

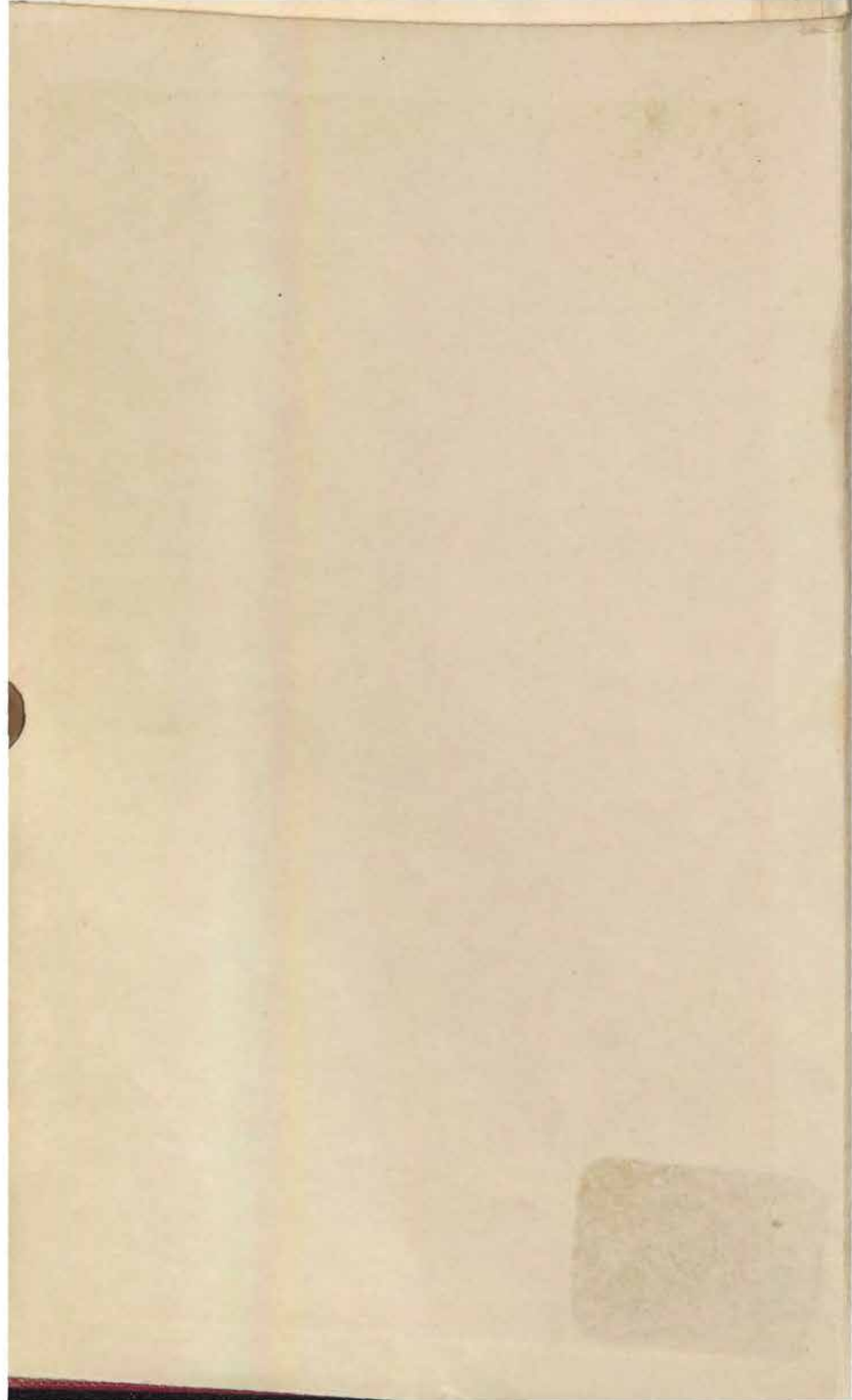
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BABY DOLL



# *Baby Doll*

THE SCRIPT FOR THE FILM BY

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

LONDON  
SECKER & Warburg  
1957

812-52  
WIL-J7

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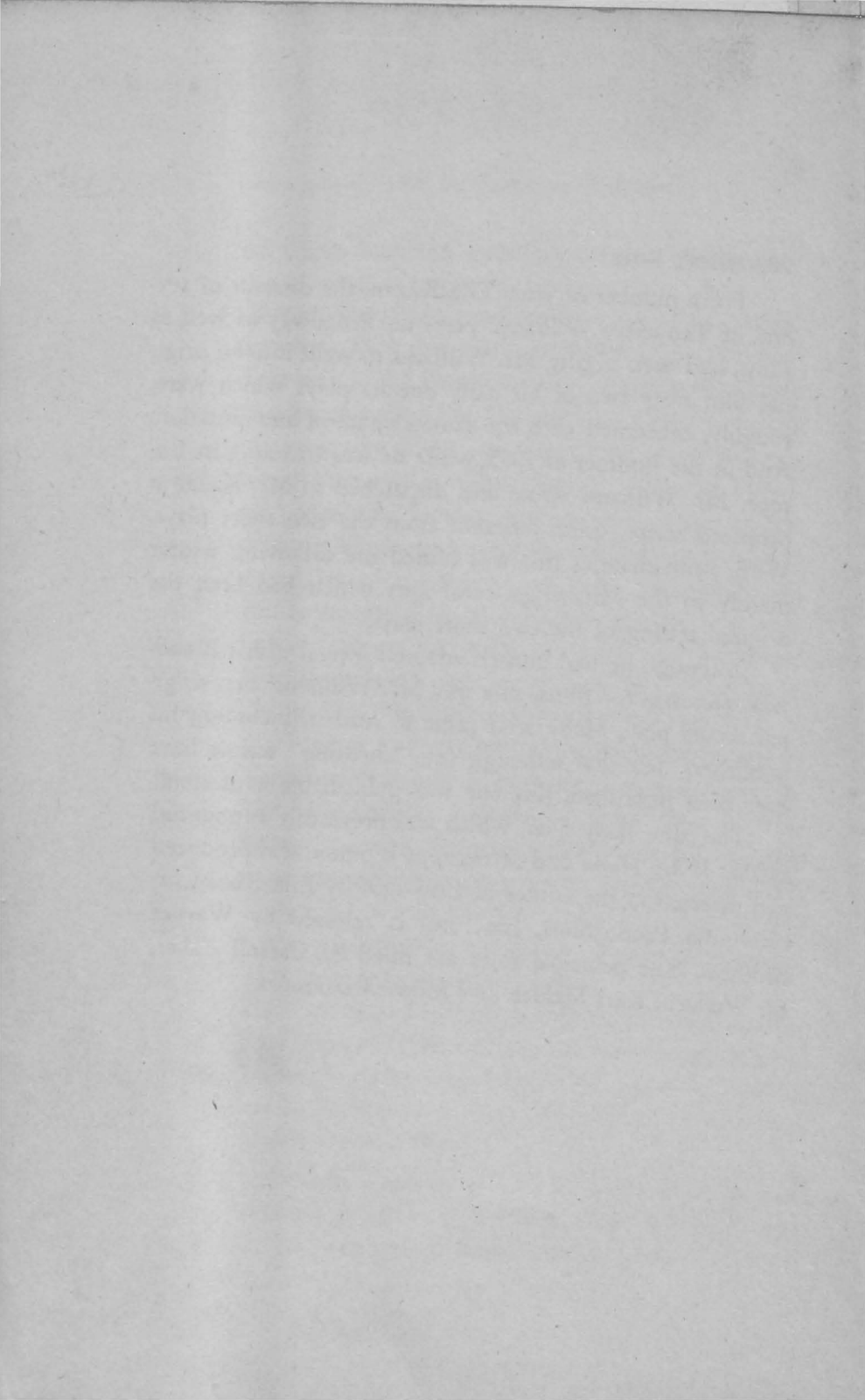
PUBLISHER'S NOTE:

For a number of years Elia Kazan, the director of several of Tennessee Williams' plays on Broadway as well as films, had been urging Mr. Williams to weld into an original film story two of his early one-act plays which were, roughly, concerned with the same characters and situation. And in the summer of 1955, while he was traveling in Europe, Mr. Williams wrote and dispatched to Mr. Kazan a proposed script, quite different from the two short plays. With some changes this was filmed the following winter mainly in the Mississippi rural area which had been the original setting of the two short plays.

Although he had himself adapted several of his Broadway successes for films, this was Mr. Williams' first original screen play. Many who came to read it, including his publishers, felt that although few "shooting" scripts have ever been published, this one was publishable as it stood.

The film, *Baby Doll*, which was previously announced as *The Whip Hand* and *Mississippi Woman*, was produced and directed in the winter of 1955-1956 by Elia Kazan for Newtown Productions, Inc., and is released by Warner Brothers. The principal roles are filled by Carroll Baker, Eli Wallach, Karl Malden and Mildred Dunnock.





1]

INTERIOR. DAY.

*A voluptuous girl, under twenty, is asleep on a bed, with the covers thrown off. This is BABY DOLL MEIGHAN, ARCHIE LEE's virgin wife. A sound is disturbing her sleep, a steady sound, furtive as a mouse scratching, she stirs, it stops, she settles again, it starts again. Then she wakes, without moving, her back to that part of the wall from which the sound comes.*

2]

INTERIOR. DAY. CLOSE SHOT. BABY DOLL.

*She is a little frightened of what sounds like a mouse in the woodwork and still doesn't sound like a mouse in the woodwork. Then a crafty look.*

3]

INTERIOR. DAY. FULL SHOT.

*She gets up, as the sound is continuing, and moves stealthily out of her room.*

4]

HALL. DAY. FULL SHOT.

*She comes out of her room and just as stealthily opens the door to an adjoining room and peeks in.*

5]

CLOSE SHOT. BABY DOLL.

*Astonished and angry at what she sees.*

6]

WHAT SHE SEES. ARCHIE LEE MEIGHAN.

*He is crouched over a section of broken plaster in the wall, enlarging a space between exposed boards with a penknife. Unshaven, black jowled, in sweaty pajamas. On the bed table behind him is a half-empty bottle of liquor, an old alarm clock, ticking away, a magazine called *Spicy Fiction* and a tube of ointment. After a moment he removes the knife and bends to peer through the enlarged crack.*

7]

CLOSE SHOT. BABY DOLL.

BABY DOLL:

Archie Lee. You're a mess.

8]

ARCHIE LEE.

*He recovers.*

9]

BABY DOLL.

BABY DOLL:

Y'know what they call such people? Peepin' Toms!

10]

FULL SHOT. ARCHIE LEE'S BEDROOM.

ARCHIE LEE:

Come in here, I want to talk to you.

BABY DOLL:

I know what you're going to say, but you can save your breath.

ARCHIE LEE:

*(Interrupting)*

We made an agreement . . .

BABY DOLL:

You promised my daddy that you would leave me alone till I was ready for marriage. . . .

ARCHIE:

Well?

BABY DOLL:

Well, I'm not ready for it yet. . . .

ARCHIE:

And I'm going crazy. . . .

BABY DOLL:

Well, you can just wait. . . .

ARCHIE:

We made an agreement that when you was twenty years old we could be man and wife in more than just in name only.

BABY DOLL:

Well, I won't be twenty till November the seventh. . . .

ARCHIE:

Which is the day after tomorrow!

BABY DOLL:

How about your side of that agreement—that you'd take good care of me? GOOD CARE OF ME! Do you remember that?! Now the Ideal Pay As You Go Plan Furniture Company is threatening to remove the furniture from this house. And every time I bring that up you walk away. . . .

ARCHIE:

Just going to the window to get a breath of air. . . .

BABY DOLL:

Now I'm telling you that if the Ideal Pay As You Go Plan Furniture Company takes those five complete sets of furniture out of this house then the understanding between us will be canceled. Completely!

11]

ARCHIE LEE. AT WINDOW.

*He is listening. We hear the distant sound of the Syndicate Cotton Gin. Like a gigantic distant throbbing heart-beat. ARCHIE LEE puts the window down. He crosses to the mirror, dolefully considers his appearance.*

BABY DOLL:

Yeah, just look at yourself! You're not exactly a young girl's dream come true, Archie Lee Meighan.

*The phone rings downstairs. This sound is instantly followed by an outcry even higher and shriller.*



BABY DOLL:

Aunt Rose Comfort screams ev'ry time the phone rings.

ARCHIE:

What does she do a damn fool thing like that for?

*The phone rings again. AUNT ROSE COMFORT screams downstairs. The scream is followed by high breathless laughter. These sounds are downstairs. Archie Lee exits.*

BABY DOLL:

She says a phone ringing scares her.

12]

HALL.

*ARCHIE lumbers over to a staircase, much too grand for the present style of the house, and shouts down to the old woman below.*

ARCHIE:

Aunt Rose Comfort, why don't you answer that phone?

13]

DOWNSTAIRS HALL.

*AUNT ROSE comes out of the kitchen and walks towards the hall telephone, withered hand to her breast.*

AUNT ROSE:

I cain't catch m'breath, Archie Lee. Phone give me such a fright.

ARCHIE:

*(From above)*

Answer it.

*She has recovered some now and gingerly lifts the receiver.*

AUNT ROSE:

Hello? This is Miss Rose Comfort McCorkle speaking. No, the lady of the house is Mrs. Archie Lee Meighan, who is the daughter of my brother that passed away . . .

*ARCHIE LEE is hurrying down the stairs.*

ARCHIE:

They don't wanta know that! Who in hell is it talking and what do they want?

AUNT ROSE:

I'm hard of hearing. Could you speak louder, please? The what? The Ideal Pay As—

*With amazing, if elephantine, speed, ARCHIE snatches the phone from the old woman.*

ARCHIE:

Gi'me that damn phone. An' close the door.

*The old woman utters her breathless cackle and backs against the door. ARCHIE speaks in a hoarse whisper.*

ARCHIE:

Now what is this? Aw. Uh-huh. Today!? Aw. You gotta gi'me more time. Yeah, well you see I had a terrible setback in business lately. The Syndicate Plantation built their own cotton gin and're ginnin' out their own cotton, now, so I lost their trade and it's gonna take me a while to recover from that. . . .

*(Suddenly)*

Then TAKE IT OUT! TAKE IT OUT! Come and get th' damn stuff. And you'll never get my business again! Never!

*They have hung up on him. He stands there—a man in tough trouble. Then abruptly starts massaging his exhausted head of hair.*

AUNT ROSE:

*(Timidly)*

Archie Lee, honey, you all aren't going to lose your furniture, are you?

ARCHIE:

*(Hoarse whisper)*

Will you shut up and git on back in the kitchen and don't speak a word that you heard on the phone, if you heard a word, to my wife! And don't holler no more in this house, and don't cackle no more in it either, or by God I'll pack you up and haul you off to th' county home at Sunset.

AUNT ROSE:

What did you say, Archie Lee, did you say something to me?

ARCHIE:

Yeah, I said shoot.

*He starts upstairs.*

AUNT ROSE *cackles uneasily and enters the kitchen. Suddenly, we hear another scream from her. We pan with her, and reveal OLD FUSSY, the hen, on top of the kitchen table pecking the corn bread.*

14]

## UPSTAIRS HALL.

ARCHIE *is heading back to his bedroom. BABY DOLL appears in a flimsy wrapper at the turn of the stairs crossing to the bathroom.*

BABY DOLL:

What made her holler this time?

ARCHIE:

How in hell would I know what made that ole woman holler this time or last time or the next time she hollers.

BABY DOLL:

Last time she hollered it was because you throwed something at her.

*She enters bathroom. ARCHIE LEE stands in doorway.*

ARCHIE:

What did I ever throw at Aunt Rose Comfort?

BABY DOLL:

*(From inside bathroom)*

Glass a water. Fo' singin' church hymns in the kitchen. . . .

*We hear the shower go on.*

ARCHIE:

This much water! Barely sprinkled her with it! To catch her attention. She don't hear nothing, you gotta do somethin' to git the ole woman's attention.

*On an abrupt impulse he suddenly enters the bathroom. Sounds of a struggle. The shower.*

BABY DOLL:

Keep y'r hands off me! Will yuh? Keep your hands off . . . Off.

*ARCHIE LEE comes out of the bathroom good and wet. The shower is turned off. BABY DOLL's head comes out past the door.*

BABY DOLL:

I'm going to move to the Kotton King Hotel, the very next time you try to break the agreement! The very next time!

*She disappears. . . .*

15]

CLOSE SHOT. ARCHIE LEE WET.

DISSOLVE.

16]

ARCHIE LEE.

*He is seated in his 1937 Chevy Sedan. The car is caked with pale brown mud and much dented. Pasted on the windshield is a photo of BABY DOLL smiling with bewilderment at the birdie-in-the-camera.*

*ARCHIE LEE is honking his horn with unconcealed and unmodified impatience.*

ARCHIE:

*(Shouting)*

*Baby Doll! Come on down here, if you're going into town with me. I got to be at the doctor's in ten minutes.*

*(No answer)*

*Baby Doll!!!*

*From inside the house. BABY DOLL's voice.*

BABY DOLL:

*If you are so impatient, just go ahead without me. Just go ahead. I know plenty of ways of getting downtown without you.*

ARCHIE:

*You come on.*

*Silence. The sound of the Syndicate Gin. ARCHIE does a sort of imitation. His face is violent.*

ARCHIE:

*Baby Doll!!!*

*BABY DOLL comes out on the sagging porch of the*



*mansion. She walks across the loose boards of the porch through stripes of alternate light and shadow from the big porch pillars. She is humming a little cakewalk tune, and she moves in sympathy to it. She has on a skirt and blouse, white, and skintight, and pearl chokers the size of gold balls seen from a medium distance. She draws up beside the car and goes no farther.*

ARCHIE:

You going in town like that?

BABY DOLL:

Like what?

ARCHIE:

In that there outfit. For a woman of your modest nature that squawks like a hen if her *husband* dast to put his hand on her, you sure do seem to be advertising your——

BABY DOLL:

*(Drowning him out)*

My figure has filt out a little since I bought my trousseau AND paid for it with m'daddy's insurance money. I got two choices, wear clo'se skintight or go naked, now which do you want me t'——

ARCHIE:

*Aw, now, hell! Will you git into th' car?*

*Their loud angry voices are echoed by the wandering poultry.*

BABY DOLL:

I will git into the rear seat of that skatterbolt when you git out of the front seat and walk around here to open the door for me like a gentleman.

ARCHIE:

Well, you gonna wait a long time if that's what you're waiting for!

BABY DOLL:

I vow my father would turn over in his grave. . . .

ARCHIE:

I never once did see your father get out and open a car door for your mother or any other woman. . . . Now get on in. . . .

*She wheels about and her wedgies clack-clack down the drive. At foot of drive she assumes a hitchhiker's stance. A hot-rod skids to a sudden and noisy stop. ARCHIE LEE bounds from his car like a jack rabbit, snatching a fistful of gravel as he plummets down drive. Hurls gravel at grinning teen-age kids in hot-rod, shouting incoherently as they shoot off, plunging BABY DOLL and her protector in a dust-cloud. Through the dust . . .*

ARCHIE LEE:

Got your license number you pack a—

DISSOLVE.

16A]

THE CAR INTERIOR.

*They are jolting down the road.*

ARCHIE:

Baby Doll, y'know they's no torture on earth to equal the torture which a cold woman inflicts on a man that she won't let touch her??!! No torture to compare with it! What I've done is!! Staked out a lot in hell, a lot with a rotten house on it and five complete sets of furniture not paid for. . . .

BABY DOLL:

What you done is bit off more'n you can chew.

ARCHIE:

People know the situation between us. Yestiddy on Front Street a man yelled to me, "Hey Archie Lee, has y'wife outgrewed the crib yet??" And three or four others haw-hawed! Public! Humiliation!

BABY DOLL *in back seat, her beads and earrings ajingle like a circus pony's harness.*

BABY DOLL:

Private humiliation is just as painful.

ARCHIE:

Well! —There's an agreement between us! You ain't gonna sleep in no crib tomorrow night, Baby, when we celebrate your birthday.

BABY DOLL:

If they remove those five complete sets of furniture from the house, I sure will sleep in the crib because the crib's paid for—I'll sleep in the crib or on the top of Aunt Rose Comfort's pianner. . . .

ARCHIE:

And I want to talk to you about Aunt Rose Comfort. . . . I'm not in a position to feed and keep her any—

BABY DOLL:

Look here, Big Shot, the day Aunt Rose Comfort is unwelcome under your roof . . .

ARCHIE:

Baby Doll, honey, we just got to unload ourselves of all unnecessary burdens. . . . Now she can't cook and she—

BABY DOLL:

If you don't like Aunt Rose Comfort's cookin, then get me a regular servant. I'm certainly not going to cook for a fat ole thing like you, money wouldn't pay me—

Owwwww!

ARCHIE *has backhanded her. And prepares to do so again.*

BABY DOLL:

Cut that out. . . .

ARCHIE:

You better quit saying 'fat ole thing' about me!!

BABY DOLL:

Well, you get young and thin and I'll quit calling you a fat old thing. —What's the matter now?

ARCHIE LEE *points to off right with a heavily tragic gesture.*

17]

TRAVELING SHOT. SYNDICATE GIN. THEIR VIEWPOINT.

*It is new, handsome, busy, clearly prospering. A sign (large) reads: SYNDICATE COTTON GIN.*

18]

TWO SHOT. ARCHIE AND BABY DOLL.

ARCHIE:

There it is! There it is!

BABY DOLL:

Looks like they gonna have a celebration!

ARCHIE:

Why shouldn't they!!?? They now got every last bit

of business in the county, including every last bit of what I used to get.

BABY DOLL:

Well, no wonder, they got an up-to-date plant—not like that big pile of junk you got!!

ARCHIE *glares at her.*

QUICK DISSOLVE.

19]

WAITING ROOM. DOCTOR'S OFFICE.

ARCHIE *and* BABY DOLL *enter, and he is still hotly pursuing the same topic of discussion.*

ARCHIE:

Now I'm just as fond of Aunt Rose Comfort——

BABY DOLL:

You ain't just as fond of Aunt——

ARCHIE:

Suppose she breaks down on us?? Suppose she gets a disease that lingers——

BABY DOLL *snorts.*

ARCHIE:

All right, but I'm serving you notice. If that ole woman breaks down and dies on my place, I'm not going to be stuck with her funeral expenses. I'll have her burned up, yep, cremated, cremated, is what they call it. And pack her ashes in an ole Coca-Cola bottle and pitch the bottle into TIGER TAIL BAYOU!!!

BABY DOLL:

*(Crossing to inner door)*

Doctor John? Come out here and take a look at my



husband. I think a mad dawg's bit him. He's gone ravin' crazy!!

RECEPTIONIST

(*Appearing*)

Mr. Meighan's a little bit late for his appointment, but the doctor will see him.

BABY DOLL:

Good! I'm going down to the—

ARCHIE:

Oh, no, you're gonna sit here and wait till I come out. . . .

BABY DOLL:

Well, maybe. . . .

ARCHIE *observes that she is exchanging a long, hard stare with a young man slouched in a chair.*

ARCHIE:

And look at this! Or somethin'.

*He thrusts a copy of Screen Secrets into her hands and shoves her into a chair. Then glares at the young man, who raises his copy of Confidential.*

DISSOLVE.

20]

INNER OFFICE.

ARCHIE LEE *has been stripped down to the waist. The doctor has just finished examining him. From the ante-room, laughter, low. Which seems to make ARCHIE LEE nervous.*

DOCTOR:

You're not an old man, Archie Lee, but you're not a young man, either.

ARCHIE:

That's the truth.

DOCTOR:

How long you been married?

ARCHIE:

Just about a year now.

DOCTOR:

Have you been under a strain? You seem terrible nervous?

ARCHIE:

No strain at all! None at all. . . .

*Sound of low laughter from the waiting room. Suddenly, ARCHIE LEE rushes over and opens the door. BABY DOLL and the YOUNG MAN are talking. He quickly raises his magazine. . . . Archie closes the door, finishes dressing. . . .*

DOCTOR:

What I think you need is a harmless sort of sedative. . . .

ARCHIE:

Sedative! Sedative! What do I want with a sedative???  
*He bolts out of the office. . . .*

DISSOLVE.

21]

MEDIUM LONG SHOT. ARCHIE LEE'S CAR  
GOING DOWN FRONT STREET.

*BABY DOLL sits on her side aloof. Suddenly a moving van passes the other way. On its side is marked the legend: IDEAL PAY AS YOU GO PLAN FURNI-*

TURE COMPANY. Suddenly, BABY DOLL jumps up and starts waving her hand, flagging the van down, then when this fails, flagging ARCHIE LEE down.

22]

CLOSER SHOT. ARCHIE'S CAR.

BABY DOLL:

That was all our stuff!

ARCHIE:

No it wasn't. . . .

BABY DOLL:

That was our stuff. Turn around, go after them.

ARCHIE:

Baby Doll, I've got to wait down here for my prescription. . . .

*At this moment another IDEAL PAY AS YOU GO PLAN FURNITURE COMPANY goes by, in the OTHER direction.*

BABY DOLL:

There goes another one, towards our house.

ARCHIE:

Baby, let's go catch the show at the Delta Brilliant.

BABY DOLL:

*(Starts beating him)*

ARCHIE:

Or let's drive over to the Flaming Pig and have some barbecue ribs and a little cold beer.

BABY DOLL:

That's our stuff. . . !

ARCHIE LEE *looks the other way.*

I said that's our stuff . . . !! I wanta go home. HOME. NOW. If you don't drive me home now, I'll, I'll, I'll— Mr. Hanna. Mr. Gus Hanna. You live on Tiger Tail Road . . .

ARCHIE:

I'll drive you home.

*He spins the car around and they start home.*

23]

EXTERIOR MEIGHAN HOUSE. DAY.

MEIGHAN's car turns in the drive. The van we saw is backed up to the house, and furniture is being removed from the house. BABY DOLL runs among them and starts to beat the movers. They go right on with their work, paying no attention. After a time AUNT ROSE puts her arms around BABY DOLL and leads her into the house.

24]

CLOSE SHOT. ARCHIE LEE.

*He really is on a spot. Again he hears the sound of the Syndicate Cotton Gin. He makes the same sound, imitating it, he made earlier. He looks in its direction and spits. Then he gets out of the car and walks towards his empty home.*

25]

INTERIOR. ARCHIE LEE'S HOUSE. THE PARLOR.

*BABY DOLL is sobbing by the window. The screen door creaks to admit the hulking figure of ARCHIE LEE.*

ARCHIE:

(*Approaching*)

Baby Doll . . .

BABY DOLL:

Leave me alone in here. I don't want to sit in the same room with a man that would make me live in a house with no furniture.

ARCHIE:

Honey, the old furniture we got left just needs to be spread out a little. . . .

BABY DOLL:

My daddy would turn in his grave if he knew, he'd turn in his grave.

ARCHIE:

Baby Doll, if your daddy turned in his grave as often as you say he'd turn in his grave, that old man would plow up the graveyard.

*Somewhere outside* AUNT ROSE *is heard singing: "Rock of Ages."*

ARCHIE:

She's out there pickin' roses in the yard just as if nothing at all had happened here. . . .

BABY DOLL:

I'm going to move to the Kotton King Hotel. I'm going to move to the Kotton King Hotel. . . .

ARCHIE:

No, you ain't, Baby Doll.

BABY DOLL:

And I'm going to get me a job. The manager of the Kotton King Hotel carried my daddy's coffin, he'll give me work.

ARCHIE:

What sort of work do you think you could do, Baby Doll?

BABY DOLL:

I could curl hair in a beauty parlor or polish nails in a barbershop, I reckon, or I could be a hostess and smile at customers coming into a place.

ARCHIE:

What place?

BABY DOLL:

Any place! I could be a cashier.

ARCHIE:

You can't count change.

BABY DOLL:

I could pass out menus or programs or something and say hello to people coming in!

*(Rises)*

I'll phone now.

*(She exits)*

26]

HALL.

BABY DOLL *crosses to the telephone. She is making herself attractive as if preparing for an interview.*

BABY DOLL:

Kotton King? This is Mrs. Meighan, I want to reserve a room for tomorrow mornin' and I want to register under my maiden name, which is Baby Doll Carson. My daddy was T. C. Carson who died last summer when I got married and he is a very close personal



friend of the manager of the Kotton King Hotel—you know—what's his name. . . .

27]

EXTERIOR OF HOUSE.

*ARCHIE comes out door and wanders into the yard, passing AUNT ROSE, who holds a bunch of roses.*

AUNT ROSE

Archie Lee, look at these roses! Aren't they poems of nature?

ARCHIE:

Uh-huh, poems of nature.

*He goes past her, through the front gate and over to his Chevy.*

*The front seat on the driver's side has been removed and a broken-down commodious armchair put in its place.*

*Sound of the Syndicate Gin, throbbing. ARCHIE LEE reaches under the chair and fishes out a pint bottle. He takes a slug, listens to the Syndicate, takes another. Then he throws the bottle out of the car, turns the ignition key of the car and . . .*

28]

THE CHEVY ROCKS OUT OF THE YARD.

DISSOLVE.

29]

THE INTERIOR. BRITE SPOT CAFE.

*A habitually crowded place. Tonight it is empty. In the*

corner a customer or two. Behind the bar, the man in the white apron with nothing to do is sharpening a frog gig on a stone. Enter ARCHIE, goes over to the bar.

ARCHIE:

Didn't get to the bank today, Billy, so I'm a little short of change. . . .

*The BARTENDER has heard this before. He reaches to a low shelf and takes out an unlabeled bottle and pours*

*ARCHIE a jolt.*

ARCHIE:

Thanks. Where's everybody?

BARTENDER:

Over to the Syndicate Gin. Free liquor over there tonight. Why don't you go over?

*(Then he laughs sardonically)*

ARCHIE:

What's the occasion?

BARTENDER:

First anniversary. Why don't you go over and help them celebrate.

ARCHIE:

I'm not going to my own funeral either.

BARTENDER:

I might as well lock up and go home. All that's coming in here is such as you.

ARCHIE:

What you got there?

*The BARTENDER holds up a frog gig. The ends, where just sharpened, glisten.*

ARCHIE:

Been getting any frogs lately?

BARTENDER:

Every time I go out. Going tomorrow night and get me a mess. You wanna come? There's a gang going. You look like you could use some fresh meat.

*Another rather despondent-looking character comes in.*

ARCHIE:

Hey, Mac, how you doing?

MAC:

Draggin', man.

BARTENDER:

Why ain't you over to the Syndicate like everybody else?

MAC:

What the hell would I do over that place. . . . That place ruined me . . . ruined me. . . .

BARTENDER:

The liquor's running free over there tonight. And they got fireworks and everything. . . .

MAC:

Fireworks! I'd like to see the whole place up in smoke.

*(Confidentially)*

Say, I'm good for a couple, ain't I?

*As the BARTENDER reaches for the same bottle-without-a-label, we*

DISSOLVE TO

30]

EXTERIOR. SYNDICATE GIN.

*A big platform has been built for the celebration and decked out with flags, including the Stars and Bars of Dixie and the Mississippi State Banner.*

*A band is playing "Mississippi Millions Love You," the state song, which is being sung by an emotional spinster. Several public officials are present, not all of them happy to be there as the county has a strongly divided attitude towards the Syndicate-owned plantation. Some old local ward heeler is reeling onto the speaker's platform and a signal is given to stop the band music. THE OLD BOY lifts a tin cup, takes a long swallow and remarks.*

THE OLD BOY:

*Strongest branch water that ever wet my whistle. Must of come out of Tiger Tail Bayou.*

*There is a great haw-haw.*

THE OLD BOY:

*(Continues)*

*Young man? Mr. Vacarro. This is a mighty fine party you're throwing tonight to celebrate your first anniversary as superintendent of the Syndicate Plantation and Gin. And I want you to know that all of us good neighbors are proud of your achievement, bringin' in the biggest cotton crop ever picked off the blessed soil of Two River County.*

*The camera has picked up a handsome, cocky young Italian, SILVA VACARRO. His affability is not put on, but he has a way of darting glances right and left as he chuckles and drinks beer which indicates a certain watchfulness, a certain reserve.*

*The camera has also picked up, among the other listeners, some uninvited guests . . . including ARCHIE LEE and his friend from the Brite Spot. ARCHIE LEE is*

*well on the way and, of course, his resentment and bitterness are much more obvious.*

THE OLD BOY:

Now when you first come here, well, we didn't know you yet and some of us old-timers were a little stand-offish, at first.

*VACARRO's face has suddenly gone dark and sober. In his watchfulness he has noticed the hostile guests. With a sharp gesture of his head, he summons a man who works for him—ROCK—who comes up and kneels alongside. The following colloquy takes place right through THE OLD BOY's lines.*

SILVA:

There's a handful of guys over there that don't look too happy to me. . . .

ROCK:

They got no reason to be. You put 'em out of business when you built your own gin, and started to gin your own cotton.

SILVA:

Watch 'em, keep an eye on 'em, specially if they start to wander around. . . .

THE OLD BOY:

*(Who has continued)*

Natchully, a thing that is profitable to some is unprofitable to others. We all know that some people in this county have suffered some financial losses due in some measure to the success of the Syndicate Plantation.

*VACARRO is looking around again. Rather defiantly, but at no one in particular. Between the knees of his cor-*

*duroy riding breeches is a whip that he carries habitually, a braided leather riding crop.*

THE OLD BOY:

But as a whole, the community has reaped a very rich profit.

*He has said this rather defiantly as if he knew he was bucking a certain tide. . . . A voice from the crowd.*

VOICE:

Next time you run for office you better run on the Republican ticket. Git the nigger vote, Fatso!

THE OLD BOY:

*(Answering)*

Just look at the new construction been going on! Contractors, carpenters, lumbermen, not to mention the owner and proprietor of the Brite Spot down the road there! And not to mention——

*Suddenly somebody throws something at the speaker, something liquid and sticky. Instantly, Rock and VACARRO spring up. . . .*

ROCK:

Who done that? ! ? !

SILVA:

*(Crossing to front of platform)*

If anybody's got anything more to throw, well, here's your target, here's your standing target! The wop! The foreign wop!!

*Big rhubarb. THE OLD BOY is wiping his face with a wad of paper napkins.*

*Suddenly, we see that something in the middle distance is on fire. The wide dark fields begin to light up.*



*Voices cry alarm. Shouts, cries. Everyone and everything is lit by the shaking radiance of the fire.*

*VACARRO races towards the fire. It is in the gin building. The volatile dust explodes. Loaded wagons are being pushed away, by Negro field hands driven by VACARRO.*

*A fire engine arrives. But it seems lax in its efforts and inefficient. A hose is pulled out, but there is insufficient water to play water on the blaze, and the hose itself falls short. The firemen are not merely ineffectual. Some seem actually indifferent. In fact, some of their faces express an odd pleasure in the flames, which they seem more interested in watching than fighting.*

*VACARRO rushes among them exhorting, commanding, constantly gesturing with his short riding crop. In his frenzy, he lashes the crop at the man holding the fire hose. The man, resentfully, throws the end of the hose at VACARRO, who seizes the nozzle and walks directly towards and into the flames.*

*Now men try to stop him. VACARRO turns the hose on them, driving them back and then goes into the flames. He disappears from sight. All we hear is his shouts in a foreign tongue.*

*A wall collapses.*

*The hose suddenly leaps about as if it has been freed. The crowd. Horrified. Then they see something. . . .*

*VACARRO comes out. He holds aloft a small, gallon-size kerosene can. He strikes at his trouser bottoms, which are hot. He is on the point of collapse. Men rush to him and drag him to a safe distance. He clutches the can.*

*They lay him out, and crouch around him. He is smudged and singed. His eyes open, look around. His viewpoint. From this distorted angle, lit by the victorious flames are a circle of faces which are either indifferent or downright unfriendly. Some cannot control a faint smile.*

*VACARRO clutches the can, closes his eyes.  
Another wall collapses.*

DISSOLV

31]

EXTERIOR. ARCHIE LEE'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

*ARCHIE LEE's car turns into the drive. He descends noiselessly as a thief. Camera follows him, and it and he discover BABY DOLL on the porch swing. There are several suitcases, packed and ready to go. In a chair near the porch swing, sleeping as mildly as a baby, is AUNT ROSE COMFORT.*

ARCHIE:

What are doin' out here at one o'clock in the morning?

BABY DOLL:

I'm not talking to you.

ARCHIE:

What are you doing out here?

BABY DOLL:

Because in the first place, I didn't have the money to pay for a hotel room, because you don't give me any money, because you don't have any money, and secondly, because if I had the money I couldn't have no way of getting there because you went off in the Chevy,

and leave me no way of getting anywhere, including to the fire which I wanted to see just like everyone else.

ARCHIE:

What fire you talking about?

BABY DOLL:

What fire am I talking about?

ARCHIE:

I don't know about no fire.

BABY DOLL:

You must be crazy or think I'm crazy. You mean to tell me you don't know the cotton gin burned down at the Syndicate Plantation right after you left the house.

ARCHIE:

*(Seizing her arm)*

Hush up. I never left this house.

BABY DOLL:

You certainly did leave this house. OW!!

ARCHIE:

Look here! Listen to what I tell you. I never left this house. . . .

BABY DOLL:

You certainly did and left me here without a coke in the place. OWW!! Cut it out!!

ARCHIE:

Listen to what I tell you. I went up to bed with my bottle after supper—

BABY DOLL:

What bed! OW!

ARCHIE:

And passed out dead to the world. You got that in your

haid?? Will you remember that now?

BABY DOLL:

Let' go my arm!

ARCHIE:

What did I do after supper?

BABY DOLL:

You know what you did, you jumped in the Chevy an' disappeared after supper and didn't get back till just — OWWW!!! Will you quit twisting my arm.

ARCHIE:

I'm trying to wake you up. You're asleep, you're dreaming! What did I do after supper?

BABY DOLL:

Went to bed! Leggo! Went to bed. Leggo! Leggo!

ARCHIE:

That's right. Make sure you remember. I went to bed after supper and didn't wake up until I heard the fire whistle blow and I was too drunk to git up and drive the car. Now come inside and go to bed.

BABY DOLL:

Go to what bed? I got no bed to go to!

ARCHIE:

You will tomorrow. The furniture is coming back tomorrow.

BABY DOLL *whimpers.*

ARCHIE:

(*Continues*)

Did I hurt my little baby's arm?

BABY DOLL:

Yais.

ARCHIE:

Where I hurt little baby's arm?

BABY DOLL:

Here. . . .

ARCHIE:

*(He puts a big wet kiss on her arm)*

Feel better?

BABY DOLL:

No. . . .

ARCHIE:

*(Another kiss. This travels up her arm)*

My sweet baby doll. My sweet little baby doll.

BABY DOLL:

*(Sleepily)*

Hurt. . . . MMMmmmmm! Hurt.

ARCHIE:

Hurt?

BABY DOLL:

Mmm!

ARCHIE:

Kiss?

BABY DOLL:

Mmmmmmmmm.

ARCHIE:

Baby sleepy?

BABY DOLL:

MMmmmmm.

ARCHIE:

Kiss good. . . ?

BABY DOLL:

Mmmmm. . . .

ARCHIE:

Make little room . . . good. . . .

BABY DOLL:

Too hot.

ARCHIE:

Make a little room, go on. . . .

BABY DOLL:

Mmmm. . . .

ARCHIE:

Whose baby? Big sweet . . . whose baby?

BABY DOLL:

You hurt me. . . . Mmmm. . . .

ARCHIE:

Kiss. . . .

*He lifts her wrist to his lips and makes gobbling sound.  
We get an idea of what their courtship—such as it was  
—was like. Also how passionately he craves her, willing  
to take her under any conditions, including fast asleep.*

BABY DOLL:

Stop it. . . . Silly. . . . Mmmmmm. . . .

ARCHIE:

What would I do if you was a big piece of cake?

BABY DOLL:

Silly.

ARCHIE:

Gobble! Gobble!

BABY DOLL:

Oh you. . . .

ARCHIE:

What would I do if you was angel food cake? Big  
white piece with lots of nice thick icin'?



BABY DOLL:

*(Giggling now, in spite of herself. She's also sleepy)*  
Quit.

ARCHIE:

*(As close as he's ever been to having her)*  
Gobble! Gobble! Gobble!

BABY DOLL:

Archie!

ARCHIE:

Hmmmmmm. . . .  
*(He's working on her arm)*  
Skrunch, gobble, ghrumpt . . . etc.

BABY DOLL:

You tickle. . . .

ARCHIE:

Answer little question. . . .

BABY DOLL:

What?

ARCHIE:

*(Into her arm)*  
Where I been since supper?

BABY DOLL:

Off in the Chevy—  
*Instantly he seizes her wrist again. She shrieks. The romance is over.*

ARCHIE:

Where I been since supper?

BABY DOLL:

Upstairs. . . .

ARCHIE:

Doing what?

BABY DOLL:

With your bottle. Archie, leggo. . . .

ARCHIE:

And what else. . . .

BABY DOLL:

Asleep. Leggo. . . .

ARCHIE:

(*Letting go*)

Now you know where I been and what I been doing since supper. In case anybody asks.

BABY DOLL:

Yeah.

ARCHIE:

Now go to sleep. . . .

*He seizes her suitcases and goes off into the house.*

*BABY DOLL follows, and AUNT ROSE follows her, asleep on her feet. As they go in, ARCHIE LEE comes out and looks around. Then he listens.*

ARCHIE:

Nice quiet night. Real nice and quiet.

*The gin can no longer be heard.*

CUT TO

32]

BRITISH SPOT CAFE. EXTERIOR. NIGHT.

*It's not quiet here at all. The area in front of the entrance is crowded with cars. A holiday mood prevails. It's as if the fire has satisfied some profound and basic hunger and left the people of that community exhilarated.*

*The pickup truck of SILVA VACARRO drives up, shoots into a vacant spot. He leaps from the driver's cab. He has not yet washed, his shirt is torn and blackened and he has a crude bandage around the arm that holds the whip. He stands for a few moments beside his truck, looking around at the cars, trying to find the car of the MARSHAL, which would indicate that that county official is inside. Then he sees what he's looking for. He walks over to the car which has the official seal on its side, and not finding the MARSHAL there, turns and strides into the . . .*

33]

INTERIOR. BRITE SPOT. (A JUKE JOINT)

*Everybody is talking about the fire. The juke box is a loud one. There are some dancing couples.*

*SILVA VACARRO passes by a little knot of men. He is followed by ROCK, holding the kerosene can. The Camera stays with them. They smile.*

A MAN:

*That ole boy is really burning!*

*One of the men detaches himself and moves in the direction that VACARRO took. Then another follows.*

34]

GROUP OF MEN AROUND THE MARSHAL.

MARSHAL:

*What makes you think your gin was set fire to?*

SILVA:

Look around you. Did you ever see such a crowd of happy faces, looks like a rich man's funeral with all his relations attending.

MARSHAL:

I'd hate to have to prove it.

SILVA:

I'd hate to have to depend on you to prove it.

*The man from the other group walks up.*

MAN:

What are you going to do about ginning out your cotton?

SILVA:

I'll truck it over to Sunset. Collins'll gin it out for me.

MAN:

Collins got cotton of his own to gin.

SILVA:

Then I'll truck it across the river. Ain't nobody around here's gonna gin it.

MAN:

I'm all set up to do it for you.

SILVA:

I wouldn't give you the satisfaction.

*The men drift back a few steps.*

MARSHAL:

*(He speaks a little for the benefit of the men in the room)*

I honestly can't imagine if it was a case of arson who could of done it since every man jack that you put out of business was standing right there next to the platform when the fire broke out.

ROCK:

One wasn't. I know one that wasn't.

MARSHAL:

*(Wheeling on bar stool to face him. Sharply)*

Looky here, boy! Naming names is risky, just on suspicion.

ROCK:

I didn't name his name. I just said I know it. And the initials are stamped on this here can.

MARSHAL:

*(Quickly)*

Let's break it up, break it up, not the time or the place to make accusations, I'll take charge of this can. I'll examine it carefully to see if there's any basis for thinking it was used to start a fire with.

SILVA:

*(Cutting in)*

I run through fire to git that can, and I mean to keep it.

*(Then to Rock)*

Lock it up in the pickup truck.

ROCK leaves. *Unobtrusively some men follow him.*

MARSHAL:

Vacarro. Come over here. I want to have a word with you in one of these booths. . . .

35]

ROCK.

*He enters the men's room. As he approaches the urinal, the light is switched out and the door is thrown open at the same moment. Hoarse muffled shouts and sounds*

*of struggle and a metallic clatter. Then the light goes on and ROCK is lying on the filthy cement floor, dazed.*

*VACARRO enters. He goes to ROCK.*

ROCK:

They got the can, boss.

SILVA:

Whose initials was on it? Huh? You said you seen some initials on the can.

ROCK:

Naw. It just said—Sears and Roebuck.

*The MARSHAL has come in and now reaches down and helps ROCK to regain his feet. . . .*

MARSHAL:

Sears and Roebuck! That does it! Hahaha. Boy, git up and git some black coffee in yuh.

*They pass through the door.*

36]

## THE MAIN ROOM.

MARSHAL:

Ruby, Ruby! Give this boy some black coffee. He had a bad fall in the outhouse. Hawhawhaw. . . .

*But SILVA has steered ROCK out the front door and they are gone. The MARSHAL follows . . .*

37]

## OUTSIDE.

*SILVA and ROCK head towards the pickup. The MARSHAL appears in the doorway.*

MARSHAL:

Vacarro!



SILVA and ROCK are at the truck. They wait for the MARSHAL, who is walking towards them.

MARSHAL:

*(Soberly, plainly)*

You take the advice of an old man who knows this county like the back of his hand. It's true you made a lot of enemies here. You happen to be a man with foreign blood. That's a disadvantage in this county. A disadvantage at least to begin with. But you added stubbornness and suspicion and resentment.

*VACARRO makes an indescribable sound.*

MARSHAL:

I still say, a warm, friendly attitude on your part could have overcome that quickly. Instead, you stood off from people, refused to fraternize with them. Why not drop that attitude now? If some one set fire to your gin—I say that's not impossible. Also, I say we'll find him. But I don't have to tell you that if you now take your cotton across the river, or into another county, it will give rise to a lot of unfriendly speculation. No one would like it. No one.

*Abruptly he turns and goes.*

*ROCK and SILVA are left alone. Men watch them from the surrounding cars . . . from the doorway.*

SILVA:

Did you ever see so many happy faces? Which one did it, Rock, you said you knew. . . ?

ROCK:

Well, they're all here . . . all here except one. The one that ain't here, I figure he did it. . . .

*They're getting into the pickup.*

SILVA:

Well, he's the one that's gonna gin out my cotton. . . .  
*The motor starts . . . the car goes into gear . . . and  
moves.*

DISSOLVE.

38]

THE ROAD BEFORE ARCHIE LEE'S HOUSE.  
THE NEXT MORNING.

*SILVA's pickup truck is leading a long line of cotton  
wagons—full of cotton.*

39]

CLOSER SHOT. THE PICKUP.

*It stops.*

40]

CLOSE ANGLE. SILVA AND ROCK.

ROCK:

Maybe it figures. But it sure puzzles me why you want  
to bring your cotton to the guy that burned down your  
gin. . . .

SILVA:

You don't know the Christian proverbs about how you  
turn the other cheek when one has been slapped. . . .

ROCK:

When both cheeks has been kicked, what are you  
gonna turn then?

SILVA:

You just got to turn and keep turning. Stop the wagons!

I'm gonna drive up to his house.  
Rock hops out of the pickup truck.

41]

#### OUTSIDE MEIGHAN HOUSE.

*At an upstairs window we can just see ARCHIE's face.  
He is watching the wagons. Suddenly, he withdraws his  
head.*

42]

#### UPSTAIRS. ARCHIE LEE MEIGHAN'S HOUSE.

*He goes into a crazy, but silent Indian war dance. Then  
suddenly he can no longer contain himself and runs  
into . . .*

43]

#### THE NURSERY.

*Enter ARCHIE LEE.*

*BABY DOLL is asleep in the crib. Her thumb is in her  
mouth. Like a child, she's trying to hold on to her sleep.*

*ARCHIE LEE just whoops and hollers. "Baby Doll! Baby  
Doll!", etc. "Get up . . ." etc.*

*She can hardly believe her eyes. . . .*

*From downstairs the pickup's horn sounds urgently.*

*AUNT ROSE COMFORT rushes in breathlessly . . .*

AUNT ROSE:

Archie Lee, honesy. . . .

ARCHIE:

*(Very Big Shot)*

Get her up! Get her up, get her washed and dressed and