

Margaret Monologues

#1

Did anyone ever tell you that you're an ass-aching Puritan, Brick? I think it's mighty fine that the 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) Yes, you should of been at that supper-table, Baby. Y'know, Big Daddy, bless his ole sweet soul, he's the dearest ole thing in the whole 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! And the no-neck monsters were ranged around the table, some in high chairs and 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! – 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!

#2

She's gone.

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! How high my body stays on me!--Nothing has fallen on me--not a fraction--

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!

#3

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--merciful arrow!

BIG DADDY Monologues

#1(to BIG MOMMA) 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!

#2 (To BRICK) Y'know how much I'm worth? Guess, Brick! Guess how much I'm worth! 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! 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. 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...

3 (to BRICK) —Concentrate, but you can't because your brain's all soaked with liquor, is

that the trouble? Wet brain! 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!--Pretenses! 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?

BIG MOMMA Monologue

1

(To DR BAUGH)

In my day they had what they call the Keeley cure for heavy drinkers. But now I understand they just take some kind of tablets, they call them 'Annie Bust' tablets. But 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 and then they called the ambulance and give him another big, big dose of it at the hospital and that and all of the alcohol in his system fo' months an months an' months just proved too much for his heart.... I'm scared of needles! I'm more scared of a needle than the knife.... I think more people have been needled out of this world than- [She stops short and wheels about.] OH!--here's Brick! My precious baby-

#2

Now you listen to me, all of you, you listen here! They's not goin' to be any more catty talk in my house! And Gooper, you put that away before I grab it out of your hand and tear it right up! I don't know what the hell's in it, and I don't want to know what the hell's in it. I'm talkin' in Big Daddy's language now; I'm his wife, not his widow, I'm still his wife! And I'm talkin' to you in his language an'--

I don't care about your plan, what you got there. Just put it back where it came from, an' don't let me see it again, not even the outside of the envelope of it! Is that understood? Basis! Plan! Preliminary! Design! I say--what is it Big Daddy always says when he's disgusted? That's right--CRAP! I say CRAP too, like Big Daddy! Nobody's goin' to take nothin'!--till Big Daddy lets go of it, and maybe, just possibly, not--not even then! No, not even then! Tonight Brick looks like he used to look when he was a little boy, just like he did when he played wild games and used to come home all sweaty and pink-cheeked and sleepy, with his--red curls shining... Time goes by so fast. Nothin' can outrun it. Death commences too early--almost before you're half-acquainted 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, especially now that such a black thing has come and moved into this place without invitation.

Brick, you hear me, don't you?

GOOPER Monologue

GOOPER: You jest won't let me do this in a nice way, will yah? Aw right--Mae and I have five kids with another one coming! I don't give a goddam if Big Daddy likes me or don't like me or did or never did or will or will never! I'm just appealing to a sense of common decency and fair play. I'll tell you the truth. I've resented Big Daddy's partiality to Brick ever since Brick was born, and the way I've been treated like I was just barely good enough to spit on and sometimes not even good enough for that. Big Daddy is dying

of cancer, and it's spread all through him and it's attacking all his vital organs including the kidneys and right now he is sinking into uremia, and you all know what uremia is, it's

poisoning of the whole system due to the failure of the body to eliminate its poisons.

I am asking for a square deal, and I expect to get one. But if I don't get one, if there's any peculiar shenanigans going on around here behind my back, or before me, well, I'm not a corporation lawyer for nothing I know how to protect my own interests.--OH! A late arrival!

[Brick enters from the gallery]

BRICK Monologues

#1BRICK [freeing himself from his father's hold]: Big Daddy, you shock me, Big Daddy, you, you--shock me! Talkin' so--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 --North Africa, last I heard!

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—Fairies....

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--It was a pure an' true thing an' that's not normal.

#2 BRICK 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.

Uh-huh. Maggie declares that Skipper and I went into pro-football after we left 'Ole Miss' because we were scared to grow up...

--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.... Maggie was great in bed. Great! the greatest!

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! --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?

MAE scene

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.

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

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

GOOPER: Let's be realistic--

MAE: --Big Daddy would never, would never, be foolish enough to--

GOOPER: --put this place in irresponsible hands!

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

MAE: Mommy, Mommy, Big Mama, we're just as hopeful an' 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.

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

GOOPER: 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!

MARGARET [returning alone]: Who are you talking about, now? Brick? A football player? He isn't a football player and you know it. Brick is a sports announcer on TV and

one of the best-known ones in the country!

MAE: I'm talking about what he was.

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

CHILDREN Scene

Maggie & Brick, Dixie, Sonny & Trixie

[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:]

MARGARET: 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.]

DOCTOR BAUGH Monologue

Well-- I never have seen a more thorough examination than Big Daddy Pollitt was given in all my experience with the Ochsner Clinic. Of course they were ninety-nine and nine-tenths per cent sure before they even started.

But now, you see, Big Mama, they cut a piece off this growth, a specimen of the tissue and--Now wait. Yes we told him there was nothing wrong with him. 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.... Involved too much, Big Mama, too many organs affected.

Yes, it's gone past the knife.

Well, Big Mama.... We're gonna keep Big Daddy as comfortable as we can. Yes, he's in denials. 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. 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.

[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.

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