with a precocious instinct for the cruelest thing]:
You're [jealous!] You're just jealous because you can't have babies!

She sticks out her tongue at Margaret as she sashays Past her with her stomach stuck out, to the gallery. Margaret slams the gallery doors and leans panting against them.

There is a pause. Brick has replaced his spilt drink and sits, faraway, on the great four-poster bed.

Margaret:

You see?—they gloat over us being childless, even in front of their five little no-neck monsters!

[Pause. Voices approach on the stairs.]

Brick?—I've been to a doctor in Memphis, a—-a gynecologist. . . .

I've been completely examined, and there is no reason why we can't have a child whenever we want one. And this is my time by the calendar to conceive. Are you listening to me? Are you? Are you LISTENING TO ME.

Brick:

Yes. I hear you, Maggie.

[His attention returns to her inflamed face.]

--But how in hell on earth do you imagine—that you're going to have a child by a man that can't stand you?

Margaret

That's a problem that I will have to work out.

[She wheels about to face the hall door.]

Mae [off stage left]:

Come on, Big Daddy. We're all goin' up to Brick's room.

[from off stage left, voices.— Reverend Tooker, Doctor Baugh, Mae.]
MARGARET:
{Here they come!}
{[The lights dim.]}