**SAMPLE ONE**

**PASSAGE ONE**

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!

**PASSAGE TWO**

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 hobbles 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 admired him in spite of his coarseness, his four-letter words and so forth.

**PASSAGE THREE**

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

MAE: Mommy, Mommy, Big Mama, we're just as hopeful an' 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: Eventualities have to be considered and now's the time.... Mae, will you please get my briefcase out of our room?

MAE: Yes, honey. [She rises and goes out through the hall door.]

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

MAE: Here's your briefcase, Gooper, honey.

GOOPER [handing the briefcase back to her]: Thank you----Of cou'se, 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 singlehanded. [Margaret has gone out on to the gallery, and can be heard calling softly to Brick.]

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

MAE: Oh, Mommy, Mommy, Big Mommy! Let's be fair! Why, Gooper has given himself body and soul to keeping this place up for the past five years since Big Daddy's health started failing. Gooper won't say it, Gooper never thought of it as a duty, he just did it. And what did Brick do? Brick kept living in his past glory at college! Still a football player at twenty-seven!

**SAMPLE TWO**

**PASSAGE ONE**

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' team-mates 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!

**PASSAGE TWO**

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 downstage 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—

**PASSAGE THREE**

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

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

MAE: You can't conceive a child by a man that won't sleep with you unless you think you're-- [Brick has turned on the phonograph. A scat song cuts Mae's speech.]

GOOPER: Turn that off! MAE: We know it's a lie because we hear you in here; he won't sleep with you, we hear you! So don't imagine you're going to put a trick over on us, to fool a dying man with a-- [A long drawn cry of agony and rage fills the house. Margaret turns phonograph down to a whisper. | The cry is repeated.]

MAE [awed]: Did you hear that, Gooper, did you hear that?

GOOPER: Sounds like the pain has struck.

MAE: Go see, Gooper!

GOOPER: Come along and leave these love birds together in their nest! [He goes out first, Mae follows but turns at the door, contorting her face and hissing at Margaret.]

MAE: Liar! [She slams the door. MARGARET exhales with relief and moves a little unsteadily to catch hold of Brick's arm.]

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

BRICK: OK, Maggie.

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

BRICK: --It hasn't happened yet.

MARGARET: What? BRICK: The click....

MARGARET: --the click in your head that makes you peaceful, honey?

BRICK: Uh-huh. It hasn't happened.... I've got to make it happen before I can sleep....

MARGARET: --I--know what you--mean....

BRICK: Give me that pillow in the big chair, Maggie.

MARGARET: I'll put it on the bed for you.

BRICK: No, put it on the sofa, where I sleep.

MARGARET: Not tonight, Brick.

BRICK: I want it on the sofa. That's where I sleep.

**SAMPLE THREE**

**PASSAGE ONE**

MARGARET: 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 ten-cent beer?---Mae an' Gooper are plannin' to freeze us out of Big Daddy's estate because you drink and I'm childless. But we can defeat that plan. We're going to defeat that plan!---Brick, y'know, I've been so God damn disgustingly poor 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.]

**PASSAGE TWO**

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 sittin' in the middle of a big piece of land, Big Daddy, twentyeight 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.

**PASSAGE THREE**

MAE: Sit down with me, Big Mama.

GOOPER [at door with Dr Baugh]: Well, Doc, we sure do appreciate all you done. I'm telling you, we're surely obligated to you for-- [Dr Baugh has gone out without a glance at him.]

GOOPER: --I guess that doctor has got a lot on his mind but it wouldn't hurt him to act a little more human.... [Big Mama sobs.] Now be a brave girl, Mommy.

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

GOOPER: Mama, those tests are infallible!

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

MAE: Big Mama!

MARGARET [gently]: I know what Big Mama means.

MAE [fiercely]: Oh, do you?

MARGARET [quietly and very sadly]: Yes, I think I do.

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

MARGARET: Understanding is needed on this place.

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

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

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

MAE: Take hold of what things, Big Mama?

BIG MAMA: The place. [There is a quick violent look between Mae and Gooper.]