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Australian Script Centre



# Abigail's Coven

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by Peter Cox & Fred Goldsworthy

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EXTRACT

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# ABIGAIL'S COVEN

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Characters:

Abigail Williams - 17yrs.

Mercy Lewis - 17yrs.

Mary Warren - 17yrs.

Giles Preston - 17yrs.

Ethan Hooper - 17yrs.

Susanna Walcott - 16yrs.

Jacob Malvin - 16yrs.

Ruth Putnam - 15yrs.

Josiah Plympton - 15yrs.

Sarah Deans - 15yrs.

James Warland - 15yrs.

Miriam Hovenden - 14 yrs.

Edith Staples - 13yrs.

Dorothy Aylmer - 13yrs.

Betty Parris - 12yrs.

Elizabeth Pearson - 12yrs.

Martha Grace - 12yrs.

## Scene 1

(SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS, IN THE SPRING OF THE YEAR 1692. NIGHT IN THE FOREST. MUSIC COMES UP. THE SHADOW OF TITUBA IS PROJECTED ON A SCREEN. SHE SWAYS AND MUMBLES IN A TRANCE. NEAR HER IS A WITCHES POT WITH FIRE UNDERNEATH IT. ON STAGE IN THE CENTRE OF A CLEARLY MARKED CIRCLE (STONES, STICKS?) IS A TREE STUMP OR BLOCK OF WOOD OR OTHER OBJECT THAT IS USED AS AN ALTAR. ON IT ARE CANDLES AND INCENSE AND OTHER LITTLE STATUETTES AND RITUAL OBJECTS.

RUTH IS ON STAGE PROSTRATE IN FRONT OF THE ALTAR. THE GIRLS ARRIVE ON STAGE HAVING JUST LIT THEIR CANDLES IN TITUBA'S FIRE. THEY DANCE ON IN A LINE CHANTING AND FORM A KNEELING CIRCLE AROUND RUTH. THEY PLACE THE CANDLES ON THE GROUND IN FRONT OF THEMSELVES.

THE VOLUME OF CHANTING AND SPEED OF SWAYING BUILDS AS RUTH WRITHES. ABIGAIL IS INCREASINGLY INVOLVED.

SUDDENLY RUTH BREAKS AND JUMPS TO HER FEET.)

RUTH: It ain't workin' Abby ... you're conjuring all wrong.

ABIGAIL: (WHISPERED BETWEEN CLENCHED TEETH) Shut-up Ruth, you'll spoil it!

RUTH: Nothin's happening.

ABIGAIL: Just a bit longer, just a bit longer ... it needs more time.

RUTH: You got the chant all wrong Abby. Those ain't the words.

ABIGAIL: Do you want to see those littl'uns or not? Do you want to conjure 'em?

RUTH: Yes Abby, you know I want that.

ABIGAIL: Well shut-up for Christ's sake and concentrate.

(THE OTHER GIRLS HAVE STOPPED AND LOOK ON IN CONFUSION. THEY ARE INCREASINGLY RESTLESS)

RUTH: But Tituba said we have to dance. It won't work unless you all dance.

MERCY: Yeah, let's dance like Tituba said.

ELIZABETH: I'm cold ...

MARTHA: ... m'legs are hurting ... how long have we got to stay here.

ABIGAIL: You shut that trap, Martha Grace. you're always whining.

MARY: Leave her alone Abby, she's right, we've been here long enough.

SARAH: We can't stay here all night.

(GENERAL MUMBLED AGREEMENT)

ABIGAIL: (CAJOLINGLY) Look you girls, we're out here to conjure Ruthie's

kin. She's got to see them. Tituba said she can. But it takes time and you've got to do what I say.

MIRIAM: It is cold Abby.

ABIGAIL: Ruthie, you do want to see your dead kin, don't you?

RUTH: You know I want that, Abby, more than anything.

ABIGAIL: Well you've got to work at it. And we've got to help her, girls.

MARY: I don't know that it's such a good idea, Abby. It gives me the creeps a bit.

EDITH: Yes it's a bit spooky, Abigail.

ABIGAIL: I don't believe it. You're all scaredy cats! This aint nothin' to be scared of. I could tell you things to be scared of. If you'd seen some of the things I've seen you'd know what to be scared of ...

DOROTHY: Tell us that story, Abby - the Indians and all - did they really cut your folks heads off? ...

MARY: Stop it! I hate that story!. It stops me from sleepin' ... an I don't think we should be muckin' about with spirits neither - even if it is for Ruth.

ABIGAIL: That's silly, Mary. Tituba's been doin' it for years an' she aint come to no harm.

RUTH: Yeah, Tituba told Mama how she could do it. I heard 'em talkin'.

Mama was interested, too. Wouldn't surprise me if she's even tried.

MERCY: Yeah, come on let's conjure Ruthie's kin ...

DOROTHY: Yeah, come on ...

MERCY: Will we see 'em, Abb, or just hear 'em?

RUTH: We have to see 'em Abb. They were just babies, remember.

ABIGAIL: We'll see 'em... but only if we work at it.

ELIZABETH: Well I still reckon it's too cold ...

SARAH: We could come back tomorrow night ...

MARTHA: Well I'll be wearin' my other shoes ...

ABIGAIL: Look we promised we'd conjure Ruthie's kin and no-one's leavin' here till we do it.

BETTY: Well come on then ...

RUTH: Abby ... I think we're doin' the wrong dance ...

ABIGAIL: Says who, Ruth Putnam ...

RUTH: We should be doin' the Wiccan dance.

ABIGAIL: You know so much. Who said.

RUTH: Tituba! She said you've got to do the Wiccan dance.

ABIGAIL: Rubbish, Tituba would never have said that.

RUTH: She did! She did! That's what she told Mama. I heard 'em talkin' ... you ask her now.

ABIGAIL: No use now, she's off in Barbados. (SOME OF THEM REGARD TITUBA)

DOROTHY: Let's try, Abby ... the Wiccan?

ABIGAIL: Alright! Are we all agreed (ONE BY ONE THEY AGREE)... But it's not the Wiccan Dance, it's the Samhain Dance. Now all join hands. You Ruth, lie down there again and concentrate. Think of the littl'uns. Now eastways first for three steps.

MERCY: We know all this, Abby. You showed us this last time.

ABIGAIL: Well do it then! And don't forget the words this time Mercy Lewis.

(MERCY POUTS, THE YOUNG ONES GIGGLE BUT THEY BEGIN TO DANCE IN THE CIRCLE HOLDING HANDS AND SINGING IN ROUND)

ALL BUT RUTH:     Turn, turn, turn the wheel,  
                          Round and round; around it goes.  
                          The flame that died, it now doth heal.  
                          Round and round; around it goes.  
                          Return, return, return to life.

Round and round; around it goes ...

(THE GIRLS ARE GETTING CAUGHT UP IN THE RITUAL AS THE ROUND IS REPEATED AND REPEATED AS NECESSARY)

(GILES, JACOB, JOSIAH, AND JAMES ENTER.)

GILES: So this is where you get to in the dark.

JACOB: Naughty games, Mary Warren. John Proctor was looking for you.

JAMES: What's Ruth doin' there on the ground. You got ants in your knickers, Ruth? (BOYS LAUGH)

(THE GIRLS ARE ANNOYED AT THE INTERRUPTION SOME ARE EMBARRASSED, OTHERS AFRAID AT BEING CAUGHT OUT)

ABIGAIL: Nothin' that's any of your business, James Warland. You get back to the barn. This is no place for little boys.

JOSIAH: Wait till Reverend Parris hears about this.

ABIGAIL: He'll hear nothin' of this from you Josiah Plympton or he'll be hearin' about your little doin's.

JOSIAH: What are you goin' on with now, Abigail? I ain't done nothin' to be ashamed of.

RUTH: That's not what we'll be sayin' unless you clear off from here right now.

JACOB: We'll go when we're good and ready. And not because you say so.

GILES: Maybe we should leave 'em alone. It don't feel right here anyway.

ABIGAIL: Go on you lot, get. Giles is the only one of you worth anything. At least he knows when he's not wanted.

JAMES: You're an uppity one, you are Abigail Williams. No wonder the Proctors got rid of you. No time for work ... too busy dancin' ...

JOSIAH: ... and bossin'.

JACOB: Come on, let's leave 'em to the fairies.

JAMES: And the goblins ...

JOSIAH: ... an' the bogey men, too. (THEY RUN OFF LAUGHING)

ABIGAIL: (SHOUTING) What would you lot know. An' you make sure you hush your mouths about this or you'll be dealin' with me Josiah Plympton. Go tend your pigs! (GIRLS LAUGH)

MERCY: What do we do now, Abigail?

ABIGAIL: Well we're not finished here. We havent got Ruth's littl'uns yet. Now back in that circle. Come on we've got conjurin' to do. Now concentrate, Ruth Putnam.

RUTH: I'm tired, Abby... I can't concentrate no longer.

ABIGAIL: You're a weak one, Ruth, you got no spine in you. ... You don't want things enough!

RUTH: I do, Abby but we've been goin' for ages. I just need a rest from it.

MIRIAM: Ruthy's been there a long time, Abby!

ABIGAIL: Well alright! ... Anyway, I got some of me own conjurin' to do. (SHE TAKES OUT A SCARF AND HOLDS IT UP) Now I'll teach Goody Proctor to look out.

MARY: What are you saying now, Abigail? What's Goody Proctor got to do with you anymore?

ABIGAIL: What's Goody Proctor got to do with me? Where have you been Mary Warren? Are you deaf, dumb and blind? She lied to John Proctor about me. She got me thrown out of the house. Now she's tryin' to set the whole of Salem against me ... she and her poisons!

BETTY: Oh no, Abby. Goody Proctor is a kind lady. She wouldn't spread no poisons.

EDITH: (TO DOROTHY) Goody Proctor wouldn't poison no-one.

ABIGAIL: She did! She did! She lied about me and now she's going to pay!

ELIZABETH: What are you going to do, Abby?

ABIGAIL: It ain't what I'm going to do, Elizabeth, It's what we're going to do ...

MERCY: Oh Lord ...

ABIGAIL: ... We're goin to conjure a spirit that's going to teach that woman to tether her tongue. We're going to set demons on Goody Proctor ... demons