

## Cat on a Hot Tin Roof - by Tennessee Williams

	Audition Sides	pages		
1	Maggie & Mae	A1 - 36-38	Archery	<a href="#">Richard: read Brick</a>
2	Brick & Maggie	A1 - 38-41	I wonder what Dixie's real name is ► Let go!	
3	Maggie & Big Mama	A1 - 42-49	Big Mama comes thru gallery door ► That's not fair ...	<a href="#">Richard: read Gooper</a>
4	Maggie & Brick, Dixie, Sonny & Trixie	A1 - 61-63	Child burst into the room ► You see ... they gloat	Children
	Children ► Sing Happy Birthday			
5	Gooper, Rev, Big Daddy, Mae, Brick, Maggie	A2 - 65-67	Here they come ► Turn that damn thing off!	Gooper & Rev (gifts to other churches)
6	Big Daddy & Big Mama	A2 - 77-80	Blow out the candles ► wouldn't it be funny	
7	Doc, Goop, Mae, Maggie, Big Mama, Rev	A3 - 143-151	Why are you all surrounding ► to act a little more human	Dr.Baugh
8	Big Daddy & Brick	A2 - 85-87	They listen, do they? ► ... I like to hear it all night	
9	Big Daddy & Brick	A2 - 125-128	But Skipper ► except you!	
10	Maggie - Monologue	A1 - 50	Our sex life didn't just peter out ...	
	Servant			

# #1 – MAGGIE & MAE

## CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

---

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.

36

## ACT ONE

---

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 *spabklubs!* 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!

37

[*She reenters.*]

But Mae? Why did y'give dawgs' names to all your kiddies?

MAE:  
Dogs' names?

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

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—

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

Intermission is over! See ya later!

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

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

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

BRICK:  
I can't get trousers on over this plaster cast.

MARGARET:  
Yes, you can, I'll help you.

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

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

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

MARGARET:  
*Thank* you, thank you so *much!*

BRICK:  
Don't mention it.

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

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

## #2 – BRICK & MAGGIE

### CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

---

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

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

38

### ACT ONE

---

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

BRICK:  
I can't get trousers on over this plaster cast.

MARGARET:  
Yes, you can, I'll help you.

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

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

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

MARGARET:  
*Thank* you, thank you so *much!*

BRICK:  
Don't mention it.

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

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

39

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

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

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

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

MARGARET:  
Oh, yes!

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

MARGARET:  
Do what?

BRICK:  
Take a lover!

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

*[She rushes to hall door, opens it, listens.]*

The concert is still going on! Bravo, no-necks, bravo!

*[She slams and locks door fiercely.]*

BRICK:  
What did you lock the door for?

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

BRICK:  
You know better, Maggie.

ACT ONE

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*

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

*mouth, then bursts into shrill, almost hysterical laughter. He remains grave for a moment, then grins and puts the chair down.*

[Big Mama calls through closed door.]

BIG MAMA:  
Son? Son? Son?

BRICK:  
What is it, Big Mama?

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

[*She rattles the knob.*]

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

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

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

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

MARGARET:  
Big Mama?

[*Big Mama appears through the opposite gallery doors behind Margaret, buffing and puffing like an old bulldog. She is a short, stout woman; her sixty years and 170 pounds*

ACT ONE

*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—

### #3 – BIG MAMA & MAGGIE

ACT ONE

---

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—

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

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

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

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

GOOPER [*shouting up the stairs*]:  
Hey, hey, Big Mama, Betsy an' Hugh got to go, waitin' t' tell yuh g'by!

BIG MAMA:  
Tell 'em to hold their hawses, I'll be right down in a jiffy!

GOOPER:  
Yes ma'am!

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

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

[*There is a muffled answer.*]

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

MARGARET:  
He can hear you, Big Mama.

BIG MAMA:  
Then why don't he say something? God Almighty, a piece of

ACT ONE

news like that should make him shout. It made *me* shout, I can tell you. I shouted and sobbed and fell right down on my knees!—Look!

[*She pulls up her skirt.*]

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

[*She laughs—she always laughs like hell at herself.*]

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

[*Facing bathroom again, she continues:*]

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

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

GOOPER:  
Big Mama!

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

MARGARET:  
Well, he broke it, Big Mama.

BIG MAMA:  
I know he broke it.

[*A phone is ringing in hall. A Negro voice answers: "Mistuh Polly's residence."*]



I mean does it hurt him much still.

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

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

BIG MAMA:  
Awright, Sookey.

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

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

MARGARET:  
Brick, don't!

[*Big Mama raises her voice to a bellow.*]

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

[*She appears at the hall door and calls to Margaret.*]

—Maggie, come out here and talk to that fool on the phone. I'm shouted breathless!

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

Ochsner Clinic and what Big Daddy has is a spastic colon. Yes. Spastic colon, Miss Sally. That's right, spastic colon. *G'bye, Miss 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.*]

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

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

BIG MAMA [*closing closet door on discarded clothes*]:  
*Miss Sally sure is a case! Big Daddy says she's always got her hand out fo' something. He's not mistaken. That poor ole thing always has her hand out fo' somethin'. I don't think Big Daddy gives her as much as he should.*

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

BIG MAMA [*shouting*]:  
I'm comin'!

[*She starts out. At the hall door, turns and jerks a fore-finger, first toward the bathroom door, then toward the liquor cabinet, meaning: "Has Brick been drinking?" Mar-*

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

*garet pretends not to understand, cocks her head and raises her brows as if the pantomimic performance was completely mystifying to her.*

[*Big Mama rushes back to Margaret.*]

Shoot! Stop playin' so dumb!—I mean has he been drinkin' that stuff much yet?

MARGARET [*with a little laugh*]:  
Oh! I think he had a highball after supper.

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

MARGARET [*crying out*]:  
THAT'S NOT FAIR!

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

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

BIG MAMA:  
Because I know that—

MARGARET:  
*It works both ways!*

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

GOOPER:  
Come on, Big Mama!

[*Gooper has called her downstairs and she has rushed to*

ACT ONE

*the door on the line above. She turns at the door and points at the bed.*]

—When a marriage goes on the rocks, the rocks are *there*, right *there!*

MARGARET:  
*That's—*

[*Big Mama has swept out of the room and slammed the door.*]

—not—*fair . . .*

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

BRICK:  
Has Big Mama gone?

MARGARET:  
She's gone.

[*He opens the bathroom door and hobbles 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:*]

*CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF*

**#4 – BRICK & MAGGIE - CHILDREN**

All three children will read the same scene *ACT ONE*

*[A little girl, Dixie, bursts into the room, wearing an Indian war bonnet and firing a cap pistol at Margaret and shouting: "Bang, bang, bang!"*

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

Little girl, your mother or someone should teach you—*[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 cruelest thing]*:  
You're *jealous!*—You're just jealous because you can't have babies!

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

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

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

*[Pause. Voices approach on the stairs.]*

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

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

BRICK:  
Yes. I hear you, Maggie.

*[His attention returns to her inflamed face.]*

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

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

*[She wheels about to face the hall door.]*

MAE *[off stage left]*:  
Come on, Big Daddy. We're all goin' up to Brick's room.

*[From off stage left, voices: Reverend Tooker, Doctor Baugh, Mae.]*

MARGARET:  
*Here they come!*

*[The lights dim.]*

CURTAIN

## ACT TWO

---

*There is no lapse of time. Margaret and Brick are in the same positions they held at the end of Act I.*

---

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.]*

GOOPER:  
I read in the *Register* that you're getting a new memorial window.

*[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.

MARGARET:  
Big Daddy.

BIG DADDY:  
Well, Brick.

BRICK:  
Hello Big Daddy.—Congratulations!

BIG DADDY:  
—Crap. . . .

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.

MAE [*almost religiously*]:  
—Let's see now, they've had their *tyyy*-phoid 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?

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.*

MARGARET [*overlapping a bit*]:  
Turn on the hi-fi, Brick! Let's have some music t' start off th' party with!

BRICK:  
You turn it on, Maggie.

[*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 dam thing off!

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

BIG DADDY:  
Quiet!

BIG MAMA:  
—*nasty* in front of Preacher and—

BIG DADDY:  
*QUIET!*—I ast you, Brick, if you was cuttin' you'self 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—'sthat 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.

#6 – BIG DADDY & BIG MAMA

ACT TWO

→ BIG MAMA *[quickly]*:  
Big Daddy, blow out the candles on your birthday cake!

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?

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 blazing 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:  
Fuck 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 fuck 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



CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

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 onto 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 blazing birthday cake.*

*After some moments, Brick hobbles 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.

ACT TWO

*[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 MAMA:

Why're you all *surroundin'* me—like this? Why're you all starin' at me like this an' makin' signs at each other?

[*Reverend Tooker steps back startled.*]

MAE:

Calm yourself, Big Mama.

BIG MAMA:

Calm you'self, *you'self*, Sister Woman. How could I calm 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 coughs and takes a center position.*]

GOOPER:

Now, Doc Baugh.

MAE:

Doc Baugh?

GOOPER:

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

MAE [*eagerly*]:

—on Big Daddy's condition!

GOOPER:

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

DOCTOR BAUGH:

Well . . .

BIG MAMA [*terrified, rising*]:

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

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

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

DOCTOR BAUGH [after a pause, uncomfortably]:  
Yes?—Well—

BIG MAMA:  
I!!!—want to—knowwww . . .

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

Somebody must be lyin'!—I want to know!

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

MARGARET:  
Brick, go sit with Big Mama.

BIG MAMA:  
What is it, what is it?

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

GOOPER:  
It's one of the best in the country.

MAE:  
It's THE best in the country—bar none!

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

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

BIG MAMA:  
Sure of what, sure of what, sure of—what?—what?

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

MAE:  
Mommy, be a brave girl!

BRICK [in the doorway, softly]:  
"By the light, by the light, Of the sil-ve-ry mo-oo-n . . ."

GOOPER:  
Shut up!—Brick.

BRICK:  
Sorry . . .

[He wanders out on the gallery.]

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

BIG MAMA:  
Growth? You told Big Daddy—

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

DOCTOR BAUGH:  
Now wait.

BIG MAMA [*fiercely*]:  
You told me and Big Daddy there wasn't a thing wrong with him but—

MAE:  
Big Mama, they always—

GOOPER:  
Let Doc Baugh talk, will yuh?

BIG MAMA:  
—little spastic condition of—

[*Her breath gives out in a sob.*]

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

[*Pause*]

BIG MAMA:  
—Cancer?! Cancer?!

[*Doctor Baugh nods gravely. Big Mama gives a long gasping cry.*]

MAE AND GOOPER:  
Now, now, now, Big Mama, you had to know . . .

BIG MAMA:  
WHY DIDN'T THEY CUT IT OUT OF HIM? HANH?  
HANH?

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

ACT THREE

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

GOOPER:  
A surgical risk.

MAE:  
—Uh-huh . . .

[*Big Mama draws a breath like a dying gasp.*]

REVEREND TOOKER:  
Tch, tch, tch, tch, tch!

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

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

BIG MAMA:  
*Git away from me, git away from me, Mae!*

[*She rises abruptly.*]

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

MAE:  
Mama! Did she say "only son"?

GOOPER:  
What does that make *me*?

MAE:  
A sober responsible man with five precious children!—*Six!*

BIG MAMA:  
I want Brick to tell me! Brick! Brick!

MARGARET [*rising from her reflections in a corner*]:  
Brick was so upset he went back out.

**CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF**

BIG MAMA:  
*Brick!*

MARGARET:  
Mama, let *me* tell you!

BIG MAMA:  
No, no, leave me alone, you're not my blood!

GOOPER:  
*Mama, I'm your son! Listen to me!*

MAE:  
Gooper's your son, he's your first-born!

BIG MAMA:  
Gooper never liked Daddy.

MAE [*as if terribly shocked*]:  
*That's not TRUE!*

[*There is a pause. The minister coughs and rises.*]

REVEREND TOOKER [*to Mae*]:  
I think I'd better slip away at this point.

[*Discreetly*]

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

[*He slips out.*]

[*Mae coughs and points at Big Mama.*]

GOOPER:  
Well, Big Mama . . .  
[*He sighs.*]

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

**ACT THREE**

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 having some pain but won't admit that he has it.

BIG MAMA:  
Just a dream, a bad dream.

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

GOOPER [*with relish*]:  
Yes, they get sly about it, they get real sly about it.

MAE:  
Gooper and I think—

GOOPER:  
Shut up, Mae! Big Mama, I think—Big Daddy ought to be started on morphine.

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

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

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

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

MAE:

Big Mama, you don't want to see Big Daddy suffer, you know you—

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

DOCTOR BAUGH [*placing a package on the table*]:

I'm leaving this stuff here, so if there's a sudden attack you all won't have to send out for it.

MAE:

I know how to give a hypo.

BIG MAMA:

Nobody's gonna give Big Daddy morphine.

GOOPER:

Mae took a course in nursing during the war.

MARGARET:

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

MAE:

You think he'd want *you* to do it?

DOCTOR BAUGH:

Well...

[*Doctor Baugh rises.*]

GOOPER:

Doctor Baugh is goin'.

DOCTOR BAUGH:

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

GOOPER [*with jocular*]:

She's gonna keep *both* chins up, aren't you, Big Mama?

[*Big Mama sobs.*]

Now stop that, Big Mama.

150

ACT THREE

GOOPER [*at the door with Doctor Baugh*]:

Well, Doc, we sure do appreciate all you done. I'm telling you, we're surely obligated to you for—

[*Doctor Baugh has gone out without a glance at him.*]

—I guess that doctor has got a lot on his mind but it wouldn't hurt him to act a little more human...

[*Big Mama sobs.*]

Now be a brave girl, Mommy.

BIG MAMA:

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

GOOPER:

Mama, those tests are infallible!

BIG MAMA:

Why are you so determined to see your father daid?

MAE:

Big Mama!

MARGARET [*gently*]:

I know what Big Mama means.

MAE [*fiercely*]:

Oh, do you?

MARGARET [*quietly and very sadly*]:

Yes, I think I do.

MAE:

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

MARGARET:

Understanding is needed on this place.

151

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?

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

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 onto. A man that drinks is throwing his life away. Don't do it, hold onto your life. There's nothing else to hold onto. . . .

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?

ACT TWO

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*



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.]*

GOOPER *[off stage]*:  
Hello.

*[As if it reminded him of something, Brick glances suddenly toward the sound and says:]*

BRICK:  
Yes!—I left out a long-distance call which I had from Skipper—

GOOPER:  
Speaking, go ahead.

BRICK:  
—In which he made a drunken confession to me and on which I hung up!

GOOPER:  
No.

BRICK:  
—Last time we spoke to each other in our lives . . .

GOOPER:  
No, sir.

BIG DADDY:  
You musta said something to him before you hung up.

BRICK:  
What could I say to him?

BIG DADDY:  
Anything. Something.

BRICK:  
Nothing.

BIG DADDY:  
Just hung up?

BRICK:  
Just hung up.

BIG DADDY:  
Uh-huh. 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!

**CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF**

BRICK:

How about these birthday congratulations, these many, many happy returns of the day, when ev'rybody knows there won't be any except you!

[*Gooper, who 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 realized that he has made a shocking disclosure. He hobbles a few paces, then freezes, and without looking at his father's shocked face, says:*]

Let's, let's—go out, now, and—watch the fireworks. Come on, Big Daddy.

[*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?

**ACT TWO**

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. . . .

## #10 – MAGGIE

### CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF

---

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!