BRICK, BIG MAMA, MAE, GOOPER, DOC, MAGGIE

BRICK:
I wish I didn't have to, Big Mama, but I'm still waiting for that click in my head which makes it all smooth out!

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

MARGARET [*at same time*]:
Brick, go sit with Big Mama!

BIG MAMA:
I just cain't staiiiiii-nnnnnnnd-it . . .

[*She sobs.*]

MAE:
Now that we're all assembled—

GOOPER:
We kin talk . . .

BIG MAMA:
Breaks my heart . . .

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

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

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

[*Brick hobbles to the gallery door; leans there as if waiting.*]

[*Mae sits beside Big Mama, while Gooper moves in front and sits on the end of the couch, facing her. Reverend Tooker moves nervously into the space between them; on*

the other side, Doctor Baugh stands looking at nothing in particular and lights a cigar. Margaret turns away.]

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

[*Reverend Tooker steps back startled.*]

MAE:
Calm yourself, Big Mama.

BIG MAMA:
Calm you'self, *you'self,* Sister Woman. How could I calm 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—*knowwwwww . . .*

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

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

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

MARGARET:
Brick, go sit with Big Mama.

BIG MAMA:
What is it, what is it?

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

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—

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.

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.