ACT THREE

{There is no lapse of time. Big Daddy is seen leaving as at the end of AM H}

BIG DADDY
ALL LYIN'---DYIN'---LIARS! LIARS!---LIARS!

{[Margaret enters.]}  
MARGARET:
Brick, what in the name of God was goin' on in this room?

{[Dixie and Trixie enter through the doors and circle around Margaret shouting Mae enters from the lower gallery window.]}  
MAE:
Dixie, Trixie, you quit that!

{[Gooper enters through the doors.]}  
GOOPER:
Gooper, will y' please get these kiddies to bed right now!

GOOPER:
Mae you seen Big Mama?

MAE:
Not yet.

{[Gooper and kids exit through the doors Reverend Tooker enters through the windows.]}  
REVEREND TOOKER:
Those kiddies are so full of vitality I think I'll have to be start-ing back to town.

MAE:
Not yet Preacher You know we regard you as a member of this family, one of our closest an dearest so you just got t' be with us when Doc Baugh gives Big Mama th' actual truth about th' report from the clinic.

MARGARET:
Where do you think you're going?

BRICK:
Out for some air.
MARGARET: Why'd Big Daddy shout "Liars"?

MAE: Has Big Daddy gone to bed, Brick?

GOOPER [[entering]]: Now where is that old lady?

REVEREND TOOKER: I'll look for her.

{{He exits to the gallery.}}

MAE: Cain'tcha find her, Gooper?

GOOPER: She's avoidin' this talk.

MAE: I think she senses somethin'.

MARGARET {{going out on the gallery to Brick}}: Brick, they're goin' to tell Big Mama the truth about Big Daddy and she's goin' to need you.

DOCTOR BAUGH: This is going to be painful.

MAE: Painful things caint always be avoided.

REVEREND TOOKER

I see Big Mama

GOOPER

Hey, Big Mama, come here.

MAE:

Hush, Gooper, don't holler.

BIG MAMA {{entering}}

Too much smell of burnt fireworks makes me feel a little bit
sick at my stomach.---Where is Big Daddy?

MAE:
That's what I want to know, where has Big Daddy gone?

BIG MAMA:
He must have turned in, I reckon he went to baid . .

GOOPER

Well, then, now we can talk.

BIG MAMA:
What {is} this talk, {what} talk?

{{Margaret appears on the gallery, talking to Doctor Baugh.}}

MARGARET {{musically}}

My family freed their slaves ten years before abolition My
great-great-grandfather gave his slaves their freedom five
years before the War between the States started!

MAE:

Oh, for God's sake Maggie's climbed back up in her family
tree!

MARGARET {{sweetly}}:

What, Mae?

{{The pace must be very quick great Southern animation.}}

BIG MAMA {{addressing them all}}:

I think Big Daddy was just worn out. He loves his family, he
loves to have them around htn but its a strain on his nerves
He wasn't himself tonight. Big Daddy wasn't himself, I could
tell he was all worked up

REVEREND TOOKER
I think he's remarkable

BIG MAMA

Yaisss. Just remarkable Did you all notice the food he ate at
that table? Did you all notice the supper he put away? Why
he ate like a hawss.

GOOPER
I hope he doesn't regret it.

BIG MAMA:

What? Why that man---ate a huge piece of cawn bread with molasses on it. Helped himself twice to hoppin' John.

MARGARET

Big Daddy loves hoppin' John.---We had a real country dinner

BIG MAMA {[Overlapping Margaret]}

Yaiss, he simply adores it! an' candied yams? Son? That man put away enough food at that table to stuff a {field} hand

GOOPER {[with grim relish]}:

I hope he don't have to pay for it later on

BIG MAMA {[fiercely]}

What's {that,} Gooper?

MAE:

Gooper says he hopes Big Daddy doesn't suffer tonight.

BIG MAMA

Oh shoot, Gooper says, Gooper says! Why should Big Daddy suffer for satisfying a normal appetite? There's nothin' wrong with that man but nerves, he's sound as a dollar! And now he knows he is an thats why he ate such a supper. He had a big load off his mind, knowin' he wasn't doomed t'---what he thought he was doomed to.

MARGARET {[sadly and sweetly]}:
Bless his old sweet soul

BIG MAMA {[vaguely]}

Yais, bless his heart, where's Brick?

MAE:

Outside

GOOPER:

---Drinkin'...
BIG MAMA:
I know he's drinkin'. Cain't I see he's drinkin' without you continually tellin' me that boy's drinkin'?

MARGARET:
Good for you, Big Mama!

{[She applauds.]} 

BIG MAMA:
Other people {drink} and {have} drunk an will {drink,} as long as they make that stuff an' put it in bottles.

MARGARET:
That's the truth. I never trusted a man that didn't drink.

BIG MAMA:

{Brick ? Brick!}

MARGARET:

He's still on the gall'ry. I'll go bring him so we can talk.

BIG MAMA {[Wormedly]}

I don't know what this mysterious family conference is about

{[Awkward silence. Big Mama looks from face to face, then belches slightly and mutters, "Excuse me..." She opened an ornamental fan suspended about her throat. A black lace fan to go with her black lace gown, and fans her wilt- ing corsage, sniffing nervously and looking from face to face in the uncomfortable silence as Margaret calls "Brick?" and Brick sings to the moon on the gallery.]} 

MARGARET:

Brick, they're gonna tell Big Mama the truth an' she's gonna need you.

BIG MAMA:

I don't know what's wrong here, you all have such long faces! Open that door on the hall and let some air circulate through here, will you please, Gooper?

MAE:

I think we'd better leave that door closed, Big Mama, till after
the talk.

MARGARET:

Brick!

BIG MAMA:
Reveren' Tooker, will {you} please open that door?

REVEREND TOOKER:
I sure will, Big Mama.

MAE:
I just didn't think we ought 't take any chance of Big Daddy hearin' a word of this discussion.

BIG MAMA:
{I swan!} Nothing's going to be said in Big Daddy's house that he caint hear if he want to.

GOOPER:
Well, Big Mama, it's---

{[Mae gives him a quick, hard poke to shut him up. He glares at her fiercely as she circles before him like a burlesque ballerina, raising her skinny bare arms over her head, jangling her bracelets, exclaiming:]} MAE:
{A breeze! A breeze!}

REVEREND TOOKER:
I think this house is the coolest house in the Delta---Did you all know that Halsey Banks's widow put air-conditioning units in the church and rectory at Friar's Point in memory of Halsey?

{[General conversation has resumed, everybody is chatting so that the stage sounds like a bird cage.]} GOOPER:
Too bad nobody cools your church off for you. I bet you sweat in that pulpit these hot Sundays, Reverend Tooker.

REVEREND TOOKER:
Yes, my vestments are drenched Last Sunday the gold in my chasuble faded into the purple. GOOPER:
Reveren', you musta been preachin' hell's fire last Sunday.
Mae {at the same time to Doctor Baugh}:

You reckon those vitamin B12 injections are what they're cracked up t'be, Doc Baugh?

Doctor Baugh:

Well, if you want to be stuck with something I guess they're as good to be stuck with as anything else.

Big Mama {at the gallery door}

{Maggie, Maggie, aren't you comin' with Brick?}

Mae {suddenly and loudly, creating a silence}

{I have a strange feeling, I have a peculiar feeling!}

Big Mama {turning from the gallery}

What feeling?

Mae:

That Brick said somethin' he shouldn't of said t' Big Daddy

Big Mama:

Now what on earth could Brick of said t Big Daddy that he shouldn't say?

Gooper:

Big Mama, there's somethin'---

Mae:

Now, Wait!

{[She rushes up to Big Mama and gives her a quick hug and kiss. Big Mama pushes her impatiently off.]}

Doctor Baugh:

In my day they had what they call the Keeley cure for heavy drinkers.

Big Mama:

Shoot!

Doctor Baugh:
But now I understand they just take some kind of tablets.

GOOPER:
They call them "Annie Bust" tablets.

BIG MAMA

{Brick} don't need to take {nothin'}

{{[Brick and Margaret appear in gallery doors, Big Mama unaware of his presence behind her.]

That boy is just broken up over Skipper's death. You know how poor Skipper died. They gave him a big big dose of that sodium amytal stuff at his home and then they called the ambulance and gave him another big, big dose of it at the hospital and that and all of the alcohol in his system for months an months just proved too much for his heart . . . I'm scared of needles! I'm more scared of a needle than the knife

. . . I think more people have been needled out of this world than---

{[She stops short and wheels about.]}

Oh---here ' Brick! My precious baby---

{{[She turns upon Brick with short, fat arms extended, at the same time uttering a loud, short sob, which is both comic and touching Brick smiles and bows slightly, making a burlesque gesture of gallantry for Margaret to pass before him into the room Then he hobbles on his crutch directly to the liquor cabinet and there is absolute silence, with everybody looking at Brick as everybody has always looked at Brick when he spoke or moved or appeared. One by one he drops ice cubes in his glass, then suddenly, but not quickly, looks back over his shoulder with a wry, charming smile, and says:]}

BRICK:

I'm sorry, Anyone else?

BIG MAMA {{[sadly]}:

No, son I {wish} you wouldn't!
I wish I didn't have to, Big Mama, but I'm still waiting for that click in my head which makes it all smooth out!

BIG MAMA:
Ow, Brick, you---BREAK MY HEART!

MARGARET {[at same time]}
{Brick, go sit with Big Mama!}

BIG MAMA
I just cain't staiiiii-nnnnnnnd-it

{[She sobs.]}  

MAE:
Now that we're all assembled---

GOOPER:
We kin talk...

BIG MAMA:
Breaks my heart...

MARGARET:
Sit with Big Mama, Brick, and hold her hand.

{[Big Mama sniffs very loudly three times, almost like three drumbeats in the pocket of silence.]}  

BRICK:
You do that, Maggie. I'm a restless cripple. I got to stay on my crutch.

{[Brick hobbles to the gallery door, leans there as if waiting.]}  

{[Mae sits beside Big Mama, while Gooper moves in front and sits on the end of the couch, facing her. Reverend Tooker moves nervously into the space between them; on the other side, Doctor Baugh stands looking at nothing in particular and lights a cigar Margaret turns away.]}  

BIG MAMA:
Why're you all {surroundin'} me---like this? Why're you all
starin' at me like this an' makin' signs at each other?

{[Reverend Tooker steps back startled.]}

MAE:
Calm yourself, Big Mama.

BIG MAMA:
Calm you'self, {you'self,} Sister Woman How could I calm my-
self with everyone starin' at me as if big drops of blood had
broken out on m face? What's this all about, annh! What?

{[Gooper coughs and takes a center position.]}

GOOPER.
Now, Doc Baugh.

Doc Baugh?

GOOPER:
Big Mama wants to know the complete truth about the report
we got from the Ochsner Clinic.

MAE {{eagerly.}}

--on Big Daddy's condition!

GOOPER:
Yais, on Big Daddy's condition, we got to face it.

DOCTOR BAUGH:
Well...

BIG MAMA {{terrified, rising}}:

Is there? Something? Something that I? Don't---know?

{[In these few words, this startled, very soft, question, Big
Mama reviews the history of her forty-five years with Big
Daddy, her great, almost embarrassingly true-hearted and
simple-minded devotion to Big Daddy, who must have had
something Brick has, who made himself loved so much by
the "simple expedient" of not loving enough to disturb his
charming detachment, also once coupled, like Brick, with
virile beauty.]}

{[Big Mama has a dignity at this moment, she almost stops
being fat.]

DOCTOR BAUGH {[after a pause, uncomfortably]}:

Yes?---Well---

BIG MAMA:

I!!!---want to--{knowwwwww}

{[Immediately she thrusts her fist to her mouth as if to deny
that statement. Then for some curious reason, she snatches
the withered corsage from her breast and hurls it on the
floor and steps on it with her short, fat feet.]}

{Somebody must be lyin'!-}--I want to know!

MAE:

Sit down, Big Mama, sit down on this sofa.

MARGARET:

Brick, go sit with Big Mama.

BIG MAMA:

{What is it, what is it?}

DOCTOR BAUGH:

I never have seen a more thorough examination than Big
Daddy Pollitt was given in all my experience with the Ochsner
Clinic

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GOOPER

It's one of the best in the country.

MAE:

It's THE best in the country---bar {none}

{[for some reason she gives Gooper a violent poke as she
goes past him. He slaps at her hand without removing his
eyes from his mother's face.]}

DOCTOR BAUGH:

Of course they were ninety-nine and nine-tenths per cent sure
before they even started.

BIG MAMA:
Sure of what, sure of what, sure of---{what}?---{what}?  

{[She catches her breath in a startled sob. Mae kisses her quickly. She thrusts Mae fiercely away from her, staring at the Doctor.]}

MAE:

Mommy, be a brave girl!

BRICK {[in the doorway, softly]}
"By the light, by the light, Of the silvery mo-oon..."

GOOPER:

Shut up!---Brick.

BRICK:

Sorry...

{[He wanders out on the gallery.]}

DOCTOR BAUGH:
But now, you see, Big Mama, they cut a piece off this growth, a specimen of the tissue and---

BIG MAMA:

Growth? You told Big Daddy---

DOCTOR BAUGH:

Now wait.

BIG MAMA {[fiercely]}
You told me and Big Daddy there wasn't a thing wrong with him but---

MAE:
Big Mama, they always--

GOOPER:

Let Doc Baugh talk, will yuh?

BIG MAMA:

---little spastic condition of---
DOCTOR BAUGH:
Yes, that's what we told Big Daddy. But we had this bit of
tissue run through the laboratory and I'm sorry to say the test
was positive on it. It's---well---malignant.

BIG MAMA:
--Cancer? Cancer?

DOCTOR BAUGH:
Involved too much, Big Mama, too many organs affected

MAE:
Big Mama, the liver's affected and so's the kidneys, both! It's
gone way past what they call a---

GOOPER:
A surgical risk.

MAE:
---Uh-huh

REVEREND TOOKER:
Tch tch, tch tch, tch

DOCTOR BAUGH:
Yes it's gone past the knife.

MAE:
{That's why he's turned yellow, Mommy!}

BIG MAMA:
{Git away from me, git away from me, Mae!}

{[She rises abruptly.]}

{I want Brick! Where's Brick? Where is my only son?}

MAE:

Mama! Did she say {only} son?

GOOPER:

What does that make {me?}

MAE:

A sober responsible man with five precious children ---{Six!}

BIG MAMA:

I want Brick to tell me! Brick! Brick!

MARGARET {[rising from her reflections in a corner:]}

Brick was so upset he went back out.

BIG MAMA:

{Brick!}

MARGARET:

Mama, let {me} tell you.

BIG MAMA:

No, no, leave me alone, you're not my blood.

GOOPER:

{Mama, I'm your son!} Listen to {me!}

MAE:

Gooper's your son, he's your first-born.

BIG MAMA:

Gooper never liked Daddy.

MAE {[as if terribly shocked]}

{That's not} TRUE!

{[There is a pause. The minister coughs and rises.]}
REVEREND TOOKER [[to Mae]]:

I think I'd better slip away at this point.

[[Discreetly]]

Good night, good night, everybody, and God bless you all on this place.

[[He slips out.]]

[[Mae coughs and Pants at Big Mama.]]

GOOPER:
Well, Big Mama...

[[He sighs.]]

BIG MAMA:
It's all a mistake, I know it's just a bad dream.

DOTOR BAUGH:
We're gonna keep Big Daddy as comfortable as we can.

BIG MAMA:
Yes, it's just a bad dream, that's all it is, it's just an awful dream.

GOOPER:
In my opinion Big Daddy is having some pain but won't admit that he has it.

BIG MAMA:
Just a dream, a bad dream.

DOCTOR BAUGH:
That's what lots of them do, they think if they don't admit they're having the pain they can sort of escape the fact of it.

GOOPER [[with relish]]

Yes, they get sly about it, they get real sly about it.

MAE:
Gooper and I think---
GOOPER:
Shut up, Mae Big Mama, I think--Big Daddy ought to be started on morphine.

BIG MAMA:
Nobody's going to give Big Daddy morphine

DOCTOR BAUGH:

Now, Big Mama, when that pain strikes it's going to strike mighty hard and Big Daddys going to need the needle to bear it.

BIG MAMA:
I tell you, nobody's going to give him morphine.

MAE:
Big Mama, you don't want to see Big Daddy suffer, you know you---

{[Gooper, standing beside her, gives her a savage poke.]}

DOCTOR BAUGH {[placing a package on the table]}:
I'm leaving this stuff here, so if there's a sudden attack you all won't have to send out for it.

MAE:
I know how to give a hypo.

BIG MAMA:
Nobody's gonna give Big Daddy morphine.

GOOPER:

Mae took a course in nursing during the war.

MARGARET:

Somehow I don't think Big Daddy would want Mae to give him a hypo.

MAE:

You think he'd want {you} to do it?

DOCTOR BAUGH:

Well...
{[Doctor Baugh rises.]} 

GOOPER:  
Doctor Baugh is goin'.

DOCTOR BAUGH:  
Yes, I got to be goin'. Well keep your chin up, Big Mama.

GOOPER {[with jocularity]}  
She's gonna keep {both} chins up, aren't you, Big Mama?

{[Big Mama sobs.]}  
Now stop that, Big Mama

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GOOPER {[at the door with Doctor Baugh]}  
Well, Doc, we sure do appreciate all you done. I'm telling you, we're surely obligated to you for---

{[Doctor Baugh has gone out without a glance at him.]}  
---I guess that doctor has got a lot on his mind but it wouldn't hurt him to act a little more human.

{[Big Mama sobs.]}  
Now be a brave girl, Mommy.

BIG MAMA:  
It's not true, I know that it's just not true!

GOOPER:  
Mama, those tests are infallible.

BIG MAMA:  
Why are you so determined to see your father daid?

MAE:  
Big Mama.

MARGARET {[gently]}  
I know what Big Mama means.

MAE {[fiercely]}
Oh, do you?

MARGARET {[quietly and very sadly]}

Yes, I think I do.

MAE:
For a newcomer in the family you sure do show a lot of understanding.

MARGARET:

Understanding is needed on this place.

MAE:
I guess you must have needed a lot of it in your family, Maggie with your father's liquor problem and now you've got Brick with his.

MARGARET:

Brick does not have a liquor problem at all. Brick is devoted to Big Daddy. This thing is a terrible strain on him.

BIG MAMA:

Brick is Big Daddy's boy, but he drinks too much and it worries me and Big Daddy, and, Margaret, you've got to co-operate with us, you've got to co-operate with Big Daddy and me in getting Brick straightened out. Because it will break Big Daddy's heart if Brick don't pull himself together and take hold of things.

MAE:

Take hold of {what} things, Big Mama?

BIG MAMA:
The place.

{[There is a quick violent look between Mae and Gooper.]}

GOOPER:
Big Mama, you've had a shock.

MAE
Yais, we've all had a shock, but...

GOOPER:
Let's be realistic---
MAE:
---Big Daddy would never, would {never,} be foolish enough
to--

GOOPER:
---put this place in irresponsible hands!

BIG MAMA:
Big Daddy ain't going to leave the place in anybody's hands,
Big Daddy is {not} going to die. I want you to get that in your
heads all of you.

MAE:
Mommy Mommy, Big Mama we're just as hopeful an optimis-
tic as you are about Big Daddy's prospects, we have faith
in {prayer}---but nevertheless there are certain matters that
have to be discussed an' dealt with because otherwise---

GOOPER:
Eventualities have to be considered and now's the time..
Mae, will you please get my brief case out of our room?

MAE:
Yes, honey

[{She rises and goes out through the hall door.}]

GOOPER {[standing over Big Mama]}
Now, Big Mom What you said just now was not at all true
and you know it. I've always loved Big Daddy in my own
quiet way. I never made a show of it, and I know that Big
Daddy has always been fond of me in a quiet way, too, and
he never made a show of it neither.

[{Mae returns with Gooper's brief case.}]

MAE:
Here's your brief case, Gooper, honey.

GOOPER {[handing the brief case back to her]}
Thank you...Of cause my relationship with Big Daddy is
different from Brick's.

MAE:
You're eight years older'n Brick an' always had t' carry a
bigger load of th' responsibilities than Brick ever had t' carry.
He never carried a thing in his life but a football or a high-ball.

GOOPER:
Mae, will y' let me talk, please?

MAE:
Yes, honey.

GOOPER:
Now, a twenty-eight-thousand-acre plantation's a mighty big thing t' run.

MAE:
Almost stinglehanded.

{{Margaret has gone out onto the gallery and can be heard calling softly to Brick.}}

BIG MAMA:
You never had to run this place. What are you talking about? As if Big Daddy was dead and in his grave, you had to run it? Why, you just helped him out with a few business details and had your law practice at the same time in Memphis!

MAE:
Oh Mommy Mommy, Big Mommy, Let's be fair!

MARGARET:
Brick!

MAE:
Why, Gooper has given himself body and soul to keeping this place up for the past five years since Big Daddy's health started failing.

MARGARET:
Brick!

MAE:
Gooper won't say it, Gooper never thought of it as a duty, he just did it. And what did Brick do? Brick kept living in his past glory at college! Still a football player at twenty-seven!
MARGARET {[returning alone]}:
Who are you talking about now? Brick? A football player?
He isn't a football player and you know it. Brick is a sports
announcer on T.V. and one of the best-known ones in the
country!

MAE:
I'm talking about what he was.

MARGARET:
Well, I wish you would just stop talking about my husband.

GOOPER:
I've got a right to discuss my brother with other members of
MY OWN family, which don't include {you.} Why don't you
go out there and drink with Brick?

MARGARET:
I've never seen such malice toward a brother.

GOOPER:
How about his for me? Why, he can't stand to be in the same
room with me!

MARGARET:
This is a deliberate campaign of vilification for the most dis-
gusting and sordid reason on earth, and I know what it is!
It's {avarice, avarice, greed, greed!}

BIG MAMA:
{Oh, I'll scream! I will scream in a moment unless this stops!}

GOOPER has stalked up to Margaret with clenched fists at
his sides as if he would strike her. Mae distorts her face
again into a hideous grimace behind Margaret's back.]

BIG MAMA {[sobs]}:

MARGARET:
Precious Mommy. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I--!

{[She bends her long graceful neck to press her forehead to
Big Mama's bulging shoulder under its blask chiffon.]}

MAE:
How beautiful, how touching, this display of devotion! Do
you know why she's childless? She's childless because that big
beautiful athlete husband of hers won't go to bed with her!

GOOPER:
You jest won't let me do this in a nice way, will yah? Aw
right--I don't give a goddam if Big Daddy likes me or don't
like me or did or never did or will or will never! I'm just appealing to a sense of common decency and fair play. I'll tell you the truth. I've resented Big Daddy's partiality to Brick ever since Brick was born, and the way I've been treated like I was just barely good enough to spit on and sometimes not even good enough for that. Big Daddy is dying of cancer, and it's spread all through him and it's attacked all his vital organs including the kidneys and right now he is sinking into uremia, and you all know what uremia is, it's poisoning of the whole system due to the failure of the body to eliminate its poisons.

MARGARET {{to herself, downstage, hissingly}}: {Poisons, poisons! Venomous thoughts and words! In hearts and minds!--That's poisons!}

GOOPER {{overlapping her}}: I am asking for a square deal, and, by God, I expect to get one. But if I don't get one, if there's any peculiar shenanigans going on around here behind my back, well, I'm not a corporation lawyer for nothing, I know how to protect my own interests.

{{[Brick enters from the gallery with a tranquil, blurred smile, carrying an empty glass with him.]} 

BRICK:
Storm coming up.

GOOPER:
Oh! A late arrival!

MAE:
Behold the conquering hero comes!

GOOPER:
The fabulous Brick Pollitt! Remember him?--Who could forget him!

MAE:
He looks like he's been injured in a game!

GOOPER:
Yep, I'm afraid you'll have to warm the bench at the Sugar Bowl this year, Brick!

{{[Mae laughs shrilly.]} 

Or was it the Rose Bowl that he made that famous run in?--
MAE:
The punch bowl, honey. It was in the punch bowl, the cut-glass punch bowl!

GOOPER:
Oh, that's right, I'm getting the bowls mixed up!

MARGARET:
Why don't you stop venting your malice and envy on a sick boy?

BIG MAMA:
{Now you two hush, I mean it, hush, all of you, hush!}

DAISY, SOOKEY:
Storm! Storm comin'! Storm! Storm!

LACEY:
Brightie, close them shutters.

GOOPER:
Lacey, put the top up on my Cadillac, will yuh?

LACEY:
Yes, suh, Mistah Pollitt!

GOOPER {[at the same time]}:
Big Mama, you know it's necessary for me t' go back to Memphis in th' mornin' t' represent the Parker estate in a lawsuit.

{[Mae sits on the bed and arranges papers she has taken from the brief case.]}

BIG MAMA:
Is it, Gooper?

MAE:
Yaiss.

GOOPER:
That's why I'm forced to--to bring up a problem that--

MAE:
Somethin' that's too important t' be put off!

GOOPER:
If Brick was sober, he ought to be in on this.
MARGARET:
Brick is present; we're present.

GOOPER:
Well, good. I will now give you this outline my paper, Tom Bullitt, an' me have drawn up--a sort of dummy--trusteeship.

MARGARET:
Oh, that's it! You'll be in charge an' dole out remittances, will you?

GOOPER:
This we did as soon as we got the report on Big Daddy from th' Ochsner Laboratories. We did this thing, I mean we drew up this dummy outline with the advice and assistance of the Chairman of the Boa'd of Directors of th' Southern Plantahs Bank and Trust Company in Memphis, C. C. Bellowes, a man who handles estates for all th' prominent fam'lies in West Tennessee and th' Delta.

BIG MAMA:
Gooper?

GOOPER {[crouching in front of Big Mama]}:
Now this is not--not final, or anything like it. This is just a preliminary outline. But it does provide a basis--a design--a possible, feasible--{plan!}

MARGARET:
Yes, I'll bet it's a plan.

{[Thunder]}

MAE:
It's a plan to protect the biggest estate in the Delta from irresponsibility an'--

BIG MAMA:
Now you listen to me, all of you, you listen here! They's not goin' to be any more catty talk in my house! And Gooper,

you put that away before I grab it out of your hand and tear it right up! I don't know what the hell's in it, and I don't want to know what the hell's in it. I'm talkin' in Big Daddy's language now; I'm his {wife,} not his {widow,} I'm still his wife! And I'm talkin' to you in his language an'--

GOOPER:
Big Mama, what I have here is --
MAE: [at the same time]:
Gooper explained that it's just a plan . . .

BIG MAMA:
I don't care what you got there. Just put it back where it came from, an' don't let me see it again, not even the outside of the envelope of it! Is that understood? Basis! Plan! Preliminary! Design! I say--what is it Big Daddy always saps when he's disgusted?

BRICK: [from the bar]:
Big Daddy says "crap" when he's disgusted.

BIG MAMA: [rising]:
That's right--CRAP! I say CRAP too, like Big Daddy!

{[Thunder]}

MAE:
Coarse language doesn't seem called for in this--

GOOPER:
Somethin' in me is {deeply outraged} by yearin' pou talk like this.

BIG MAMA:
{Nobody's goin' to take nothin'!}--till Big Daddy lets go of it --maybe, just possibly, not--not even then! No, not even then!

{[Thunder]}

MAE: 160
Sookey, hurry up an' git that po'ch furniture covahed; want th' paint to come off?

GOOPER:
Lacey, put mah car away!

LACEY:
Caint, Mistah Pollitt, you got the keys!

GOOPER:
Naw, you got 'em, man. Where th' keys to th' car, honey?

MAE:
You got 'em in your pocket!

BRICK:
"You can always hear me singin' this song, Show me the way}
to go home."

{[Thunder distantly]}

BIG MAMA:
Brick! Come here, Brick, I need you. Tonight Brick looks like he used to look when he was a little boy, just like he did when he played wild games and used to come home when I hollered myself hoarse for him, all sweaty and pink cheeked and sleepy, with his--red curls shining . . .

{[Brick draws aside as he does from all physical contact and continues the song in a whisper, opening the ice bucket and dropping in the ice cubes one by one as if he were mixing some important chemical formula.]}

{[Distant thunder.]}

Time goes by so fast. Nothin' can outrun it. Death commences too early--almost before you're half acquainted with life--you meet the other . . . Oh, you know we just got to love each other an' stay together, all of us, just as close as we can, especially now that such a {black} thing has come and moved into this place without invitation.

{[Awkwardly embracing Brick, she presses her head to his shoulder.]}

{[A dog howls off stage.]}

Oh, Brick, son of Big Daddy, Big Daddy does so love you. Y'know what would be his fondest dream come true? If before he passed on, if Big Daddy has to pass on...

{[A dog howls.]}

...you give him a child of yours, a grandson as much like his son as his son is like Big Daddy...

MARGARET:
I know that's Big Daddy's dream.

BIG MAMA:
That's his dream.

MAE:
Such a pity that Maggie and Brick can't oblige.

BIG DADDY {{off down stage right on the gallery}}:
Looks like the wind was takin' liberties with this place.
SERVANT {[off stage]}:
Yes, sir, Mr. Pollitt.

MARGARET {[crossing to the right door]}:
Big Daddy's on the gall'ry.

{[Big Mama has turned toward the hall door at the sound of Big Daddy's voice on the gallery.]} 

BIG MAMA:
I can't stay here. He'll see somethin' in my eyes.

{[Big Daddy enters the room from up stage right.]} 

BIG DADDY:
Can I come in?

{[He Puts his cigar in an ash tray.]} 

MARGARET:
Did the storm wake you up, Big Daddy?

BIG DADDY:
Which stawm are you talkin' about--th' one outside or th' hullballoo in here?

{[Gooper squeezes Past Big Daddy.]} 

GOOPER:
'Scuse me.

{[Mae tries to squeeze Past Big Daady to join Gooper, but Big Daddy puts his arm firmly around her.]} 

BIG DADDY:
I heard some mighty loud talk. Sounded like somethin' im-
portant was bein' discussed. What was the powwow about?

MAE {[flustered]}:
Why--nothin', Big Daddy . . .

BIG DADDY {[crossing to extreme left center, taking Mae with him]}:
What is that pregnant-lookin' envelope you're puttin' back in your brief case, Gooper?

GOOPER {[at the foot of the bed, caught, as he stuffs papers into envelope]}:
That? Nothin', suh--nothin' much of anythin' at all . . .
BIG DADDY:
Nothin'? It looks like a whole lot of nothin'!

{{He turns up stage to the group.}}

You all know th' story about th' young married couple--

GOOPER:
Yes, sir!

BIG DADDY:
Hello, Brick--

BRICK:
Hello, Big Daddy.

{{The group is arranged in a semicircle above Big Daddy, Margaret at the extreme right, then Mae and Gooper, then Big Mama, with Brick at the left.}}

BIG DADDY:
Young married couple took Junior out to th' zoo one Sunday, inspected all of God's creatures in their cages, with satisfaction.

GOOPER:
Satisfaction.

BIG DADDY {{crossing to up stage center, facing front}}:
This afternoon was a warm afternoon in spring an' that ole elephant had somethin' else on his mind which was bigger'n peanuts. You know this story, Brick?

{{Gooper nods.}}

BRICK:
No, sir, I don't know it.

BIG DADDY:
Y' see, in th' cage adjoinin' they was a young female elephant in heat!

BIG MAMA {{at Big Daddy's shoulder}}:
Oh, Big Daddy!

BIG DADDY:
What's the matter, preacher's gone, ain't he? All right. That female elephant in the next cage was permeatin' the atmosphere about her with a powerful and excitin' odor of female fertility! Huh! Ain't that a nice way to put it, Brick?
BRICK:
Yes, sir, nothin' wrong with it.

BIG DADDY:
Brick says th's nothin' wrong with it!

BIG MAMA:
Oh, Big Daddy!

BIG DADDY {(crossing to down stage center]}:
So this ole bull elephant still had a couple of fornications left in him. He reared back his trunk an' got a whiff of that elephant lady next door!--began to paw at the dirt in his cage an' butt his head against the separatin' partition and, first thing y'know, there was a conspicuous change in his {Profile}-very {conspicuous!} Ain't I tellin' this story in decent language, Brick?

BRICK:
Yes, sir, too fuckin' decent!

BIG DADDY:
So, the little boy pointed at it and said, "What's that?" His mama said, "Oh, that's--nothin'!"--His papa said, "She's spoiled!"

{{[Big Daddy crosses to Brick at left.]]}
You didn't laugh at that story, Brick.

{{[Big Mama crosses to down stage right crying. Margaret goes to her. Mae and Gooper hold up stage right center.]]}

BRICK:
No, sir, I didn't laugh at that story.

BIG DADDY:
What is the smell in this room? Don't you notice it, Brick? Don't you notice a powerful and obnoxious odor of mendacity in this room?

BRICK:
Yes, sir, I think I do, sir.

GOOPER:
Mae, Mae . . .

BIG DADDY:
There is nothing more powerful. Is there, Brick?

BRICK:
No, sir. No, sir, there isn't, an' nothin' more obnoxious.

BIG DADDY:
Brick agrees with me. The odor of mendacity is a powerful and obnoxious odor an' the stawm hasn't blown it away from this room yet. You notice it, Gooper?

GOOPER:
What, sir?

BIG DADDY:
How about you, Sister Woman? You notice the unpleasant odor of mendacity in this room?

MAE:
Why, Big Daddy, I don't even know what that is.

BIG DADDY:
You can smell it. Hell it smells like death!

{[Big Mama sobs. Big Daddy looks toward her.]} 166

What's wrong with that fat woman over there, loaded with diamonds? Hey, what's-you-name, what's the matter with you?

MARGARET {[crossing toward Big Daddy]}:
She had a slight dizzy spell, Big Daddy.

BIG DADDY:
You better watch that, Big Mama. A stroke is a bad way to go.

MARGARET {[crossing to Big Daddy a center]}:
Oh, Brick, Big Daddy has on your birthday present to him, Brick, he has on your cashmere robe, the softest material I have ever felt.

BIG DADDY:
Yeah, this is my soft birthday, Maggie . . . Not my gold or my silver birthday, but my soft birthday, everything's got to be soft for Big Daddy on this soft birthday.

{[Maggie kneels before Big Daddy at center.]} 166

MARGARET:
Big Daddy's got on his Chinese slippers that I gave him, Brick. Big Daddy, I haven't given you my big present yet, but now I will, now's the time for me to present it to you! I have an announcement to make!

MAE:
What? What kind of announcement?
GOOPER:
A sports announcement, Maggie?

MARGARET:
Announcement of life beginning! A child is coming, sired by
Brick, and out of Maggie the Cat! I have Brick's child in my
body, an' that's my birthday present to Big Daddy on this
birthday!

{[Big Daddy looks at Brick who crosses behind Big Daddy
to down stage Portal, left.]}  

BIG DADDY:
Get up, girl, get up off your knees, girl.

{[Big Daddy helps Margaret to rise. He crosses above her,
to her right, bites off the end of a fresh cigar, taken from his
bathrobe pocket, as he studies Margaret.]}  

{Uh-huh, this girl has life in her body, that's no lie!}

BIG MAMA:
BIG DADDY'S DREAM COME TRUE!

BRICK:
JESUS!

BIG DADDY {[crossing right below wicker staffi]}:
Gooper, I want my lawyer in the mornin'.

BRICK:
Where are you goin', Big Daddy?

BIG DADDY:
Son, I'm goin' up on the roof, to the belvedere on th' roof to
look over my kingdom before I give up my kingdom--
twenty-eight thousand acres of th' richest land this side of the
valley Nile!

{[He exits through right doors, and down right on the
gallery.]}  

BIG MAMA {[following]}:
Sweetheart, sweetheart, sweetheart--can I come with you?

{[She exits down stage right.]}  

{[Margaret is down stage center in the mirror area. Mae has
joined Gooper and she gives him a fierce Poke, making a
low hissing sound and a grimace of fury.]}
GOOPER {(Pushing her aside)}:
Brick could you possibly spare me one small shot of that liquor?

BRICK:
Why, help yourself, Gooper boy.

GOOPER:
I will.

MAE {[shrilly]}:
Of course we know that this is--a lie.

GOOPER:
{Be still, Mae.}

MAE:
I won't be still! I know she's made this up!

GOOPER:
Goddam it, I said shut up!

MARGARET:
Gracious! I didn't know that my little announcement was going to provoke such a storm!

MAE:
{That} woman isn't {pregnant!}

GOOPER:
Who said she was?

MAE:
{She} did.

GOOPER:
The doctor didn't. Doc Baugh didn't.

MARGARET:
I haven't gone to Doc Baugh.

GOOPER:
Then who'd you go to, Maggie?

MARGARET:
One of the best gynecologists in the South.

GOOPER:
Uh huh, uh huh!--I see . . .
--May we have his name, please?

MARGARET:
No, you may not, Mister Prosecuting Attorney!

MAE:
He doesn't have any name, he doesn't exist!

MARGARET:
Oh, he exists all right, and so does my child, Brick's baby!

MAE:
You can't conceive a child by a man that won't sleep with you unless you think you're--

[[Brick has turned on the phonograph. A scat song cuts Mae's speech.]]

GOOPER:
{Turn that off!}

MAE:
We know it's a lie because we hear you in here; he won't sleep with you, we hear you! So don't imagine you're going to put a trick over on us, to fool a dying man with a--

[[A long drawn cry of agony and rage fills the house. Margaret turns the phonograph down to a whisper. The cry is repeated.]]

MAE:
Did you hear that, Gooper, did you hear that?

GOOPER:
Sounds like the pain has struck.

GOOPER:
Come along and leave these lovebirds together in their nest!

[[He goes out first. Mae follows but turns at the door, contorting her face and hissing at Margaret.]]

MAE:
{Liar!}

[[She slams the door.]]

[[Margaret exhales with relief and moves a little unsteadily...]]
to catch hold of Brick's arm.}

MARGARET:
Thank you for--keeping still . . .

BRICK:
O.K., Maggie.

MARGARET:
It was gallant of you to save my face!

{[He now pours down three shots in quick succession and stands waiting, silent. All at once he turns with a smile and says:]

BRICK:
{There!}

MARGARET:
What?

BRICK:
The {click} . . .

{{His gratitude seems almost infinite as he hobbles out on the gallery with a drink. We hear his crutch as he swings out of sight. Then, at some distance, he begins singing to himself a peaceful song. Margaret holds the big Pillow forlornly as if it were her only companion, for a few moments, then throws it on the bed. She rushes to the liquor cabinet, gathers all the bottles in her arms, turns about undecidedly, then runs out of the room with them, leaving the door ajar on the dim yellow hall. Brick is heard hobbling back along the gallery, singing his peaceful song. He comes back in, sees the pillow on the bed, laughs lightly, sadly, picks it up. He has it under his arm as Margaret returns to the room. Margaret softly shuts the door and leans against it, smiling softly at Brick.}

MARGARET:
Brick, I used to think that you were stronger than me and I didn't want to be overpowered by you. But now, since you've taken to liquor--you know what?--I guess it's bad, but now I'm stronger than you and I can love you more truly! Don't move that pillow. I'll move it right back if you do!--Brick?

{[She turns out all the lamps but a single rose-silk-shaded one by the bed.]

I really have been to a doctor and I know what to do and--Brick?--this is my time by the calendar to conceive?
BRICK:
Yes, I understand, Maggie. But how are you going to conceive a child by a man in love with his liquor?

MARGARET:
By locking his liquor up and making him satisfy my desire before I unlock it!

BRICK:
Is that what you've done, Maggie?

MARGARET:
Look and see. Mat cabinet's mighty empty compared to before!

BRICK:
Well, I'll be a son of a--

{[He reaches for his crutch but she beats him to it and rushes out on the gallery, hurls the crutch over the rail and comes back in, Panting.}]

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

BRICK:
I don't say anything. I guess there's nothing to say.

MARGARET:
Oh, you weak people, you weak, beautiful people!--who give up with such grace. What you want is someone to--

{[She turns out the rose-silk lamp.]}

--take hold of you.--Gently, gently with love hand your life back to you, like somethin' gold you let go of. I do love you, Brick, I {do!}

BRICK {[smiling with charming sadness]}:
Wouldn't it be funny if that was true?

{THE END}