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INSTANTLY**

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PROMOTE HEALING**

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MOVIES

CARROLL BAKER

fights her way

Youth taught this volatile "method" actress that if she didn't take care of herself, nobody would—and she's had the best of care ever since

by Peer J. Oppenheimer



"SHE LOOKS like a choir singer and fights like a hellion."

When you hear this description in Hollywood, you can be pretty sure the subject is Carroll Baker. The disgruntled person delivering it is likely to be a fellow worker, director, or studio hand—Carroll plays no favorites—reeling from the wrath of the "Baby Doll" actress who scrapped her way to the top and shows no signs of mellowing with success.

Irving Rapper, who directed her in "The Miracle," is the most recent sparring partner to come out of a flurry with Carroll, bruised and bitter. "She refuses to take direction," Rapper says. "Every time I make a suggestion, she claims she has it all worked out already. She pretends to be a 'method' actress. Frankly, I think she's cold and doesn't know the meaning of humble appreciation!"

Carroll's defenses come up at the suggestion that she's a "temperamental prima donna." She says that all she asks of anybody is the "same considerations and courtesies extended any craftsman," and a lot of high-ranking film experts agree that there's a lot of difference between senseless temper tantrums and the spunkiness characteristic of Carroll.

Elia Kazan, Walter Lang, and George Stevens are directors who have used Carroll's fieriness to advantage and look forward to working with her again. "I like an actress who has the guts to stand up for what she believes is right," Stevens explains. "The few times I insisted on having her play a scene my way, she accepted direction without protest—after I explained my reasons."

Those who know her well—and few do—are convinced she isn't a spoiled brat but the product of an environment that includes a broken home, parental indifference, loneliness, frustration, and a conviction learned by bitter experience that if she didn't look out for her own

Early film role, as overgrown "Baby Doll," made Carroll a star. Her first movie featured her with Rock Hudson and another "method" actor, James Dean, in "Giant." Carroll shared top billing with Gregory Peck in "The Big Country," and recently appeared with Clark Gable in "But Not for Me." Currently she stars in "The Miracle," as a nun who flees her convent.



Carroll's beauty showed even as a child in curls. But only in last few years has she been able to accept the fact of her good looks.

interests, no one would. Since she was a child, Carroll has fought for what she considered right. Usually she has won.

Carroll's father, William Baker, was an appliance salesman with a territory around Johnstown, Pa., where she was born 26 years ago. To save rentals, he often took his family on his trips. There were many nights when Carroll slept in the back of the car as they traveled.

When Carroll was 11, her parents split up and she moved to Youngwood with her mother and sister. Her father settled at Carpentertown where he purchased a farm. Her first attempt at self-assertion came when she suddenly informed her mother she was moving to her father's farm.

"Mother didn't care whether I left, and my father didn't care whether I came. I went there only because of my grandmother, who kept house for my father. There was no great affection between us, either. I think I was attached to her because she made pretty dresses and wonderful pies for me."

As a youngster, Carroll was intrigued by dancing. While she never took lessons, she did well enough on her own to participate in school operettas. But her father told her she would never get anywhere because she had neither the looks nor the talent to be a success on the stage. He said she should concentrate on becoming a good secretary, which would at least assure her of a living.

"Once I locked myself in my room, and cried all night," she recalls. "He had me so convinced that I was just a homely girl that until four years ago I had a real complex about my looks."