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SF PERUSALS

Baby Doll

by Tennessee Williams

A new stage version devised
and originally directed
by Lucy Bailey

Samuel French
www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk
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and page viii for important contractual information.

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BABY DOLL

First produced at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre on 22nd October 1999 with the following cast:

Baby Doll	Charlotte Emmerson
Archie Lee Meighan	Tom Mannion
Aunt Rose Comfort	Georgine Anderson
SilvaVacarro	Jonathan Cake
Rock	John Marquez
Stanley	Craig Pinder
Dr John	Morris Perry
Art	Morris Perry
Mac	Ken Shorter
Young man at Doctor's	George Calil
Billy	George Calil
Cotton Ginner	George Calil
Gabriel	Louis Decosta Johnson

Directed by Lucy Bailey
Designed by Bunny Christie
Lighting designed by Chris Davey

This production transferred to the Lyttelton auditorium of the Royal National Theatre on 7 March 2000 with the following cast:

Baby Doll, wife of Archie Lee Meighan	Charlotte Emmerson
Archie Lee Meighan, husband of Baby Doll	Paul Brennen
Aunt Rose Comfort, sister of TC Carson, Baby Doll's father	Georgine Anderson
SilvaVacarro, manager of the Syndicate Plantation	Jonathan Cake
Rock, foreman of the Syndicate Plantation	John Marquez
Stanley, town marshal	Mac McDonald
Dr John	Morris Perry
Art, a local "old boy"	Morris Perry
Mac, fellow cotton ginner / friend of Archie Lee	Ken Shorter
Sid, fellow cotton ginner / friend of Archie Lee	Ben Craze
Sam, fellow cotton ginner / friend of Archie Lee	Anthony Bailey
Hank, fellow cotton ginner / friend of Archie Lee	Marshall Griffin
Billy, bartender at *Brite Spot Café*	Patrick Poletti
Moses, hired hand working for Archie Lee	Aby Gouhad
Boy	Anthony Taylor
Furniture removal boss	Jimmy Akingbola
Young man at Doctor's	Marshall Griffin
Norm, furniture remover / hired hand	Jimmy Akingbola
Moose, furniture remover / hired hand	Alexander James Simon
Gad, furniture remover / hired hand	Anthony Taylor

Directed by Lucy Bailey
Designed by Bunny Christie
Lighting designed by Chris Davey

CHARACTERS

Baby Doll: wife of Archie Lee Meighan, nearly 20
Archie Lee Meighan
Aunt Rose Comfort: sister of TC Carson, Baby Doll's father
SilvaVacarro: manager of the Syndicate Plantation
Rock: foreman of the Syndicate Plantation
Stanley, the **town Marshal**
Doctor
Old Boy
Mac
Sid
Bartender: at *Brite Spot Café*
Moses: hired hand working for Archie Lee
Boy
Furniture removal boss
Young man at Doctor's
Norm, **Moose** } furniture movers and hired hands

Cotton ginners and friends of Archie Lee

The action of the play takes place in the house and yard belonging to Archie Lee Meighan, a doctor's surgery, a café and the Syndicate Cotton Gin. Mississippi

Time — the 1950s

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THE SET

The original stage production of this play — at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, transferring to the Royal National Theatre — had a set designed by Bunny Christie which deliberately echoed the play's origins as a film. The set alternated between the interior of the house shown in cross-section, and the exterior of the house with its dilapidated porch and front yard.

The cross-section of the house was as follows. On the ground floor were a kitchen and a downstairs hall with doors leading out from both on to the porch. A staircase led from the latter to the first floor, on which Baby Doll's and Archie Lee's bedrooms were visible,with an adjoining door. There was an exit to a bathroom from Baby Doll's room and a sink in Archie Lee's. Above the bedrooms was an attic with a crumbling floor. The rooms were seen as if in a peep-show, with sliding panels allowing only the rooms in use to be seen. This allowed the activities of the different inhabitants to be shown simultaneously.

The exterior set showed the Meighans' house, battered, with gaps in the planking revealing some of the interior of the house. A dilapidated pillared porch ran along the front of the house, with steps down into the yard, and a swing. In the yard were a huge pile of cotton with a long ladder propped against it, a broken-down car (a Pierce-Arrow limousine), an old table and chairs and an old water cistern with a hand pump. Several other scenes — a doctor's consulting- and waiting-rooms, the interior and exterior of a café, the interior and exterior of the Syndicate Cotton Gin — were played in this area with props to suggest the settings.

Lucy Bailey

IMPORTANT CONTRACTUAL INFORMATION

The following conditions must be met by all future producers of **BABY DOLL**, as specified in the contract.

1. No changes whatsoever to the approved text of the play may be made by presenting companies.

2. It is understood that there will be no nudity in licencees' productions of the play unless specifically indicated in the script and that nothing in the stage presentation or stage business in the play will alter the spirit of the play as written. All roles shall be cast and performed by actors of the same gender as written by Tennessee Williams.

3) Presenting companies must include the following billing on all programmes/advertising for the said play:

This play is presented by special arrangement with
The University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, USA

ACT I

The Meighan house. Day

When the play begins, the Lights are up on Baby Doll's bedroom only

Baby Doll Meighan is asleep in a cot, with the covers thrown off. Baby Doll is a voluptuous girl, under twenty. She is Archie Lee Meighan's virgin wife

A sound from the part of the wall behind her back is disturbing her sleep; a steady sound, furtive as a mouse scratching. Baby Doll stirs. The sound stops. She settles again. The noise starts again. Then she wakes, without moving. 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 she gives a crafty look and gets up. The sound continues. She moves stealthily out of her room

Baby Doll just as stealthily opens the door to the adjoining room. She peeks in

The Lights come up on Archie Lee's bedroom

Archie Lee, unshaven, black-jowled, in sweaty pyjamas, is crouched over a section of broken plaster in the wall, enlarging a space between exposed boards with a penknife

Baby Doll (*astonished and angry at what she sees*) Archie Lee. You're a mess. Y'know what they call such people? Peepin' Toms!

Archie Lee Sit down here, I want to talk to you.

Baby Doll I know what you're going to say, but you can save your breath. You promised my daddy that you would leave me alone till I was ready for marriage.

Archie Lee Well?

Baby Doll Well I'm not ready for it yet.

Archie Lee And I'm going crazy.

Baby Doll Well you can just wait.

Baby Doll goes back into her bedroom followed by Archie Lee

Archie Lee We made an agreement that when you was twenty years old we could be man and wife in more than just name only.
Baby Doll Well, I won't be twenty till November the seventh …
Archie Lee Which is the day after tomorrow! Are you going to live up to it?
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 just look at you! Archie Lee Meighan, you're not exactly a young girl's dream come true ...
Archie Lee Are you or are you not gonna keep the agreement? (*Pause*) Remember you made that promise on the Bible.
Baby Doll I remember.
Archie Lee Are you going to respect it?
Baby Doll My daddy would turn in his grave if I failed to keep a promise I made on a Bible …
Archie Lee Awright.
Baby Doll Unless you fail t'keep yours. 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 understandin' between us will be cancelled. Completely!

The phone rings downstairs

Aunt Rose gives out a cry, off, even shriller and higher than the telephone

The Lights come up on the stairs

Archie Lee goes on to the upstairs landing and lumbers over to the staircase, much too grand for the present style of the house, and shouts down to the old woman below

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

The Lights come up on the downstairs hall and part of the kitchen

Aunt Rose comes through 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 Lee (*from above*) Answer it.

Aunt Rose has recovered some now and gently lifts the receiver

Aunt Rose Hallo? 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 hurries down the stairs

Archie Lee They don't wanta know that! Who in the 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 ——

Archie snatches the phone from the old woman with amazing, if elephantine, speed

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

Aunt Rose utters her breathless cackle and backs against the kitchen door

(*Into the phone, in a hoarse whisper*) Now what is this? … Aw. … Uh-huh. …Today? … Aw. You gotta g'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*) *Take it out then! Take it out!* Come and get the damn stuff! And you'll never get my business again! Never! (*They have hung up on him. He hangs up and stands there, a man in tough trouble. He abruptly massages his exhausted head of hair*)

Aunt Rose (*timidly*) Archie Lee, honey, you all aren't going to lose your furniture, are you?

Archie Lee (*in a hoarse whisper*) Will you shut up and git 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'country home in Sunset.

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

Archie Lee Yeah. I said shoot. (*He starts upstairs*)

Aunt Rose cackles uneasily and returns to the kitchen

Archie Lee heads back to Baby Doll's 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 Lee How in the 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.

Baby Doll exits into the bathroom

Archie Lee stands in the doorway

Archie Lee What did I ever throw at Aunt Rose Comfort?
Baby Doll (*off*) Glass a water. Fo' singin' church hymns in the kitchen …

We hear the shower go on

Archie Lee 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.

Archie Lee, on an abrupt impulse, suddenly exits into the bathroom

There are sounds of a struggle with the shower

Baby Doll (*off*) Keep y'r hands off me! Will yuh? Keep you hands off … Off.

Archie Lee comes out of the bathroom good and wet. The shower is turned off

Baby Doll puts her head round 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!

Baby Doll disappears

The Lights focus on Archie Lee, wet

Music

The Lights change, moving the scene from the inside to the outside of the house

Moses sits in the huge pile of cotton — as he does all day

Archie Lee is in the yard

Archie Lee (*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

(*Honking the horn on the Pierce Arrow limousine*) Baby Doll!!!

Baby Doll appears in the bedroom window of the house

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.
Moses Thass as true.
Archie Lee You come on.

Baby Doll leaves the window

We hear the sound of the cotton gin

Moses There ain't no stopping that Syndicate Plantation … I hear they got them twenty-seven wagonfuls of cotton coming in today ...
Archie Lee Baby Doll!!!

Music

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 golf balls seen from a medium distance. She carries a bag

Archie Lee You going in town like that?
Baby Doll Like what?
Archie Lee 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 flit out a little since I bought my trousseau *and* paid for it with m'daddy's insurance money. I got two choices, wear clo's skintight or go naked, now which do you want me t' ——

Archie Lee Aw, no, hell! I got t'git me t' the doctor's!

The Lights change, shifting the scene to the Doctor's waiting-room and consulting-room

Archie Lee and Baby Doll are in the waiting-room. A man — Mac — can be seen talking to the doctor in the consulting-room

Archie Lee 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 a bit off more'n you can chew.

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

Baby Doll Private humiliation is just as painful.

Archie Lee 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 Lee 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 Lee 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 — —

Archie backhands Baby Doll. And prepares to do so again

Owwwww! Cut that out …

Archie Lee 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.

Mac leaves the Doctor's consulting-room and crosses through the waiting-room

Mac Archie Lee … Mrs Meighan ...

Archie Lee Mac…

Mac exits

Now I'm just as fond of Aunt Rose Comfort ——
Baby Doll You ain't just as fond of Aunt ——
Archie Lee Suppose she breaks down on us?? Suppose she gets a disease that lingers ——

Baby Doll snorts

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 the consulting-room door*) Dr John? Come out here and take a look at my husband. I think a mad dawg's bit him. He's gone ravin' crazy!!
Doctor Come on through, Archie Lee, I'll see you now.
Baby Doll Good! I'm going down the ——
Archie Lee Oh no, you're gonna sit here and wait till I come out …

A young man enters the waiting-room

Baby Doll Well, maybe …
Archie Lee (*giving her a magazine*) And look at this! Or somethin'. (*He turns and enters the consulting-room*)

Baby Doll and the man get acquainted, laughing together, during the following

Archie takes his jacket off. The Doctor examines Archie

Archie Lee So what's wrong?
Doctor Well you know, Archie Lee, you're not an old man, but you're not a young man, either.
Archie Lee That's the truth, that's the truth now, that's no lie.
Doctor How long you been married?
Archie Lee Just about a year now. She's pretty though.
Doctor Yeah, I guess so … Youth, huh …

There is laughter from the waiting-room

Have you been under some kind of strain?
Archie Lee No, no strain at all.
Doctor Look mighty nervous to me.
Archie Lee I'm not ner …

There is more laughter from the waiting-room

Doctor Archie Lee, all I think you need is some kind of a little harmless sedative.
Archie Lee Sedative? Sedative! What do I want with a sedative?
Doctor (*writing a prescription*) Now you take this down to old man Hogg. You tell him to fill it out for you and you take it according to direction. Here you are. Don't forget your jacket.

Archie Lee collects his jacket and prescription and goes back into the waiting-room

Not going to help you, what's wrong with you, one bit.

Archie Lee and Baby Doll leave the waiting-room. The man goes in to see the Doctor

The Lights change, shifting the scene back to the yard of the house

Moses is in his usual place on the cotton pile

Workers, supervized by their boss, are clearing the furniture out of the house

Baby Doll and Archie Lee approach

Worker Look out, here comes trouble.
Baby Doll That's my stuff! (*She sobs*)

Music

As the furniture is moved out of the yard Baby Doll tries to stop the men, beating them with her bag and attempting to take things back inside. Finally she gives up and runs away from Archie Lee to the other end of the yard

The men exit

Archie Lee (*approaching Baby Doll*) Baby Doll …
Baby Doll Leave me alone here. I don't want to be near a man that would make me live in a house with no furniture.

Archie Lee Honey, the old furniture we got left just needs to be spread out a little … Let's drive over to the *Flaming Pig* and have some barbecue ribs and a little cold beer.
Baby Doll My daddy would turn in his grave if he knew, he'd turn in his grave.
Archie Lee Baby Doll, if your daddy turned in his grave as often as you say he'd turn in his grave, that old man would plough up the graveyard.

From somewhere behind the house, Aunt Rose is heard singing "Rock of Ages"

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

A worker leans out of the bedroom window

Worker All clear up here, boss.

The worker exits

Baby Doll I'm going to move to the Kotton King Hotel.
Boss (*proffering a paper to be signed*) Sign here.

Archie Lee signs

Baby Doll I'm going to move to the Kotton King Hotel …
Archie Lee 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 Lee What sort of work do you think you could do, Baby Doll?
Baby Doll I could curl hair in a beauty parlour or polish nails in a barber-shop, I reckon, or I could be a hostess and smile at customers coming into a place.
Archie Lee 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 programmes or something and say hello to people coming! (*She rises*) I'll phone now.

Baby Doll goes into the house

The Lights come up in the downstairs hall

Baby Doll moves to the telephone. She is making herself attractive as if preparing for an interview

Archie Lee sits on the porch steps. He can hear Baby Doll talking on the phone

Baby Doll (*into the phone*) 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 …

Aunt Rose comes round the house and on to the porch holding a bunch of roses

Aunt Rose Archie Lee, look at these roses! Aren't they poems of nature?
Archie Lee Uh-huh, poems of nature.

Aunt Rose goes into the house

There is a long pause. The sound of the Syndicate cotton gin can be heard

Moses (*from the cotton pile*) When are we going to gin out some more cotton, Mr Archie? Looks like the Syndicate Plantation's going to have a celebration.
Archie Lee 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.

The Lights come up on the interior and exterior of the "Brite Spot Café". Night

Archie Lee approaches the café

Sid emerges from the café carrying a crate of beer

Archie Lee Hey, Sid, where you going?
Sid Well, it's a party, a celebration of some kind. At the Syndicate Plantation.
Archie Lee The Syndicate.
Sid Vacarro's got me working for him now.
Archie Lee For him? You working for that wop?
Sid What else would I do? Syndicate's shutting my gin.
Archie Lee Well, why shouldn't they celebrate? They got every bit of business in the county — including every last bit of what I used to get.
Sid Maybe see you later.
Archie Lee Yeah …

Sid exits

The Lights go down on the exterior of the café

The "Brite Spot" is a habitually crowded place. Tonight it is empty. In the corner, a customer or two. Behind the bar, the Bartender, in a white apron, with nothing to do, is sharpening a frog gig on a stone

Archie Lee goes into the café and approaches the bar

Archie Lee 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 unlabelled bottle and pours Archie a jolt

Archie Lee It's quiet tonight in the *Brite Spot*. Where's everybody?
Bartender Over to the Syndicate Gin. Free liquor over there tonight. Why don't you go over? (*He laughs sardonically*)
Archie Lee What's the occasion?
Bartender First anniversary. Why don't you go over and help them celebrate?
Archie Lee 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 Lee What you got there?

The Bartender holds up the frog gig. The ends, where just sharpened, glisten

Archie Lee 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.

Mac enters, looking rather despondent

Archie Lee 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 … (*Confidentially*) Say, I'm good for a couple, ain't I?

The Bartender reaches for the same bottle-without-a-label

This scene in the café continues to be visible during the following

The Lights come up on the exterior of the 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. Silva Vacarro, manager of the Syndicate Plantation (with, between the knees of his corduroy riding breeches, a whip that he carries habitually, a braided leather riding crop), Rock, his foreman, and a local "Old Boy" are on the platform. A crowd is gathered below; it includes Mac from the "Brite Spot" and other uninvited guests

Crowd Hip hip — hoorah!
Old Boy Strongest branch water that ever wet my whistle. Must of come out of Tiger Tail Bayou.

There is a great haw-haw

Young man? Mr Vacarro. This is a mighty fine party you're throwing tonight to celebrate your first anniversary as manager of the Syndicate Plantation and Gin. And I want you to know that all of us good neighbours are proud of your achievement, bringin' in the biggest cotton crop ever picked off the blessed soil of Two River County.
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.
Old Boy Now when you first come here, well, we didn't know you yet and some of us old-timers were a little standoffish, at first.
Silva Watch 'em, keep an eye on 'em, specially if they start to wander around …
Old Boy (*continuing*) Natchully, a thing that is profitable to some is unprofitable to others. We all know that some people in this country have suffered some financial losses due in some measure to the success of the Syndicate Plantation.

Silva looks around again, rather defiantly but at no-one in particular

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SF **PERUSALS**