

"CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF"

By

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

TELEVISION ADAPTATION BY

LWAZI NKIWANE

6 Mansfield Road  
Reading, Berkshire RG1 6AJ  
07508019614  
lwazinkiwanesongs@gmail.com

FADE IN:

INT. THE BED - SITTING - ROOM OF A PLANTATION HOME IN THE  
MISSISSIPPI DELTA. - CONTINUOUS

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 HAVET' 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 HEAR  
YA....

MARGARET:

WELL, I!--JUST REMARKED THAT!--ONE OF TH' NO-NECK 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?

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 CONNEXION.

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, MONSTERS.... ALL NO-NECK  
PEOPLE ARE MONSTERS....

[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, NOOOOOO! 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 and 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 DIIIEED! 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 INNUENDOES 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 THE BATHROOM DOORWAY DRYING HIS HAIR WITH A TOWEL AND HANGING ON TO 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 DELIQUESCENCE, 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 EMBARRASSING ADMISSION.]

--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 FIENDS 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! SONOF-  
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; SHE'S  
DOWNRIGHT ODIUS TO HIM! 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!

[THIS LOUD 'HAH!' IS ACCOMPANIED BY A VIOLENT ACTION SUCH  
AS SLAMMING A DRAWER SHUT.]

--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  
MONSTERS....

[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 BE 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.

[WHENEVER SHE CALLS HIM 'BABY' THE WORD IS A SOFT  
CARESS...]

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'  
BRILLIANCE OF TH' NO-NECK MONSTERS!

[SHE GIGGLES WITH A HAND FLUTTERING AT HER THROAT AND HER  
BREAST AND HER LONG THROAT ARCHED. SHE COMES DOWNSTAGE AND  
RECREATES THE SCENE WITH VOICE AND GESTURE.]

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 HONOUR 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 I--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!

[MARGARET, BACK AT THE DRESSING-TABLE, STILL DOESN'T SEE BRICK. | HE IS WATCHING HER WITH A LOOK THAT IS NOT QUITE DEFINABLE--AMUSED? SHOCKED? CONTEMPTUOUS?--PART OF THOSE AND PART OF SOMETHING ELSE.]

Y'KNOW--YOUR BROTHER GOOPER STILL  
CHERISHES THE ILLUSION HE TOOK A  
GIANT STEP UP ON THE SOCIAL LADDER  
WHEN HE MARRIED MISS MAE FLYNN OF  
THE MEMPHIS FLYNNS.

[MARGARET MOVES ABOUT THE ROOM AS SHE TALKS, STOPS BEFORE THE MIRROR, MOVES ON.]

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 HONOUR 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 JEWELLED SANDALS AND RUSHES TO THE  
DRESSING-TABLE.]

WHY, YEAR BEFORE LAST, WHEN SUSAN  
MCPHEETERS WAS SINGLED OUT FO' THAT  
HONOUR, 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 HOBBLER DOWNSTAGE AND ASKS,  
WITHOUT 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.

[MUSIC IS HEARD.]

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.... 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!  
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.]

--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....

[MORE CROQUET SOUNDS.]

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.]

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.]

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.... GET DRESSED,  
BRICK.

[HE DROPS HIS CRUTCH.]

BRICK:

I'VE DROPPED MY CRUTCH.

[HE HAS STOPPED RUBBING HIS HAIR DRY BUT STILL STANDS  
HANGING ON TO THE TOWEL RACK IN A WHITE TOWEL-CLOTH ROBE.]

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 HOBBLER 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 PARTY.

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 BREATHELESSLY 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 YOUR 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.

MARGARET:  
THEY'RE IMPOSSIBLE CONDITIONS!

BRICK:  
THEN WHY DON'T YOU--?

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!

[SHE RE-ENTERS.]

BUT MAE? WHY DID Y'GIVE DAWGS' NAMES  
TO ALL YOUR KIDDIES?

MAE:

DOGS' NAMES?

[MARGARET HAS MADE THIS OBSERVATION AS SHE GOES TO RAISE  
THE BAMBOO BLINDS, SINCE THE SUNSET GLARE HAS DIMINISHED.  
IN CROSSING SHE WINKS AT BRICK.]

MARGARET [SWEETLY]:

DIXIE, TRIXIE,

BUSTER, SONNY, POLLY!--SOUNDS LIKE  
FOUR DOGS AND A PARROT--ANIMAL ACT  
IN A CIRCUS!

MAE:

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?

MAE:

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--

[SOMEONE DOWNSTAIRS CALLS FOR HER. 'HEY, MAE!'--SHE RUSHES  
TO DOOR, SAYING:]

INTERMISSION IS OVER!

MARGARET [AS MAE CLOSES DOOR]:

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'VE LAID 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 PYJAMAS?

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?

[CHILDREN'S AND GROWNUPS' VOICES ARE BLENDED, BELOW, IN A  
LOUD BUT UNCERTAIN RENDITION OF 'MY WILD IRISH ROSE'.]

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! CAN'T! 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 HOBBLER 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--I 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

FLOOR]:

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!

[SHE TURNS TO THE BATHROOM DOOR AND CALLS OUT.]

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.]

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: 'MISTUH POLLY'S RES'DENCE.']

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!--

[SHE RAISES HER VOICE TO A BELLOW.]

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 SALLY, 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.]

23.

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.

[SOMEBODY SHOUTS FOR HER DOWNSTAIRS AND SHE SHOUTS:] I'M  
COMIN'!

[SHE STARTS OUT. AT THE HALL DOOR, TURNS AND JERKS A  
FOREFINGER, FIRST TOWARDS THE BATHROOM DOOR, THEN TOWARDS  
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!

[SOMEONE 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 SWEEPED 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 BRICK CALLS OUT TO HER.]

BRICK:

HAS BIG MAMA GONE?

MARGARET:

SHE'S GONE.

[HE OPENS THE BATHROOM DOOR AND HOBBLER 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 HIM  
OUT OF A POWDER ROOM IN THAT CASE.

MARGARET:

AND HAVE SOMEONE CATCH ME  
AT IT? I'M NOT THAT STUPID. OH, I  
MIGHT SOME TIME 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 THE FIRST TIME A REALISATION 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.

BRICK:

WHY?

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,  
ANYHOW.... [SHE LOOKS ABOUT.] WHERE  
DID I PUT DOWN MY CIGARETTE? 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 HOBBLER RATHER RAPIDLY  
OUT ON TO THE LONG GALLERY IN THE FADING, MUCH FADED, 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  
ADMIRER 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 RED  
NECK, AS MUCH OF A RED NECK 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 TENCENT  
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

ALL 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 MOULDY 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, MISTAH BRICK, HOW YUH  
FEELIN?']

BRICK RAISES HIS LIQUOR GLASS AS IF THAT ANSWERED THE  
QUESTION.]

MARGARET:

YOU CAN BE YOUNG WITHOUT  
MONEY BUT YOU CAN'T BE OLD WITHOUT  
IT. YOU'VE GOT TO BE OLD WITH 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.

[FORLORNLY, ALMOST FEARFULLY.]

I'M DRESSED, ALL DRESSED, NOTHING  
ELSE FOR ME TO DO....

[SHE MOVES ABOUT RESTLESSLY, AIMLESSLY, AND SPEAKS, AS IF  
TO HERSELF.]

I KNOW WHEN I MADE MY MISTAKE.--WHAT  
AM I--? OH!--MY BRACELETS....

[SHE STARTS WORKING A COLLECTION OF BRACELETS OVER HER  
HANDS ON TO HER WRISTS, ABOUT SIX ON EACH, AS SHE TALKS.]

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 [HOLDING 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--?

[BRICK TURNS SUDDENLY OUT UPON THE GALLERY AND CALLS:]

BRICK:

LITTLE GIRL! HEY, LITTLE

GIRL!

GIRL [AT A DISTANCE]:

WHAT, UNCLE BRICK?

BRICK:

TELL THE FOLKS TO COME UP!--

BRING EVERYBODY UPSTAIRS!

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!

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, 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:]

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, DON'T BRAIN ME YET,  
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  
FOR EVER! 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  
THANKSGIVIN' 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 TIGHT SHUT EYES.]

--MERCIFUL ARROW!

[BRICK STRIKES AT HER; MISSES.]

MISSED ME!--SORRY,--I'M NOT TRYIN'  
TO WHITEWASH MY BEHAVIOUR, 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! 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 BALL 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--[GASPING]--TO KNOCK AT A DOOR BEFORE YOU COME INTO A ROOM. OTHERWISE PEOPLE MIGHT THINK THAT YOU--LACK--GOOD BREEDING....

DIXIE: YANH, YANH, YANH, WHAT IS UNCLE BRICK DOIN' ON TH' FLOOR?

BRICK:

I TRIED TO KILL 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 CRUELLEST 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 GYNAECOLOGIST.... 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.] HERE THEY COME!

FADE OUT

INT. THE BED - SITTING - ROOM OF A PLANTATION HOME IN THE  
MISSISSIPPI DELTA. - CONTINUOUS

FADE IN

THERE IS NO LAPSE OF TIME. MARGARET AND BRICK ARE IN THE  
SAME POSITIONS.

MARGARET [AT DOOR]:

HERE THEY COME!

[BIG DADDY APPEARS FIRST, A TALL MAN WITH A FIERCE, ANXIOUS  
LOOK, MOVING CAREFULLY NOT TO BETRAY HIS WEAKNESS EVEN, OR  
ESPECIALLY, TO HIMSELF.]

BIG DADDY:

WELL, BRICK.

BRICK:

HELLO, BIG DADDY.--

CONGRATULATIONS!

BIG DADDY:

--CRAP....

[SOME OF THE PEOPLE ARE APPROACHING THROUGH THE HALL,  
OTHERS ALONG THE GALLERY | VOICES FROM BOTH DIRECTIONS.  
GOOPER AND REVEREND TOOKER BECOME VISIBLE OUTSIDE GALLERY  
DOORS, AND THEIR VOICES COME IN CLEARLY. THEY PAUSE OUTSIDE  
AS GOOPER LIGHTS A CIGAR.]

REVEREND TOOKER [VIVACIOUSLY]:

OH, BUT ST PAUL'S IN GRENADA HAS THREE  
MEMORIAL WINDOWS, AND THE LATEST ONE  
IS A TIFFANY STAINED-GLASS WINDOW  
THAT COST TWENTY-FIVE HUNDRED  
DOLLARS, A PICTURE OF CHRIST THE  
GOOD SHEPHERD WITH A LAMB IN HIS  
ARMS.

GOOPER:

WHO GIVE THAT WINDOW,  
PREACH?

REVEREND TOOKER:

CLYDE FLETCHER'S WIDOW. ALSO PRESENTED ST PAUL'S WITH  
A BAPTISMAL FONT.

GOOPER:

Y'KNOW WHAT SOMEBODY OUGHT  
T' GIVE YOUR CHURCH IS A COOLIN'  
SYSTEM, PREACH.

REVEREND TOOKER:

YES, SIREE, BOB!

AND Y'KNOW WHAT GUS HAMMA'S FAMILY  
GAVE IN HIS MEMORY TO THE CHURCH AT

TWO RIVERS? A COMPLETE NEW STONE  
PARISH-HOUSE WITH A BASKETBALL COURT  
IN THE BASEMENT AND A--  
BIG DADDY [UTTERING A LOUD BARKING  
LAUGH WHICH IS FAR FROM TRULY  
MIRTHFUL]:

HEY, PREACH! WHAT'S ALL  
THIS TALK ABOUT MEMORIALS, PREACH?  
Y' THINK SOMEBODY'S ABOUT T' KICK  
OFF AROUND HERE? 'S THAT IT?

[STARTLED BY THIS INTERJECTION, REVEREND TOOKER DECIDES TO  
LAUGH AT THE QUESTION ALMOST AS LOUD AS HE CAN. HOW HE  
WOULD ANSWER THE QUESTION WE'LL NEVER KNOW, AS HE'S SPARED  
THAT EMBARRASSMENT BY THE VOICE OF GOOPER'S WIFE, MAE,  
RISING HIGH AND CLEAR AS SHE APPEARS WITH DOC' BAUGH, THE  
FAMILY DOCTOR, THROUGH THE HALL DOOR.]

MAE [ALMOST RELIGIOUSLY]:  
--LET'S SEE NOW, THEY'VE HAD THEIR TYYYPHOID  
SHOTS, AND THEIR TETANUS  
SHOTS, THEIR DIPHTHERIA SHOTS AND  
THEIR HEPATITIS SHOTS AND THEIR  
POLIO SHOTS, THEY GOT THOSE SHOTS  
EVERY MONTH FROM MAY THROUGH  
SEPTEMBER, AND--GOOPER? HEY!  
GOOPER!-- WHAT ALL HAVE THE KIDDIES  
BEEN SHOT FAW?

MARGARET [OVERLAPPING A BIT]:  
TURN ON THE HI-FI, BRICK! LET'S HAVE SOME  
MUSIC T' START OFF TH' PARTY WITH!

[THE TALK BECOMES SO GENERAL THAT THE ROOM SOUNDS LIKE A GREAT AVIARY OF CHATTERING BIRDS. ONLY BRICK REMAINS UNENGAGED, LEANING UPON THE LIQUOR CABINET WITH HIS FARAWAY SMILE, AN ICE CUBE IN A PAPER NAPKIN WITH WHICH HE NOW AND THEN RUBS HIS FOREHEAD. HE DOESN'T RESPOND TO MARGARET'S COMMAND. SHE BOUNDS FORWARD AND STOOPS OVER THE INSTRUMENT PANEL OF THE CONSOLE.]

GOOPER:

WE GAVE 'EM THAT THING FOR A  
THIRD ANNIVERSARY PRESENT, GOT THREE  
SPEAKERS IN IT.

[THE ROOM IS SUDDENLY BLASTED BY THE CLIMAX OF A WAGNERIAN OPERA OR A BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY.]

BIG DADDY:

TURN THAT DAMN THING OFF!

[ALMOST INSTANT SILENCE, ALMOST INSTANTLY BROKEN BY THE SHOUTING CHARGE OF BIG MAMA, ENTERING THROUGH HALL DOOR LIKE A CHARGING RHINO.]

BIG MAMA:

WHA'S MY BRICK, WHA'S MAH  
PRECIOUS BABY!!

BIG DADDY:

SORRY! TURN IT BACK ON!

[EVERYONE LAUGHS VERY LOUD. BIG DADDY IS FAMOUS FOR HIS JOKES AT BIG MAMA'S EXPENSE, AND NOBODY LAUGHS LOUDER AT THESE JOKES THAN BIG MAMA HERSELF, THOUGH SOMETIMES THEY'RE PRETTY CRUEL AND BIG MAMA HAS TO PICK UP OR FUSS WITH SOMETHING TO COVER THE HURT THAT THE LOUD LAUGH DOESN'T QUITE COVER. ON THIS OCCASION, A HAPPY OCCASION, BECAUSE THE DREAD IN HER HEART HAS ALSO BEEN LIFTED BY THE FALSE REPORT ON BIG DADDY'S CONDITION, SHE GIGGLES, GROTESQUELY,

COYLY, IN BIG DADDY'S DIRECTION AND BEARS DOWN UPON BRICK,  
ALL VERY QUICK AND ALIVE.]

BIG MAMA:

HERE HE IS, HERE'S MY  
PRECIOUS BABY! WHAT'S THAT YOU'VE  
GOT IN YOUR HAND? YOU PUT THAT  
LIQUOR DOWN, SON, YOUR HAND WAS MADE  
FO' HOLDIN' SOMETHIN' BETTER THAN  
THAT!

GOOPER:

LOOK AT BRICK PUT IT DOWN!

[BRICK HAS OBEYED BIG MAMA BY DRAINING THE GLASS AND  
HANDING IT TO HER. AGAIN EVERYONE LAUGHS, SOME HIGH, SOME  
LOW.]

BIG MAMA:

OH, YOU BAD BOY, YOU,  
YOU'RE MY BAD LITTLE BOY. GIVE BIG  
MAMA A KISS, YOU BAD BOY, YOU!--LOOK  
AT HIM SHY AWAY, WILL YOU? BRICK  
NEVER LIKED BEIN' KISSED OR MADE A  
FUSS OVER, I GUESS BECAUSE HE'S  
ALWAYS HAD TOO MUCH OF IT! SON, YOU  
TURN THAT THING OFF!

[BRICK HAS SWITCHED ON THE TV SET.]

I CAN'T STAND T V, RADIO WAS BAD  
ENOUGH BUT T V HAS GONE IT ONE  
BETTER, I MEAN--[PLOPS WHEELING IN  
CHAIR]--ONE WORSE, HA HA! NOW WHAT'M  
I SITTING DOWN HERE FAW? I WANT T'

SIT NEXT TO MY SWEETHEART ON THE  
SOFA, HOLD HANDS WITH HIM AND LOVE

HIM UP A LITTLE!

[BIG MAMA HAS ON A BLACK AND WHITE FIGURED CHIFFON. THE  
LARGE IRREGULAR PATTERNS, LIKE THE MARKINGS OF SOME MASSIVE  
ANIMAL, THE LUSTER OF HER GREAT DIAMONDS AND MANY PEARLS,  
THE BRILLIANTS SET IN THE SILVER FRAMES OF HER GLASSES, HER  
RIOTOUS VOICE, BOOMING LAUGH, HAVE DOMINATED THE ROOM SINCE  
SHE ENTERED. BIG DADDY HAS BEEN REGARDING HER WITH A STEADY  
GRIMACE OF CHRONIC ANNOYANCE.]

BIG MAMA [STILL LOUDER]:

PREACHER,

PREACHER, HEY, PREACH! GIVE ME YOU'  
HAND AN' HELP ME UP FROM THIS CHAIR!

REVEREND TOOKER:

NONE OF YOUR TRICKS, BIG MAMA!

BIG MAMA:

WHAT TRICKS? YOU GIVE ME

YOU' HAND SO I CAN GET UP AN'--

[REVEREND TOOKER EXTENDS HER HIS HAND. SHE GRABS IT AND  
PULLS HIM INTO HER LAP WITH A SHRILL LAUGH THAT SPANS AN  
OCTAVE IN TWO NOTES.]

EVER SEEN A PREACHER IN A FAT LADY'S

LAP? HEY, HEY, FOLKS! EVER SEEN A

PREACHER IN A FAT LADY'S LAP?

[BIG MAMA IS NOTORIOUS THROUGHOUT THE DELTA FOR THIS SORT  
OF INELEGANT HORSEPLAY. MARGARET LOOKS ON WITH INDULGENT  
HUMOR, SIPPING DUBONNET 'ON THE ROCKS' AND WATCHING BRICK,  
BUT MAE AND GOOPER EXCHANGE SIGNS OF HUMORLESS ANXIETY OVER  
THESE ANTICS, THE SORT OF BEHAVIOUR WHICH MAE THINKS MAY  
ACCOUNT FOR THEIR FAILURE TO QUITE GET IN WITH THE SMARTEST  
YOUNG MARRIED SET IN MEMPHIS, DESPITE ALL. ONE OF THE  
NEGROES, LACY OR SOOKEY, PEEKS IN, CACKLING. THEY ARE  
WAITING FOR A SIGN TO BRING IN THE CAKE AND CHAMPAGNE. BUT  
BIG DADDY'S NOT AMUSED. HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND WHY, IN SPITE

OF THE INFINITE MENTAL RELIEF HE'S RECEIVED FROM THE DOCTOR'S REPORT, HE STILL HAS THESE SAME OLD FOX TEETH IN HIS GUTS. 'THIS SPASTIC THING SURE IS SOMETHING?' HE SAYS TO HIMSELF, BUT ALOUD HE ROARS AT BIG MAMA:]

BIG DADDY:

BIG MAMA, WILL YOU QUIT  
HOR-SIN'?--YOU'RE TOO OLD AN' TOO  
FAT FO' THAT SORT OF CRAZY KID STUFF  
AN' BESIDES A WOMAN WITH YOUR BLOODPRESSURE--  
SHE HAD TWO HUNDRED LAST  
SPRING!--IS RISKIN' A STROKE WHEN  
YOU MESS AROUND LIKE THAT....

BIG MAMA:

HERE COMES BIG DADDY'S  
BIRTHDAY!

[NEGROES IN WHITE JACKETS ENTER WITH AN ENORMOUS BIRTHDAY CAKE ABLAZE WITH CANDLES AND CARRYING BUCKETS OF CHAMPAGNE WITH SATIN RIBBONS ABOUT THE BOTTLE NECKS. | MAE AND GOOPER STRIKE UP SONG, AND EVERYBODY, INCLUDING THE NEGROES AND CHILDREN, JOINS IN. ONLY BRICK REMAINS ALOOF.]

EVERYONE:

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU.  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU. HAPPY  
BIRTHDAY, BIG DADDY--[SOME SING:  
'DEAR, BIG DADDY!']--HAPPY BIRTHDAY  
TO YOU. [SOME SING: 'HOW OLD ARE  
YOU!']

[MAE HAS COME DOWN CENTER AND IS ORGANIZING HER CHILDREN LIKE A CHORUS. SHE GIVES THEM A BARELY AUDIBLE: 'ONE, TWO, THREE!' AND THEY ARE OFF IN THE NEW TUNE.]



CHILDREN:

SKINAMARINKA--DINKA--DINK  
SKINAMARINKA--DO WE LOVE YOU.  
SKINAMARINKA- -DINKA--DINK  
SKINAMARINKA--DO.

[ALL TOGETHER, THEY TURN TO BIG DADDY.]

BIG DADDY, YOU!

[THEY TURN BACK FRONT, LIKE A MUSICAL COMEDY CHORUS.]

WE LOVE YOU IN THE MORNING; WE LOVE  
YOU IN THE NIGHT. WE LOVE YOU WHEN  
WE'RE WITH YOU. AND WE LOVE YOU OUT  
OF SIGHT. SKINAMARINKA--DINKA--DINK  
SKINAMARINKA--DO.

[MAE TURNS TO BIG MAMA.]

BIG MAMA, TOO!

[BIG MAMA BURSTS INTO TEARS. THE NEGROES LEAVE.]

BIG DADDY:

NOW IDA, WHAT THE HELL IS  
THE MATTER WITH YOU?

MAE:

SHE'S JUST SO HAPPY.

BIG MAMA:

I'M JUST SO HAPPY, BIG  
DADDY, I HAVE TO CRY OR SOMETHING.

[SUDDEN AND LOUD IN THE HUSH:]

BRICK, DO YOU KNOW THE WONDERFUL  
NEWS THAT DOC BAUGH GOT FROM THE

CLINIC ABOUT BIG DADDY? BIG DADDY'S  
ONE HUNDRED PER CENT!

MARGARET:

ISN'T THAT WONDERFUL?

BIG MAMA:

HE'S JUST ONE HUNDRED PER  
CENT. PASSED THE EXAMINATION WITH  
FLYING COLORS. NOW THAT WE KNOW  
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH BIG DADDY  
BUT A SPASTIC COLON, I CAN TELL YOU  
SOMETHING. I WAS WORRIED SICK, HALF  
OUT OF MY MIND, FOR FEAR THAT BIG  
DADDY MIGHT HAVE A THING LIKE--

[MARGARET CUTS THROUGH THIS SPEECH, JUMPING UP AND  
EXCLAIMING SHRILLY:]

MARGARET:

BRICK, HONEY, AREN'T YOU  
GOING TO GIVE BIG DADDY HIS BIRTHDAY  
PRESENT?

[PASSING BY HIM, SHE SNATCHES HIS LIQUOR GLASS FROM HIM.  
SHE PICKS UP A FANCILY WRAPPED PACKAGE.]

HERE IT IS, BIG DADDY, THIS IS FROM  
BRICK!

BIG MAMA:

THIS IS THE BIGGEST  
BIRTHDAY BIG DADDY'S EVER HAD, A  
HUNDRED PRESENTS AND BUSHELS OF  
TELEGRAMS FROM--

MAE [AT SAME TIME]:

WHAT IS IT, BRICK?

GOOPER:

I BET 500 TO 50 THAT BRICK  
DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS.

BIG MAMA:

THE FUN OF PRESENTS IS NOT  
KNOWING WHAT THEY ARE TILL YOU OPEN  
THE PACKAGE. OPEN YOUR PRESENT, BIG  
DADDY.

BIG DADDY:

OPEN IT YOU'SELF. I WANT  
TO ASK BRICK SOMETHIN'! COME HERE,  
BRICK.

MARGARET:

BIG DADDY'S CALLIN' YOU,  
BRICK.

[SHE IS OPENING THE PACKAGE.]

BRICK:

TELL BIG DADDY I'M CRIPPLED.

BIG DADDY:

I SEE YOU'RE CRIPPLED. I  
WANT TO KNOW HOW YOU GOT CRIPPLED.

MARGARET [MAKING DIVERSIONARY  
TACTICS]:

OH, LOOK, OH, LOOK, WHY,  
IT'S A CASHMERE ROBE!

[SHE HOLDS THE ROBE UP FOR ALL TO SEE.]

MAE:

YOU SOUND SURPRISED, MAGGIE.

MARGARET:

I NEVER SAW ONE BEFORE.

MAE:

THAT'S FUNNY.--HAH!

MARGARET [TURNING ON HER FIERCELY,  
WITH A BRILLIANT SMILE]:

WHY IS IT

FUNNY? ALL MY FAMILY EVER HAD WAS  
FAMILY--AND LUXURIES SUCH AS  
CASHMERE ROBES STILL SURPRISE ME!

BIG DADDY [OMINOUSLY]:

QUIET!

MAE [HEEDLESS IN HER FURY]:

I DON'T SEE HOW YOU COULD BE SO SURPRISED  
WHEN YOU BOUGHT IT YOURSELF AT  
LOEWENSTEIN'S IN MEMPHIS LAST  
SATURDAY. YOU KNOW HOW I KNOW?

BIG DADDY:

I SAID, QUIET!

MAE:

--I KNOW BECAUSE THE SALESGIRL  
THAT SOLD IT TO YOU WAITED ON ME AND  
SAID, OH, MRS POLLITT, YOUR SISTERIN-  
LAW JUST BOUGHT A CASHMERE ROBE

FOR YOUR HUSBAND'S FATHER!

MARGARET:

SISTER WOMAN! YOUR TALENTS  
ARE WASTED AS A HOUSEWIFE AND  
MOTHER, YOU REALLY OUGHT TO BE WITH  
THE FBI OR--

BIG DADDY:

QUIET!

[REVEREND TOOKER'S REFLEXES ARE SLOWER THAN THE OTHERS'. HE  
FINISHES A SENTENCE AFTER THE BELLOW.]

REVEREND TOOKER [TO DOC BAUGH]:

-- THE STORK AND THE REAPER ARE RUNNING  
NECK AND NECK!

[HE STARTS TO LAUGH GAILY WHEN HE NOTICES THE SILENCE AND  
BIG DADDY'S GLARE. HIS LAUGH DIES FALSELY.]

BIG DADDY:

PREACHER, I HOPE I'M NOT  
BUTTING IN ON MORE TALK ABOUT  
MEMORIAL STAINED- GLASS WINDOWS, AM  
I, PREACHER?

[REVEREND TOOKER LAUGHS FEEBLY, THEN COUGHS DRYLY IN THE  
EMBARRASSED SILENCE.]

PREACHER?

BIG MAMA:

NOW, BIG DADDY, DON'T YOU  
PICK ON PREACHER!

BIG DADDY [RAISING HIS VOICE]:  
YOU EVER HEAR THAT EXPRESSION ALL HAWK

AND NO SPIT? YOU BRING THAT  
EXPRESSION TO MIND WITH THAT LITTLE  
DRY COUGH OF YOURS, ALL HAWK AN' NO  
SPIT....

[THE PAUSE IS BROKEN ONLY BY A SHORT STARTLED LAUGH FROM  
MARGARET, THE ONLY ONE THERE WHO IS CONSCIOUS OF AND AMUSED  
BY THE GROTESQUE.]

MAE [RAISING HER ARMS AND JANGLING  
HER BRACELETS]:

I WONDER IF THE  
MOSQUITOES ARE ACTIVE TONIGHT?

BIG DADDY:

WHAT'S THAT, LITTLE MAMA?

DID YOU MAKE SOME REMARK?

MAE:

YES, I SAID I WONDERED IF THE  
MOSQUITOES WOULD EAT US ALIVE IF WE  
WENT OUT ON THE GALLERY FOR A WHILE.

BIG DADDY:

WELL, IF THEY DO, I'LL  
HAVE YOUR BONES PULVERIZED FOR  
FERTILIZER!

BIG MAMA [QUICKLY]:

LAST WEEK WE HAD  
AN AIRPLANE SPRAYING THE PLACE AND I  
THINK IT DONE SOME GOOD, AT LEAST I  
HAVEN'T HAD A--

BIG DADDY [CUTTING HER SPEECH]:  
BRICK, THEY TELL ME, IF WHAT THEY  
TELL ME IS TRUE, THAT YOU DONE SOME  
JUMPING LAST NIGHT ON THE HIGH  
SCHOOL ATHLETIC FIELD?

BIG MAMA:

BRICK, BIG DADDY IS  
TALKING TO YOU, SON.

BRICK [SMILING VAGUELY OVER HIS  
DRINK]:

WHAT WAS THAT, BIG DADDY?

BIG DADDY:

THEY SAID YOU DONE SOME  
JUMPING ON THE HIGH SCHOOL TRACK  
FIELD LAST NIGHT.

BRICK:

THAT'S WHAT THEY TOLD ME,  
TOO.

BIG DADDY:

WAS IT JUMPING OR HUMPING  
THAT YOU WERE DOING OUT THERE? WHAT  
WERE YOU DOING OUT THERE AT THREE  
A.M., LAYIN' A WOMAN ON THAT CINDER  
TRACK?

BIG MAMA:

BIG DADDY, YOU ARE OFF THE  
SICK-LIST, NOW, AND I'M NOT GOING TO

EXCUSE YOU FOR TALKIN' SO--

BIG DADDY:

QUIET!

BIG MAMA:

--NASTY IN FRONT OF  
PREACHER AND--

BIG DADDY:

QUIET!--I ASK YOU, BRICK,  
IF YOU WAS CUTTIN' YOURSELF A PIECE  
O' POON-TANG LAST NIGHT ON THAT  
CINDER TRACK? I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU  
WERE CHASIN' POON-TANG ON THAT TRACK  
AN' TRIPPED OVER SOMETHING IN THE  
HEAT OF THE CHASE--'S THAT IT?

[GOOPER LAUGHS, LOUD AND FALSE, OTHERS NERVOUSLY FOLLOWING  
SUIT. BIG MAMA STAMPS HER FOOT, AND PURSES HER LIPS,  
CROSSING TO MAE AND WHISPERING SOMETHING TO HER AS BRICK  
MEETS HIS FATHER'S HARD, INTENT, GRINNING STARE WITH A  
SLOW, VAGUE SMILE THAT HE OFFERS ALL SITUATIONS FROM BEHIND  
THE SCREEN OF HIS LIQUOR.]

BRICK:

NO, SIR, I DON'T THINK SO....

MAE [AT THE SAME TIME, SWEETLY]:

REVEREND TOOKER, LET'S YOU AND I  
TAKE A STROLL ON THE WIDOW'S WALK.

[SHE AND THE PREACHER GO OUT ON THE GALLERY AS BIG DADDY  
SAYS:]

BIG DADDY:

THEN WHAT THE HELL WERE  
YOU DOING OUT THERE AT THREE O'CLOCK



IN THE MORNING?

BRICK:

JUMPING THE HURDLES, BIG  
DADDY, RUNNIN' AND JUMPIN' THE  
HURDLES, BUT THOSE HIGH HURDLES HAVE  
GOTTEN TOO HIGH FOR ME, NOW.

BIG DADDY:

'CAUSE YOU WAS DRUNK?

BRICK [HIS VAGUE SMILE FADING A  
LITTLE]:

SOBER I WOULDN'T HAVE TRIED  
TO JUMP THE LOW ONES....

BIG MAMA [QUICKLY]:

BIG DADDY, BLOW  
OUT THE CANDLES ON YOUR BIRTHDAY  
CAKE!

MARGARET [AT THE SAME TIME]:

I WANT TO PROPOSE A TOAST TO BIG DADDY  
POLLITT ON HIS SIXTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY,  
THE BIGGEST COTTON-PLANTER IN--  
BIG DADDY [BELLOWING WITH FURY AND  
DISGUST]: I TOLD YOU TO STOP IT, NOW  
STOP IT, QUIT THIS--!

BIG MAMA [COMING IN FRONT OF BIG  
DADDY WITH THE CAKE]:

BIG DADDY, I WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO TALK THAT WAY,  
NOT EVEN ON YOUR BIRTHDAY, I--

BIG DADDY:

I'LL TALK LIKE I WANT TO  
ON MY BIRTHDAY, IDA, OR ANY OTHER  
GODDAM DAY OF THE YEAR AND ANYBODY  
HERE THAT DON'T LIKE IT KNOWS WHAT  
THEY CAN DO!

BIG MAMA:

YOU DON'T MEAN THAT!

BIG DADDY:

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I  
DON'T MEAN IT?

[MEANWHILE VARIOUS DISCREET SIGNALS HAVE BEEN EXCHANGED AND  
GOOPER HAS ALSO GONE OUT ON THE GALLERY.]

BIG MAMA:

I JUST KNOW YOU DON'T MEAN  
IT.

BIG DADDY:

YOU DON'T KNOW A GODDAM  
THING AND YOU NEVER DID!

BIG MAMA:

BIG DADDY, YOU DON'T MEAN  
THAT.

BIG DADDY:

OH, YES, I DO, OH, YES, I  
DO, I MEAN IT! I PUT UP WITH A WHOLE  
LOT OF CRAP AROUND HERE BECAUSE I  
THOUGHT I WAS DYING. AND YOU THOUGHT

I WAS DYING AND YOU STARTED TAKING  
OVER, WELL, YOU CAN STOP TAKING OVER  
NOW, IDA, BECAUSE I'M NOT GONNA DIE,  
YOU CAN JUST STOP NOW THIS BUSINESS  
OF TAKING OVER BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT  
TAKING OVER BECAUSE I'M NOT DYING, I  
WENT THROUGH THE LABORATORY AND THE  
GODDAM EXPLORATORY OPERATION AND  
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH ME BUT A  
SPASTIC COLON. AND I'M NOT DYING OF  
CANCER WHICH YOU THOUGHT I WAS DYING  
OF. AIN'T THAT SO? DIDN'T YOU THINK  
THAT I WAS DYING OF CANCER, IDA?

[ALMOST EVERYBODY IS OUT ON THE GALLERY BUT THE TWO OLD  
PEOPLE GLARING AT EACH OTHER ACROSS THE BLAMING CAKE. BIG  
MAMA'S CHEST HEAVES AND SHE PRESSES A FAT FIST TO HER  
MOUTH. BIG DADDY CONTINUES, HOARSELY:]

AIN'T THAT SO, IDA? DIDN'T YOU HAVE  
AN IDEA I WAS DYING OF CANCER AND  
NOW YOU COULD TAKE CONTROL OF THIS  
PLACE AND EVERYTHING ON IT? I GOT  
THAT IMPRESSION, I SEEMED TO GET  
THAT IMPRESSION. YOUR LOUD VOICE  
EVERYWHERE, YOUR FAT OLD BODY  
BUTTING IN HERE AND THERE!

BIG MAMA:

HUSH! THE PREACHER!

BIG DADDY:

RUT THE GODDAM PREACHER!

[BIG MAMA GASPS LOUDLY AND SITS DOWN ON THE SOFA WHICH IS ALMOST TOO SMALL FOR HER.]

DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID? I SAID RUT

THE GODDAM PREACHER!

[SOMEBODY CLOSES THE GALLERY DOORS FROM OUTSIDE JUST AS THERE IS A BURST OF FIREWORKS AND EXCITED CRIES FROM THE CHILDREN.]

BIG MAMA:

I NEVER SEEN YOU ACT LIKE THIS BEFORE AND I CAN'T THINK WHAT'S

GOT IN YOU!

BIG DADDY:

I WENT THROUGH ALL THAT LABORATORY AND OPERATION AND ALL JUST SO I WOULD KNOW IF YOU OR ME WAS BOSS HERE! WELL, NOW IT TURNS OUT THAT I AM AND YOU AIN'T--AND THAT'S MY BIRTHDAY PRESENT--AND MY CAKE AND CHAMPAGNE!--BECAUSE FOR THREE YEARS NOW YOU BEEN GRADUALLY TAKING OVER. BOSSING. TALKING. SASHAYING YOUR FAT OLD BODY AROUND THE PLACE I MADE! I MADE THIS PLACE! I WAS OVERSEER ON IT! I WAS THE OVERSEER ON THE OLD STRAW AND OCHELLO PLANTATION. I QUIT SCHOOL AT

TEN! I QUIT SCHOOL AT TEN YEARS OLD  
AND WENT TO WORK LIKE A NIGGER IN  
THE FIELDS. AND I ROSE TO BE  
OVERSEER OF THE STRAW AND OCHELLO  
PLANTATION. AND OLD STRAW DIED AND I  
WAS OCHELLO'S PARTNER AND THE PLACE  
GOT BIGGER AND BIGGER AND BIGGER AND  
BIGGER AND BIGGER! I DID ALL THAT  
MYSELF WITH NO GODDAM HELP FROM YOU,  
AND NOW YOU THINK YOU'RE JUST ABOUT  
TO TAKE OVER. WELL, I AM JUST ABOUT  
TO TELL YOU THAT YOU ARE NOT JUST  
ABOUT TO TAKE OVER, YOU ARE NOT JUST  
ABOUT TO TAKE OVER A GOD DAMN THING.  
IS THAT CLEAR TO YOU, IDA? IS THAT  
VERY PLAIN TO YOU, NOW? IS THAT  
UNDERSTOOD COMPLETELY? I BEEN  
THROUGH THE LABORATORY FROM A TO Z.  
I'VE HAD THE GODDAM EXPLORATORY  
OPERATION, AND NOTHING IS WRONG WITH  
ME BUT A SPASTIC COLON--MADE  
SPASTIC, I GUESS, BY DISGUST! BY ALL  
THE GODDAM LIES AND LIARS THAT I  
HAVE HAD TO PUT UP WITH, AND ALL THE  
GODDAM HYPOCRISY THAT I LIVED WITH  
ALL THESE FORTY YEARS THAT WE BEEN  
LIVIN' TOGETHER!-- HEY! IDA! BLOW

OUT THE CANDLES ON THE BIRTHDAY  
CAKE! PURSE UP YOUR LIPS AND DRAW A  
DEEP BREATH AND BLOW OUT THE GODDAM

CANDLES ON THE CAKE!

BIG MAMA:

OH, BIG DADDY, OH, OH, OH,

BIG DADDY!

BIG DADDY:

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH

YOU?

BIG MAMA:

IN ALL THESE YEARS YOU

NEVER BELIEVED THAT I LOVED YOU??

BIG DADDY:

HUH?

BIG MAMA:

AND I DID, I DID SO MUCH,

I DID LOVE YOU!--I EVEN LOVED YOUR

HATE AND YOUR HARDNESS, BIG DADDY!

[SHE SOBS AND RUSHES AWKWARDLY OUT ON TO THE GALLERY.]

BIG DADDY [TO HIMSELF]:

WOULDN'T IT

BE FUNNY IF THAT WAS TRUE----

[A PAUSE IS FOLLOWED BY A BURST OF LIGHT IN THE SKY FROM  
THE FIREWORKS.]

BRICK! HEY, BRICK!

[HE STANDS OVER HIS FLAMING BIRTHDAY CAKE. | AFTER SOME  
MOMENTS, BRICK HOBBLER IN ON HIS CRUTCH, HOLDING HIS GLASS.]

MARGARET FOLLOWS HIM WITH A BRIGHT, ANXIOUS SMILE.]

I DIDN'T CALL YOU, MAGGIE. I CALLED  
BRICK.

MARGARET:

I'M JUST DELIVERING HIM TO  
YOU.

[SHE KISSES BRICK ON THE MOUTH WHICH HE IMMEDIATELY WIPES  
WITH THE BACK OF HIS HAND. SHE FLIES GIRLISHLY BACK OUT.  
BRICK AND HIS FATHER ARE ALONE.]

BIG DADDY:

WHY DID YOU DO THAT?

BRICK:

DO WHAT, BIG DADDY?

BIG DADDY:

WIPE HER KISS OFF YOUR  
MOUTH LIKE SHE'D SPIT ON YOU.

BRICK:

I DON'T KNOW. I WASN'T  
CONSCIOUS OF IT.

BIG DADDY:

THAT WOMAN OF YOURS HAS A  
BETTER SHAPE ON HER THAN GOOPER'S  
BUT SOMEHOW OR OTHER THEY GOT THE  
SAME LOOK ABOUT THEM.

BRICK:

WHAT SORT OF LOOK IS THAT,  
BIG DADDY?

BIG DADDY:

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO  
DESCRIBE IT BUT IT'S THE SAME LOOK.

BRICK:

THEY DON'T LOOK PEACEFUL, DO  
THEY?

BIG DADDY:

NO, THEY SURE IN HELL  
DON'T.

BRICK:

THEY LOOK NERVOUS AS CATS?

BIG DADDY:

THAT'S RIGHT, THEY LOOK  
NERVOUS AS CATS.

BRICK:

NERVOUS AS A COUPLE OF CATS  
ON A HOT TIN ROOF?

BIG DADDY:

THAT'S RIGHT, BOY, THEY  
LOOK LIKE A COUPLE OF CATS ON A HOT  
TIN ROOF. IT'S FUNNY THAT YOU AND  
GOOPER BEING SO DIFFERENT WOULD PICK  
OUT THE SAME TYPE OF WOMAN.

BRICK:

BOTH OF US MARRIED INTO  
SOCIETY, BIG DADDY.



BIG DADDY:

CRAP... I WONDER WHAT  
GIVES THEM BOTH THAT LOOK?

BRICK:

WELL. THEY'RE SITTING IN THE  
MIDDLE OF A BIG PIECE OF LAND, BIG  
DADDY, TWENTY- EIGHT THOUSAND ACRES  
IS A PRETTY BIG PIECE OF LAND AND SO  
THEY'RE SQUARING OFF ON IT, EACH  
DETERMINED TO KNOCK OFF A BIGGER  
PIECE OF IT THAN THE OTHER WHENEVER  
YOU LET IT GO.

BIG DADDY:

I GOT A SURPRISE FOR  
THOSE WOMEN. I'M NOT GONNA LET IT GO  
FOR A LONG TIME YET IF THAT'S WHAT  
THEY'RE WAITING FOR.

BRICK:

THAT'S RIGHT, BIG DADDY. YOU  
JUST SIT TIGHT AND LET THEM SCRATCH  
EACH OTHER'S EYES OUT....

BIG DADDY:

YOU BET YOUR LIFE I'M  
GOING TO SIT TIGHT ON IT AND LET  
THOSE SONS OF BITCHES SCRATCH THEIR  
EYES OUT, HA HA HA.... BUT GOOPER'S  
WIFE'S A GOOD BREEDER, YOU GOT TO

ADMIT SHE'S FERTILE. HELL, AT SUPPER  
TONIGHT SHE HAD THEM ALL AT THE  
TABLE AND THEY HAD TO PUT A  
COUPLE OF EXTRA LEAFS IN THE TABLE  
TO MAKE ROOM FOR THEM, SHE'S GOT  
FIVE HEAD OF THEM, NOW, AND ANOTHER  
ONE'S COMIN'.

BRICK:

YEP, NUMBER SIX IS COMIN'....

BIG DADDY:

BRICK, YOU KNOW, I SWEAR  
TO GOD, I DON'T KNOW THE WAY IT  
HAPPENS?

BRICK:

THE WAY WHAT HAPPENS, BIG  
DADDY?

BIG DADDY:

YOU GIT YOU A PIECE OF  
LAND, BY HOOK OR CROOK, AN' THINGS  
START GROWIN' ON IT, THINGS  
ACCUMULATE ON IT, AND THE FIRST  
THING YOU KNOW IT'S COMPLETELY OUT  
OF HAND, COMPLETELY OUT OF HAND!

BRICK:

WELL, THEY SAY NATURE HATES A  
VACUUM, BIG DADDY.

BIG DADDY:

THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY, BUT  
SOMETIMES I THINK THAT A VACUUM IS A  
HELL OF A LOT BETTER THAN SOME OF  
THE STUFF THAT NATURE REPLACES IT  
WITH. IS SOMEONE OUT THERE BY THAT

DOOR?

BRICK:

YEP.

BIG DADDY:

WHO?

[HE HAS LOWERED HIS VOICE.]

BRICK:

SOMEONE INT'RESTED IN WHAT WE  
SAY TO EACH OTHER.

BIG DADDY:

GOOPER?--GOOPER!

[AFTER A DISCREET PAUSE, MAE APPEARS IN THE GALLERY DOOR.]

MAE:

DID YOU CALL GOOPER, BIG DADDY?

BIG DADDY:

AW, IT WAS YOU.

MAE:

DO YOU WANT GOOPER, BIG DADDY?

BIG DADDY:

NO, AND I DON'T WANT YOU.

I WANT SOME PRIVACY HERE, WHILE I'M

HAVING A CONFIDENTIAL TALK WITH MY  
SON BRICK. NOW IT'S TOO HOT IN HERE  
TO CLOSE THEM DOORS, BUT IF I HAVE  
TO CLOSE THOSE RUTTEN DOORS IN ORDER  
TO HAVE A PRIVATE TALK WITH MY SON  
BRICK, JUST LET ME KNOW AND I'LL  
CLOSE 'EM. BECAUSE I HATE  
EAVESDROPPERS, I DON'T LIKE ANY KIND  
OF SNEAKIN' AN' SPYIN'.

MAE:

WHY, BIG DADDY--

BIG DADDY:

YOU STOOD ON THE WRONG  
SIDE OF THE MOON, IT THREW YOUR  
SHADOW!

MAE:

I WAS JUST--

BIG DADDY:

YOU WAS JUST NOTHING BUT  
SPYIN' AN' YOU KNOW IT!

MAE [BEGINS TO SNIFF AND SOB]:  
OH, BIG DADDY, YOU'RE SO UNKIND FOR SOME  
REASON TO THOSE THAT REALLY LOVE  
YOU!

BIG DADDY:

SHUT UP, SHUT UP, SHUT  
UP! I'M GOING TO MOVE YOU AND GOOPER

OUT OF THAT ROOM NEXT TO THIS! IT'S  
NONE OF YOUR GODDAM BUSINESS WHAT  
GOES ON IN HERE AT NIGHT BETWEEN  
BRICK AN' MAGGIE. YOU LISTEN AT  
NIGHT LIKE A COUPLE OF RUTTEN PEEKHOLE  
SPIES AND GO AND GIVE A REPORT  
ON WHAT YOU HEAR TO BIG MAMA AN' SHE  
COMES TO ME AND SAYS THEY SAY SUCH  
AND SUCH AND SO AND SO ABOUT WHAT  
THEY HEARD GOIN' ON BETWEEN BRICK  
AN' MAGGIE, AND JESUS, IT MAKES ME  
SICK. I'M GOIN' TO MOVE YOU AN'  
GOOPER OUT OF THAT ROOM, I CAN'T  
STAND SNEAKIN' AN' SPYIN', IT MAKES  
ME SICK....

[MAE THROWS BACK HER HEAD AND ROLLS HER EYES HEAVENWARD AND  
EXTENDS HER ARMS AS IF INVOKING GOD'S PITY FOR THIS UNJUST  
MARTYRDOM; THEN SHE PRESSES A HANDKERCHIEF TO HER NOSE AND  
FLIES FROM THE ROOM WITH A LOUD SWISH OF SKIRTS.]

BRICK [NOW AT THE LIQUOR CABINET]:

THEY LISTEN, DO THEY?

BIG DADDY:

YEAH. THEY LISTEN AND

GIVE REPORTS TO BIG MAMA ON WHAT

GOES ON IN HERE BETWEEN YOU AND

MAGGIE. THEY SAY THAT--

[HE STOPS AS IF EMBARRASSED.]

--YOU WON'T SLEEP WITH HER, THAT YOU  
SLEEP ON THE SOFA. IS THAT TRUE OR  
NOT TRUE? IF YOU DON'T LIKE MAGGIE,  
GET RID OF MAGGIE!--WHAT ARE YOU  
DOIN' THERE NOW?

BRICK:

FRESH'NIN' UP MY DRINK.

BIG DADDY:

SON, YOU KNOW YOU GOT A  
REAL LIQUOR PROBLEM?

BRICK:

YES, SIR, YES, I KNOW.

BIG DADDY:

IS THAT WHY YOU QUIT  
SPORTS-ANNOUNCING, BECAUSE OF THIS  
LIQUOR PROBLEM?

BRICK:

YES, SIR, YES, SIR, I GUESS SO.

[HE SMILES VAGUELY AND AMIABLY AT HIS FATHER ACROSS HIS  
REPLENISHED DRINK.]

BIG DADDY:

SON, DON'T GUESS ABOUT  
IT, IT'S TOO IMPORTANT.

BRICK [VAGUELY]:

YES, SIR.

BIG DADDY:

AND LISTEN TO ME, DON'T  
LOOK AT THE DAMN CHANDELIER....

[PAUSE. BIG DADDY'S VOICE IS HUSKY.]

--SOMETHIN' ELSE WE PICKED UP AT TH'  
BIG FIRE SALE IN EUROPE.

[ANOTHER PAUSE.]

LIFE IS IMPORTANT. THERE'S NOTHING  
ELSE TO HOLD ON TO. A MAN THAT  
DRINKS IS THROWING HIS LIFE AWAY.  
DON'T DO IT, HOLD ON TO YOUR LIFE.  
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE TO HOLD ON  
TO.... SIT DOWN OVER HERE SO WE  
DON'T HAVE TO RAISE OUR VOICES, THE  
WALLS HAVE EARS IN THIS PLACE.  
BRICK [HOBBLING OVER TO SIT ON THE  
SOFA BESIDE HIM]:

ALL RIGHT, BIG DADDY.

BIG DADDY:

QUIT!--HOW'D THAT COME  
ABOUT? SOME DISAPPOINTMENT?

BRICK:

I DON'T KNOW. DO YOU?

BIG DADDY:

I'M ASKIN' YOU, GOD DAMN  
IT! HOW IN HELL WOULD I KNOW IF YOU  
DON'T?

BRICK:

I JUST GOT OUT THERE AND  
FOUND THAT I HAD A MOUTH FULL OF  
COTTON. I WAS ALWAYS TWO OR THREE  
BEATS BEHIND WHAT WAS GOIN' ON ON  
THE FIELD AND SO I--

BIG DADDY:

QUIT!

BRICK [AMIABLY]:

YES, QUIT.

BIG DADDY:

SON?

BRICK:

HUH?

BIG DADDY [INHALES LOUDLY AND DEEPLY  
FROM HIS CIGAR; THEN BENDS SUDDENLY  
A LITTLE FORWARD, EXHALING LOUDLY  
AND RAISING A HAND TO HIS FOREHEAD]:

--WHEW!--HA HA!--I TOOK IN TOO MUCH  
SMOKE, IT MADE ME A LITTLE LIGHTHEADED....

[THE MANTEL CLOCK CHIMES.]

WHY IS IT SO DAMN HARD FOR PEOPLE TO  
TALK?

BRICK:

YEAH....

[THE CLOCK GOES ON SWEETLY CHIMING TILL IT HAS COMPLETED  
THE STROKE OF TEN.]

--NICE PEACEFUL-SOUNDIN' CLOCK, I



LIKE TO HEAR IT ALL NIGHT....

[HE SLIDES LOW AND COMFORTABLE ON THE SOFA; BIG DADDY SITS UP STRAIGHT AND RIGID WITH SOME UNSPOKEN ANXIETY. ALL HIS GESTURES ARE TENSE AND JERKY AS HE TALKS. HE WHEEZES AND PANTS AND SNIFFS THROUGH HIS NERVOUS SPEECH, GLANCING QUICKLY, SHYLY, FROM TIME TO TIME, AT HIS SON.]

BIG DADDY:

WE GOT THAT DOCK THE  
SUMMER WE WINT TO EUROPE, ME AN' BIG  
MAMA ON THAT DAMN COOK'S TOUR, NEVER  
HAD SUCH AN AWFUL TIME IN MY LIFE,  
I'M TELLIN' YOU, SON, THOSE GOOKS  
OVER THERE, THEY GOUGE YOUR EYEBALLS  
OUT IN THEIR GRAND HOTELS. AND BIG  
MAMA BOUGHT MORE STUFF THAN YOU  
COULD HAUL IN A COUPLE OF BOXCARS,  
THAT'S NO CRAP. EVERYWHERE SHE WINT  
ON THIS WHIRLWIND TOUR, SHE BOUGHT,  
BOUGHT, BOUGHT. WHY, HALF THAT STUFF  
SHE BOUGHT IS STILL CRATED UP IN THE  
CELLAR, UNDER WATER LAST SPRING!

[HE LAUGHS.]

THAT EUROPE IS NOTHIN' ON EARTH BUT  
A GREAT BIG AUCTION, THAT'S ALL IT  
IS, THAT BUNCH OF OLD WORN-OUT  
PLACES, IT'S JUST A BIG FIRE-SALE,  
THE WHOLE RUTTEN THING, AN' BIG MAMA  
WINT WILD IN IT, WHY, YOU COULDN'T

HOLD THAT WOMAN WITH A MULE'S  
HARNESS! BOUGHT, BOUGHT, BOUGHT!--  
LUCKY I'M A RICH MAN, YES SIREE,  
BOB, AN' HALF THAT STUFF IS  
MILDEWIN' IN TH' BASEMENT. IT'S  
LUCKY I'M A RICH MAN, IT SURE IS  
LUCKY, WELL, I'M A RICH MAN, BRICK,  
YEP, I'M A MIGHTY RICH MAN.

[HIS EYES LIGHT UP FOR A MOMENT.]

Y'KNOW HOW MUCH I'M WORTH? GUESS,  
BRICK! GUESS HOW MUCH I'M WORTH!

[BRICK SMILES VAGUELY OVER HIS DRINK.]

CLOSE ON TEN MILLION IN CASH AN'  
BLUE CHIP STOCKS, OUTSIDE, MIND YOU,  
OF TWENTY-EIGHT THOUSAND ACRES OF  
THE RICHEST LAND THIS SIDE OF THE  
VALLEY NILE!

[A PUFF AND CRACKLE AND THE NIGHT SKY BLOOMS WITH AN EERIE  
GREENISH GLOW. CHILDREN SHRIEK ON THE GALLERY.]

BUT A MAN CAN'T BUY HIS LIFE WITH  
IT, HE CAN'T BUY BACK HIS LIFE WITH  
IT WHEN HIS LIFE HAS BEEN SPENT,  
THAT'S ONE THING NOT OFFERED IN THE  
EUROPE FIRE-SALE OR IN THE AMERICAN  
MARKETS OR ANY MARKETS ON EARTH, A  
MAN CAN'T BUY HIS LIFE WITH IT, HE  
CAN'T BUY BACK HIS LIFE WHEN HIS

LIFE IS FINISHED.... THAT'S A  
SOBERING THOUGHT, A VERY SOBERING  
THOUGHT, AND THAT'S A THOUGHT THAT I  
WAS TURNING OVER IN MY HEAD, OVER  
AND OVER AND OVER--UNTIL TODAY....  
I'M WISER AND SADDER, BRICK, FOR  
THIS EXPERIENCE WHICH I JUST GONE  
THROUGH. THEY'S ONE THING ELSE THAT  
I REMEMBER IN EUROPE.

BRICK:

WHAT IS THAT, BIG DADDY?

BIG DADDY:

THE HILLS AROUND  
BARCELONA IN THE COUNTRY OF SPAIN  
AND THE CHILDREN RUNNING OVER THOSE  
BARE HILLS IN THEIR BARE SKINS  
BEGGIN' LIKE STARVIN' DOGS WITH  
HOWLS AND SCREECHES, AND HOW FAT THE  
PRIESTS ARE ON THE STREETS OF  
BARCELONA, SO MANY OF THEM AND SO  
FAT AND SO PLEASANT, HA HA!--Y'KNOW  
I COULD FEED THAT COUNTRY? I GOT  
MONEY ENOUGH TO FEED THAT GODDAM  
COUNTRY, BUT THE HUMAN ANIMAL IS A  
SELFISH BEAST AND I DON'T RECKON THE  
MONEY I PASSED OUT THERE TO THOSE  
HOWLING CHILDREN IN THE HILLS AROUND

BARCELONA WOULD MORE THAN UPHOLSTER  
ONE OF THE CHAIRS IN THIS ROOM, I  
MEAN PAY TO PUT A NEW COVER ON THIS  
CHAIR! HELL, I THREW THEM MONEY LIKE  
YOU'D SCATTER FEED CORN FOR  
CHICKENS, I THREW MONEY AT THEM JUST  
TO GET RID OF THEM LONG ENOUGH TO  
CLIMB BACK INTO TH' CAR AND--DRIVE  
AWAY....

AND THEN IN MOROCCO, THEM ARABS,  
WHY, PROSTITUTION BEGINS AT FOUR OR  
FIVE, THAT'S NO EXAGGERATION, WHY, I  
REMEMBER ONE DAY IN MARRAKECH THAT  
OLD WALLED ARAB CITY, I SET ON A  
BROKEN-DOWN WALL TO HAVE A CIGAR, IT  
WAS FEARFUL HOT THERE AND THIS ARAB  
WOMAN STOOD IN THE ROAD AND LOOKED  
AT ME TILL I WAS EMBARRASSED, SHE  
STOOD STOCK STILL IN THE DUSTY HOT  
ROAD AND LOOKED AT ME TILL I WAS  
EMBARRASSED. BUT LISTEN TO THIS. SHE  
HAD A NAKED CHILD WITH HER, A LITTLE  
NAKED GIRL WITH HER, BARELY ABLE TO  
TODDLE, AND AFTER A WHILE SHE SET  
THIS CHILD ON THE GROUND AND GIVE  
HER A PUSH AND WHISPERED SOMETHING  
TO HER. THIS CHILD COME TOWARD ME,

BARELY ABLE T' WALK, COME TODDLING  
UP TO ME AND--JESUS, IT MAKES YOU  
SICK T' REMEMBER A THING LIKE THIS!  
IT STUCK OUT ITS HAND AND TRIED TO  
UNBUTTON MY TROUSERS! THAT CHILD WAS  
NOT YET FIVE! CAN YOU BELIEVE ME? OR  
DO YOU THINK THAT I AM MAKING THIS  
UP? I WINT BACK TO THE HOTEL AND  
SAID TO BIG MAMA, GIT PACKED! WE'RE  
CLEARING OUT OF THIS COUNTRY....

BRICK:

BIG DADDY, YOU'RE ON A  
TALKIN' JAG TONIGHT.

BIG DADDY [IGNORING THIS REMARK]:

YES, SIR, THAT'S HOW IT IS, THE  
HUMAN ANIMAL IS A BEAST THAT DIES  
BUT THE FACT THAT HE'S DYING DON'T  
GIVE HIM PITY FOR OTHERS, NO, SIR,  
IT----DID YOU SAY SOMETHING?

BRICK:

YES.

BIG DADDY:

WHAT?

BRICK:

HAND ME OVER THAT CRUTCH SO I  
CAN GET UP.

BIG DADDY:

WHERE YOU GOIN'?

BRICK:

I'M TAKIN' A LITTLE SHORT  
TRIP TO ECHO SPRING.

BIG DADDY:

TO WHERE?

BRICK:

LIQUOR CABINET....

BIG DADDY:

YES, SIR, BOY--

[HE HANDS BRICK THE CRUTCH.]

--THE HUMAN ANIMAL IS A BEAST THAT  
DIES AND IF HE'S GOT MONEY HE BUYS  
AND BUYS AND BUYS AND I THINK THE  
REASON HE BUYS EVERYTHING HE CAN BUY  
IS THAT IN THE BACK OF HIS MIND HE  
HAS THE CRAZY HOPE THAT ONE OF HIS  
PURCHASES WILL BE LIFE EVERLASTING!-

-WHICH IT NEVER CAN BE-- THE HUMAN

ANIMAL IS A BEAST THAT--

BRICK [AT THE LIQUOR CABINET]:

BIG DADDY, YOU SURE ARE SHOOTIN' TH'

BREEZE HERE TONIGHT.

[THERE IS A PAUSE AND VOICES ARE HEARD OUTSIDE.]

BIG DADDY:

I BEEN QUIET HERE LATELY,  
SPOKE NOT A WORD, JUST SAT AND  
STARED INTO SPACE. I HAD SOMETHING  
HEAVY WEIGHING ON MY MIND BUT  
TONIGHT THAT LOAD WAS TOOK OFF ME.  
THAT'S WHY I'M TALKING.--THE SKY  
LOOKS DIFF'RENT TO ME....

BRICK:

YOU KNOW WHAT I LIKE TO HEAR  
MOST?

BIG DADDY:

WHAT?

BRICK:

SOLID QUIET. PERFECT UNBROKEN  
QUIET.

BIG DADDY:

WHY?

BRICK:

BECAUSE IT'S MORE PEACEFUL.

BIG DADDY:

MAN, YOU'LL HEAR A LOT OF  
THAT IN THE GRAVE.

[HE CHUCKLES AGREEABLY.]

BRICK:

ARE YOU THROUGH TALKIN' TO  
ME?

BIG DADDY:

WHY ARE YOU SO ANXIOUS TO  
SHUT ME UP?

BRICK:

WELL, SIR, EVER SO OFTEN YOU  
SAY TO ME, BRICK, I WANT TO HAVE A  
TALK WITH YOU, BUT WHEN WE TALK, IT  
NEVER MATERIALIZES. NOTHING IS SAID.  
YOU SIT IN A CHAIR AND GAS ABOUT  
THIS AND THAT AND I LOOK LIKE I  
LISTEN. I TRY TO LOOK LIKE I LISTEN,  
BUT I DON'T LISTEN, NOT MUCH.  
COMMUNICATION IS--AWFUL HARD BETWEEN  
PEOPLE AN'--SOMEHOW BETWEEN YOU AND  
ME, IT JUST DON'T--

BIG DADDY:

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN  
SCARED? I MEAN HAVE YOU EVER FELT  
DOWNRIGHT TERROR OF SOMETHING?

[HE GETS UP.]

JUST ONE MOMENT. I'M GOING TO CLOSE  
THESE DOORS....

[HE CLOSES DOORS ON GALLERY AS IF HE WERE GOING TO TELL AN  
IMPORTANT SECRET.]



BRICK:

WHAT?

BIG DADDY:

BRICK?

BRICK:

HUH?

BIG DADDY:

SON, I THOUGHT I HAD IT!

BRICK:

HAD WHAT? HAD WHAT, BIG

DADDY?

BIG DADDY:

CANCER!

BRICK:

OH...

BIG DADDY:

I THOUGHT THE OLD MAN  
MADE OUT OF BONES HAD LAID HIS COLD  
AND HEAVY HAND ON MY SHOULDER!

BRICK:

WELL, BIG DADDY, YOU KEPT A  
TIGHT MOUTH ABOUT IT.

BIG DADDY:

A PIG SQUEALS. A MAN  
KEEPS A TIGHT MOUTH ABOUT IT, IN  
SPITE OF A MAN NOT HAVING A PIG'S  
ADVANTAGE.

BRICK:

WHAT ADVANTAGE IS THAT?

BIG DADDY:

IGNORANCE--OF MORTALITY--  
IS A COMFORT. A MAN DON'T HAVE THAT  
COMFORT, HE'S THE ONLY LIVING THING  
THAT CONCEIVES OF DEATH, THAT KNOWS  
WHAT IT IS. THE OTHERS GO WITHOUT  
KNOWING, WHICH IS THE WAY THAT  
ANYTHING LIVING SHOULD GO, GO  
WITHOUT KNOWING, WITHOUT ANY  
KNOWLEDGE OF IT, AND YET A PIG  
SQUEALS, BUT A MAN SOMETIMES, HE CAN  
KEEP A TIGHT MOUTH ABOUT IT.

SOMETIMES HE--

[THERE IS A DEEP, SMOULDERING FEROCITY IN THE OLD MAN.]

--CAN KEEP A TIGHT MOUTH ABOUT IT. I

WONDER IF--

BRICK:

WHAT, BIG DADDY?

BIG DADDY:

A WHISKY HIGHBALL WOULD  
INJURE THIS SPASTIC CONDITION?

BRICK:

NO, SIR, IT MIGHT DO IT GOOD.

BIG DADDY [GRINS SUDDENLY,  
WOLFISHLY]:

JESUS, I CAN'T TELL YOU!  
THE SKY IS OPEN! CHRIST, IT'S OPEN  
AGAIN! IT'S OPEN, BOY, IT'S OPEN!

[BRICK LOOKS DOWN AT HIS DRINK.]

BRICK:

YOU FEEL BETTER, BIG DADDY?

BIG DADDY:

BETTER? HELL! I CAN  
BREATHE!--ALL OF MY LIFE I BEEN LIKE  
A DOUBLED UP FIST.... [HE POURS A  
DRINK.] POUNDIN', SMASHIN', DRIVIN'  
I--NOW I'M GOING TO LOOSEN THESE  
DOUBLED UP HANDS AND TOUCH THINGS  
EASY WITH THEM....

[HE SPREADS HIS HANDS AS IF CARESSING THE AIR.]

YOU KNOW WHAT I'M CONTEMPLATING?

BRICK [VAGUELY]:

NO, SIR. WHAT ARE YOU CONTEMPLATING?

BIG DADDY:

HA HA!--PLEASURE!--

PLEASURE WITH WOMEN!

[BRICK'S SMILE FADES A LITTLE BUT LINGERS.]

BRICK, THIS STUFF BURNS ME!----YES,  
BOY. I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING THAT  
YOU MIGHT NOT GUESS. I STILL HAVE

DESIRE FOR WOMEN AND THIS IS MY  
SIXTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY.

BRICK:

I THINK THAT'S MIGHTY REMARKABLE, BIG DADDY.

BIG DADDY:

REMARKABLE?

BRICK:

ADMIRABLE, BIG DADDY.

BIG DADDY:

YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT IT IS,  
REMARKABLE AND ADMIRABLE BOTH. I  
REALIZE NOW THAT I NEVER HAD ME  
ENOUGH. I LET MANY CHANCES SLIP BY  
BECAUSE OF SCRUPLES ABOUT IT,  
SCRUPLES, CONVENTION--CRAP.... ALL  
THAT STUFF IS BULL, BULL, BULL!--IT  
TOOK THE SHADOW OF DEATH TO MAKE ME  
SEE IT. NOW THAT SHADOW'S LIFTED,  
I'M GOING TO CUT LOOSE AND HAVE,  
WHAT IS IT THEY CALL IT, HAVE ME A--

BALL!

BRICK:

A BALL, HUH?

BIG DADDY:

THAT'S RIGHT, A BALL, A  
BALL! HELL!--I SLEPT WITH BIG MAMA  
TILL, LET'S SEE, FIVE YEARS AGO,

TILL I WAS SIXTY AND SHE WAS FIFTYEIGHT,  
AND NEVER EVEN LIKED HER,  
NEVER DID!

[THE PHONE HAS BEEN RINGING DOWN THE HALL. BIG MAMA ENTERS,  
EXCLAIMING:]

BIG MAMA:

DON'T YOU MEN HEAR THAT  
PHONE RING? I HEARD IT WAY OUT ON  
THE GALL'RY.

BIG DADDY:

THERE'S FIVE ROOMS OFF  
THIS FRONT GALL'RY THAT YOU COULD GO  
THROUGH. WHY DO YOU GO THROUGH THIS  
ONE?

[BIG MAMA MAKES A PLAYFUL FACE AS SHE BUSTLES OUT THE HALL  
DOOR.]

HUH!--WHY, WHEN BIG MAMA GOES OUT OF  
A ROOM, I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT THAT  
WOMAN LOOKS LIKE, BUT WHEN BIG MAMA  
COMES BACK INTO THE ROOM, BOY, THEN  
I SEE WHAT SHE LOOKS LIKE, AND I  
WISH I DIDN'T!

[BENDS OVER LAUGHING AT THIS JOKE TILL IT HURTS HIS GUTS  
AND HE STRAIGHTENS WITH A GRIMACE. THE LAUGH SUBSIDES TO A  
CHUCKLE AS HE PUTS THE LIQUOR GLASS A LITTLE DISTRUSTFULLY  
DOWN ON THE TABLE. | BRICK HAS RISEN AND HOBbled TO THE  
GALLERY DOORS.]

HEY! WHERE YOU GOIN'?

BRICK:

OUT FOR A BREATHER.

BIG DADDY:

NOT YET YOU AIN'T. STAY  
HERE TILL THIS TALK IS FINISHED,  
YOUNG FELLOW.

BRICK:

I THOUGHT IT WAS FINISHED,

BIG DADDY.

BIG DADDY:

IT AIN'T EVEN BEGUN.

BRICK:

MY MISTAKE. EXCUSE ME. I JUST  
WANTED TO FEEL THAT RIVER BREEZE.

BIG DADDY:

TURN ON THE CEILING FAN  
AND SET BACK DOWN IN THAT CHAIR.

[BIG MAMA'S VOICE RISES, CARRYING DOWN THE HALL.]

BIG MAMA:

MISS SALLY, YOU'RE A CASE!  
YOU'RE A CAUTION, MISS SALLY. WHY  
DIDN'T YOU GIVE ME A CHANCE TO  
EXPLAIN IT TO YOU?

BIG DADDY:

JESUS, SHE'S TALKING TO  
MY OLD MAID SISTER AGAIN.

BIG MAMA:

WELL, GOODBYE, NOW, MISS  
SALLY. YOU COME DOWN REAL SOON, BIG  
DADDY'S DYING TO SEE YOU! YAISSS,  
GOODBYE, MISS SALLY....

[SHE HANGS UP AND BELLOWS WITH MIRTH. BIG DADDY GROANS AND  
COVERS HIS EARS AS SHE APPROACHES. BURSTING IN:]

BIG DADDY, THAT WAS MISS SALLY  
CALLIN' FROM MEMPHIS AGAIN! YOU KNOW  
WHAT SHE DONE, BIG DADDY? SHE CALLED  
HER DOCTOR IN MEMPHIS TO GIT HIM TO  
TELL HER WHAT THAT SPASTIC THING  
IS!! HA-HAAAA!--AND CALLED BACK TO  
TELL ME HOW RELIEVED SHE WAS THAT--  
HEY! LET ME IN!

[BIG DADDY HAS BEEN HOLDING THE DOOR HALF CLOSED AGAINST  
HER.]

BIG DADDY:

NAW I AIN'T. I TOLD YOU  
NOT TO COME AND GO THROUGH THIS  
ROOM. YOU JUST BACK OUT AND GO  
THROUGH THOSE FIVE OTHER ROOMS.  
BIG MAMA: BIG DADDY? BIG DADDY? OH,  
BIG DADDY!--YOU DIDN'T MEANT THOSE  
THINGS YOU SAID TO ME, DID YOU?

[HE SHUTS DOOR FIRMLY AGAINST HER BUT SHE STILL CALLS.]

SWEETHEART? SWEETHEART? BIG DADDY?

YOU DIDN'T MEAN THOSE AWFUL THINGS  
YOU SAID TO ME?--I KNOW YOU DIDN'T.  
I KNOW YOU DIDN'T MEAN THOSE THINGS  
IN YOUR HEART....

[THE CHILDLIKE VOICE FADES WITH A SOB AND HER HEAVY  
FOOTSTEPS RETREAT DOWN THE HALL. BRICK HAS RISEN ONCE MORE  
ON HIS CRUTCH AND STARTS FOR THE GALLERY AGAIN.]

BIG DADDY:

ALL I ASK OF THAT WOMAN  
IS THAT SHE LEAVE ME ALONE. BUT SHE  
CAN'T ADMIT TO HERSELF THAT SHE  
MAKES ME SICK. THAT COMES OF HAVING  
SLEPT WITH HER TOO MANY YEARS.  
SHOULD OF QUIT MUCH SOONER BUT THAT  
OLD WOMAN SHE NEVER GOT ENOUGH OF  
IT--AND I WAS GOOD IN BED... I NEVER  
SHOULD OF WASTED SO MUCH OF IT ON  
HER.... THEY SAY YOU GOT JUST SO  
MANY AND EACH ONE IS NUMBERED. WELL,  
I GOT A FEW LEFT IN ME, A FEW, AND  
I'M GOING TO PICK ME A GOOD ONE TO  
SPEND 'EM ON! I'M GOING TO PICK ME A  
CHOICE ONE, I DON'T CARE HOW MUCH  
SHE COSTS, I'LL SMOTHER HER IN--  
MINKS! HA HA! I'LL STRIP HER NAKED  
AND SMOTHER HER IN MINKS AND CHOKE  
HER WITH DIAMONDS! HA HA! I'LL STRIP  
HER NAKED AND CHOKE HER WITH



DIAMONDS AND SMOTHER HER WITH MINKS  
AND HUMP HER FROM HELL TO BREAKFAST.

HA HA HA HA HA!

MAE [GAILY AT DOOR]:

WHO'S THAT  
LAUGHIN' IN THERE?

GOOPER:

IS BIG DADDY LAUGHIN' IN  
THERE?

BIG DADDY:

CRAP!--THEM TWO--

DRIPS....

[HE GOES OVER AND TOUCHES BRICK'S SHOULDER.]

YES, SON. BRICK, BOY.--I'M--HAPPY!

I'M HAPPY, SON, I'M HAPPY!

[HE CHOKES A LITTLE AND BITES HIS UNDER LIP, PRESSING HIS  
HEAD QUICKLY, SHYLY AGAINST HIS SON'S HEAD AND THEN,  
COUGHING WITH EMBARRASSMENT, GOES UNCERTAINLY BACK TO THE  
TABLE WHERE HE SET DOWN THE GLASS. HE DRINKS AND MAKES A  
GRIMACE AS IT BURNS HIS GUTS. BRICK SIGHS AND RISES WITH  
EFFORT.]

WHAT MAKES YOU SO RESTLESS? HAVE YOU  
GOT ANTS IN YOUR BRITCHES?

BRICK:

YES, SIR...

BIG DADDY:

WHY?

BRICK:

--SOMETHING--HASN'T--

HAPPENED....

BIG DADDY:

YEAH? WHAT IS THAT!

BRICK [SADLY]:

--THE CLICK....

BIG DADDY:

DID YOU SAY CLICK?

BRICK:

YES, CLICK.

BIG DADDY:

WHAT CLICK?

BRICK:

A CLICK THAT I GET IN MY HEAD

THAT MAKES ME PEACEFUL.

BIG DADDY:

I SURE IN HELL DON'T KNOW

WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, BUT IT

DISTURBS ME.

BRICK:

IT'S JUST A MECHANICAL THING.

BIG DADDY:

WHAT IS A MECHANICAL

THING?

BRICK:

THIS CLICK THAT I GET IN MY

HEAD THAT MAKES ME PEACEFUL. I GOT

TO DRINK TILL I GET IT. IT'S JUST A

MECHANICAL THING, SOMETHING LIKE A--

LIKE A--LIKE A--

BIG DADDY:

LIKE A--

BRICK:

SWITCH CLICKING OFF IN MY  
HEAD, TURNING THE HOT LIGHT OFF AND  
THE COOL NIGHT ON AND--

[HE LOOKS UP, SMILING SADLY.]--ALL OF A SUDDEN THERE'S--

PEACE!

BIG DADDY [WHISTLES LONG AND SOFT  
WITH ASTONISHMENT; HE GOES BACK TO  
BRICK AND CLASPS HIS SON'S TWO  
SHOULDERS]:

JESUS! I DIDN'T KNOW IT  
HAD GOTTEN THAT BAD WITH YOU. WHY,  
BOY, YOU'RE--ALCOHOLIC!

BRICK:

THAT'S THE TRUTH, BIG DADDY.

I'M ALCOHOLIC.

BIG DADDY:

THIS SHOWS HOW I--LET  
THINGS GO!

BRICK:

I HAVE TO HEAR THAT LITTLE  
CLICK IN MY HEAD THAT MAKES ME  
PEACEFUL. USUALLY I HEAR IT SOONER  
THAN THIS, SOMETIMES AS EARLY AS--

NOON, BUT----TODAY IT'S--  
DILATORY.... I JUST HAVEN'T GOT THE  
RIGHT LEVEL OF ALCOHOL IN MY  
BLOODSTREAM YET!

[THIS LAST STATEMENT IS MADE WITH ENERGY AS HE FRESHENS HIS  
DRINK.]

BIG DADDY:

UH--HUH. EXPECTING DEATH  
MADE ME BLIND. I DIDN'T HAVE NO IDEA  
THAT A SON OF MINE WAS TURNING INTO  
A DRUNKARD UNDER MY NOSE.

BRICK [GENTLY]:

WELL, NOW YOU DO,  
BIG DADDY, THE NEWS HAS PENETRATED.

BIG DADDY:

UH-HUH, YES, NOW I DO,  
THE NEWS HAS--PENETRATED....

BRICK:

AND SO IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME--

BIG DADDY:

NO, I WON'T EXCUSE YOU.

BRICK:

--I'D BETTER SIT BY MYSELF  
TILL I HEAR THAT CLICK IN MY HEAD,  
IT'S JUST A MECHANICAL THING BUT IT  
DON'T HAPPEN EXCEPT WHEN I'M ALONE  
OR TALKING TO NO ONE....

BIG DADDY:

YOU GOT A LONG, LONG TIME  
TO SIT STILL, BOY, AND TALK TO NO  
ONE, BUT NOW YOU'RE TALKIN' TO ME.  
AT LEAST I'M TALKING TO YOU. AND YOU  
SET THERE AND LISTEN UNTIL I TELL  
YOU THE CONVERSATION IS OVER!

BRICK:

BUT THIS TALK IS LIKE ALL THE  
OTHERS WE'VE EVER HAD TOGETHER IN  
OUR LIVES! IT'S NOWHERE, NOWHERE!--  
IT'S--IT'S PAINFUL, BIG DADDY....

BIG DADDY:

ALL RIGHT, THEN LET IT BE  
PAINFUL, BUT DON'T YOU MOVE FROM  
THAT CHAIR!--I'M GOING TO REMOVE  
THAT CRUTCH....

[HE SEIZES THE CRUTCH AND TOSSES IT ACROSS ROOM.]

BRICK:

I CAN HOP ON ONE FOOT, AND IF  
I FALL, I CAN CRAWL!

BIG DADDY:

IF YOU AIN'T CAREFUL  
YOU'RE GONNA CRAWL OFF THIS  
PLANTATION AND THEN, BY JESUS,  
YOU'LL HAVE TO HUSTLE YOUR DRINKS  
ALONG SKID ROW!

BRICK:

THAT'LL COME, BIG DADDY.

BIG DADDY:

NAW, IT WON'T. YOU'RE MY  
SON, AND I'M GOING TO STRAIGHTEN YOU  
OUT; NOW THAT I'M STRAIGHTENED OUT,  
I'M GOING TO STRAIGHTEN YOU OUT!

BRICK:

YEAH?

BIG DADDY:

TODAY THE REPORT COME IN  
FROM OCHSNER CLINIC. Y'KNOW WHAT  
THEY TOLD ME?

[HIS FACE GLOWS WITH TRIUMPH.]

THE ONLY THING THAT THEY COULD  
DETECT WITH ALL THE INSTRUMENTS OF  
SCIENCE IN THAT GREAT HOSPITAL IS A  
LITTLE SPASTIC CONDITION OF THE  
COLON! AND NERVES TORN TO PIECES BY  
ALL THAT WORRY ABOUT IT.

[A LITTLE GIRL BURSTS INTO ROOM WITH A SPARKLER CLUTCHED IN  
EACH FIST, BOPS AND SHRIEKS LIKE A MONKEY GONE MAD AND  
RUSHES BACK OUT AGAIN AS BIG DADDY STRIKES AT HER. SILENCE.  
THE TWO MEN STARE AT EACH OTHER. A WOMAN LAUGHS GAILY  
OUTSIDE.]

I WANT YOU TO KNOW I BREATHED A SIGH  
OF RELIEF ALMOST AS POWERFUL AS THE  
VICKSBURG TORNADO!

BRICK:

YOU WEREN'T READY TO GO?

BIG DADDY:

GO WHERE?--CRAP....

--WHEN YOU ARE GONE FROM HERE, BOY,

YOU ARE LONG GONE AND NOWHERE! THE

HUMAN MACHINE IS NOT SO DIFFERENT

FROM THE ANIMAL MACHINE OR THE FISH

MACHINE OR THE BIRD MACHINE OR THE

REPTILE MACHINE; OR THE INSECT

MACHINE! IT'S JUST A WHOLE GOD DAMN

LOT MORE COMPLICATED AND

CONSEQUENTLY MORE TROUBLE TO KEEP

TOGETHER. YEP. I THOUGHT I HAD IT.

THE EARTH SHOOK UNDER MY FOOT, THE

SKY COME DOWN LIKE THE BLACK LID OF

A KETTLE AND I COULDN'T BREATHE!--

TODAY!!--THAT LID WAS LIFTED, I DREW

MY FIRST FREE BREATH IN--HOW MANY

YEARS?--GOD!--THREE....

[THERE IS LAUGHTER OUTSIDE, RUNNING FOOTSTEPS, THE SOFT, PLUSHY SOUND AND LIGHT OF EXPLODING ROCKETS. BRICK STARES AT HIM SOBERLY FOR A LONG MOMENT; THEN MAKES A SORT OF STARTLED SOUND IN HIS NOSTRILS AND SPRINGS UP ON ONE FOOT AND BOPS ACROSS THE ROOM TO GRAB HIS CRUTCH, SWINGING ON THE FURNITURE FOR SUPPORT. HE GETS THE CRUTCH AND FLEES AS IF IN HORROR FOR THE GALLERY. HIS FATHER SEIZES HIM BY THE SLEEVE OF HIS WHITE SILK PYJAMAS.]

STAY HERE, YOU SON OF A BITCH!--TILL

I SAY GO!

BRICK:

I CAN'T.

BIG DADDY:

YOU SURE IN HELL WILL,  
GOD DAMN IT.

BRICK:

NO, I CAN'T. WE TALK, YOU  
TALK, IN--CIRCLES! WE GET NOWHERE,  
NOWHERE! IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME, YOU  
SAY YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME AND DON'T  
HAVE A RUTTIN' THING TO SAY TO ME!

BIG DADDY:

NOTHIN' TO SAY WHEN I'M  
TELLIN' YOU I'M GOING TO LIVE WHEN I  
THOUGHT I WAS DYING?!

BRICK:

OH--THAT!--IS THAT WHAT YOU  
HAVE TO SAY TO ME?

BIG DADDY:

WHY, YOU SON OF A BITCH!  
AIN'T THAT, AIN'T THAT--IMPORTANT?!

BRICK:

WELL, YOU SAID THAT, THAT'S  
SAID, AND NOW I--

BIG DADDY:

NOW YOU SET BACK DOWN.



BRICK:

YOU'RE ALL BALLED UP, YOU--

BIG DADDY:

I AIN'T BALLED UP!

BRICK:

YOU ARE, YOU'RE ALL BALLED  
UP!

BIG DADDY:

DON'T TELL ME WHAT I AM,  
YOU DRUNKEN WHELP! I'M GOING TO TEAR  
THIS COAT SLEEVE OFF IF YOU DON'T  
SET DOWN!

BRICK:

BIG DADDY--

BIG DADDY:

DO WHAT I TELL YOU! I'M  
THE BOSS HERE, NOW! I WANT YOU TO  
KNOW I'M BACK IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT  
NOW!

[BIG MAMA RUSHES IN, CLUTCHING HER GREAT HEAVING BOSOM.]

WHAT IN HELL DO YOU WANT IN HERE,

BIG MAMA?

BIG MAMA:

OH, BIG DADDY! WHY ARE YOU  
SHOUTING LIKE THAT? I JUST CAIN'T  
STAINNNNNNND- -IT....

BIG DADDY [RAISING THE BACK OF HIS  
HAND ABOVE HIS HEAD]:

GIT!--OUTA HERE.

[SHE RUSHES BACK OUT, SOBBING.]

BRICK [SOFTLY, SADLY]:

CHRIST...

BIG DADDY [FIERCELY]:

YEAH! CHRIST!--

-IS RIGHT....

[BRICK BREAKS LOOSE AND HOBBLER TOWARD THE GALLERY. | BIG  
DADDY JERKS HIS CRUTCH FROM UNDER BRICK SO HE STEPS WITH  
THE INJURED ANKLE. HE UTTERS A HISSING CRY OF ANGUISH,  
CLUTCHES A CHAIR AND PULLS IT OVER ON TOP OF HIM ON THE  
FLOOR.]

SON OF A--TUB OF--HOG FAT....

BRICK:

BIG DADDY! GIVE ME MY CRUTCH.

[BIG DADDY THROWS THE CRUTCH OUT OF REACH.]

GIVE ME THAT CRUTCH, BIG DADDY.

BIG DADDY:

WHY DO YOU DRINK?

BRICK:

DON'T KNOW, GIVE ME MY

CRUTCH!

BIG DADDY:

YOU BETTER THINK WHY YOU  
DRINK OR GIVE UP DRINKING!

BRICK:

WILL YOU PLEASE GIVE ME MY  
CRUTCH SO I CAN GET UP OFF THIS  
FLOOR?

BIG DADDY:

FIRST YOU ANSWER MY  
QUESTION. WHY DO YOU DRINK? WHY ARE  
YOU THROWING YOUR LIFE AWAY, BOY,  
LIKE SOMETHIN' DISGUSTING YOU PICKED  
UP ON THE STREET?

BRICK [GETTING ON TO HIS KNEES]:  
BIG DADDY, I'M IN PAIN, I STEPPED ON  
THAT FOOT.

BIG DADDY:

GOOD! I'M GLAD YOU'RE NOT  
TOO NUMB WITH THE LIQUOR IN YOU TO  
FEEL SOME PAIN!

BRICK:

YOU--SPILLED MY--DRINK....

BIG DADDY:

I'LL MAKE A BARGAIN WITH  
YOU. YOU TELL ME WHY YOU DRINK AND  
I'LL HAND YOU ONE. I'LL POUR YOU THE  
LIQUOR MYSELF AND HAND IT TO YOU.

BRICK:

WHY DO I DRINK?

BIG DADDY:

YEAH! WHY?

BRICK:

GIVE ME A DRINK AND I'LL TELL  
YOU.

BIG DADDY:

TELL ME FIRST!

BRICK:

I'LL TELL YOU IN ONE WORD.

BIG DADDY:

WHAT WORD?

BRICK:

DISGUST!

[THE CLOCK CHIMES SOFTLY, SWEETLY. BIG DADDY GIVES IT A  
SHORT, OUTRAGED GLANCE.]

NOW HOW ABOUT THAT DRINK?

BIG DADDY:

WHAT ARE YOU DISGUSTED  
WITH? YOU GOT TO TELL ME THAT,  
FIRST. OTHERWISE BEING DISGUSTED  
DON'T MAKE NO SENSE!

BRICK:

GIVE ME MY CRUTCH.

BIG DADDY:

YOU HEARD ME, YOU GOT TO  
TELL ME WHAT I ASKED YOU FIRST.

BRICK:

I TOLD YOU, I SAID TO KILL MY

DISGUST!

BIG DADDY:

DISGUST WITH WHAT!

BRICK:

YOU STRIKE A HARD BARGAIN.

BIG DADDY:

WHAT ARE YOU DISGUSTED

WITH?--AN' I'LL PASS YOU THE LIQUOR.

BRICK:

I CAN HOP ON ONE FOOT, AND IF

I FALL, I CAN CRAWL.

BIG DADDY:

YOU WANT LIQUOR THAT BAD?

BRICK [DRAGGING HIMSELF UP, CLINGING

TO BEDSTEAD]:

YEAH, I WANT IT THAT BAD.

BIG DADDY:

IF I GIVE YOU A DRINK,

WILL YOU TELL ME WHAT IT IS YOU'RE

DISGUSTED WITH, BRICK?

BRICK:

YES, SIR, I WILL TRY TO.

[THE OLD MAN POURS HIM A DRINK AND SOLEMNLY PASSES IT TO HIM. THERE IS SILENCE AS BRICK DRINKS.]

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE WORD

'MENDACITY'?

BIG DADDY:  
SURE. MENDACITY IS ONE OF  
THEM FIVE-DOLLAR WORDS THAT CHEAP  
POLITICIANS THROW BACK AND FORTH AT  
EACH OTHER.

BRICK:  
YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS?

BIG DADDY:  
DON'T IT MEAN LYING AND  
LIARS?

BRICK:  
YES, SIR, LYING AND LIARS.

BIG DADDY:  
HAS SOMEONE BEEN LYING TO  
YOU?  
CHILDREN [CHANTING IN CHORUS  
OFFSCREEN]:

WE WANT BIG DAD-DEE! WE  
WANT BIG DAD- DEE!

[GOOPER APPEARS IN THE GALLERY DOOR.]

GOOPER:  
BIG DADDY, THE KIDDIES ARE  
SHOUTING FOR YOU OUT THERE.

BIG DADDY [FIERCELY]:  
KEEP OUT, GOOPER!

GOOPER:  
'SCUSE ME!

[BIG DADDY SLAMS THE DOORS AFTER GOOPER.]

BIG DADDY:

WHO'S BEEN LYING TO YOU,  
HAS MARGARET BEEN LYING TO YOU, HAS  
YOUR WIFE BEEN LYING TO YOU ABOUT  
SOMETHING, BRICK?

BRICK:

NOT HER. THAT WOULDN'T  
MATTER.

BIG DADDY:

THEN WHO'S BEEN LYING TO  
YOU, AND WHAT ABOUT?

BRICK:

NO ONE SINGLE PERSON AND NO  
ONE LIE....

BIG DADDY:

THEN WHAT, WHAT THEN, FOR  
CHRIST'S SAKE?

BRICK:

--THE WHOLE, THE WHOLE--  
THING....

BIG DADDY:

WHY ARE YOU RUBBING YOUR  
HEAD? YOU GOT A HEADACHE?

BRICK:

NO, I'M TRYIN' TO-

BIG DADDY:

--CONCENTRATE, BUT YOU  
CAN'T BECAUSE YOUR BRAIN'S ALL  
SOAKED WITH LIQUOR, IS THAT THE  
TROUBLE? WET BRAIN!

[HE SNATCHES THE GLASS FROM BRICK'S HAND.]

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS  
MENDACITY THING? HELL! I COULD WRITE  
A BOOK ON IT! DON'T YOU KNOW THAT? I  
COULD WRITE A BOOK ON IT AND STILL  
NOT COVER THE SUBJECT? WELL, I  
COULD, I COULD WRITE A GODDAM BOOK  
ON IT AND STILL NOT COVER THE  
SUBJECT ANYWHERE NEAR ENOUGH!--  
THINK OF ALL THE LIES I GOT TO PUT  
UP WITH!--PRETENCES! AIN'T THAT  
MENDACITY? HAVING TO PRETEND STUFF  
YOU DON'T THINK OR FEEL OR HAVE ANY  
IDEA OF? HAVING FOR INSTANCE TO ACT  
LIKE I CARE FOR BIG MAMA!--I HAVEN'T  
BEEN ABLE TO STAND THE SIGHT, SOUND,  
OR SMELL OF THAT WOMAN FOR FORTY  
YEARS NOW!--EVEN WHEN I LAID HER!--  
REGULAR AS A PISTON.... PRETEND TO  
LOVE THAT SON OF A BITCH OF A GOOPER  
AND HIS WIFE MAE AND THOSE FIVE SAME  
SCREECHERS OUT THERE LIKE PARROTS IN



A JUNGLE? JESUS I CAN'T STAND TO  
LOOK AT 'EM! CHURCH!--IT BORES THE  
BEJESUS OUT OF ME BUT I GO!--I GO  
AN' SIT THERE AND LISTEN TO THE FOOL  
PREACHER! CLUBS!--ELKS! MASONS!  
ROTARY!--CRAP!

[A SPASM OF PAIN MAKES HIM CLUTCH HIS BELLY. HE SINKS INTO  
A CHAIR AND HIS VOICE IS SOFTER AND HOARSER.]

YOU I DO LIKE FOR SOME REASON, DID  
ALWAYS HAVE SOME KIND OF REAL  
FEELING FOR--AFFECTION-- RESPECT--  
YES, ALWAYS.... YOU AND BEING A  
SUCCESS AS A PLANTER IS ALL I EVER  
HAD ANY DEVOTION TO IN MY WHOLE  
LIFE!--AND THAT'S THE TRUTH.... I  
DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT IT IS! I'VE  
LIVED WITH MENDACITY!--WHY CAN'T YOU  
LIVE WITH IT? HELL, YOU GOT TO LIVE  
WITH IT, THERE'S NOTHING ELSE TO  
LIVE WITH EXCEPT MENDACITY, IS  
THERE?

BRICK:

YES, SIR. YES, SIR, THERE IS  
SOMETHING ELSE THAT YOU CAN LIVE  
WITH!

BIG DADDY:

WHAT?

BRICK [LIFTING HIS GLASS]:

THIS!--LIQUOR...

BIG DADDY:

THAT'S NOT LIVING, THAT'S  
DODGING AWAY FROM LIFE.

BRICK:

I WANT TO DODGE AWAY FROM IT.

BIG DADDY:

THEN WHY DON'T YOU KILL  
YOURSELF, MAN?

BRICK:

I LIKE TO DRINK....

BIG DADDY:

OH, GOD, I CAN'T TALK TO  
YOU....

BRICK:

I'M SORRY, BIG DADDY.

BIG DADDY:

NOT AS SORRY AS I AM.

I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING. A LITTLE  
WHILE BACK WHEN I THOUGHT MY NUMBER  
WAS UP--

[THIS SPEECH SHOULD HAVE TORRENTIAL PACE AND FURY.]

--BEFORE I FOUND OUT IT WAS JUST  
THIS--SPASTIC--COLON. I THOUGHT  
ABOUT YOU. SHOULD I OR SHOULD I NOT,  
IF THE JIG WAS UP, GIVE YOU THIS  
PLACE WHEN I GO--SINCE I HATE GOOPER

AN' MAE AN' KNOW THAT THEY HATE ME,  
AND SINCE ALL FIVE SAME MONKEYS ARE  
LITTLE MAES AN' GOOPERS.- -AND I  
THOUGHT, NO!--THEN I THOUGHT, YES!--  
I COULDN'T MAKE UP MY MIND. I HATE  
GOOPER AND HIS FIVE SAME MONKEYS AND  
THAT BITCH MAE! WHY SHOULD I TURN  
OVER TWENTY-EIGHT THOUSAND ACRES OF  
THE RICHEST LAND THIS SIDE OF THE  
VALLEY NILE TO NOT MY KIND?--BUT WHY  
IN HELL, ON THE OTHER HAND, BRICK--  
SHOULD I SUBSIDIZE A GODDAM FOOL ON  
THE BOTTLE?--LIKED OR NOT LIKED,  
WELL, MAYBE EVEN--LOVED!--WHY SHOULD  
I DO THAT?--SUBSIDIZE WORTHLESS  
BEHAVIOUR? ROT? CORRUPTION?

BRICK [SMILING]:

I UNDERSTAND.

BIG DADDY:

WELL, IF YOU DO, YOU'RE  
SMARTER THAN I AM, GOD DAMN IT,  
BECAUSE I DON'T UNDERSTAND. AND THIS  
I WILL TELL YOU FRANKLY. I DIDN'T  
MAKE UP MY MIND AT ALL ON THAT  
QUESTION AND STILL TO THIS DAY I  
AIN'T MADE OUT NO WILL!--WELL, NOW I  
DON'T HAVE TO. THE PRESSURE IS GONE.

I CAN JUST WAIT AND SEE IF YOU PULL  
YOURSELF TOGETHER OR IF YOU DON'T.

BRICK:

THAT'S RIGHT, BIG DADDY.

BIG DADDY:

YOU SOUND LIKE YOU  
THOUGHT I WAS KIDDING.

BRICK [RISING]:

NO, SIR, I KNOW  
YOU'RE NOT KIDDING.

BIG DADDY:

BUT YOU DON'T CARE--?

BRICK [HOBBLING TOWARD THE GALLERY  
DOOR]:

NO, SIR, I DON'T CARE.... NOW  
HOW ABOUT TAKING A LOOK AT YOUR  
BIRTHDAY FIREWORKS AND GETTING SOME  
OF THAT COOL BREEZE OFF THE RIVER?

[HE STANDS IN THE GALLERY DOORWAY AS THE NIGHT SKY TURNS  
PINK AND GREEN AND GOLD WITH SUCCESSIVE FLASHES OF LIGHT.]

BIG DADDY:

WAIT!--BRICK...

[HIS VOICE DROPS. SUDDENLY THERE IS SOMETHING SHY, ALMOST  
TENDER, IN HIS RESTRAINING GESTURE.]

DON'T LET'S--LEAVE IT LIKE THIS,  
LIKE THEM OTHER TALKS WE'VE HAD,  
WE'VE ALWAYS--TALKED AROUND THINGS,  
WE'VE--JUST TALKED AROUND THINGS FOR

SOME RUTTEN REASON, I DON'T KNOW  
WHAT, IT'S  
ALWAYS LIKE SOMETHING WAS LEFT NOT  
SPOKEN, SOMETHING AVOIDED BECAUSE  
NEITHER OF US WAS HONEST ENOUGH WITH  
THE--OTHER....

BRICK:

I NEVER LIED TO YOU, BIG  
DADDY.

BIG DADDY:

DID I EVER TO YOU?

BRICK:

NO, SIR....

BIG DADDY:

THEN THERE IS AT LEAST  
TWO PEOPLE THAT NEVER LIED TO EACH  
OTHER.

BRICK:

BUT WE'VE NEVER TALKED TO  
EACH OTHER.

BIG DADDY:

WE CAN NOW.

BRICK:

BIG DADDY, THERE DON'T SEEM  
TO BE ANYTHING MUCH TO SAY.

BIG DADDY:

YOU SAY THAT YOU DRINK TO  
KILL YOUR DISGUST WITH LYING.

BRICK:

YOU SAID TO GIVE YOU A  
REASON.

BIG DADDY:

IS LIQUOR THE ONLY THING  
THAT'LL KILL THIS DISGUST?

BRICK:

NOW. YES.

BIG DADDY:

BUT NOT ONCE, HUH?

BRICK:

NOT WHEN I WAS STILL YOUNG  
AN' BELIEVING. A DRINKING MAN'S  
SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO FORGET HE ISN'T  
STILL YOUNG AN' BELIEVING.

BIG DADDY:

BELIEVING WHAT?

BRICK:

BELIEVING....

BIG DADDY:

BELIEVING WHAT?

BRICK [STUBBORNLY EVASIVE]:

BELIEVING....

BIG DADDY:

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE  
HELL YOU MEAN BY BELIEVING AND I  
DON'T THINK YOU KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN  
BY BELIEVING, BUT IF YOU STILL GOT  
SPORTS IN YOUR BLOOD, GO BACK TO  
SPORTS ANNOUNCING AND--

BRICK:

SIT IN A GLASS BOX WATCHING  
GAMES I CAN'T PLAY? DESCRIBING WHAT  
I CAN'T DO WHILE PLAYERS DO IT?  
SWEATING OUT THEIR DISGUST AND  
CONFUSION IN CONTESTS I'M NOT FIT  
FOR? DRINKIN' A COKE, HALF BOURBON,  
SO I CAN STAND IT? THAT'S NO GODDAM  
GOOD ANY MORE, NO HELP--TIME JUST  
OUTRAN ME, BIG DADDY--GOT THERE  
FIRST...

BIG DADDY:

I THINK YOU'RE PASSING  
THE BUCK.

BRICK:

YOU KNOW MANY DRINKIN' MEN?  
BIG DADDY [WITH A SLIGHT, CHARMING  
SMILE]:

I HAVE KNOWN A FAIR NUMBER  
OF THAT SPECIES.

BRICK:

COULD ANY OF THEM TELL YOU  
WHY HE DRANK?

BIG DADDY:

YEP, YOU'RE PASSIN' THE  
BUCK TO THINGS LIKE TIME AND DISGUST  
WITH 'MENDACITY' AND--CRAP!---IF YOU  
GOT TO USE THAT KIND OF LANGUAGE  
ABOUT A THING, IT'S NINETY- PROOF  
BULL, AND I'M NOT BUYING ANY.

BRICK: I HAD TO GIVE YOU A REASON TO  
GET A DRINK!

BIG DADDY:

YOU STARTED DRINKIN' WHEN  
YOUR FRIEND SKIPPER DIED.

[SILENCE FOR FIVE BEATS. THEN BRICK MAKES A STARTLED  
MOVEMENT, REACHING FOR HIS CRUTCH.]

BRICK:

WHAT ARE YOU SUGGESTING?

BIG DADDY:

I'M SUGGESTING NOTHING.

[THE SHUFFLE AND CLOP OF BRICK'S RAPID HOBBLE AWAY FROM HIS  
FATHER'S STEADY, GRAVE ATTENTION.]

--BUT GOOPER AN' MAE SUGGESTED THAT  
THERE WAS SOMETHING NOT RIGHT  
EXACTLY IN YOUR--

BRICK [STOPPING SHORT OFFSCREEN AS  
IF BACKED TO A WALL]: 'NOT RIGHT'?



BIG DADDY:

NOT, WELL, EXACTLY NORMAL  
IN YOUR FRIENDSHIP WITH--

BRICK:

THEY SUGGESTED THAT, TOO? I  
THOUGHT THAT WAS MAGGIE'S  
SUGGESTION.

[BRICK'S DETACHMENT IS AT LAST BROKEN THROUGH. HIS HEART IS ACCELERATED; HIS FOREHEAD SWEAT-BEADED; HIS BREATH BECOMES MORE RAPID AND HIS VOICE HOARSE. THE THING THEY'RE DISCUSSING, TIMIDLY AND PAINFULLY ON THE SIDE OF BIG DADDY, FIERCELY, VIOLENTLY ON BRICK'S SIDE, IS THE INADMISSIBLE THING THAT SKIPPER DIED TO DISAVOW BETWEEN THEM. THE FACT THAT IF IT EXISTED IT HAD TO BE DISAVOWED TO 'KEEP FACE' IN THE WORLD THEY LIVED IN, MAY BE AT THE HEART OF THE 'MENDACITY' THAT BRICK DRINKS TO KILL HIS DISGUST WITH. IT MAY BE THE ROOT OF HIS COLLAPSE. OR MAYBE IT IS ONLY A SINGLE MANIFESTATION OF IT, NOT EVEN THE MOST IMPORTANT. THE BIRD

THAT I HOPE TO CATCH IN THE NET OF THIS PLAY IS NOT THE SOLUTION OF ONE MAN'S PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEM. I'M TRYING TO CATCH THE TRUE QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE IN A GROUP OF PEOPLE, THAT CLOUDY, FLICKERING, EVANESCENT--FIERCELY CHARGED!-- INTERPLAY OF LIVE HUMAN BEINGS IN THE THUNDERCLOUD OF A COMMON CRISIS. SOME MYSTERY SHOULD BE LEFT IN THE REVELATION OF CHARACTER IN A PLAY, JUST AS A GREAT DEAL OF MYSTERY IS ALWAYS LEFT IN THE REVELATION OF CHARACTER IN LIFE, EVEN IN ONE'S OWN CHARACTER TO HIMSELF. THIS DOES NOT ABSOLVE THE

PLAYWRIGHT OF HIS DUTY TO OBSERVE AND PROBE AS CLEARLY AND DEEPLY AS HE LEGITIMATELY CAN--BUT IT SHOULD STEER HIM AWAY FROM 'PAT' CONCLUSIONS, FACILE DEFINITIONS WHICH MAKE A PLAY

JUST PLAY, NOT A SNARE FOR THE TRUTH OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE. |

THE FOLLOWING SCENE SHOULD BE PLAYED WITH GREAT

CONCENTRATION, WITH MOST OF THE POWER LEASHED BUT PALPABLE IN

WHAT IS LEFT UNSPOKEN.]

WHO ELSE'S SUGGESTION IS IT, IS IT YOURS? HOW MANY OTHERS THOUGHT THAT

SKIPPER AND I WERE--

BIG DADDY [GENTLY]:

NOW, HOLD ON,

HOLD ON A MINUTE, SON.--I KNOCKED AROUND IN MY TIME.

BRICK:

WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH--

BIG DADDY:

I SAID 'HOLD ON!'--I

BUMMED, I BUMMED THIS COUNTRY TILL I WAS--

BRICK:

WHOSE SUGGESTION, WHO ELSE'S

SUGGESTION IS IT?

BIG DADDY:

SLEPT IN HOBO JUNGLES AND  
RAILROAD Y'S AND FLOPHOUSES IN ALL  
CITIES BEFORE I- -

BRICK:

OH, YOU THINK SO, TOO, YOU  
CALL ME YOUR SON AND A QUEER. OH!!  
MAYBE THAT'S WHY YOU PUT MAGGIE AND  
ME IN THIS ROOM THAT WAS JACK  
STRAW'S AND PETER OCHELLO'S, IN  
WHICH THAT PAIR OF OLD SISTERS SLEPT  
IN A DOUBLE BED WHERE BOTH OF 'EM  
DIED!

BIG DADDY:

NOW JUST DON'T GO  
THROWING ROCKS AT--

[SUDDENLY REVEREND TOOKER APPEARS IN THE GALLERY DOORS, HIS  
HEAD SLIGHTLY, PLAYFULLY, FATUOUSLY COCKED, WITH A  
PRACTISED CLERGYMAN'S SMILE, SINCERE AS A BIRD-CALL BLOWN  
ON A HUNTER'S WHISTLE, THE LIVING EMBODIMENT OF THE PIOUS,  
CONVENTIONAL LIE. | BIG DADDY GASPS A LITTLE AT THIS  
PERFECTLY TIMED, BUT INCONGRUOUS, APPARITION.]

--WHAT'RE YOU LOOKING FOR, PREACHER?

REVEREND TOOKER:

THE GENTLEMEN'S

LAVATORY, HA HA!--HEH, HEH...

BIG DADDY [WITH STRAINED COURTESY]:

--GO BACK OUT AND WALK DOWN TO THE  
OTHER END OF THE GALLERY, REVEREND  
TOOKER, AND USE THE BATHROOM

CONNECTED WITH MY BEDROOM, AND IF  
YOU CAN'T FIND IT, ASK THEM WHERE IT  
IS!

REVEREND TOOKER:

AH, THANKS.

[HE GOES OUT WITH A DEPRECATORY CHUCKLE.]

BIG DADDY:

IT'S HARD TO TALK IN THIS  
PLACE...

BRICK:

SON OF A--!

BIG DADDY [LEAVING A LOT UNSPOKEN]:  
--I SEEN ALL THINGS AND UNDERSTOOD A  
LOT OF THEM, TILL 1910. CHRIST, THE  
YEAR THAT--I HAD WORN MY SHOES  
THROUGH, HOCKED MY--I HOPPED OFF A  
YELLOW DOG FREIGHT CAR HALF A MILE  
DOWN THE ROAD, SLEPT IN A WAGON OF  
COTTON OUTSIDE THE GIN--JACK STRAW  
AN' PETER OCHELLO TOOK ME IN. HIRED  
ME TO MANAGE THIS PLACE WHICH GREW  
INTO THIS ONE.--WHEN JACK STRAW  
DIED--WHY, OLD PETER OCHELLO QUIT  
EATIN' LIKE A DOG DOES WHEN ITS  
MASTER'S DEAD, AND DIED, TOO!

BRICK:

CHRIST!

BIG DADDY:

I'M JUST SAYING I  
UNDERSTAND SUCH--

BRICK [VIOLENTLY]:

SKIPPER IS DEAD.  
I HAVE NOT QUIT EATING!

BIG DADDY:

NO, BUT YOU STARTED  
DRINKING.

[BRICK WHEELS ON HIS CRUTCH AND HURLS HIS GLASS ACROSS THE  
ROOM SHOUTING.]

BRICK:

YOU THINK SO, TOO?

BIG DADDY:

SHHH!

[FOOTSTEPS RUN ON THE GALLERY. THERE ARE WOMEN'S CALLS. BIG  
DADDY GOES TOWARD THE DOOR.]

GO 'WAY!--JUST BROKE A GLASS....

[BRICK IS TRANSFORMED, AS IF A QUIET MOUNTAIN BLEW SUDDENLY  
UP IN VOLCANIC FLAME.]

BRICK:

YOU THINK SO, TOO? YOU THINK  
SO, TOO? YOU THINK ME AN' SKIPPER  
DID, DID, DID!-- SODOMY!--TOGETHER?

BIG DADDY:

HOLD--!

BRICK:

THAT WHAT YOU--

BIG DADDY:

--ON--A MINUTE!

BRICK:

YOU THINK WE DID DIRTY THINGS

BETWEEN US, SKIPPER AN'--

BIG DADDY:

WHY ARE YOU SHOUTING LIKE

THAT? WHY ARE YOU--

BRICK:

--ME, IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK

OF SKIPPER, IS THAT--

BIG DADDY:

--SO EXCITED? I DON'T

THINK NOTHING. I DON'T KNOW NOTHING.

I'M SIMPLY TELLING YOU WHAT--

BRICK:

YOU THINK THAT SKIPPER AND ME

WERE A PAIR OF DIRTY OLD MEN?

BIG DADDY:

NOW THAT'S--

BRICK:

STRAW? OCHELLO? A COUPLE OF--

BIG DADDY:

NOW JUST--

BRICK:

--FUCKING SISSIES? QUEERS? IS

THAT WHAT YOU--

BIG DADDY:

SHHH.

BRICK:

--THINK?

[HE LOSES HIS BALANCE AND PITCHES TO HIS KNEES WITHOUT NOTICING THE PAIN. HE GRABS THE BED AND DRAGS HIMSELF UP.]

BIG DADDY:

JESUS!--WHEW.... GRAB MY

HAND!

BRICK:

NAW, I DON'T WANT YOUR

HAND....

BIG DADDY:

WELL, I WANT YOURS. GIT

UP!

[HE DRAWS HIM UP, KEEPS AN ARM ABOUT HIM WITH CONCERN AND AFFECTION.]

YOU BROKEN OUT IN A SWEAT! YOU'RE  
PANTING LIKE YOU'D RUN A RACE WITH--

BRICK [FREEING HIMSELF FROM HIS  
FATHER'S HOLD]:

BIG DADDY, YOU SHOCK  
ME, BIG DADDY, YOU, YOU--SHOCK ME!

TALKIN' SO--

[HE TURNS AWAY FROM HIS FATHER.]

--CASUALLY!--ABOUT A--THING LIKE

THAT...

--DON'T YOU KNOW HOW PEOPLE FEEL  
ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT? HOW, HOW  
DISGUSTED THEY ARE BY THINGS LIKE  
THAT? WHY, AT OLE MISS WHEN IT WAS  
DISCOVERED A PLEDGE TO OUR  
FRATERNITY, SKIPPER'S AND MINE, DID  
A, ATTEMPTED TO DO A, UNNATURAL  
THING WITH--WE NOT ONLY DROPPED HIM  
LIKE A HOT ROCK!--WE TOLD HIM TO GIT  
OFF THE CAMPUS, AND HE DID, HE GOT!--  
-ALL THE WAY TO--

[HE HALTS, BREATHLESS.]

BIG DADDY:

--WHERE?

BRICK:

--NORTH AFRICA, LAST I HEARD!

BIG DADDY:

WELL, I HAVE COME BACK  
FROM FURTHER AWAY THAN THAT, I HAVE  
JUST NOW RETURNED FROM THE OTHER  
SIDE OF THE MOON, DEATH'S COUNTRY,  
SON, AND I'M NOT EASY TO SHOCK BY  
ANYTHING HERE.



[HE COMES OFFSCREEN AND FACES OUT.]

ALWAYS, ANYHOW, LIVED WITH TOO MUCH  
SPACE AROUND ME TO BE INFECTED BY  
IDEAS OF OTHER PEOPLE. ONE THING YOU  
CAN GROW ON A BIG PLACE MORE  
IMPORTANT THAN COTTON!--IS  
TOLERANCE!--I GROWN IT.

[HE RETURNS TOWARD BRICK.]

BRICK:

WHY CAN'T EXCEPTIONAL  
FRIENDSHIP, REAL, REAL, DEEP, DEEP  
FRIENDSHIP! BETWEEN TWO MEN BE  
RESPECTED AS SOMETHING CLEAN AND  
DECENT WITHOUT BEING THOUGHT OF AS--

BIG DADDY:

IT CAN, IT IS, FOR GOD'S  
SAKE.

BRICK:

--FAIRIES....

[IN HIS UTTERANCE OF THIS WORD, WE GAUGE THE WIDE AND  
PROFOUND REACH OF THE CONVENTIONAL MORES HE GOT FROM THE  
WORLD THAT CROWNED HIM WITH EARLY LAUREL.]

BIG DADDY:

I TOLD MAE AN' GOOPER--

BRICK: FRIG MAE AND GOOPER, FRIG ALL  
DIRTY LIES AND LIARS!--SKIPPER AND  
ME HAD A CLEAN, TRUE THING BETWEEN

US!--HAD A CLEAN FRIENDSHIP,  
PRACTICALLY ALL OUR LIVES, TILL  
MAGGIE GOT THE IDEA YOU'RE TALKING  
ABOUT. NORMAL? NO!--IT WAS TOO RARE  
TO BE NORMAL, ANY TRUE THING BETWEEN  
TWO PEOPLE IS TOO RARE TO BE NORMAL.  
OH, ONCE IN A WHILE HE PUT HIS HAND  
ON MY SHOULDER OR I'D PUT MINE ON  
HIS, OH, MAYBE EVEN, WHEN WE WERE  
TOURING THE COUNTRY IN PRO-FOOTBALL  
AN' SHARED HOTEL-ROOMS WE'D REACH  
ACROSS THE SPACE BETWEEN THE TWO  
BEDS AND SHAKE HANDS TO SAY  
GOODNIGHT, YEAH, ONE OR TWO TIMES  
WE--

BIG DADDY:

BRICK, NOBODY THINKS THAT  
THAT'S NOT NORMAL!

BRICK:

WELL, THEY'RE MISTAKEN, IT  
WAS! IT WAS A PURE AN' TRUE THING  
AN' THAT'S NOT NORMAL.

[THEY BOTH STARE STRAIGHT AT EACH OTHER FOR A LONG MOMENT.  
THE TENSION BREAKS AND BOTH TURN AWAY AS IF TIRED.]

BIG DADDY:

YEAH, IT'S--HARD T'--  
TALK....

BRICK:

ALL RIGHT, THEN, LET'S--LET

IT GO....

BIG DADDY:

WHY DID SKIPPER CRACK UP?

WHY HAVE YOU?

[BRICK LOOKS BACK AT HIS FATHER AGAIN. HE HAS ALREADY DECIDED, WITHOUT KNOWING THAT HE HAS MADE THIS DECISION, THAT HE IS GOING TO TELL HIS FATHER THAT HE IS DYING OF CANCER.

ONLY THIS COULD EVEN THE SCORE BETWEEN THEM | ONE INADMISSIBLE THING IN RETURN FOR ANOTHER.]

BRICK [OMINOUSLY]:

ALL RIGHT. YOU'RE

ASKING FOR IT, BIG DADDY. WE'RE FINALLY GOING TO HAVE THAT REAL TRUE TALK YOU WANTED. IT'S TOO LATE TO STOP IT, NOW, WE GOT TO CARRY IT THROUGH AND COVER EVERY SUBJECT.

[HE HOBBLES BACK TO THE LIQUOR CABINET.]

UH-HUH.

[HE OPENS THE ICE BUCKET AND PICKS UP THE SILVER TONGS WITH SLOW ADMIRATION OF THEIR FROSTY BRIGHTNESS.]

MAGGIE DECLARES THAT SKIPPER AND I WENT INTO PRO-FOOTBALL AFTER WE LEFT 'OLE MISS' BECAUSE WE WERE SCARED TO

GROW UP...

[HE MOVES OFFSCREEN WITH THE SHUFFLE AND CLOP OF A CRIPPLE ON A CRUTCH. AS MARGARET DID WHEN HER SPEECH BECAME']

RECITATIVE', HE LOOKS OUT INTO THE HOUSE, COMMANDING ITS ATTENTION BY HIS DIRECT, CONCENTRATED GAZE--A BROKEN, 'TRAGICALLY ELEGANT' FIGURE TELLING SIMPLY AS MUCH AS HE KNOWS OF THE 'TRUTH']

--WANTED TO--KEEP ON TOSSING--THOSE  
LONG, LONG!--HIGH, HIGH!--PASSES  
THAT--COULDN'T BE INTERCEPTED EXCEPT  
BY TIME, THE AERIAL ATTACK THAT MADE  
US FAMOUS! AND SO WE DID, WE DID, WE  
KEPT IT UP FOR ONE SEASON, THAT  
AERIAL ATTACK, WE HELD IT HIGH!--  
YEAH, BUT----THAT SUMMER, MAGGIE,  
SHE LAID THE LAW DOWN TO ME, SAID,  
NOW OR NEVER, AND SO I MARRIED  
MAGGIE....

BIG DADDY:

HOW WAS MAGGIE IN BED?

BRICK [WRYLY]:

GREAT! THE GREATEST!

[BIG DADDY NODS AS IF BE THOUGHT SO.]

SHE WENT ON THE ROAD THAT FALL WITH  
THE DIXIE STARS. OH, SHE MADE A  
GREAT SHOW OF BEING THE WORLD'S BEST  
SPORT. SHE WORE A--WORE A--TALL  
BEARSKIN CAP! A SHAKO, THEY CALL IT,  
A DYED MOLESKIN COAT, A MOLESKIN  
COAT DYED RED!--CUT UP CRAZY! RENTED

HOTEL BALLROOMS FOR VICTORY  
CELEBRATIONS, WOULDN'T CANCEL THEM  
WHEN IT--TURNED OUT--DEFEAT....  
MAGGIE THE CAT! HA HA!

[BIG DADDY NODS.]

--BUT SKIPPER, HE HAD SOME FEVER  
WHICH CAME BACK ON HIM WHICH DOCTORS  
COULDN'T EXPLAIN AND I GOT THAT  
INJURY--TURNED OUT TO BE JUST A  
SHADOW ON THE X-RAY PLATE--AND A  
TOUCH OF BURSITIS.... I LAY IN A  
HOSPITAL BED, WATCHED OUR GAMES ON  
TV, SAW MAGGIE ON THE BENCH NEXT TO  
SKIPPER WHEN HE WAS HAULED OUT OF A  
GAME FOR STUMBLES, FUMBLES!--BURNED  
ME UP THE WAY SHE HUNG ON HIS ARM!--  
Y'KNOW, I THINK THAT MAGGIE HAD  
ALWAYS FELT SORT OF LEFT OUT BECAUSE  
SHE AND ME NEVER GOT ANY CLOSER  
TOGETHER THAN TWO PEOPLE JUST GET IN  
BED, WHICH IS NOT MUCH CLOSER THAN  
TWO CATS ON A--FENCE HUMPING.... SO!  
SHE TOOK THIS TIME TO WORK ON POOR  
DUMB SKIPPER. HE WAS A LESS THAN  
AVERAGE STUDENT AT OLE MISS, YOU  
KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU?!--POURED IN  
HIS MIND THE DIRTY, FALSE IDEA THAT

WHAT WE WERE, HIM AND ME, WAS A  
FRUSTRATED CASE OF THAT OLE PAIR OF  
SISTERS THAT LIVED IN THIS ROOM,  
JACK STRAW AND PETER OCHELLO!--HE,  
POOR SKIPPER, WENT TO BED WITH  
MAGGIE TO PROVE IT WASN'T TRUE, AND  
WHEN IT DIDN'T WORK OUT, HE THOUGHT  
IT WAS TRUE!--SKIPPER BROKE IN TWO  
LIKE A ROTTEN STICK-- NOBODY EVER  
TURNED SO FAST TO A LUSH--OR DIED OF  
IT SO QUICK.... --NOW ARE YOU  
SATISFIED?

[BIG DADDY HAS LISTENED TO THIS STORY, DIVIDING THE GRAIN  
FROM THE CHAFF. NOW HE LOOKS AT HIS SON.]

BIG DADDY:

ARE YOU SATISFIED?

BRICK:

WITH WHAT?

BIG DADDY:

THAT HALF-ASS STORY!

BRICK:

WHAT'S HALF-ASS ABOUT IT?

BIG DADDY:

SOMETHING'S LEFT OUT OF

THAT STORY. WHAT DID YOU LEAVE OUT?

[THE PHONE HAS STARTED RINGING IN THE HALL. AS IF IT  
REMINDED HIM OF SOMETHING, BRICK GLANCES SUDDENLY TOWARD  
THE SOUND AND SAYS:]

BRICK:

YES!--I LEFT OUT A LONGDISTANCE  
CALL WHICH I HAD FROM  
SKIPPER, IN WHICH HE MADE A DRUNKEN  
CONFESSION TO ME AND ON WHICH I HUNG  
UP!--LAST TIME WE SPOKE TO EACH  
OTHER IN OUR LIVES....

[MUTED RING STOPS AS SOMEONE ANSWERS PHONE IN A SOFT,  
INDISTINCT VOICE IN HALL.]

BIG DADDY:

YOU HUNG UP?

BRICK:

HUNG UP. JESUS! WELL--

BIG DADDY:

ANYHOW NOW!--WE HAVE  
TRACKED DOWN THE LIE WITH WHICH  
YOU'RE DISGUSTED AND WHICH YOU ARE  
DRINKING TO KILL YOUR DISGUST WITH,  
BRICK. YOU BEEN PASSING THE BUCK.  
THIS DISGUST WITH MENDACITY IS  
DISGUST WITH YOURSELF.  
YOU!--DUG THE GRAVE OF YOUR FRIEND  
AND KICKED HIM IN IT!--BEFORE YOU'D  
FACE TRUTH WITH HIM!

BRICK:

HIS TRUTH, NOT MINE!

BIG DADDY:

HIS TRUTH, OKAY! BUT YOU  
WOULDN'T FACE IT WITH HIM!

BRICK:

WHO CAN FACE TRUTH? CAN YOU?

BIG DADDY:

NOW DON'T START PASSIN'  
THE ROTTEN BUCK AGAIN, BOY!

BRICK:

HOW ABOUT THESE BIRTHDAY  
CONGRATULATIONS, THESE MANY, MANY  
HAPPY RETURNS OF THE DAY, WHEN  
EV'RYBODY BUT YOU KNOWS THERE WON'T  
BE ANY!

[WHOEVER HAS ANSWERED THE HALL PHONE LETS OUT A HIGH,  
SHRILL LAUGH; THE VOICE BECOMES AUDIBLE SAYING: 'NO, NO,  
YOU GOT IT ALL WRONG! UPSIDE DOWN! ARE YOU CRAZY?' | BRICK  
SUDDENLY CATCHES HIS BREATH AS HE REALISES THAT HE HAS MADE  
A SHOCKING DISCLOSURE. HE HOBBLER A FEW PACES, THEN  
FREEZES, AND WITHOUT LOOKING AT HIS FATHER'S SHOCKED FACE,  
SAYS:]

LET'S, LET'S--GO OUT, NOW, AND--

[BIG DADDY MOVES SUDDENLY FORWARD AND GRABS HOLD OF THE  
BOY'S CRUTCH LIKE IT WAS A WEAPON FOR WHICH THEY WERE  
FIGHTING FOR POSSESSION.]

BIG DADDY:

OH, NO, NO! NO ONE'S  
GOING OUT! WHAT DID YOU START TO  
SAY?

BRICK:

I DON'T REMEMBER.



BIG DADDY:

'MANY HAPPY RETURNS WHEN  
THEY KNOW THERE WON'T BE ANY'?

BRICK:

AW, HELL, BIG DADDY, FORGET  
IT. COME ON OUT ON THE GALLERY AND  
LOOK AT THE FIREWORKS THEY'RE  
SHOOTING OFF FOR YOUR BIRTHDAY....

BIG DADDY:

FIRST YOU FINISH THAT  
REMARK YOU WERE MAKIN' BEFORE YOU  
CUT OFF. 'MANY HAPPY RETURNS WHEN  
THEY KNOW THERE WON'T BE ANY'?--  
AIN'T THAT WHAT YOU JUST SAID?

BRICK:

LOOK, NOW. I CAN GET AROUND  
WITHOUT THAT CRUTCH IF I HAVE TO BUT  
IT WOULD BE A LOT EASIER ON THE  
FURNITURE AN' GLASSWARE IF I DIDN'  
HAVE TO GO SWINGING ALONG LIKE  
TARZAN OF TH'--

BIG DADDY:

FINISH WHAT YOU WAS  
SAYIN'!

[AN EERIE GREEN GLOW SHOWS IN SKY BEHIND HIM.]

BRICK [SUCKING THE ICE IN HIS GLASS,  
SPEECH BECOMING THICK]:

LEAVE TH' PLACE TO GOOPER AND MAE AN' THEIR  
FIVE LITTLE SAME LITTLE MONKEYS. ALL

I WANT IS--

BIG DADDY:

'LEAVE TH' PLACE,' DID  
YOU SAY?

BRICK [VAGUELY]:

ALL TWENTY-EIGHT  
THOUSAND ACRES OF THE RICHEST LAND  
THIS SIDE OF THE VALLEY NILE.

BIG DADDY:

WHO SAID I WAS 'LEAVING  
THE PLACE' TO GOOPER OR ANYBODY?  
THIS IS MY SIXTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY! I  
GOT FIFTEEN YEARS OR TWENTY YEARS  
LEFT IN ME! I'LL OUTLIVE YOU! I'LL  
BURY YOU AN' HAVE TO PAY FOR YOUR  
COFFIN!

BRICK:

SURE. MANY HAPPY RETURNS. NOW  
LET'S GO WATCH THE FIREWORKS, COME  
ON, LET'S--

BIG DADDY:

LYING, HAVE THEY BEEN  
LYING? ABOUT THE REPORT FROM TH'--  
CLINIC? DID THEY, DID THEY--FIND  
SOMETHING?--CANCER. MAYBE?

BRICK:

MENDACITY IS A SYSTEM THAT WE  
LIVE IN. LIQUOR IS ONE WAY OUT AN'

DEATH'S THE OTHER....

[HE TAKES THE CRUTCH FROM BIG DADDY'S LOOSE GRIP AND SWINGS  
OUT ON THE GALLERY LEAVING THE DOORS OPEN. A SONG, 'PICK A  
BALE OF COTTON', IS HEARD.]

MAE [APPEARING IN DOOR]:

OH, BIG DADDY, THE FIELD-HANDS ARE SINGIN'

FO' YOU!

BIG DADDY [SHOUTING HOARSELY]:

BRICK! BRICK!

MAE:

HE'S OUTSIDE DRINKIN', BIG DADDY.

BIG DADDY:

BRICK!

[MAE RETREATS, AWED BY THE PASSION OF HIS VOICE. CHILDREN  
CALL BRICK IN TONES MOCKING BIG DADDY. HIS FACE CRUMBLES  
LIKE BROKEN YELLOW PLASTER ABOUT TO FALL INTO DUST. | THERE  
IS A GLOW IN THE SKY. BRICK SWINGS BACK THROUGH THE DOORS,  
SLOWLY, GRAVELY, QUITE SOBERLY.]

BRICK:

I'M SORRY, BIG DADDY. MY HEAD  
DON'T WORK ANY MORE AND IT'S HARD  
FOR ME TO UNDERSTAND HOW ANYBODY  
COULD CARE IF HE LIVED OR DIED OR  
WAS DYING OR CARED ABOUT ANYTHING  
BUT WHETHER OR NOT THERE WAS LIQUOR  
LEFT IN THE BOTTLE AND SO I SAID

WHAT I SAID WITHOUT THINKING. IN  
SOME WAYS I'M NO BETTER THAN THE  
OTHERS, IN SOME WAYS WORSE BECAUSE  
I'M LESS ALIVE. MAYBE IT'S BEING  
ALIVE THAT MAKES THEM LIE, AND BEING  
ALMOST NOT ALIVE MAKES ME SORT OF  
ACCIDENTALLY TRUTHFUL--I DON'T KNOW  
BUT--ANYWAY--WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS... -  
-AND BEING FRIENDS IS TELLING EACH  
OTHER THE TRUTH.... [THERE IS A  
PAUSE.] YOU TOLD ME! I TOLD YOU!

[A CHILD RUSHES INTO THE ROOM AND GRABS A FISTFUL OF  
FIRECRACKERS, AND RUNS OUT AGAIN.]

CHILD [SCREAMING]:

BANG, BANG, BANG,

BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG!

BIG DADDY [SLOWLY AND PASSIONATELY]:

CHRIST--DAMN-- ALL--LYING SONS OF--

LYING BITCHES!

[HE STRAIGHTENS AT LAST AND CROSSES TO THE INSIDE DOOR. AT  
THE DOOR HE TURNS AND LOOKS BACK AS IF HE HAD SOME  
DESPERATE QUESTION HE COULDN'T PUT INTO WORDS. THEN HE NODS  
REFLECTIVELY AND SAYS IN A HOARSE VOICED]

YES, ALL LIARS, ALL LIARS, ALL LYING

DYING LIARS!

[THIS IS SAID SLOWLY, SLOWLY, WITH A FIERCE REVULSION. HE  
GOES ON OUT.]

--LYING! DYING! LIARS!

[HIS VOICE DIES OUT. THERE IS THE SOUND OF A CHILD BEING

SLAPPED. IT RUSHES, HIDEOUSLY BAWLING, THROUGH ROOM AND OUT THE HALL DOOR. BRICK REMAINS MOTIONLESS.]

FADE OUT

INT. THE BED - SITTING - ROOM OF A PLANTATION HOME IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA. - CONTINUOUS

FADE IN

[AFTER BIG DADDY HAS GONE, MARGARET ENTERS]

MARGARET:

BRICK, WHAT IN THE NAME OF  
GOD WAS GOIN' ON IN THIS ROOM?

[DIXIE AND TRIXIE RUSH THROUGH THE ROOM FROM THE HALL, BRANDISHING CAP PISTOLS, WHICH THEY FIRE REPEATEDLY, AS THEY SHOUT: 'BANG! BANG! BANG!' | MAE APPEARS AND TURNS THE CHILDREN BACK. AT THE SAME MOMENT, GOOPER, REVEREND TOOKER AND DR BAUGH ENTER.]

MAE:

DIXIE! YOU QUIT THAT! GOOPER,  
WILL Y'PLEASE GIT THESE KIDDIES  
T'BAID? RIGHT NOW?

GOOPER [URGING THE CHILDREN ALONG]:

MAE--YOU SEEN BIG MAMA?

MAE:

NOT YET.

[DIXIE AND TRIXIE VANISH THROUGH HALL.]

REVEREND TOOKER [TO MAE]:

THOSE KIDDIES ARE SO FULL OF VITALITY.--I  
THINK I'LL HAVE TO BE STARTIN' BACK  
TO TOWN.

[MARGARET TURNS TO WATCH AND LISTEN.]

MAE:

NOT YET, PREACHER. YOU KNOW WE  
REGARD YOU AS A MEMBER OF THIS  
FAM'LY, 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  
TH' CLINIC.

[MAE CALLS THROUGH DOOR:]

HAS BIG DADDY GONE TO BED, BRICK?

[GOOPER HAS GONE OUT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EXCHANGE  
BETWEEN MAE AND REVEREND TOOKER.]

MARGARET [REPLYING TO MAE]:

YES, HE'S GONE TO BED.

[TO BRICK:]

WHY'D BIG DADDY SHOUT 'LIARS'?

GOOPER:

MAE!

[MAE EXITS | REVEREND TOOKER DRIFTS.]

BRICK:

I DIDN'T LIE TO BIG DADDY.  
I'VE LIED TO NOBODY, NOBODY BUT  
MYSELF, JUST LIED TO MYSELF. THE  
TIME HAS COME TO PUT ME IN RAINBOW  
HILL, PUT ME IN RAINBOW HILL,  
MAGGIE, I OUGHT TO GO THERE.

MARGARET:

OVER MY DEAD BODY!

[BRICK STARTS OUT. SHE HOLDS HIM.]

WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOIN'?

[MAE ENTERS TO REVEREND TOOKER, WHO COMES TO MEET HER.]

BRICK [WALKING OUT]:

OUT FOR SOME AIR, I WANT AIR--

GOOPER [ENTERING]:

NOW, WHERE IS THAT OLD LADY?

MAE:

CANTCHA FIND HER, GOOPER?

[REVEREND TOOKER GOES OUT.]

GOOPER:

SHE'S AVOIDIN' THIS TALK.

MAE:

I THINK SHE SENSES SOMETHIN'.

GOOPER [CALLS]:

SOOKEY! GO FIND BIG

MAMA AN' TELL HER DOC BAUGH AN' THE

PREACHER 'VE GOT TO GO SOON.

MAE:

DON'T LET BIG DADDY HEAR YUH!

[BRINGS DR BAUGH.]

REVEREND TOOKER [CALLS]:

BIG MAMA. SOOKEY AND DAISY [RUNNING IN LAWN,

CALLING]: MISS IDA! MISS IDA!

GOOPER [CALLING]:

LACEY, YOU LOOK

DOWNSTAIRS FOR BIG MAMA!

MARGARET:

BRICK, THEY'RE GOING TO  
TELL BIG MAMA THE TRUTH NOW, AN' SHE  
NEEDS YOU!

[REVEREND TOOKER APPEARS IN LAWN AREA.]

DOCTOR BAUGH [TO MAE]:

THIS IS GOING TO BE PAINFUL.

MAE:

PAINFUL THINGS CAN'T ALWAYS BE  
AVOIDED.

DOCTOR BAUGH:

THAT'S WHAT I'VE  
NOTICED ABOUT 'EM, SISTER WOMAN.

REVEREND TOOKER [ON LAWN]:

I SEE BIG MAMA!

[HURRIES OFF AND REAPPEARS SHORTLY IN HALL.]

GOOPER [HURRYING INTO HALL]:

SHE'S GONE ROUND THE GALL'RY TO BIG  
DADDY'S ROOM. HEY, MAMA!--HEY, BIG  
MAMA! COME HERE!

MAE [CALLS]:

HUSH, GOOPER! DON'T

HOLLER, GO TO HER!

[GOOPER AND REVEREND TOOKER NOW APPEAR TOGETHER IN HALL.  
BIG MAMA RUNS IN CARRYING A GLASS OF MILK. SHE CROSSES PAST  
DR BAUGH TO MAE. DR BAUGH TURNS AWAY.]



BIG MAMA:

HERE I AM! WHAT D'YOU ALL  
WANT WITH ME?

GOOPER [STEPS TOWARD BIG MAMA]:

BIG MAMA, I TOLD YOU WE GOT TO HAVE THIS  
TALK.

BIG MAMA:

WHAT TALK YOU TALKIN'  
ABOUT? I SAW THE LIGHT GO ON IN BIG  
DADDY'S BEDROOM AN' TOOK HIM HIS  
GLASS OF MILK, AN' HE JUST SHUT THE  
SHUTTERS RIGHT IN MY FACE.

[SHE STEPS INTO ROOM.]

WHEN OLD COUPLES HAVE BEEN TOGETHER  
AS LONG AS ME AN' BIG DADDY, THEY,  
THEY GET IRRITABLE WITH EACH OTHER  
JUST FROM TOO MUCH--DEVOTION! ISN'T  
THAT SO?

MARGARET [EMBRACING BIG MAMA]:

YES, OF COURSE IT'S SO.

[BRICK HOBBLER OUT TO GALLERY.]

BIG MAMA:

I THINK BIG DADDY WAS JUST  
WORN OUT. HE LOVES HIS FAM'LY. HE  
LOVES TO HAVE 'EM AROUND HIM, BUT  
IT'S A STRAIN ON HIS NERVES. HE  
WASN'T HIMSELF TONIGHT, BRICK--

[BRICK PASSES HER ON HIS WAY OUT.]

BIG DADDY WASN'T HIMSELF, I COULD  
TELL HE WAS ALL WORKED UP.

REVEREND TOOKER:  
I THINK HE'S REMARKABLE.

BIG MAMA:  
YAISS! JUST REMARKABLE.

[PUTS DOWN GLASS OF MILK.]

DID YOU NOTICE ALL THE FOOD HE ATE  
AT THAT TABLE?--WHY HE ATE LIKE A  
HAWSS!

GOOPER:  
I HOPE HE DON'T REGRET IT.

BIG MAMA [TOWARD GOOPER]:  
WHAT! WHY THAT MAN ATE A HUGE PIECE OF CAWN  
BREAD WITH MOLASSES ON IT! HELPED  
HIMSELF TWICE TO HOPPIN' JOHN!

MARGARET [TO BIG MAMA]:  
BIG DADDY LOVES HOPPIN' JOHN. WE HAD A REAL  
COUNTRY DINNER.

BIG MAMA:  
YAIS, HE SIMPLY ADORES IT!  
AN' CANDIED YAMS. SON-

[LOOKING OUT AT BRICK.]

THAT MAN PUT AWAY ENOUGH FOOD AT  
THAT TABLE TO STUFF A FIELD-HAND.

GOOPER:

I HOPE HE DON'T HAVE TO PAY  
FOR IT LATER ON.

BIG MAMA:

WHAT'S THAT, GOOPER?

MAE:

GOOPER SAYS HE HOPES BIG DADDY  
DOESN'T SUFFER TONIGHT.

BIG MAMA [TURNS TO MARGARET]:

OH, SHOOT, GOOPER SAYS, GOOPER SAYS! WHY  
SHOULD BIG DADDY SUFFER FOR  
SATISFYIN' A NAWMAL APPETITE?  
THERE'S NOTHIN' WRONG WITH THAT MAN  
BUT NERVES; HE'S SOUND AS A DOLLAR!  
AN' NOW HE KNOWS HE IS, AN' THAT'S  
WHY HE ATE SUCH A SUPPER. HE HAD A  
BIG LOAD OFF HIS MIND, KNOWIN' HE  
WASN'T DOOMED TO--WHAT--HE THOUGHT  
HE WAS--DOOMED T'--

[SHE WAVERS. MARGARET PUTS HER ARMS AROUND BIG MAMA.]

GOOPER [URGING MAE FORWARD]:

M A E!

[MAE RUNS FORWARD. SHE STANDS BELOW BIG MAMA, MARGARET  
ABOVE BIG MAMA. THEY HELP HER TO THE WICKER SEAT. BIG MAMA  
SITS. MARGARET SITS ABOVE HER. MAE STANDS BEHIND HER.]

MARGARET:

BLESS HIS OLE SWEET SOUL.

BIG MAMA:

YES--BLESS HIS HEART.

BRICK [ON GALLERY, LOOKING OUT]:  
HELLO, MOON, I ENVY YOU, YOU COOL  
SON OF A BITCH.

BIG MAMA:

I WANT BRICK!

MARGARET:

HE JUST STEPPED OUT FOR  
SOME FRESH AIR.

BIG MAMA:

HONEY! I WANT BRICK!

MAE:

BRING LI'L BROTHER IN HERE SO  
WE CIN TALK.

[MARGARET EXITS TO BRICK ON GALLERY.]

BRICK [TO THE MOON]:

I ENVY YOU--YOU  
COOL SON OF A BITCH.

MARGARET:

BRICK WHAT'RE YOU DOIN'  
OUT HERE ON THE GALL'RY BABY?

BRICK:

ADMIRIN' AN' COMPLIMENTIN'  
TH' MAN IN THE MOON.

MARGARET [TO BRICK]:

COME IN, BABY.

THEY'RE GETTIN' READY TO TELL BIG  
MAMA THE TRUTH.

BRICK:

I CAN'T WITNESS THAT THING IN  
THERE.

MAE:

DOC BAUGH, D'YOU THINK THOSE  
VITAMIN B12 INJECTIONS ARE ALL  
THEY'RE CRACKED UP T'BE?

[ENTERS ROOM TO UPPER SIDE, BEHIND WICKER SEAT.]

DOCTOR BAUGH:

WELL, I GUESS THEY'RE  
AS GOOD T'BE STUCK WITH AS ANYTHING  
ELSE.

[LOOKS AT WATCH]

MARGARET [TO BRICK]:

BIG MAMA NEEDS  
YOU!

BRICK:

I CAN'T WITNESS THAT THING IN  
THERE!

BIG MAMA:

WHAT'S WRONG HERE? YOU ALL  
HAVE SUCH LONG FACES, YOU SIT HERE  
WAITIN' FOR SOMETHIN' LIKE A BOMB--  
TO GO OFF.

GOOPER:

WE'RE WAITIN' FOR BRICK AN'  
MAGGIE TO COME IN FOR THIS TALK.

MARGARET:

BROTHER MAN AN' MAE HAVE  
GOT A TRICK UP THEIR SLEEVES, AN' IF  
YOU DON'T GO IN THERE T' HELP BIG  
MAMA, Y'KNOW WHAT I'M GOIN' TO DO--?  
BIG MAMA: TALK. WHISPERS! WHISPERS!

[LOOKS OUT]

BRICK!...

MARGARET [ANSWERING BIG MAMA'S

CALL]:

COMIN', BIG MAMA!

[TO BRICK.]

I'M GOIN' TO TAKE EVERY DAM' BOTTLE  
ON THIS PLACE AN' PITCH IT OFF TH'  
LEVEE INTO TH' RIVER!

BIG MAMA:

NEVER HAD THIS SORT OF  
ATMOSPHERE HERE BEFORE.

MAE [SITS ABOVE BIG MAMA ON WICKER  
SEAT]:

BEFORE WHAT, BIG MAMA?

BIG MAMA:

THIS OCCASION. WHAT'S  
BRICK AN' MAGGIE DOIN' OUT THERE  
NOW?

GOOPER [LOOKS OUT]:

THEY SEEM TO BE  
HAVIN' SOME LITTLE ALTERCATION.  
BIG MAMA [TAKING A PILL FROM PILL  
BOX ON CHAIN AT HER WRIST]:

GIVE ME A LITTLE SOMETHIN' TO WASH THIS  
TABLET DOWN WITH. SMELL OF BURNT  
FIREWORKS ALWAYS MAKES ME SICK.

[MAE CROSSES TO BAR TO POUR GLASS OF WATER. DR BAUGH JOINS  
HER. GOOPER CROSSES TO REVEREND TOOKER.]

BRICK [TO MAGGIE]:

YOU'RE A LIVE CAT, AREN'T YOU?

MARGARET:

YOU'RE DAM' RIGHT I AM!

BIG MAMA:

GOOPER, WILL Y'PLEASE OPEN  
THAT HALL DOOR--AN' LET SOME AIR  
CIRCULATE IN THIS STIFLIN' ROOM?

[GOOPER STARTS, BUT IS RESTRAINED BY MAE]

MAE [CROSSES TO BIG MAMA WITH WATER,  
SITS]:

BIG MAMA, I THINK WE OUGHT TO  
KEEP THAT DOOR CLOSED TILL AFTER WE

TALK.

BIG MAMA:

I SWAN!

[DRINKS WATER. WASHES DOWN PILL.]

MAE:

I JUST DON'T THINK WE OUGHT TO  
TAKE ANY CHANCE OF BIG DADDY HEARIN'  
A WORD OF THIS DISCUSSION.

BIG MAMA [HANDS GLASS TO MAE]:  
WHAT DISCUSSION OF WHAT? MAGGIE! BRICK!  
NOTHIN' IS GOIN' TO BE SAID IN TH'  
HOUSE OF BIG DADDY POLLITT THAT HE  
CAN'T HEAR IF HE WANTS TO!

[MAE JOINS GOOPER]

BRICK:

HOW LONG ARE YOU GOIN' TO  
STAND BEHIND ME, MAGGIE?

MARGARET:

FOREVER, IF NECESSARY.

[BRICK TO GALLERY DOOR.]

BIG MAMA:

BRICK!

[MAE RISES, LOOKS OUT]

GOOPER:

THAT BOY'S GONE T' PIECES--  
HE'S JUST GONE T' PIECES.



DOCTOR BAUGH:

Y'KNOW, IN MY DAY THEY  
USED TO HAVE SOMETHIN' THEY CALLED  
THE KEELEY CURE FOR DRINKERS.

BIG MAMA:

SHOOT!

DOCTOR BAUGH:

BUT NOWADAYS, I  
UNDERSTAND THEY TAKE SOME KIND OF  
TABLETS THAT KILL THEIR TASTE FOR  
THE STUFF.

GOOPER [TURNS TO DR BAUGH]:

CALL 'EM

ANTI-BUST TABLETS.

BIG MAMA:

BRICK DON'T NEED TO TAKE  
NOTHIN'. 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 AN' THEN THEY  
CALLED THE AMBULANCE AN' GIVE HIM  
ANOTHER BIG, BIG DOSE OF IT AT TH'  
HOSPITAL AN' THAT AN' ALL THE  
ALCOHOL IN HIS SYSTEM FO' MONTHS AN'  
MONTHS JUST PROVED TOO MUCH FOR HIS  
HEART AN' HIS HEART QUIT BEATIN'.

I'M SCARED OF NEEDLES! I'M MORE  
SCARED OF A NEEDLE THAN TH' KNIFE-  
[BRICK HAS ENTERED THE ROOM TO BEHIND THE WICKER SEAT. HE  
RESTS HIS HAND ON BIG MAMA'S HEAD. GOOPER HAS MOVED A BIT  
FACING BIG MAMA.]

BIG MAMA:

OH! HERE'S BRICK! MY  
PRECIOUS BABY!

BRICK:

TAKE IT, GOOPER!

MAE [RISING]:

WHAT?

BRICK:

GOOPER KNOWS WHAT. TAKE IT,  
GOOPER!

[MAE TURNS TO GOOPER. MARGARET, WHO HAS FOLLOWED BRICK, NOW  
ENTERS ROOM, TO BEHIND WICKER SEAT.]

BIG MAMA [TO BRICK]:

YOU JUST BREAK MY HEART.

BRICK [AT BAR]:

SORRY--ANYONE ELSE?

MARGARET:

BRICK, SIT WITH BIG MAMA  
AN' HOLD HER HAND WHILE WE TALK.

BRICK:

YOU DO THAT, MAGGIE. I'M A  
RESTLESS CRIPPLE. I GOT TO STAY ON  
MY CRUTCH.

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?

[BRICK HOBBLER OUT HALL DOOR.]

I DON'T NEED NOBODY TO HOLD MY HAND.  
ARE YOU ALL CRAZY? SINCE WHEN DID  
BIG DADDY OR ME NEED ANYBODY--?

[REVEREND TOOKER MOVES BEHIND WICKER SEAT.]

MAE:

CALM YOURSELF, BIG MAMA.

BIG MAMA:

CALM YOU'SELF YOU'SELF,  
SISTER WOMAN! HOW COULD I CALM  
MYSELF 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:

DOC BAUGH--

[MAE RISES.]

SIT DOWN, MAE--

[MAE SITS.]

--BIG MAMA WANTS TO KNOW THE  
COMPLETE TRUTH ABOUT TH' REPORT WE  
GOT TODAY FROM THE OCHSNER CLINIC!

[DR BAUGH BUTTONS HIS COAT, FACES GROUP.]

BIG MAMA:

IS THERE SOMETHIN'--

SOMETHIN' THAT I DON'T KNOW?

DOCTOR BAUGH:

YES--WELL...

BIG MAMA [RISES]:

I--WANT TO--

KNOWWWWW!

--SOMEBODY MUST BE LYIN'! I WANT TO  
KNOW!

[MAE, GOOPER, REVEREND TOOKER SURROUND BIG MAMA.]

MAE:

SIT DOWN, BIG MAMA, SIT DOWN ON  
THIS SOFA!

MARGARET:

BRICK! BRICK!

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 AT THE OCHSNER CLINIC.

GOOPER:

IT'S ONE OF TH' BEST IN TH'  
COUNTRY.

MAE:

IT'S THE BEST IN TH' COUNTRY--  
BAR NONE!

DOCTOR BAUGH:

OF COURSE THEY WERE  
NINETY-NINE AND NINE-TENTHS PER CENT  
CERTAIN BEFORE THEY EVEN STARTED.

BIG MAMA:

SURE OF WHAT, SURE OF  
WHAT, SURE OF WHAT--WHAT!?

MAE:

NOW, MOMMY, BE A BRAVE GIRL!  
BRICK [ON GALLERY, COVERS HIS EARS,

SINGS]:

'BY THE LIGHT, BY THE LIGHT,  
OF THE SILVERY MOON!'

GOOPER [CALLS OUT TO BRICK]:

SHUT UP, BRICK!

[RETURNS TO GROUP]

BRICK:

SORRY...

[CONTINUES SINGING.]

DOCTOR BAUGH:

BUT NOW, YOU SEE, BIG  
MAMA, THEY CUT A PIECE OFF THIS  
GROWTH, A SPECIMEN OF THE TISSUE,

AN'--

BIG MAMA:

GROWTH? YOU TOLD BIG

DADDY--

DOCTOR BAUGH:

NOW, WAIT--

BIG MAMA:

YOU TOLD ME AN' 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--

REVEREND TOOKER [THROUGHOUT ALL  
THIS]:

SHH! SHH! SHH!

[BIG MAMA BREAKS, THEY ALL FOLLOW.]

DOCTOR BAUGH:

YES, THAT'S WHAT WE  
TOLD BIG DADDY. BUT WE HAD THIS BIT  
OF TISSUE RUN THROUGH THE  
LABORATORY, AN' I'M SORRY T'SAY THE  
TEST WAS POSITIVE ON IT. IT'S  
MALIGNANT.

[PAUSE.]

BIG MAMA:

CANCER! CANCER!

MAE:

NOW NOW, MOMMY--

GOOPER [AT THE SAME TIME]:

YOU HAD TO KNOW, BIG MAMA.

BIG MAMA:

WHY DIDN'T THEY CUT IT OUT

OF HIM? HANH? HANNH?

DOCTOR BAUGH:

INVOLVED TOO MUCH, BIG  
MAMA, TOO MANY ORGANS AFFECTED.

MAE:

BIG MAMA, THE LIVER'S AFFECTED,  
AN' SO'S THE KIDNEYS, BOTH. IT'S

GONE WAY PAST WHAT THEY CALL A--

GOOPER:

--A SURGICAL RISK.

[BIG MAMA GASPS.]

REVEREND TOOKER:

TCH, TCH, TCH.

DOCTOR BAUGH:

YES, IT'S GONE PAST

THE KNIFE.

MAE:

THAT'S WHY HE'S TURNED YELLOW!

[BRICK STOPS SINGING, TURNS AWAY ON GALLERY.]

BIG MAMA [PUSHES MAE]:

GIT AWAY FROM ME, GIT AWAY FROM ME, MAE! I WANT

BRICK! WHERE'S BRICK! WHERE'S MY

ONLY SON?

MAE [A STEP AFTER BIG MAMA]:

MAMA!

DID SHE SAY 'ONLY' SON?

GOOPER [FOLLOWING BIG MAMA]:

WHAT DOES THAT MAKE ME?

MAE [ABOVE GOOPER]:

A SOBER

RESPONSIBLE MAN WITH FIVE PRECIOUS

CHILDREN--SIX!



BIG MAMA:

I WANT BRICK! BRICK!

BRICK!

MARGARET [A STEP TO BIG MAMA ABOVE

COUCH]:

MAMA, LET ME TELL YOU.

BIG MAMA [PUSHING HER ASIDE]:

NO, NO, LEAVE ME ALONE, YOU'RE NOT MY

BLOOD!

[SHE RUSHES ON TO THE GALLERY.]

GOOPER [TO BIG MAMA ON GALLERY]:

MAMA! I'M YOUR SON! LISTEN TO ME!

MAE:

GOOPER'S YOUR SON, MAMA, HE'S

YOUR FIRST-BORN!

BIG MAMA:

GOOPER NEVER LIKED DADDY!

MAE:

THAT'S NOT TRUE!

REVEREND TOOKER:

I THINK I'D BETTER

SLIP AWAY AT THIS POINT. GOOD NIGHT,

GOOD NIGHT EVERYBODY, AND GOD BLESS

YOU ALL--ON THIS PLACE. [GOES OUT

THROUGH HALL.]

DOCTOR BAUGH:

WELL, BIG MAMA--

BIG MAMA [LEANING AGAINST GOOPER]:  
IT'S ALL A MISTAKE, I KNOW IT'S JUST  
A BAD DREAM.

DOCTOR 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  
HAVIN' 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  
'EM DO, THEY THINK IF THEY DON'T  
ADMIT THEY'RE HAVIN' THE PAIN THEY  
CAN SORT OF ESCAPE TH' FACT OF IT.

[MARGARET WATCHES BRICK.]

GOOPER:

YES, THEY GET SLY ABOUT IT,  
GET REAL SLY ABOUT IT.

MAE:

GOOPER AN' I THINK--

GOOPER:

SHUT UP, MAE!--BIG MAMA, I  
REALLY DO THINK BIG DADDY SHOULD BE  
STARTED ON MORPHINE.

BIG MAMA [PULLING AWAY FROM GOOPER]:

NOBODY'S GOIN' TO GIVE BIG DADDY  
MORPHINE!

DOCTOR BAUGH:

NOW, BIG MAMA, WHEN  
THAT PAIN STRIKES IT'S GOIN' TO  
STRIKE MIGHTY HARD AN' BIG DADDY'S  
GOIN' T'NEED THE NEEDLE TO BEAR IT.

BIG MAMA [TO DR BAUGH]:

I TELL YOU,  
NOBODY'S GOIN' TO GIVE HIM MORPHINE!  
MAE: BIG MAMA, YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE

BIG DADDY SUFFER, Y' KNOW Y'--

DOCTOR BAUGH [CROSSES TO BAR]:

WELL,

I'M LEAVIN' THIS STUFF HERE.

[PUTS PACKET OF MORPHINE, ETC., ON BAR.]

SO IF THERE'S A SUDDEN ATTACK YOU  
WON'T HAVE TO SEND OUT FOR IT.

[BIG MAMA HURRIES TO SIDE OF BAR.]

MAE:

I KNOW HOW TO GIVE A HYPO.

BIG MAMA:

NOBODY'S GOIN' TO GIVE BIG  
DADDY MORPHINE!

GOOPER:

MAE TOOK A COURSE IN NURSIN'  
DURIN' TH' WAR.

MARGARET:

SOMEHOW I DON'T THINK BIG  
DADDY WOULD WANT MAE T'GIVE HIM A  
HYPO.

MAE [TO MARGARET]:

YOU THINK HE'D  
WANT YOU TO DO IT?

DOCTOR BAUGH:

WELL--

GOOPER:

WELL, DOC BAUGH IS GOIN'--

DOCTOR BAUGH:

YES, I GOT TO BE  
GOIN'. WELL, KEEP YOUR CHIN UP, BIG  
MAMA.

GOOPER [AS HE AND MAE FOLLOW DR  
BAUGH INTO THE HALL]:

SHE'S GOIN' TO  
KEEP HER OLE CHIN UP, AREN'T YOU,  
BIG MAMA?

[THEY GO OUT.]

WELL, DOC, WE SURE DO APPRECIATE ALL  
YOU'VE DONE. I'M TELLING YOU, WE'RE  
OBLIGATED--

BIG MAMA:

MARGARET!

MARGARET [MEETING BIG MAMA IN FRONT  
OF WICKER SEAT]:

I'M RIGHT HERE, BIG  
MAMA.

BIG MAMA:

MARGARET, YOU'VE GOT TO  
COOPERATE WITH ME AN' BIG DADDY TO  
STRAIGHTEN BRICK OUT NOW--

GOOPER [RETURNING WITH MAE]:

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:

--BECAUSE IT'LL BREAK BIG  
DADDY'S HEART IF BRICK DON'T PULL  
HIMSELF TOGETHER AN' TAKE HOLD OF  
THINGS HERE.

MAE [OVERHEARING]:

TAKE HOLD OF WHAT  
THINGS, BIG MAMA?

BIG MAMA [SITS IN WICKER CHAIR,  
MARGARET STANDING BEHIND CHAIR]:

THE PLACE.

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 NOT, WOULD  
NEVER, BE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO--

GOOPER: --PUT THIS PLACE IN  
IRRESPONSIBLE HANDS!

BIG MAMA:

BIG DADDY AIN'T GOIN'  
T'PUT TH' PLACE IN ANYBODY'S HANDS,

BIG DADDY IS NOT GOIN' T'DIE! I WANT  
YOU TO GIT THAT INTO YOUR HANDS, ALL  
OF YOU!

[MAE SITS ABOVE BIG MAMA, MARGARET TURNS TO DOOR.]

MAE:

MOMMY, MOMMY, BIG MAMA, WE'RE  
JUST AS HOPEFUL AN' OPTIMISTIC 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:

MAE, WILL Y'PLEASE GET MY  
BRIEFCASE OUT OF OUR ROOM?

MAE:

YES, HONEY.

[RISES, GOES OUT THROUGH HALL.]

MARGARET [TO BRICK ON GALLERY]:

HEAR THEM IN THERE?

GOOPER [STANDS ABOVE BIG MAMA.

LEANING OVER HER]:

BIG MAMA, WHAT  
YOU SAID JUST NOW WAS NOT AT ALL  
TRUE, AN' YOU KNOW IT. I'VE ALWAYS  
LOVED BIG DADDY IN MY OWN QUIET WAY.  
I NEVER MADE A SHOW OF IT. I KNOW

THAT BIG DADDY HAS ALWAYS BEEN FOND  
OF ME IN A QUIET WAY, TOO.

[MAE RETURNS, WITH BRIEFCASE.]

MAE:

HERE'S YOUR BRIEFCASE, GOOPER,  
HONEY.

[HANDS IT TO HIM.]

GOOPER [HANDS BRIEFCASE BACK TO  
MAE]:

THANK YOU. OF CO'USE, 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 HIGHBALL.

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 SINGLE-HANDED!

BIG MAMA:

YOU NEVER HAD T'RUN THIS  
PLACE, BROTHER MAN, WHAT'RE YOU  
TALKIN' ABOUT, AS IF BIG DADDY WAS  
DEAD AN' IN HIS GRAVE, YOU HAD TO  
RUN IT? WHY, YOU JUST HAD T'HELP HIM  
OUT WITH A FEW BUSINESS DETAILS AN'  
HAD YOUR LAW PRACTICE AT THE SAME  
TIME IN MEMPHIS.

MAE:

OH, MOMMY, MOMMY, MOMMY! LET'S  
BE FAIR! WHY, GOOPER HAS GIVEN  
HIMSELF BODY AN' SOUL T'KEEPIN' THIS  
PLACE UP FO' THE PAST FIVE YEARS  
SINCE BIG DADDY'S HEALTH STARTED  
FALLIN'. GOOPER WON'T SAY IT, GOOPER  
NEVER THOUGHT OF IT AS A DUTY, HE  
JUST DID IT. AN' WHAT DID BRICK DO?  
BRICK KEP' LIVIN' IN HIS PAST GLORY  
AT COLLEGE!

[GOOPER PLACES A RESTRAINING HAND ON MAE'S LEG]

GOOPER:

STILL A FOOTBALL PLAYER AT  
TWENTY-SEVEN!

MARGARET [BURSTS IN]:

WHO ARE YOU  
TALKIN' ABOUT NOW? BRICK? A FOOTBALL  
PLAYER? HE ISN'T A FOOTBALL PLAYER  
AN' YOU KNOW IT! BRICK IS A SPORTS  
ANNOUNCER ON TV AN' ONE OF THE BESTKNOWN  
ONES IN THE COUNTRY!

MAE:

I 'M TALKIN' ABOUT WHAT HE WAS!

MARGARET:

WELL, I WISH YOU WOULD  
JUST STOP TALKIN' ABOUT MY HUSBAND!

GOOPER:

LISTEN, MARGARET, I 'VE GOT A  
RIGHT TO DISCUSS MY OWN BROTHER WITH  
OTHER MEMBERS OF MY OWN FAM'LY,  
WHICH DON'T INCLUDE YOU!

[POKES FINGER AT HER; SHE SLAPS HIS FINGER AWAY.]

NOW, WHY DON'T YOU GO ON OUT THERE  
AN' 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!

BRICK [ON LOWER GALLERY]:

THAT'S THE TRUTH!

MARGARET:

THIS IS A DELIBERATE  
CAMPAIGN OF VILIFICATION FOR THE  
MOST DISGUSTING 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! MARGARET, CHILD, COME HERE,  
SIT NEXT TO BIG MAMA.

MARGARET:

PRECIOUS MOMMY.

MAE:

HOW BEAUTIFUL, HOW TOUCHIN'  
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, THAT'S

WHY!

GOOPER:

YOU JEST WON'T LET ME DO  
THIS THE NICE WAY, WILL YUH? 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 AP-PEALIN' TO A SENSE OF COMMON  
DECENCY AN' FAIR PLAY! I'M TELLIN'  
YOU TH' TRUTH--

[CROSSES DOOR TO BRICK ON DR GALLERY.]

I'VE RESENTED BIG DADDY'S PARTIALITY  
TO BRICK EVER SINCE TH' GODDAM DAY  
YOU WERE BORN, SON, AN' TH' WAY I'VE  
BEEN TREATED, LIKE I WAS JUST BARELY  
GOOD ENOUGH TO SPIT ON, AN'  
SOMETIMES NOT EVEN GOOD ENOUGH FOR  
THAT.

[CROSSES BACK THROUGH ROOM TO ABOVE WICKER SEAT.]

BIG DADDY IS DYIN' OF CANCER AN'  
IT'S SPREAD ALL THROUGH HIM AN' IT'S  
ATTACKED ALL HIS VITAL ORGANS  
INCLUDIN' THE KIDNEYS AN' RIGHT NOW  
HE IS SINKIN' INTO UREMIA, AN' YOU  
ALL KNOW WHAT UREMIA IS, IT'S  
POISONIN' OF THE WHOLE SYSTEM DUE TO

TH' FAILURE OF TH' BODY TO ELIMINATE  
ITS POISONS.

MARGARET:

POISONS, POISONS, VENOMOUS  
THOUGHTS AND WORDS! IN HEARTS AND  
MINDS! THAT'S POISONS!

GOOPER:

I'M ASKIN' FOR A SQUARE DEAL  
AN' BY GOD I EXPECT TO GET ONE. BUT  
IF I DON'T GET ONE, IF THERE'S ANY  
PECULIAR SHENANIGANS GOIN' ON AROUND  
HERE BEHIND MY BACK, WELL I'M NOT A  
CORPORATION LAWYER FOR NOTHIN'! I  
KNOW HOW TO PROTECT MY OWN  
INTERESTS.

[RUMBLE OF DISTANT THUNDER.]

BRICK [ENTERING THE ROOM]:

STORM COMIN' UP.

GOOPER:

OH, A LATE ARRIVAL!

MAE:

BEHOLD, THE CONQUERIN' HERO  
COMES!

GOOPER [FOLLOWING BRICK, IMITATING  
HIS LIMP]:

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 TH' BENCH AT THE SUGAR BOWL  
THIS YEAR, BRICK! OR WAS IT THE ROSE  
BOWL THAT HE MADE HIS FAMOUS RUN IN.

[ANOTHER RUMBLE OF THUNDER, SOUND OF WIND RISING.]

MAE:

THE PUNCH BOWL, HONEY, IT WAS  
THE PUNCH BOWL, THE CUT-GLASS PUNCH  
BOWL!

GOOPER:

THAT'S RIGHT! I'M ALWAYS  
GETTIN' THE BOY'S BOWLS MIXED UP!

[PATS BRICK ON THE BUTT.]

MARGARET [RUSHES AT GOOPER, STRIKING  
HIM]:

STOP THAT! YOU STOP THAT!

[THUNDER. | MAE FLAILS AT MARGARET; GOOPER KEEPS THE WOMEN  
APART. LACEY RUNS THROUGH THE LAWN IN A RAINCOAT.]

DAISY AND SOOKEY:

STORM! STORM

COMIN'! STORM! STORM!

LACEY [RUNNING OUT]:

BRIGHTIE, CLOSE

THEM SHUTTERS!

GOOPER [CALLS AFTER LACEY]:

LACEY, PUT THE TOP UP ON MY CADILLAC, WILL

YUH?

LACEY:

YES, SUR, MISTAH POLLITT!

GOOPER:

BIG MAMA, YOU KNOW IT'S

GOIN' TO BE NECESSARY FOR ME T'GO

BACK TO MEMPHIS IN TH' MORNIN'

T'REPRESENT THE PARKER ESTATE IN A

LAWSUIT.

[MAE SITS ON SIDE OF BED, ARRANGES PAPERS SHE REMOVES FROM  
BRIEFCASE.]

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. I THINK HE OUGHT  
TO BE PRESENT WHEN I PRESENT THIS  
PLAN.

MARGARET:

BRICK IS PRESENT, WE'RE  
PRESENT!

GOOPER:

WELL, GOOD. I WILL NOW GIVE  
YOU THIS OUTLINE MY PARTNER, 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  
PLANTUHS 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:

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!

[HE WAVES PAPERS MAE HAS THRUST INTO HIS HAND.]

MARGARET:

YES, I'LL BET IT'S A PLAN!

[THUNDER ROLLS. INTERIOR LIGHTING DIMS.]

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 NO 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:

GOOPER EXPLAINED THAT IT'S JUST  
A PLAN....

BIG MAMA:

I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU GOT  
THERE, JUST PUT IT BACK WHERE IT  
COME 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 THAT BIG DADDY  
ALWAYS SAYS WHEN HE'S DISGUSTED?

[STORM CLOUDS RACE ACROSS SKY.]

BRICK [FROM BAR]:

BIG DADDY SAYS  
'CRAP' WHEN HE IS DISGUSTED.

BIG MAMA [RISING]:

THAT'S RIGHT--  
CRAPPPP! I SAY CRAP TOO, LIKE BIG

DADDY!

[THUNDER ROLLS.]

MAE:

COARSE LANGUAGE DON'T SEEM  
CALLED FOR IN THIS--

GOOPER:

SOMETHIN' IN ME IS DEEPLY  
OUTRAGED BY THIS.

BIG MAMA:

NOBODY'S GOIN' TO DO  
NOTHIN'! TILL BIG DADDY LETS GO OF  
IT, AND MAYBE JUST POSSIBLY NOT--NOT  
EVEN THEN! NO, NOT EVEN THEN!

[THUNDER CLAP. GLASS CRASH, CHILDREN COMMENCE CRYING. MANY  
STORM SOUNDS | BARNYARD ANIMALS IN TERROR, PAPERS  
CRACKLING, SHUTTERS RATTLING. SOOKEY AND DAISY HURRY FROM  
LAWN.

INEXPLICABLY, DAISY HITS TOGETHER TWO LEATHER PILLOWS. THEY  
CRY, 'STORM! STORM!' SOOKEY WAVES A PIECE OF WRAPPING PAPER  
TO COVER LAWN FURNITURE. MAE EXITS TO HALL. STRANGE MAN  
RUNS ACROSS LAWN. | THUNDER ROLLS REPEATEDLY.]

MAE:

SOOKEY, HURRY UP AN' GIT THAT  
PO'CH FU'NITURE COVAHED; WANT TH'  
PAINT TO COME OFF?

GOOPER [YELLS TO LACEY, WHO  
APPEARS]:

LACEY, PUT MAH CAR AWAY!

LACEY:

CAIN'T, MISTAH POLLITT, YOU  
GOT THE KEYS!

GOOPER:

NAW, YOU GOT 'EM, MAN.

[CALLS TO MAE]

WHERE TH' KEYS TO TH' CAR, HONEY?

MAE:

YOU GOT 'EM IN YOUR POCKET!

[DOG HOWLS. DAISY AND SOOKEY SING TO COMFORT CHILDREN. MAE IS HEARD PLACATING THE CHILDREN. STORM FADES AWAY. | DURING THE STORM, MARGARET SITS ON COUCH.]

BIG MAMA:

BRICK! COME HERE, BRICK, I

NEED YOU.

[THUNDER DISTANTLY. CHILDREN WHIMPER. MAE CONSOLES THEM.  
BRICK CROSSES TO RIGHT OF BIG MAMA.]

BIG MAMA:

TONIGHT BRICK LOOKS LIKE  
HE USED TO LOOK WHEN HE WAS A LITTLE  
BOY JUST LIKE HE DID WHEN HE PLAYED  
WILD GAMES IN THE ORCHARD BACK OF  
THE HOUSE AND USED TO COME HOME WHEN  
I HOLLERED MYSELF HOARSE FOR HIM!  
ALL--SWEATY--AND PINK-CHEEKED--AN'  
SLEEPY WITH HIS CURLS SHININ'--

[THUNDER DISTANTLY. CHILDREN WHIMPER OFFSCREEN MAE CONSOLES THEM. DOG HOWLS.]

TIME GOES BY SO FAST. NOTHIN' CAN  
OUTRUN IT. DEATH COMMENCES TOO  
EARLY--ALMOST BEFORE YOU'RE HALFACQUAINTED  
WITH LIFE--YOU MEET WITH  
THE OTHER. OH, YOU KNOW WE JUST GOT  
TO LOVE EACH OTHER, AN' STAY  
TOGETHER ALL OF US JUST AS CLOSE AS  
WE CAN, SPECIALLY NOW THAT SUCH A  
BLACK THING HAS COME AND MOVED INTO  
THIS PLACE WITHOUT INVITATION. 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.... 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.

BIG DADDY [OFF ON GALLERY]:  
LOOKS LIKE THE WIND WAS TAKIN' LIBERTIES  
WITH THIS PLACE.

[LACEY APPEARS IN LAWN AREA; BRIGHTIE AND SMALL APPEAR ON LAWN.]

LACEY:

EVENIN', MR POLLITT.

BRIGHTIE AND SMALL:

EVENIN', CAP'N.

HELLO, CAP'N.

MARGARET:

BIG DADDY'S ON THE

GALL'RY.

BIG DADDY:

STAWM CROSSED TH' RIVER,

LACEY?

LACEY:

GONE TO ARKANSAS, CAP'N.

[BIG MAMA HAS TURNED TOWARD THE HALL DOOR AT THE SOUND OF BIG DADDY'S VOICE ON THE GALLERY. NOW SHE CROSSES TO DOOR ON TO THE GALLERY.]

BIG MAMA:

I CAN'T STAY HERE. HE'LL

SEE SOMETHIN' IN MY EYES.

BIG DADDY [ON UPPER GALLERY, TO THE

BOYS]:

STAWM DONE ANY DAMAGE AROUND

HERE?

BRIGHTIE:

TOOK THE PO'CH OFF OLE

AUNT CRAWLEY'S HOUSE.

BIG DADDY:

OLE AUNT CRAWLEY SHOULD  
OF BEEN SETTIN' ON IT. IT'S TIME FO'  
TH' WIND TO BLOW THAT OLE GIRL AWAY!

[FIELD-HANDS LAUGH, EXIT. BIG DADDY ENTERS ROOM.]

CAN I COME IN?

[PUTS HIS CIGAR IN ASH TRAY ON BAR. | MAE AND GOOPER HURRY  
ALONG THE UPPER GALLERY AND STAND BEHIND BIG DADDY IN HALL  
DOOR.]

MARGARET:

DID THE STORM WAKE YOU UP,

BIG DADDY?

BIG DADDY:

WHICH STAWM ARE YOU  
TALKIN' ABOUT--TH' ONE OUTSIDE OR  
TH' HULLABALLOO IN HERE?

[GOOPER SQUEEZES PAST BIG DADDY.]

GOOPER [CROSSES TOWARD BED, WHERE  
LEGAL PAPERS ARE STREWN]:

'SCUSE ME, SIR...

[MAE TRIES TO SQUEEZE PAST BIG DADDY TO JOIN GOOPER, BUT  
BIG DADDY PUTS HIS ARM FIRMLY AROUND HER.]

BIG DADDY:

I HEARD SOME MIGHTY LOUD  
TALK. SOUNDED LIKE SOMETHIN'  
IMPORTANT WAS BEIN' DISCUSSED. WHAT  
WAS THE POWWOW ABOUT?

MAE [FLUSTERED]:  
WHY--NOTHIN', BIG  
DADDY...

BIG DADDY:  
WHAT IS THAT PREGNANTLOOKIN'  
ENVELOPE YOU'RE PUTTIN' BACK  
IN YOUR BRIEFCASE, GOOPER?  
GOOPER [AT FOOT OF 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 NOTHING!

[TURNS TO 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 SEMI-CIRCLE ABOVE BIG DADDY.]

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:

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 PER-MEATIN' THE  
ATMOSPHERE ABOUT HER WITH A POWERFUL  
AND EXCITIN' ODOUR 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 THE'S NOTHIN'  
WRONG WITH IT!

BIG MAMA:

OH, BIG DADDY!

BIG DADDY:

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 RUTTIN' DECENT!

BIG DADDY:

SO, THE LITTLE BOY  
POINTED AT IT AND SAID, 'WHAT'S  
THAT?' HIS MAM SAID, 'OH, THAT'S  
NOTHIN'!'--HIS PAPA SAID, 'SHE'S  
SPOILED!'

[FIELD-HANDS SING OFF. BIG DADDY CROSSES TO BRICK.]

BIG DADDY:

YOU DIDN'T LAUGH AT THAT  
STORY, BRICK.

[BIG MAMA CRYING. MARGARET GOES TO HER.]

BRICK:

NO, SIR, I DIDN'T LAUGH AT  
THAT STORY.

[BIG MAMA SOBS. BIG DADDY LOOKS TOWARD HER.]

BIG DADDY:

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT  
LONG, THIN WOMAN OVER THERE, LOADED  
WITH DIAMONDS? HEY, WHAT'S-YOURNAME,  
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?

MARGARET [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:

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. AS GOOPER AND MAE SPEAK,  
BIG MAMA HUSHING THEM WITH A GESTURE.]

GOOPER:

MAGGIE, I HATE TO MAKE SUCH  
A CRUDE OBSERVATION, BUT THERE IS  
SOMETHIN' A LITTLE INDECENT ABOUT  
YOUR--

MAE:

LIKE A SLOW-MOTION FOOTBALL  
TACKLE--

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.]

BIG DADDY:

GET UP, GIRL, GET UP OFF  
YOUR KNEES, GIRL.

[BIG DADDY HELPS MARGARET RISE. HE 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:

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!

[EXIT THROUGH DOORS, TO GALLERY.]

BIG MAMA [FOLLOWING]: SWEETHEART,

SWEETHEART, SWEETHEART--CAN I COME

WITH YOU? [EXITS.]

GOOPER:

BRICK, COULD YOU POSSIBLY

SPARE ME ONE SMALL SHOT OF THAT

LIQUOR?

BRICK:

WHY, HELP YOURSELF, GOOPER

BOY.

GOOPER:

I WILL.

MAE:

OF COURSE WE KNOW THAT THIS IS

A LIE!

GOOPER [DRINKS]:

BE STILL, MAE!

MAE: I WON'T BE STILL! I KNOW SHE'S

MADE THIS UP!

GOOPER:

GOD DAMN IT, I SAID TO SHUT

UP!

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?

[OFFSCREEN SONG FINISHES.]

MARGARET:

ONE OF THE BEST

GYNAECOLOGISTS IN THE SOUTH.

GOOPER:

UH-HUH, I SEE--MAY WE HAVE

HIS NAME PLEASE?

MARGARET:

NO, YOU MAY NOT, MISTER--

PROSECUTIN' ATTORNEY!

MAE:

HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY NAME, HE

DOESN'T EXIST!

MARGARET:

HE DOES SO EXIST, AND SO

DOES MY BABY, BRICK'S BABY!

MAE:

YOU CAN'T CONCEIVE A CHILD BY A

MAN THAT WON'T SLEEP WITH YOU UNLESS

YOU THINK YOU'RE--

[SHE FORCES MARGARET ON TO COUCH. BRICK STARTS FOR MAE.]



HE DRINKS ALL THE TIME TO BE ABLE TO  
TOLERATE YOU! SLEEPS ON THE SOFA TO  
KEEP OUT OF CONTACT WITH YOU!

GOOPER:

DON'T TRY TO KID US,

MARGARET--

MAE:

HOW CAN YOU CONCEIVE A CHILD BY  
A MAN THAT WON'T SLEEP WITH YOU? HOW  
CAN YOU CONCEIVE? HOW CAN YOU? HOW  
CAN YOU!

GOOPER [SHARPLY]:

MAE!

BRICK:

MAE, SISTER WOMAN, HOW D'YOU  
KNOW THAT I DON'T SLEEP WITH MAGGIE?

MAE:

WE OCCUPY THE NEXT ROOM AN' TH'  
WALL BETWEEN ISN'T SOUNDPROOF.

BRICK:

OH...

MAE:

WE HEAR THE NIGHTLY PLEADIN'  
AND THE NIGHTLY REFUSAL. SO DON'T  
IMAGINE YOU'RE GOIN' T'PUT A TRICK  
OVER ON US, TO FOOL A DYIN' MAN

WITH--A--

BRICK:

MAE, SISTER WOMAN, NOT  
EVERYBODY MAKES MUCH NOISE ABOUT  
LOVE. OH, I KNOW SOME PEOPLE ARE  
HUFFERS AN' PUFFERS, BUT OTHERS ARE  
SILENT LOVERS.

GOOPER:

THIS TALK IS POINTLESS,  
COMPLETELY.

BRICK:

HOW D'Y' KNOW THAT WE'RE NOT  
SILENT LOVERS? EVEN IF Y'GOT A PEEPHOLE  
DRILLED IN THE WALL, HOW CAN  
Y'TELL IF SOMETIME WHEN GOOPER'S GOT  
BUSINESS IN MEMPHIS AN' YOU'RE  
PLAYIN' SCRABBLE AT THE COUNTRY CLUB  
WITH OTHER EX-QUEENS OF COTTON,  
MAGGIE AND I DON'T COME TO SOME  
TEMPORARY AGREEMENT? HOW DO YOU KNOW  
THAT--?

MAE:

BRICK, I NEVER THOUGHT THAT YOU  
WOULD STOOP TO HER LEVEL, I JUST  
NEVER DREAMED THAT YOU WOULD STOOP  
TO HER LEVEL.

GOOPER:

I DON'T THINK BRICK WILL  
STOOP TO HER LEVEL.

BRICK [SITS WITH MARGARET ON COUCH]:  
WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL? TELL ME YOUR  
LEVEL SO I CAN SINK OR RISE TO IT.

[RISES.]

YOU HEARD WHAT BIG DADDY SAID. THIS  
GIRL HAS LIFE IN HER BODY.

MAE:

THAT IS A LIE!

BRICK:

NO, TRUTH IS SOMETHING  
DESPERATE, AN' SHE'S GOT IT. BELIEVE  
ME, IT'S SOMETHIN' DESPERATE, AN'  
SHE'S GOT IT. AN' NOW IF YOU WILL  
STOP ACTIN' AS IF BRICK POLLITT WAS  
DEAD AN' BURIED, INVISIBLE, NOT  
HEARD, AN' GO ON BACK TO YOUR PEEPHOLE  
IN THE WALL--I'M DRUNK, AND  
SLEEPY--NOT AS ALIVE AS MAGGIE, BUT  
STILL ALIVE....

[POURS DRINK, DRINKS.]

GOOPER [PICKS UP BRIEF CASE FROM  
FOOT OF BED]:  
COME ON, MAE. WE'LL  
LEAVE THESE LOVE BIRDS TOGETHER IN

THEIR NEST.

MAE:

YEAH, NEST OF LICE! LIARS!

GOOPER:

MAE--MAE, YOU JES' GO ON

BACK TO OUR ROOM--

MAE:

LIARS!

[EXITS THROUGH HALL.]

GOOPER [ABOVE MARGARET]:

WE'RE JEST

GOIN' TO WAIT AN' SEE. TIME WILL

TELL. YES, SIR, LITTLE BROTHER,

WE'RE JUST GOIN' TO WAIT AN' SEE!

[EXITS TO HALL. | THE CLOCK STRIKES TWELVE. | MAGGIE AND BRICK EXCHANGE A LOOK. HE DRINKS DEEPLY, PUTS HIS GLASS ON THE BAR. GRADUALLY, HIS EXPRESSION CHANGES. HE UTTERS A SHARP EXHALATION. | THE EXHALATION IS ECHOED BY THE SINGERS, WHO COMMENCE VOCALIZING WITH ' GIMME A COOL DRINK OF WATER FO' I DIE', AND CONTINUE TILL END OF THIS FINAL SCENE.]

MARGARET [AS SHE HEARS BRICK'S

EXHALATION]:

THE CLICK?

[BRICK LOOKS TOWARD THE SINGERS, HAPPILY, ALMOST GRATEFULLY.

HE CROSSES TO BED, PICKS UP HIS PILLOW, AND STARTS TOWARD HEAD OF COUCH. MARGARET SEIZES THE PILLOW FROM HIS GRASP, HOLDING IT CLOSE. BRICK WATCHES HER WITH GROWING ADMIRATION.

SHE MOVES QUICKLY THROWING PILLOW ON TO BED. SHE CROSSES TO

BAR. SHE GRABS ALL THE BOTTLES FROM THE BAR. SHE PITCHES THE BOTTLES, ONE AFTER THE OTHER, OFF THE PLATFORM INTO THE LAWN. BOTTLES BREAK. MARGARET RE-ENTERS THE ROOM, STANDS FACING BRICK.]

ECHO SPRING HAS GONE DRY, AND NO ONE  
BUT ME COULD DRIVE YOU TO TOWN FOR  
MORE.

BRICK:

LACEY WILL GET ME--

MARGARET:

LACEY'S BEEN TOLD NOT TO!

BRICK:

I COULD DRIVE--

MARGARET:

AND YOU LOST YOUR DRIVER'S  
LICENSE! I'D PHONE AHEAD AND HAVE  
YOU STOPPED ON THE HIGHWAY BEFORE  
YOU GOT HALFWAY TO RUBY LIGHTFOOT'S  
GIN MILL. I TOLD A LIE TO BIG DADDY,  
BUT WE CAN MAKE THAT LIE COME TRUE.  
AND THEN I'LL BRING YOU LIQUOR, AND  
WE'LL GET DRUNK TOGETHER, HERE,  
TONIGHT, IN THIS PLACE THAT DEATH  
HAS COME INTO! WHAT DO YOU SAY? WHAT  
DO YOU SAY, BABY?

BRICK:

I ADMIRE YOU, MAGGIE.

[BRICK SITS ON EDGE OF BED. HE LOOKS UP AT THE OVERHEAD LIGHT, THEN AT MARGARET. SHE REACHES FOR THE LIGHT, TURNS IT OUT; THEN SHE KNEELS QUICKLY BESIDE BRICK AT FOOT OF BED.]

MARGARET:

OH, YOU WEAK, BEAUTIFUL  
PEOPLE WHO GIVE UP WITH SUCH GRACE.  
WHAT YOU NEED IS SOMEONE TO TAKE  
HOLD OF YOU--GENTLY, WITH LOVE, AND  
HAND YOUR LIFE BACK TO YOU, LIKE  
SOMETHING GOLD YOU LET GO OF--AND I  
CAN! I'M DETERMINED TO DO IT--AND  
NOTHING'S MORE DETERMINED THAN A CAT  
ON A TIN ROOF--IS THERE? IS THERE,  
BABY?

[SHE TOUCHES HIS CHEEK GENTLY.]

FADE OUT

[CREDITS ON THE BLACK SCREEN STARTS WITH ''DIRECTED BY..'']

[MUSIC: BY THE LIGHT, OF THE SILVERY MOON (INSTRUMENTAL)]

THE END