



BECKY NURSE OF SALEM.

BY
SARAH RUHL

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Created by JB Benzinger, Am Wyckoff, and the Education Department

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Theater Audience Etiquette & Discussion

Please read carefully and go over with your classes before the show

TEACHERS

Speaking to your students about theater etiquette is ESSENTIAL. Students should be aware that this is a live performance and that they should not talk during the show. If you do nothing else to prepare your students to see the play, please take some time to talk to them about theater etiquette to help the students better appreciate their experience. It will enhance their enjoyment of the show and allow other audience members to enjoy the experience. The questions below can help guide the discussions. Thank you for your help and enjoy the show!

ETIQUETTE

What is the role of the audience in a live performance? How is it different from seeing a film? Why is it important not to chew gum or eat popcorn at a live theater performance? Why shouldn't you talk? What can happen in live theater that cannot happen in cinema?

Reiterate that students may not talk during the performance. Please make sure all cell phones and alarms are turned off. Recording devices and cameras are strictly prohibited. If there is a disturbance, they will be asked to leave, and the class may not be invited back to the theater. Students may not leave the building during intermission.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS BEFORE SEEING THE SHOW AT TRINITY REP

What are the differences between live theater and cinema? (Two-dimensional vs. three-dimensional; larger than life on the screen vs. life-size; recorded vs. live, etc.) Discuss the nature of film as mass-produced, versus the one-time only nature of live performances. Talk about original art works vs. posters. Which do they feel is more valuable? Why? What is the responsibility of an audience when watching a play? What is the responsibility of an audience when watching a Shakespeare play?

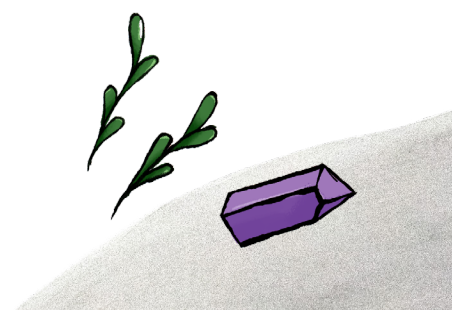
Observation #1

When you get into the theater, look around. What do you see? Observe the lighting instruments around the room and on the ceiling. Look at the set. Does it look realistic or abstract? Try to guess how the set will be used during the show

Observation #2

Discuss the elements that go into producing a live performance: The lights, set, props, costumes, and stage direction. All the people involved in the "behind-the-scenes" elements of the theater are working backstage as the play unfolds before the students' eyes. Tell them to be aware of this as they watch the show. Observe the lighting cues. How do special effects work? How do the actors change costumes so fast?

Pay attention to when you're excited about something on-stage. What excited you? Pay attention to when you're bored. Why were you bored? What would you have done differently to make the play more interesting? Actors in a live performance are very attuned to the audience and are interested in the students' reactions to the play. Ask the students to write letters to the actors about the characters they played and to ask questions of the actors. Send these letters to: Trinity Repertory Company, c/o Education, 201 Washington St., Providence, RI 02903 or email to: education@trinityrep.com.



USING THIS STUDY GUIDE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

A Letter from the Education Department

Welcome to Trinity Rep and the 57th season of Project Discovery! The education staff at Trinity Rep had a lot of fun preparing this study guide and hope that the activities included will help you incorporate the play into your academic study. It is also structured to help you to introduce performance into your classroom through the following elements:

- Community Building in Your Classroom
- Inspiration and Background on the Artist
- Entering and Comprehending Text
- Creating Text for Performance
- Performing in Your Class
- Reflecting on Your Performance

Trinity Rep's Project Discovery student matinees help high school students in the following common core areas (for more information on the National Core Arts Standards, visit <http://nationalartsstandards.org/>):

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively (CCS. ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1)
- Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme (CCSS. RL.910.3)
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (CCSS. RL.9-10.44)
- Investigate how cultural perspectives, community ideas, and personal beliefs impact a drama/ theatre work (TH: Cn10.1.1.)
- Analyze and compare artistic choices developed from personal experiences in multiple drama/ theatre works (TH: Re8.1.1.)
- Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in a drama/ theatre work to develop criteria for artistic choices (TH: Re7.1.1.)
- Evaluate and analyze problems and situations in a drama/ theatre work from an audience perspective (TH: Re9.1.1.)

Enjoy the show!

BECKY NURSE OF SALEM.

By **Sarah Ruhl** Directed by **Curt Columbus**

Stage Managed by **Polly Feliciano***

Assistant Stage Managed by **Samantha Hudgins*, Olivia Tellier***

2023–24 Season at the **Lederer Theater Center** under the direction of
Curt Columbus **Kate Liberman**
Artistic Director Executive Director

THE ARTISTIC TEAM

Set Design by **Michael McGarty**

Costume Design by **Shahrazad Mazaheri**

Lighting Design by **Dawn Chiang**

Sound Design by **Joanna Lynne Staub**

Choreography and Intimacy Design

by **Shura Baryshnikov**

Fight Choreography by **Mark Rose**

THE CAST

Becky Nurse **Angela Brazil*‡**

Bob **Dereks Thomas***

Gail **Jihan Haddad***

A Witch **Meg Thalken***

Stan **Alexander Crespo-Rosario II**

Shelby **Rachel Dulude***

The Judge/The Jailer **Benjamin Grills***

UNDERSTUDIES:

Understudies never substitute for a listed player unless a specific announcement is made at the time of performance.

Becky Nurse/A Witch **Tracy DiiBon Coffey**

Bob **Dylan Michael Bowden**

Shelby **Lucia Aremu+**

Gail **Evie Dumont+**

Stan **Daniel Shtivelberg+**

The Judge/The Jailer **Quinn West+**



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Produced by Lincoln Center Theater, New York City, 2022

Originally commissioned by Tony Taccone and produced by Johanna Pfaelzer, Artistic Directors / Susan Medak, Managing Director

Developed with the support of New York Stage and Film & Vassar's Powerhouse Season, Summer 2019

Becky Nurse of Salem is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

This production is made possible in part by a grant from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, through an appropriation by the Rhode Island General Assembly, a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and private funders.

* Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.

‡ Trinity Rep Resident Company member

+ Brown/Trinity Rep MFA Program student

THE ARTISTIC TEAM

TALENE MONAHON

Playwright, The Good John Proctor
Off-Broadway: *The Good John Proctor* (Bedlam Theater), *Jane Anger* (New Ohio; 2022 Off-Broadway Alliance Best New Play Nominee), *How to Load a Musket* (Less than Rent; TheaterMania's "The 10 Best Theater Productions of 2020"), and *Frankie & Will* (MCC). **Regional:** *Jane Anger* (Shakespeare Theater of D.C.), *All in Good Fun* (Peterborough Players). **Education:** BA Senior Fellow, Dartmouth College. Talene Monahan is a Brooklyn-based playwright and actor of Armenian and Irish descent, originally from Belmont, Massachusetts. She was featured in the New York Times 2023 list of "Rising Theater Stars."

SARAH RUHL

Playwright, Becky Nurse of Salem
Sarah Ruhl's plays include *In the Next Room: or the vibrator play*, *The Clean House*, *Passion Play*, *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *Melancholy Play*, *For Peter Pan on her 70th Birthday*, *The Oldest Boy*, *Stage Kiss*, *Dear Elizabeth*, *Eurydice*, *How to Transcend a Happy Marriage*, *Orlando*, *Late: a cowboy song*, and a translation of *Three Sisters*. She has been a two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist and a Tony Award nominee. Her plays have been produced on and off Broadway, around the country, and internationally, where they have been translated into over fifteen languages. Originally from Chicago, Ms. Ruhl received her MFA from Brown University, where she studied with Paula Vogel. She has received the Steinberg Award, the Samuel French Award, the Susan Smith Blackburn Award, the Whiting Award, the Lily Award, a PEN Award for mid-career playwrights, and the MacArthur Award. You can read more about her work on www.SarahRuhlplaywright.com. Her new book *100 Essays I Don't Have Time to Write* was a *New York Times* notable book of the year, and she most recently published *Letters from Max* with Max Ritvo. She teaches at the Yale School of Drama, and she lives in Brooklyn with her family.

KIMBERLY SENIOR

Director, The Good John Proctor
Trinity Rep: Debut. **Brown/Trinity Rep:** *We Go Round and Round*. **Broadway:** *Disgraced*. **Off-Broadway:** *Bella Bella*, *The Niceties*, Manhattan Theatre Club; *The Who & The What*, *Disgraced*, LCT3; *Discord*, Primary Stages; *Engagements*, Second Stage; *Stories of a Lifetime*, *Certain Women of an Age*, *Sakina's Restaurant*, Audible Theater. **Regional:** *Support Group for Men*, *Disgraced*, *Rapture*, *Blister*, *Burn*, Goodman Theatre; *Our Daughters*, *Like Pillars*, *Sweat*, *The Niceties*, Huntington Theatre Company; *Byhalia*, MS, The Kennedy Center; *The Niceties*, *Sex with Strangers*, Geffen Playhouse; *Disgraced*, Mark Taper Forum, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre; *The Who & The What*, La Jolla Playhouse; *Buried Child*, *The Scene*, *Marjorie Prime*, *Diary of Anne Frank*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Letters*, Writers Theatre; *Want*, *The North Plan* Steppenwolf; among others. **Film/TV:** *Chris Gethard: Career Suicide* (HBO). **Audio:** *The Wastelanders* (Marvel/Apple/Sirius), *Crowded Hours* (Believe Entertainment/Audible), *Ghostwriter* (C13/Best Case). **Other:** Kimberly is a member of SDC and proud mother of Noah (17) and Delaney (15). KimberlySenior.net

JESSIE MARCH

Assistant Director, The Good John Proctor
Trinity Rep: Debut. **Other Theaters:** As an actor: *The Hu-*

mans, *Silhouette of a Silhouette*, *Spring Awakening*, *Not I*, *10,000 Things*, Wilbury Theatre Group; *The Squirrels*, *Everybody*, Burbage Theatre Company; *As You Like It*, Saratoga Shakespeare Company. **Other:** Jessie is so excited to begin her journey with the Brown/Trinity Rep MFA Acting cohort this year. She holds a Bachelor of Science from Skidmore College and simply loves to learn! So much gratitude to this cast, crew, and team.

CURT COLUMBUS

Director, Becky Nurse of Salem
Curt has been Trinity Rep's artistic director since 2006. **Directing:** *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, *Tiny Beautiful Things*, *Macbeth*, *Ragtime*, *Beowulf: A Thousand Years of Baggage*, *Middletown*, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *His Girl Friday*, *Camelot*, *Cabaret*, *Blithe Spirit*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Cherry Orchard*, and the world premieres of *The Completely Fictional—Utterly True—Final Strange Tale of Edgar Allen Poe* and *Social Creatures*. **Playwriting and Translations:** *Paris by Night*, *The Dreams of Antigone*, *Sparrow Grass*, *Cherry Orchard*, *Ivanov*, *A Flea in Her Ear*, *Like Sheep to Water* (Fuente Ovejuna). **Other:** Curt lives in Providence, Rhode Island with his husband, Nate Watson.

SHURA BARYSHNIKOV

Choreography and Intimacy Designer
Trinity Rep: *The Inferior Sex*, *Fuente Ovejuna*, *A Christmas Carol* (2012, 2013, 2015, 2022), *A Flea in Her Ear*, *Middletown*, *Veronica Meadows*, *Social Creatures*, *The Completely Fictional – Utterly True – Final Strange Tale of Edgar Allan Poe*. **Brown/Trinity Rep:** *In the Next Room*, *Stone Cold Dead Serious*, *Rhinoceros*, *Tango*. **Other Theaters:** *Norma*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, Boston Lyric Opera; *Dark Room*, Bridge Repertory Theatre; *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Cabaret*, Wilbury Theatre Group; *The Forgetting Curve*, Bridge Repertory Theatre & Theatrum Mundi Productions. **Film/Television:** Choreographer/Director, *Svadba*, Boston Lyric Opera. **Other:** Shura works broadly across dance, theater, and opera, with recent choreographic commissions and directing projects for First-Works, Khambatta Dance Company, Urbanity Dance, and Emmanuel Music. She serves as Head of Physical Theater/Assistant Professor of the Practice for the Brown/Trinity Rep MFA Programs and is a member of Actors' Equity Association and the American Guild of Musical Artists. More at www.shurabaryshnikov.com

MARK ROSE

Fight Choreographer
Trinity Rep: *Sweeney Todd*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Sueño*, *A Christmas Carol* (2022). **Other Credits:** *Cabaret*, *Camelot*, *Into the Breeches*, *Lifespan of a Fact*, *Rhinoceros*, *The Motherf**ker with the Hat*, *Romeo & Juliet*, Asolo Rep; *The Big Test Stunt Show*, Legoland New York; *Frontier Follies Stunt Show* (2018-19), Idlewild & SoakZone Theme Park; *The Kings Tournament* (2017-present), *Misfits of Fortune Pirrate Show* (2021-present), Sparta NJ Renaissance Faire. **Other:** Mark is an actor and stuntman whose work has recently been seen at Cleveland Playhouse and Asolo Rep, as well as on TV in shows like *Gotham*, *The Blacklist*, *Quantico*, *South Beach Tow*, and more. You can see more at www.mark-rose.com or on Instagram: @mark.rose.stunts

MICHAEL MCGARTY

Set Designer
2023 is the beginning of Mr. McGarty's 40th season in association with Trinity Rep. In that time, he has designed upwards of 50 productions. He has designed extensively

at regional theaters throughout the U.S., including The Public Theater, Seattle Rep, The Old Globe, and the Dallas Theater Center. He has designed on Broadway and the West End of London, as well as opera in Europe and America. McGarty is an adjunct professor of design at the Rhode Island School of Design.

SHAHZRAD MAZAHERI

Costume Designer
Trinity Rep: *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, *Sueño*. **Regional:** *English*, Berkeley Repertory Theatre; *Carmela*, *Full of Wishes*, Children's Theatre Company; *LIZZIE: The Rock Musical*. Theatre Three; *La Gringa*, American Stage Theatre Company; *He's Born*, *He's Borne*, Undermain Theatre; *Baba*, Amphibian Stage. **Education:** MFA, Southern Methodist University. www.shahrzadmazaheri.com

DAWN CHIANG

Lighting Designer
Trinity Rep: *Sweeney Todd*, *Tiny Beautiful Things*, *black odyssey*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *A Christmas Carol* (2017), *The Mountaintop*. **Broadway:** *Zoot Suit*, co-design for *Tango Pasion*; associate design: *Show Boat*, *La Cage aux Falles*. **Opera:** Resident lighting designer, New York City Opera. **Off-Broadway:** *Little Girl Blue*, *Robin and Me*; Manhattan Theatre Club, Roundabout Theatre, the first two seasons of the *Encores!* (City Center/New York). **Regional:** Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Mark Taper Forum, Denver Center Theatre Company, South Coast Repertory, Guthrie Theater, Syracuse Stage, Arena Stage. **Awards:** Two Drama-Logue awards, two Lighting Designer of the Year awards (Syracuse Area Live Theatre). **Nominations:** American Theatre Wing/Maharam Design Award, Los Angeles Drama Critics' Award and San Francisco Bay Area Drama Critics' Award. **Other:** Mentor for Theater Development Fund's "Wendy Wasserstein Project" theater outreach program for New York City high school students. www.linkedin.com/in/dawnchiang

JOANNA LYNNE STAUB

Sound Designer
Trinity Rep: Debut. **Off-Broadway:** *Mother of the Maid*, The Public Theater; *Tooth & Claw*, Ensemble Studio Theatre; *Smart Blonde*, 59E59; *Weightless*, WP Theatre. **Regional:** *Sammy & Me*, Alliance Theatre and Bay Street Theatre; *Dames at Sea*, *Tommy and Me*, Bucks Co. Playhouse; *Into the Woods*, Dallas Theater Center; *Mamma Mia!*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Annie*, *Austen's Pride*, 5th Avenue Theatre; *Constellations*, Geva Theatre; *How to Catch Creation*, Bernhardt/Hamlet, *Life After*, Goodman Theatre; *Wild Goose Dreams*, La Jolla Playhouse; *Pirates of Penzance*, *My Fair Lady*, *Beauty & the Beast*, Oregon Shakespeare Festival; *Shout Sister Shout*, Seattle Rep; *Fun Home*, Theatreworks Hartford. **TV:** *The Sound of Music*, *Peter Pan*, *The Wiz*, NBC; Morning Summer Concert Series, NBC & ABC; The Puppy Bowl, Animal Planet; US Open Tennis, ESPN. **Education:** BS, Ithaca College; MFA, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. **Other:** Dozens of Broadway Associate Design & Engineering Credits. www.jlssound.com.

ADDITIONAL STAFF

Assistant to the Scenic Designer.....
Tiago Rodrigues
Associate Sound Designer.....
Alex Brock
Dialect Coach, Becky Nurse of Salem
Rebecca Gibel

THE CAST, BECKY NURSE OF SALEM

ANGELA BRAZIL* she/her
Becky Nurse



Resident company member since 2000. **Trinity Rep:** In over 60 roles, highlights include: *Sugar*, *Tiny Beautiful Things*; *Mary/Mr. Bingley*, *Pride and Prejudice*; *Emilia*, *Othello*; *Scout*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*; the title characters in *The Heidi Chronicles* and *Veronica Meadows*; *Hildy Johnson*, *His Girl Friday*; *Elizabeth Proctor*, *The Crucible*; *Jane*, *Absurd Person Singular*; *Mathilde*, *The Clean House*; *Samantha*, *Indoor/ Outdoor*; *Julia*, *A Delicate Balance*; *Claire*, *The Long Christmas Ride Home*; *Edward* and *Victoria*, *Cloud Nine*; *Priscilla*, *Homebody/ Kabul*. **Directing:** Trinity Rep (*A Christmas Carol*, co-directed with Stephen Thorne) and The Wilbury Theatre Group. **Other Theaters:** Dallas Theater Center, Long Wharf Theater, Berkeley Rep, The Bread Loaf Acting Ensemble, Riverside Theater. **Other:** Ms. Brazil is director of the Brown/Trinity Rep MFA Programs in Acting and Directing and an associate professor of the practice. She is also on the faculty of the Bread Loaf School of English. She has narrated numerous audiobooks.

ALEXANDER CRESPO-ROSARIO II



Alexander Crespo-Rosario is a Native Taino born in Puerto Rico. He started his career as a B-boy representing the AllCity Rockers hip-hop crew and has continued to expand his skills through other artistic forms. **Trinity Rep:** *Sweeney Todd*. **Teatro en el Verano:** *La Mancha*. **Other Theaters:** *Witch*, *JUNK*, *Our Dear Dead Drug Lord*, Burbage Theatre Company. **Dance Films:** *Through Mable's Eyes*, TUMULT, Marta Renzi; *Do My Dance*, *Flawless*. **Awards:** Miranda Family Fellow, Forman Scholarship Recipient in Dance, Certificate of Merit: Outstanding Ensemble Member. **Other:** Crespo is a Rhode Island College alum with a double major in dance performance and musical theater. He currently resides in Providence, Rhode Island. Instagram: @crespo_acr

RACHEL DULUDE*



LUNGS, Wilbury Theatre Group; *Flu Season*, *Macbeth*,

Burbage Theatre Co. **Other:** Rachel holds a BA in Acting from Plymouth State University. She lives in Providence and is an audiobook narrator.

BENJAMIN GRILLS*

The Judge/The Jailer



2014.

JIHAN HADDAD*



Trinity Rep: *Mrs. Cratchit*, *A Christmas Carol* (2022), *Estrella*, *Sueño*. **Brown/Trinity Rep:** Eleanor and others, *The Late Wedding*; Miranda and others, *The Tempest*; *Nellie Ewell/Rosa Gonzalez*, *Summer and Smoke*; *Golf Girl*, *Golf Girl*, *Writing is Live*; *Susan/Ida*, *The Executrix*, *Writing is Live*. **TV/Film:** *Salvation*. **Other Theaters:** *Marianne*, *Sense and Sensibility*, Northern Stage; *Connie*, *The Great Leap*, Lyric Stage Boston; *Viola*, *Twelfth Night*; *Jeanne 1*, *Thrive*, American Shakespeare Center; *Soothsayer*, *Julius Caesar*, The Hanover Theatre; *Helen*, *Helen*, Willamette University. **Other:** Jihan is an actor and theater-maker based in Providence. She holds an MFA in acting from Brown University/Trinity Rep and a BA in theatre and French and Francophone Studies from Willamette University. A big thanks to Trinity Rep for this journey and to my partner for his endless support. And to the incredible women who raised me — this one is for you. www.jihanhaddad.com

MEG THALKEN*



Trinity Rep: Debut. **Regional:** *Steel Magnolias*, Milwaukee Rep; *Ripcord*, Peninsula Players; *Tribes*, Actors Theatre of Louisville; **Chicago:** *Mosquitoes*, Steep Theatre; *Four Places*, The Den Theatre; *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Domesticated*, Steppenwolf Theatre; *Soups*, *Stews*, and *Casseroles*, Goodman Theatre; *A Funny Thing Happened at the Gynecological Oncology Unit*, Route 66; *A View of the Dome*, *Guide for the Perplexed*, *Symmetry*, *The Long Awaited*, Victory Gardens Theater; *The Metal Children*, Next Theatre; *I Am Going to Change the World*, Chicago Dramatists; *Laundry & Bourbon*, Travel Light; *Bagtime*, Wisdom Bridge. **TV:** *Chicago PD*, *Chicago Med*, *Chicago Fire*, *Paper Girls*, *61st Street*, *Shameless*, *Empire*, *Detroit 187*, *ER*, *The Joan Cusack Show*, *Turks*, *Chicago Hope*, *Early Edition*, *EZ Streets*, *The Untouchables*, *Chicago Story*, *Jack & Mike*, *The Richard Speck Case*, *Through Naked Eyes*. **Film:** *Christmas Again*, *This Day Forward*, *Henry Gamble's Birthday Party*, *Bad Johnson*, *Hannah Free*, *Check Please*, *The Company*, *U.S. Marshals*, *Poltergeist III*, *A Family Thing*, *The Babe*, *Class*.

DEREKSTHOMAS*

Bob



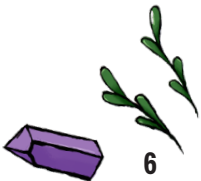
Trinity Rep: August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*, August Wilson's *Radio Golf*, *A Christmas Carol* (2022). **Off-Broadway:** *Ghost Stories: The Shawl & Prairie Du Chien*, Atlantic Theater Company. **Regional:** *Seven Guitars*, Actors' Shakespeare Project; *Passing Strange*, Studio Theatre; *The Lily's Revenge*, *The Light Princess*, *The Donkey Show*, American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.); *Paradise Blue*, Gloucester Stage. **International:** *The Imaginary Invalid*, Moscow Art Theatre. **Television:** *Prodigal Son* (FOX). **Education:** MFA, Moscow Art Theatre (A.R.T. Institute for Advanced Theater Training at Harvard University). BS, The Citadel. www.derekstthomas.com

POLLY FELICIANO*

Stage Manager
Trinity Rep: Assistant stage manager, *The Inheritance*, *Fairview*; production assistant, *A Christmas Carol* (2019 and 2021), August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*, August Wilson's *Radio Golf*, *The Prince of Providence*. **Brown/Trinity Rep:** Stage manager, *An Acorn*. **Other Theaters:** Stage manager, *Heart Broker*, *A Lie Agreed Upon*, The Gamm Theatre; stage manager, *The Last Wide Open*, assistant stage manager, *Pump Up the Volume*, Adirondack Theatre Festival. **Other:** Polly is from Providence, Rhode Island. She had the privilege of being the production manager at Mixed Magic Theatre in Pawtucket, RI from July 2020 until August 2021. Polly graduated from Rhode Island College with a BA in theater. She is currently on the Board of Directors for Burbage Theatre Company. Polly does it all for Bucky, Bernie, Gus, and Emmy. And also Hayley.

SAMANTHA HUDGINS*

Assistant Stage Manager
Trinity Rep: Child coordinator, *A Christmas Carol* (2022), production assistant, *Sweeney Todd*. **Regional:** *Bernhardt/Hamlet*, *Avenue Q*, *20th Century Blues*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, Barker Playhouse; *Moby Dick*, Mixed Magic Theatre; *Great American Trailer Park Musical*, West Bay Community Theater; *Aaron Blanks's Christmas 2: A Very Burbage Christmas*, Burbage Theatre Co. **Other:** Samantha lives in Providence with her wonderful husband Ian and three wacky cats. She is on the board and production committee of Barker Playhouse, the theater home given to her by her mother and grandmother before her. @sgaus86 on Instagram



Unit One:

Background Information

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT: SARAH RUHL

Sarah Ruhl, born on January 24, 1974, is a prominent American playwright known for her thought-provoking works that blend whimsy and surrealism while exploring the intricacies of human relationships, identity, and the human experience.

Sarah Ruhl was born in Chicago, Illinois, and her parents were both involved in the arts, her father being a playwright and her mother a visual artist. Ruhl attended Brown University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in English. During her time there, she immersed herself in literature, drama, and the works of influential playwrights, which helped shape her perspective on theater.

After completing her undergraduate studies, Ruhl continued her education at the Graduate Dramatic Writing Program at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Ruhl's breakthrough came with her play *The Clean House*, which premiered in 2004 at Yale Repertory Theatre. This play garnered significant attention for its blending of humor and surrealism, earning her the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, a prestigious award recognizing outstanding female playwrights. Ruhl's work often weaves magical realism and whimsical elements into her plays. She likes creating a dreamlike atmosphere that mirrors the complexities of human emotions. Ruhl's contributions to theater have not gone unnoticed. She has received numerous awards and honors, including multiple Tony Award nominations, the MacArthur Fellowship, and a Pulitzer Prize finalist designation.

Her plays have been produced on Broadway at the Lyceum by Lincoln Center Theatre, Off-Broadway at Playwrights' Horizons, Second Stage, and at Lincoln Center's Mitzi Newhouse Theater. Her plays have been produced regionally all over the country, with premieres often at Yale Repertory Theatre, the Goodman Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, and the Piven Theatre Workshop in Chicago.



HER PLAYS INCLUDE:

Becky Nurse Of Salem • Dead Man's Cell Phone • Dear Elizabeth • Demeter In The City • Eurydice • For Peter Pan On Her 70th Birthday • How To Transcend A Happy Marriage • In The Next Room, Or The Vibrator Play • Late, A Cowboy Song • Letters From Max • Melancholy Play • Melancholy Play: A Chamber Musical • Orlando (Adapted From The Original By Virginia Woolf) • Passion Play • Scenes From Court Life • Stage Kiss • The Oldest Boy • The Clean House • Three Sisters (Translated from the original by Anton Chekhov)

The Salem Witch Trials

The Salem witch trials, which unfolded in the late 17th century in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, stand as one of the most infamous and harrowing episodes in American history. This tragic event was marked by mass delirium, paranoia, and misogyny.

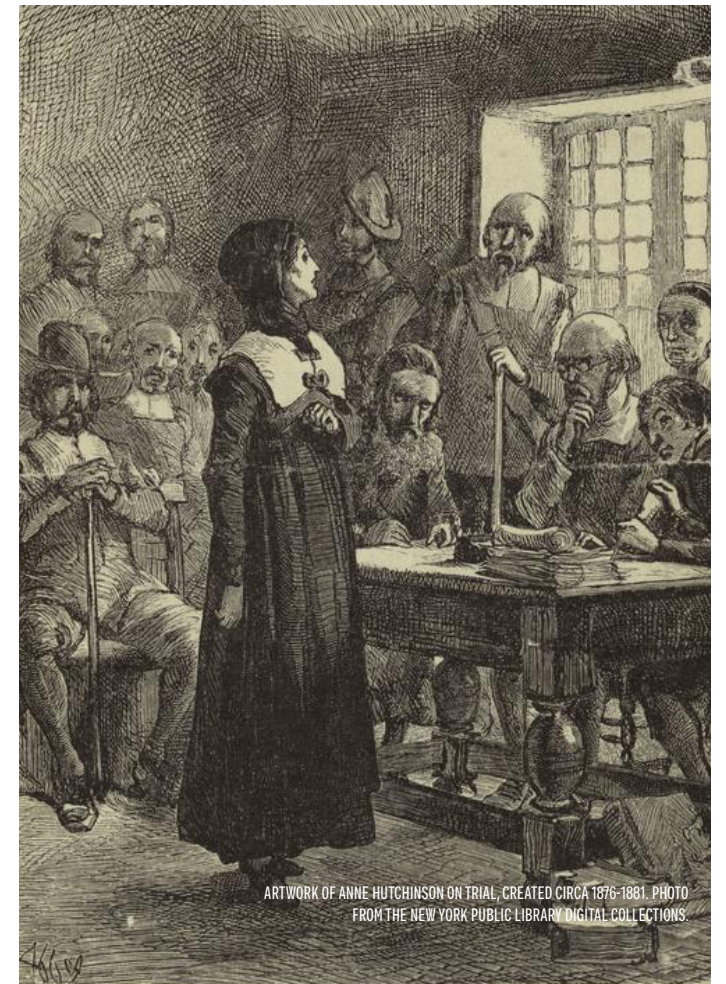
The Salem witch trials took place between 1692 and 1693 in the town of Salem, a small Puritan community characterized by its strict religious beliefs and social hierarchy. The Puritans, who had migrated to the New World seeking religious freedom, lived in a tight-knit society where communal norms were strictly enforced. Any deviation from these norms was met with suspicion and fear due to their religious beliefs, and outsiders were treated with suspicion and hostility. Additionally, Salem was facing the aftereffects of a British war with France, a smallpox epidemic, and tensions with the affluent community of Salem Town. These circumstances caused social tension and instability in Salem, which contributed to community paranoia and the need for a scapegoat.

The crisis began with a series of mysterious afflictions that affected a group of young girls in Salem. They exhibited behaviors such as fits, seizures, and uncontrollable screaming. Failing to find a logical explanation, the community turned to the supernatural. In their search for a scapegoat, the girls accused several local women of witchcraft, igniting a wildfire of fear and paranoia. The accusations spread rapidly, with neighbors pointing fingers at each other. As more people were accused of witchcraft, the authorities established a court to handle the trials. The court operated under a deeply flawed legal process, where testimonies of dreams and visions were used to incriminate the accused. This evidence was highly unreliable and subjective, leading to wrongful convictions.

The Salem witch trials exposed the fragility of societal norms and the potential for mass hysteria to destroy a community. Families were torn apart as individuals turned against one another, driven by fear and mistrust. The trials highlighted the dangers of religious extremism when it disregards justice and reason. The trials also underscored the power dynamics within the community. Many of those accused were women, particularly those who did not conform to traditional gender roles or who challenged the established authority. Accusations

were often rooted in personal rivalries or longstanding feuds, as well as prejudices against individuals who were deemed "different" or "other." Additionally, many of the accused were vulnerable members of the community and houseless, poor, or enslaved.

The Salem witch trials eventually came to an end, but not before numerous innocent lives were ruined. Several accused individuals were executed, and many more faced imprisonment, public humiliation, and the loss of property. After the trials, we can see a legacy of skepticism toward unchecked authority and the importance of defending civil liberties.



REBECCA NURSE

Amidst the chaos and injustice of the Salem witch trials, the story of Rebecca Nurse emerges as a poignant testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the devastating consequences of unchecked accusations. Rebecca Nurse was a devout and well-respected member of the Salem Village community. Known for her piety, strong moral values, and dedication to her family, she embodied the virtues esteemed in Puritan society. Her reputation as a healer and a nurturing figure further endeared her to the community. In the midst of a society grappling with religious tensions and societal hierarchies, Rebecca Nurse stood as a pillar of goodness and kindness.

In 1692, fear swept through Salem Village, leading to a series of accusations of witchcraft. Rebecca Nurse found herself accused of witchcraft by the Putnam family, prominent figures in the community, when there was a land dispute about the boundaries of properties. The accusations against her were born out of grudges, personal rivalries, and misunderstandings,

rather than any evidence of witchcraft. Despite her good reputation, Rebecca Nurse's trial was marred by biases and manipulated testimonies. Rebecca Nurse's trial revealed her unwavering faith and determination to prove her innocence. Throughout the proceedings, she remained resolute, confident that her reputation and character would prevail over the baseless accusations. Her defense was rooted in her deep religious beliefs and her conviction that justice would ultimately be served. However, the legal system of the time was heavily influenced by superstition and panic amongst the village.

In the end, Rebecca Nurse was found guilty of witchcraft. Her conviction serves as a haunting reminder of the failure of justice that characterized the Salem witch trials. On July 19, 1692, she met her fate on Gallows Hill, executed alongside other innocent individuals who fell victim to the hysteria. Her death further marked the loss of integrity within the legal system and the broader community.



Witch Hunts Then and Now

While the explicit witch trials of colonial days may have subsided, elements of modern society continue to perpetuate witch hunts in different forms. The article "Witch Trials in the 21st Century" by National Geographic Education sheds light on instances where people are accused of witchcraft and subjected to violence, often in regions with limited education and exposure. These cases stem from factors like economic disparities, gender inequality, and ignorance, perpetuating age-old biases that associate vulnerable individuals with supernatural harm.

Similarities Across Eras

- **Scapegoating and Fear:** Both historical and contemporary witch hunts are driven by fear and a need for scapegoats. Whether it's the fear of the unknown or societal anxieties, individuals are often targeted as convenient outlets for this fear. The Salem Witch Museum has a tool where you can view submissions of fears, triggering events, and the resulting scapegoats throughout history or today: <https://salemwitchmuseum.com/witch-hunt/>
- **Gender Dynamics:** Historically, women were disproportionately targeted due to prevailing gender norms. Today, women in some regions still face

accusations and violence on charges of witchcraft, reflecting the persistence of gender-based discrimination. Misogyny played a multifaceted role in the witch trials. The trials provided an outlet for the perpetuation of male dominance, as women who defied societal norms or posed a challenge to patriarchal authority were branded as witches. Their persecution served as a stark warning to other women to conform to the accepted roles and behaviors of the time. The trials also served as a means of controlling and silencing women, limiting their opportunities for agency and expression. The legacy of misogyny, as exemplified by the witch trials, persists in modern society. Although progress has been made in advancing gender equality, gender-based discrimination continues to be prevalent in various aspects of life, from workplace opportunities to representation in leadership roles. The witch trials serve as a stark reminder of the dire consequences of unchecked bias and the importance of dismantling systemic inequalities

- **Social and Economic Factors:** In both eras, witch hunts are fueled by social and economic disparities. Accusations can be triggered by jealousy, personal vendettas, or a means to control resources and who has access to them



Arthur Miller

Arthur Miller, an iconic American playwright, became known for his distinctive voice in American theater and his ability to dissect complex social and political issues. Miller was born to Jewish immigrant parents of Polish descent. His family experienced the challenges of the Great Depression, which significantly influenced Miller's later writings that often explored the struggles of the working class. He attended the University of Michigan, where he honed his skills as a writer. In 1947, Miller's first major play, All My Sons, was produced on Broadway. However, it was his play Death of a Salesman (a piece about the American Dream and its disillusionment) earned him the Pulitzer Prize and cemented his reputation as a playwright.

Miller's The Crucible, which premiered in 1953, was inspired by the Salem witch trials of the 17th century but served as an examination of McCarthyism, a period of intense anti-communist fear in the United States during the Cold War. Through the play's characters and events, Miller draws a parallel between the Salem witch trials and the political witch hunts of his own time, where individuals were accused of disloyalty and being communists without direct or conclusive evidence. This period of time led to similar mass hysteria and the accused losing their jobs and the crumbling of their livelihoods. The Crucible serves as a commentary on the dangers of unchecked authority.



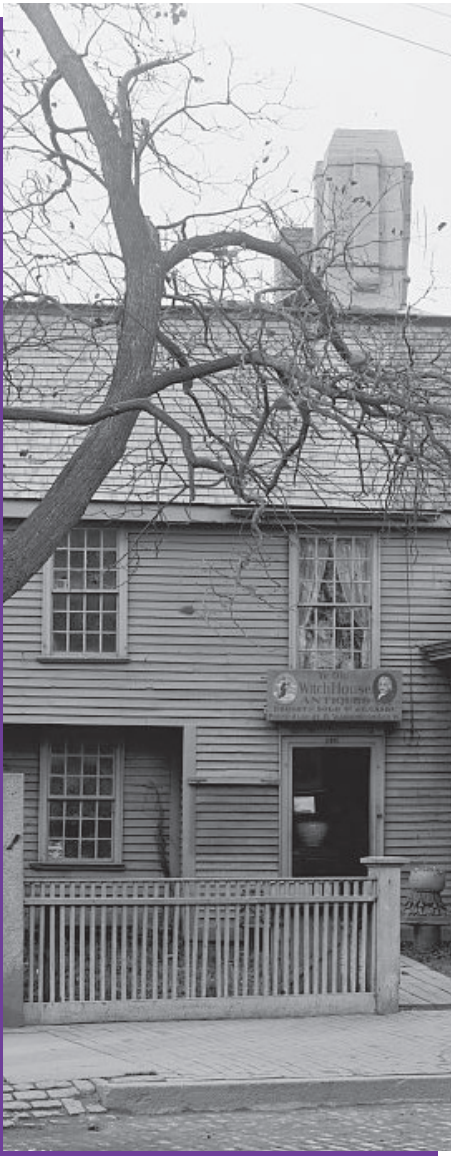
Arthur Miller Plays:

- The Golden Years • The Man Who Had All The Luck • All My Sons • Death Of A Salesman • An Enemy Of The People • The Golden Years • The Crucible • A View From The Bridge • After The Fall • A Memory Of Two Mondays • Incident At Vichy • The Price • The Creation Of The World And Other Buissness • The Archbishop's Ceiling • The American Clock • Playing For Time • The Ride Down Mt. Morgan • Broken Glass • Mr. Peters' Connections • Resurrection Blues • Finishing The Picture

HISTORICAL SITES OF THE SALEM WITCH TRIALS

The Witch House

One of the most iconic landmarks in Salem associated with the witch trials is the Witch House. This well-preserved 17th-century structure was the home of Judge Jonathan Corwin, one of the magistrates who was first called to investigate the reports of witchcraft..



Salem Witch Trials Memorial

A somber and contemplative site next to a burial ground, the Salem witch trials Memorial is dedicated to the 20 individuals who lost their lives during the trials. The memorial features a series of stone benches inscribed with the names of the victims and the dates of their execution.



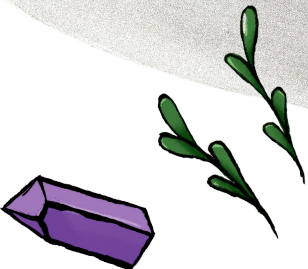
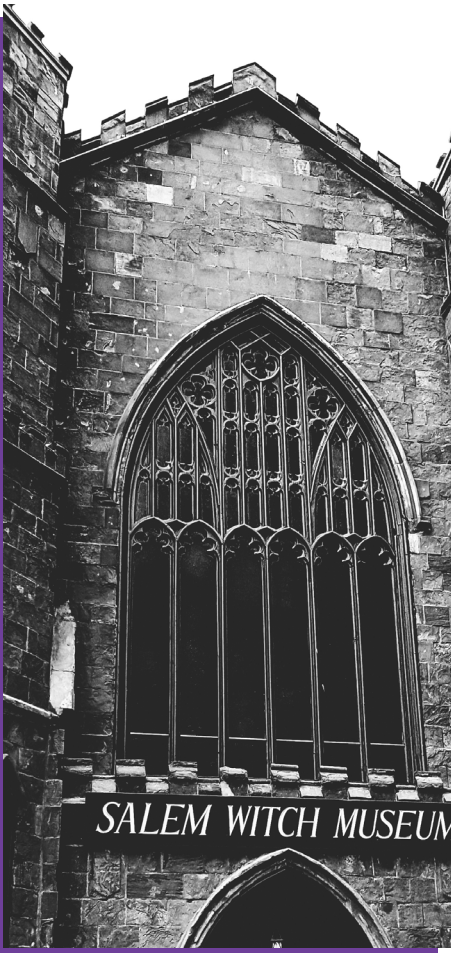
Gallows Hill Park

Gallows Hill Park is believed to be the location where many accused witches were executed. While no original structures remain, the park hosts various memorials and educational programs that examine the events leading up to the trials.



Salem Witch Museum

The Salem Witch Museum offers a multimedia experience that combines life-size figures, lighting effects, and narrations to present an overview of the witch trials. While some aspects may lean towards dramatization, the museum contributes to a broader understanding of the social and psychological factors that fueled the hysteria. The witch museum Becky Nurse works at in Becky Nurse of Salem mirrors this historical site.





ADDICTION AND THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Becky Nurse of Salem contains strong adult language, references to addiction and overdose, references to sexual content, and themes of historical violence against women. Becky is living with opioid use disorder. It's also revealed that her daughter passed away from an overdose. Becky Nurse of Salem advocates for extending empathy to those with substance use disorders, and Becky eventually receives the support from her community she needs to begin her recovery process.

Addiction is now understood to be a disease that affects an individual's brain chemistry. Unfortunately, people with substance use disorders are still often judged by their communities and criminalized, leaving them without a support system and vulnerable to dangerous situations and further drug misuse. People living with addiction who are marginalized experience this neglect and criminalization disproportionately.

For example, the "War on Drugs" has been a huge factor in mass incarceration in America, and targets and criminalizes Black people disproportionately. The Drug Policy Alliance writes, "Black people comprise 13 percent of the U.S. population, and

are consistently documented by the U.S. government to use drugs at similar rates to people of other races. But Black people comprise 30 percent of those arrested for drug law violations – and nearly 40 percent of those incarcerated in state or federal prison for drug law violations."

Sarah Ruhl points out in her Afterword to Becky Nurse of Salem that, "The current focus on the opioid crisis, which disproportionately affects white Americans, is in stark contrast to the lack of attention, empathy, and resources being directed toward public health crises that feature fewer white faces on posters." Becky's drug possession charge results in her being sentenced to community service and rehabilitation, which is unfortunately often not the case for people who are charged with the same crime.

Advocates work to end the stigma around drug use and use harm reduction practices to prevent overdose and treat those with opioid use disorder. Below are resources for educating youth about the opioid epidemic, including prevention strategies, and information on harm reduction services and advocacy opportunities.



RESOURCES

Thank you to 2nd Act for recommending many of these resources on their website!

Information About the Epidemic

This Maryland toolkit has resources for educators and parents as well as a helpful overview of the opioid epidemic. <https://marylandpublicschools.org/Documents/heroinprevention/HeroinOpioidToolkit.pdf>

This is a primer on opioids from the Society for Public Health Education. <https://www.sophe.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Opioid-fact-sheet-FINAL.pdf>

Educational Resources

"RISAS provides a range of evidence-based programs, including the student assistance program Project SUCCESS, which is designed to prevent substance use and promote mental health in youth regardless of income level, cultural context, or immigration status."

The National Alliance on Mental Illness' program is an in-depth, interactive teaching program about mental illness for middle and high school students and college students. This free, 90-minute program, developed by NAMI Rhode Island, "illustrates how we can create positive change in our society by reducing the stigma associated with mental illness." The program is delivered by people living

with mental illness who show that hope and recovery are possible. They also have support groups for individuals and friends and families of individuals: <https://namirhodeisland.org/support-and-education/presentations/inside-mental-illness/>

My Generation Rx includes resources designed to educate teens about the importance of using medications safely, as well as teaching teens key skills to turn down invitations to misuse and positive alternatives to cope with the demands of life. These materials could be delivered in formal classroom settings, after-school programming, youth organization meetings, or any other venue with teen audiences. <https://generationrx.org/toolkits/teen/>

This US Department of Health and Human Services resource includes links to awareness campaigns, prevention toolkits, and national programs. <https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/prevention/prevention-programs-tools/index.html>

This Department of Education site has multiple links to webinars by educators on a variety of topics related to the opioid epidemic. <https://www.ed.gov/opioids/>





Community Resources

The Jim Gillen Teen Center is "a non-clinical, peer-based program, where youth can find a safe and substance-free space to build community and develop a network of support." <https://teenanchor.providencecenter.org/about-us>

Anchor Academy is "a recovery high school combining academics and therapeutic support for students overcoming drug and alcohol addiction." <https://www.providencecenter.org/anchor-academy>

Anchor Recovery has a network of community centers and programs run by people with lived experience of addiction recovery. They believe and advocate for multiple pathways of recovery and can connect you with recovery avenues including a peer recovery specialist. <https://anchorrecovery.providencecenter.org/>

Project Weber*Renew is a center for harm reduction and recovery services. They provide harm reduction supplies such as Narcan and Naloxone, safer use supplies, fentanyl test strips, as well as affinity support groups, recovery support, and outreach programs, and sexual health education and testing. <https://weberrenew.org/>

BH Link is a crisis center in East Providence. <https://www.bhlink.org/>

Fed Up is an activist coalition advocating for policy to end the opioid epidemic. Their vision: "A world where opioids are prescribed cautiously and those with opioid addiction have easy access to effective treatment and recovery services." <https://feduprally.org/>

United Way has a 211 call line that will connect you to an addiction specialist and other community resources. <https://www.unitedwayri.org/get-help/2-1-1/opioid-addiction-recovery/>

Magic Stream has poetry and articles about coping with addiction. <https://magicstream.org/addict.htm>

"2nd Act is a collective of artists in recovery which uses theatre, film, and drama therapy to address the impact of substance use. Together we empower diverse and inclusive communities to promote understanding in the face of stigma." <https://www.weare2ndact.org/>

Unit Two: About The Production

A CONVERSATION WITH Curt Columbus

Becky Nurse of Salem director Curt Columbus discusses the content and themes of the play in conversation with The Good John Proctor director Kimberly Senior:



Curt Columbus: We all know about the opioid crisis in the United States, and in Becky Nurse, Becky has an addiction problem. But Sarah doesn't say that because Becky has an addiction, that means she's a bad person. Instead, she asks, "What if you understand it as the consequence of a life lived?" Becky is a teen mother, her daughter was a teen mother, she's raising her granddaughter on her own. Surely that'll have an effect.

[...] I think what both of our plays are doing is meeting these topics, in our current moment. We're living in this frightful time of post-COVID isolation, and with Roe v. Wade overturned where women's bodies are being controlled. Neither of these things are directly spoken of in the plays, but the essence is present. We are put into structures

that oppress and criminalize women, so sadly, these plays will be relevant until patriarchy ends.

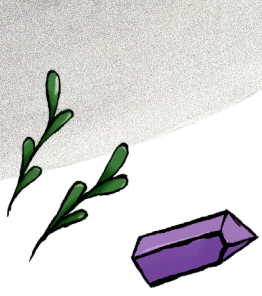
[...] Both plays ask, "Why are women's intelligence, adventurousness, and wisdom deemed 'witchcraft' or 'unnatural'?" Both plays unpack this question against the backdrop of

two very different eras in our history. Monahan's play revisits what I will call the "American founder myth;" we hear a lot of talk about our founding fathers, but almost nothing about our founding mothers. By centering the story of the girls in *The Crucible*, she asks us to consider why their story was only used to support the narrative of the "good" John Proctor. Ruhl's play begins in 2016 against the backdrop of chants of "lock her up." She asks us to consider how Americans have changed, if at all, since the events of the Salem witch trials three centuries ago. By starting her play in an imagined Salem witch museum, with issues like the opioid and mental health crises, and the financial and emotional difficulties of working people swirling throughout, she problematizes our history by

questioning who we are today.

Sarah Ruhl's Afterword to Becky Nurse discusses her response to *The Crucible*, the themes of the play, and her reframing of the Salem story:

The real Abigail Williams was 11 years old. In the play, Miller made her 17. The real John Proctor was a 60-year-old tavern keeper. Miller made him an upright farmer, age 35. The real Abigail Williams never turned to prostitution; Miller writes, in *Echoes Down the Corridor*, that legend has it that Abigail grew up to be a whore in Boston. There is no evidence for that line of thinking, nor is there any evidence that she and John Proctor knew each other before the witch trials... I suppose what strikes me as fundamentally dishonest about *The Crucible* is the mixture of fact and fiction; the copious historical notes, unusually embedded in the stage directions, lead us to believe that we are watching actual history unfold. But we are watching what we always watch onstage—a psychic drama from the mind of a complicated individual relating his psyche to humankind's larger, collective unconscious. That *The Crucible* is



performed at almost every high school and is in fact the way American girls and boys understand the history of Salem, added to my frustration. I thought, All those bonnets, all those Goody Sarahs, and, really, Arthur Miller just wanted to have sex with Marilyn Monroe! I thought, all those women died, but John Proctor was the hero of the story. I thought, to this day, no one knows why the girls engaged in mass hysteria, but it probably was not the lust of one duplicitous eleven-year-old for a middle-aged barkeep. For all of these logical reasons, I thought that I would end up writing my own historical drama about the Salem witch trials, but every time I tried to dip my toe into the 17th century my pen came back and told me to stay in my own era. Perhaps because I felt dwarfed by the long shadow cast by Arthur Miller's mastery. Or perhaps I wanted to stay in the present moment because I have been undone and fascinated by the language of the witch hunt used by Donald Trump from his campaign, in which he whipped crowds into a frenzy, yelling "Lock her up!," with those crowds often replying, "Hang the bitch!," to his term in office, during which he has used the expression "witch hunt" hundreds of times, describing himself as the victim. Not since the burning of witches in Europe has the iconography of witchery been used with such base hypocrisy and to such effect.

Although most contemporary historians have dismissed the rye-bread explanation for the symptoms of hysteria in Salem as sheer folly, we do know that rye was rare in the



New World, and that it was shipped from Europe, often moldering on the long journey. And we also know that Tituba fed rye bread mixed with urine to the girls, trying to get to the bottom of their maladies. It would be ironic if the "cure" for witchcraft was actually a biological deepening and intensifying of the girls' symptoms, which would have subsided on their own after St. Anthony's fire left their bodies. Most contemporary historians eschew a biological explanation, preferring post-traumatic stress from the American Indian Wars, property disputes, and the like as more feasible. I don't know that we'll ever understand why those girls accused their elders of witchcraft. But what we do know is that the accusations were not a function of the lust Abigail Williams had for John Proctor. Speaking of Tituba and the American Indian Wars, I think the historical characters of Tituba and John Indian deserve new plays of their very own. (Two contemporary novels have already been written about

Tituba.) Apparently, Tituba may not have come from Barbados, as *The Crucible* suggests, but was, instead, from South America, a member of the Arawak tribe. The magic she was asked to do was not native to Barbados but was European witchcraft already known to the white women who asked her to perform it. The "othering" of Tituba throughout the ages, and the great mystery surrounding her own desires and intentions, deserve investigation. I did not think that story was mine to write.

A note on the opioid crisis. Massachusetts is one of 10 states that have the highest casualties for opioid overdoses in the country. In 2017, there were 28 deaths per 100,000 people in Massachusetts. 64,000 Americans died of opioid overdoses in 2016, more than died in automobile accidents. It is the largest preventable cause of death for people between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. This cluster has created

what some call a lost generation, flooding the foster-care system with their children. The greatest increase in opioid deaths has been attributed to synthetic opioids like fentanyl. In a bizarre Karmic loop, or bitter irony, the 19th-century opium trade with China, which destroyed many Chinese citizens, greatly enriched Boston. The money from the trade even helped finance cultural institutions, such as hospitals and libraries in Boston, as well as the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem. Even in 19th-century Boston, doctors like Dr. Fitch Edward Oliver warned against the dangers of opium, particularly for women: "Doomed, often, to a life of disappointment, and, it may be, of physical and mental inaction, and in the smaller and more remote towns . . . deprived of all wholesome social diversion, it is not strange that nervous depression, with all its concomitant evils, should sometimes follow, —opium being discreetly selected as the safest and most agreeable remedy."

The current focus on the opioid crisis, which disproportionately affects white Americans, is in stark contrast to the lack of attention, empathy, and resources being directed toward public health crises that feature fewer white faces on posters.

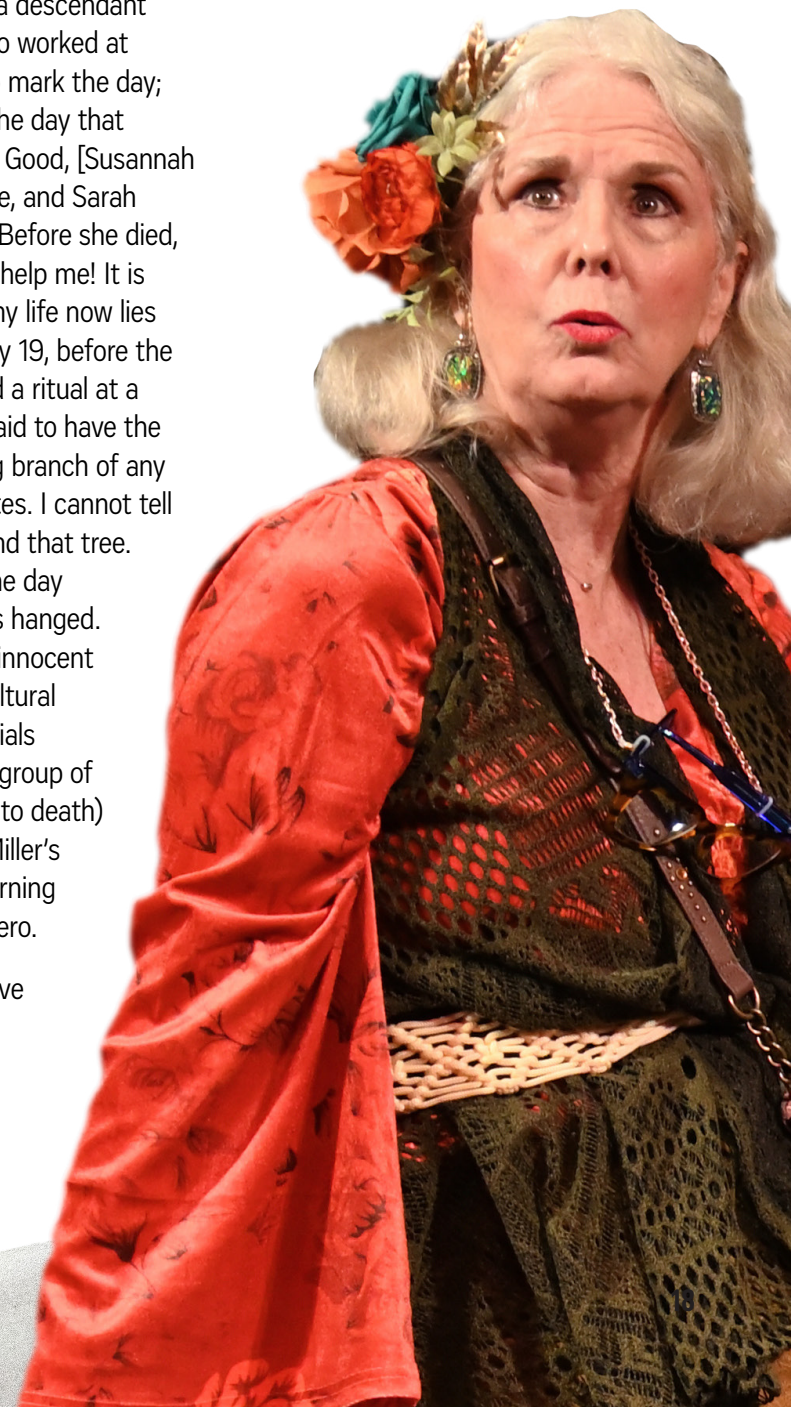
[...] If we are to insist on fact, it should be noted that Gallows Hill does indeed appear to be at the site overlooking a Walgreens in Salem, not a Dunkin' Donuts. Some townspeople and amateur sleuths have claimed that the original site is now a Dunkin' Donuts (a strange fact that led me

down the rabbit hole of this play), but the Walgreens was designated in 2016 as the most probable site of the executions. Much of the evidence was wiped away in an attempt to forget, and one of the few historical sites still preserved is the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, in Danvers.

I did a reading of this play on July 19, in Poughkeepsie, and a descendant of Rebecca Nurse, who worked at the theater, wanted to mark the day; in 1692, July 19 was the day that Rebecca Nurse, Sarah Good, [Susannah Martin, Elizabeth Howe, and Sarah Wildes] were hanged. Before she died, Nurse said, "Oh, Lord, help me! It is false! I am clear. For my life now lies in your hands." On July 19, before the reading, we performed a ritual at a very large tree—it is said to have the largest self-supporting branch of any tree in the United States. I cannot tell you what we did around that tree. Today, August 19, is the day that John Proctor was hanged. John Proctor, also an innocent victim, became the cultural symbol of the witch trials (rather than the large group of women who were put to death) as a result of Arthur Miller's outsized success in turning Proctor into a tragic hero.

[...] Let playwrights have their secrets, their private lusts, their compulsions— but do let us free Abigail Williams from her manufactured lust

for John Proctor. When John Proctor says, "It is a whore!" and the "it" is a child called Abigail, let us consider that the real historical child was neither an "it" nor a whore. As for my own private reason for writing this particular play, I either don't know or I will never tell.



THE PLOT SYNOPSIS

Set in 2016 Salem Massachusetts, we follow the life of 62-year-old Becky Nurse, a modern-day descendant of accused witch Rebecca Nurse. Becky is a tour guide at the local witch museum and her life is overruled by bad luck. The play begins with Becky giving a tour to a group of catholic schoolgirls where she drops the f-bomb and multiple other expletives. After the tour, she stops by her friend Bob's bar for lunch. She downs a beer and goes back to work where her boss, Shelby, is waiting for her. Shelby reprimands Becky for her behavior on her last tour and her unprofessional conduct, especially the drinking during her lunch break. They get into an argument and Shelby ends up firing Becky, but before Becky leaves, she cusses Shelby out and tries to steal the wax statue of her ancestor, Rebecca Nurse. She goes back to Bob's to decompress, and we get to learn about Bob and Becky's friendship in high school. Becky asks Bob for the classifieds and finds a job opening to be a Marriot night-shift clerk. She leaves the bar to check out the Marriot job, but when she gets there, the position has already been filled by an edgy 18-year-old boy named Stan. Becky laments to Stan that this is one of the only open jobs that she was qualified for. Stan explains how he went to see a witch to obtain this job and he gives her the witch's information, but Becky is uneasy about the idea because "my ancestor was killed because of all this witch stuff." Stan asks Becky, "What have you got to lose?" and Becky visits the Witch.

At Psychic Witch's Emporium, Becky is taken aback by how much the Witch seems to know about her family. The Witch asserts that Becky's troubles are the result of a curse set on her family because her grandmother was Rebecca Nurse. She gives Becky crystals and other items that will allegedly help Becky get a new job, her granddaughter recover from her illness, and charm Bob to fall in love with her. However, the service will cost \$400. Becky asks Bob for a loan, and while she's at the bar, she places the love spell crystals in his cash register. She goes home and burns the herbs in the fire, still skeptical and "feeling dumb" about the spells but beginning to believe. She asks, "Gail - Come home, okay?"

Gail does come home from the hospital, and we learn more about Becky and Gail's relationship. We find out that Gail was at the hospital for her mental health. Stan turns up at their house, and it turns out that Gail and Stan met at the hospital. Gail goes out with Stan, and Becky and Gail argue about if Stan is a good guy. They get into a fight. Gail sees Becky taking opioids, and Becky defensively tells her to throw them out. Becky takes the pills back out of the garbage and takes one.

Becky goes back to the Witch with the \$400 for breaking the curse and asks to be the Witch's apprentice. The Witch denies her but gives her the instructions for a love potion and a curse to get Stan to leave town and leave Gail. Becky asks for more money from Bob and distracts him while she places another bag of crystals in the cash register and anoints herself with the love potion. They reminisce over high school, and the love potion begins to work - they kiss. At the house, Becky walks in on Gail and Stan kissing, and goes back to the Witch with \$200 to get Stan to leave. Becky's prescription is revealed to be for endometriosis while she speaks to the Witch about her pain. The Witch channels Amy, Becky's deceased daughter, and says "Beware the eyes lit up in the dark." Becky later sneaks into the Marriott and museum to charm Stan and Shelby's desks, and while at the museum she steals the Rebecca Nurse statue, which has glowing eyes.

Becky decides to start her own Salem tours, "The Real Salem Tour," and Bob reveals that Shelby broke her hip and is on leave after slipping on water by her desk. Gail comes home to Bob and Becky dancing and explains that Stan left her and "literally ran off into the night." Becky feels guilty when Bob says, "It's like you bewitched me," and confesses that she did a love spell. Bob finds it touching, but when being intimate together without the potion on, Bob has a heart attack. At the hospital, Bob recounts a visit from the Virgin Mary during his heart attack, who has convinced him to be a man of principle and therefore end his affair with Becky.

Becky begins her Real Tour of Salem, and criticizes Arthur

Miller's The Crucible for being centered around a man when the real trials persecuted women. A police officer catches sight of her and points out that she needs a license to give tours, and that there is footage of her entering the museum and stealing the statue. They go back in time and Becky transforms into Rebecca Nurse. The crowd chants "Lock her up." Back in the present day, Becky is in jail. Her prescription is taken by the jailer. She asks Bob for bail when he visits, but he refuses because he worries what Sharon, his wife, would think. Becky then asks him to bring her the prescription, and she starts having her first withdrawal symptoms. Gail visits and explains that she's lonely and distressed and now living with Stan, who she depends upon for connection. In withdrawal, Becky sees the Witch in jail. The Witch claims to be different from the Witch Becky visited earlier, and opens a hole in history.

Becky witnesses the trial of Rebecca Nurse. The court performs an invasive search of Rebecca and finds a wound of childbirth that they claim is evidence that she is a witch. Becky wakes up from her dream, and Bob attempts to hand her the pills without realizing doing so is illegal. The jailer catches him and charges Becky with possession. In withdrawal, Becky hears voices asking her to "sign the book," tempting her into witchcraft and recalling testimonies from the Salem witch trials. Stan offers to do a spell to get Becky out of jail. Becky is deep in withdrawal and dreams of the voices but finds Bob in her dream, and he coaches her through it. Bob visits and Becky apologizes, and he admits to still loving her. Stan and Gail perform a ritual to free Becky.

At the courthouse, Becky has her hearing. She testifies and tells the judge about her daughter's overdose and death, as well as her own opioid addiction. Although the judge is not swayed, Becky's testimony moves Shelby to drop the charges against her, saying, "I realize now - I did not imagine you to be real." Later, Becky, Bob, Stan, and Gail are sitting eating ice cream after Gail's performance in the school play. They do a ritual to celebrate their shared love.

THE CHARACTERS

Becky
(in her mid 50s to 60s).
Our heroine.



Bob
(in his mid 50s to 60s).
The man she loves.



Gail
(in her teens, but can be played by an actress in her 20s.) Becky's granddaughter also plays Abigail in Act 2.



A Witch
(age immaterial, might be nice if she were in her 70s), Plays a witch.



Stan
(17 or 18 but can be played by an actor in his 20s)



Shelby
(a smug woman in her 30s), also plays voices in the dark



A shape shifter
plays Policeman, a Jailer, a Magistrate and Voices in the Dark.



NOTABLE THEMES

Addiction

Becky has opioid use disorder during the play and undergoes withdrawal. Additionally, we know that Becky's daughter passed away because of an overdose. As mentioned in the resources above, overprescribing of opioids is one of the driving factors of the opioid epidemic. Becky is prescribed opioids instead of receiving the appropriate care for endometriosis, highlighting also the lack of proper care and healthcare options for people with uteruses. It's revealed that Becky gave her daughter Amy one of her pills for pain from her kidney infection, and Amy later developed opioid use disorder.

Becky tells her story in court in front of a Judge, and Shelby drops the museum's charges against her. The Judge sentences her to community service and rehabilitation, and Becky is able to leave jail and focus on recovery. Community support and the judge's sentencing of rehabilitation allows Becky to get better. Unfortunately, opioid use disorder is often criminalized, and not everyone is able to leave jail and seek rehabilitation like Becky does. Becky Nurse of Salem tells a story of empathy and compassion for those with substance use disorder.

Community Support and Mental Health

In the play, we see how each character's experiences with mental health impact their lives. Becky's grief over the death of her daughter returns throughout the play, and she depends on opioids in times of stress. Gail has been admitted to the hospital for her mental health concerns and describes how her loneliness has led her to depend on Stan, who she met at the hospital.

Becky's family is very important to her, and all the problems she asks the witch to help with have to do with maintaining her community. She's raising her granddaughter, whose hospitalization is a great source of worry to Becky. Bob is also a part of Becky's support system, as a friend and a romantic partner. Eventually, Becky's community works together to support her – Stan and Gail do their ritual, Bob provides emotional support, and Shelby removes the charges to stop any further harm to Becky. At the end of the play, we see how Becky, Bob, Gail, and Stan are able to support one another in community, which they symbolize with their ritual.

Project SUCCESS at Rhode Island Student Assistance Services (RISAS) provides resources that focus on

the intersection between substance abuse and mental health in young people.

The Relevance of History/Past Meets Present

Becky Nurse has a few scenes that flashback to Rebecca Nurse's story and the Salem witch trials. And it's significant that the main character is descended directly from one of the women accused. Like Rebecca, Becky is navigating the justice system, which has little empathy for her family's trauma and Becky's mental health. The play shows a through line between how Rebecca was treated and how Becky is being interrogated. Like many of the witches at the Salem trials, Becky is punished for acting outside of the norms of her workplace and her town and is criminalized before being treated with compassion.

Additionally, the play questions who can access historical fact, and what types of knowledge are accepted by academic authorities like the museum. Shelby and Becky argue over who is correct about locations of historical events, and at one point Shelby seems to laugh at Becky for her lack of academic knowledge. Although Becky changes her mind on the location of the gallows by the end of the play, the play questions who has the right to knowledge about the past. Becky, a descendant of someone executed during the trials, is shut out of the institutions that seek to learn and teach about it. Ruhl uses surrealism to highlight the connections between the past and the present. In Ruhl's play, the past haunts the present, in supernatural and very real ways.

Unit Three: Entering The Text

EXERCISE 1: MAKING YOUR OWN RESPONSE

Becky Nurse of Salem responds to and comments on Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and its focus and biases.

- Think about a book, play, movie, song, or other work of art that you have questions about. What's the biggest thing you would change about it? Does anything about it make you angry, sad, or curious?
- Brainstorm a response to the piece of art – write a chapter of a book, a verse of a song, a poem, draw a picture, create a playlist, create a movement piece, anything you want! Students can volunteer to share their creations with the class.
- If you made the play before you could read the last chapter, how would YOU change the ending? Why would you make that change?

EXERCISE 2: 101 WAYS TO READ A MONOLOGUE

A monologue, or soliloquy, is a long speech made by one person. Sometimes it can be a challenge for a young actor to take on a piece of text and perform it on his or her own, so this activity is a way to get your students to forget their inhibitions and have fun with it.

- Pick one or more of the monologues below, and hand them out to your students. You can assign or let them choose which monologue they want to do and give them a few minutes to read it over a few times and familiarize themselves with it
- In partners, let them read it out loud to one another a few times in whichever way they want to.
- After this, using your own suggestions and those of your students, throw out different ways to read the monologue. Feel free to be as wacky as you want -- this is supposed to be fun. You can filter the suggestions and pick one that you think would work and let them do it that way. Some examples of different ways to read it include (but are definitely not limited to): an aerobics instructor, an army general, someone who desperately has to go to the bathroom, a squirrel, the laziest person in the world, singing it, whispering it, telling it like it's a scary story, like an interpretive dancer, like they are in a musical, like a President, or a King...you can even use celebrity names and have them imitate them using the monologue
- This can be done with all the students working in partners or on their own at the same time. If this is a particularly brave group, you can challenge them to take your suggestions and perform individually in front of the class
- After every willing student has performed, take some time to talk about what they got from it. Did it help them understand the monologue better? If so, how? Did they find that any of the interpretations, as silly as they may have been, worked and made some sense? Which ones, and why? How does this help them as actors?



Exercises for reflection after the play

EXERCISE 3: I'M NOT BAD, I'M JUST DRAWN THIS WAY

One of the most important jobs for an actor is to figure out why their character does what they do. Even if an actor is playing a villain, it is important that the actor not judge or criticize their character's actions—instead, they must play them truthfully.

→ Assign each student (or depending on the class, a group of students) one character from the play. They must take an in-depth look at that character.

→ Have them come up with things that the character says about themselves and lines that other characters say to describe them.

→ Group students into pairs, with one student playing an interviewer (have them create the type of interview they want to do – is it a serious news report, an Access Hollywood segment, an Oprah style emotional tell-all?) and one student playing their character. The interviewer can ask about events in the play, and the student playing the character can explain why they are not so bad after all. Whether or not they actually believe it, encourage students to think about their character's motivations for their actions in the play.

→ Discuss with your students how actors, writers and directors must always ask why people behave the way they do.

EXERCISE 4: LETTERS IN CHARACTER

The first part of the following activity gives students the opportunity to interact with the characters and plot points of the story. The second half of this activity allows students to get inside the character's head and understand the story from their perspective.

→ Have your students choose a character from the play and, using any of the following prompts, write a letter to that character: What advice would you give the character at this point in the story? What is something important that you want this character to know right now? Tell this character about an event in the story that hasn't happened yet.

→ Once everyone has finished, collect the letters and redistribute them to other students in the class.

→ Now, each student must imagine that they are the character that the letter is addressed to and respond to it from his or her perspective and their character's motivations for their actions in the play.

→ Have students write their responses in the form of a monologue and perform them for the class.

MONOLOGUES:

BECKY

Bob? Remember that night—you climbed up that ladder on the power plant by the bay, and I said, no, you're going to fall and break your goddam neck, but you wanted to see the view? You climbed up and waved to me. And then you came down, and we swam, at night, and the power plant was on all night and it glowed. And there was a tremor in the water. And I was scared, and you kissed me.

Back when Rebecca Nurse was alive it was dark all night long and you couldn't see what was going on in the yard in front of your face. And they thought they saw witches in the night sky, flying around on broomsticks. Now it's lit all the time but we still can't see a goddam thing.

WITCH

Yes. I think you need to remove the bad energy she's created in your life. Burn this incense and put the ashes into a little pile on her desk. And sprinkle some of this holy water around her desk to protect yourself from her. And if there's anything in the museum that could be helpful to remove the Nurse curse – an object – a statue? Bring it to me. Come back Friday to tell me how it goes... Look, Becky. I like you. I have to pay rent, like anyone else, plus my landlord wants to kick me out and put in a Starbucks. Otherwise I would do this for free. But at the end of the day, none of this is about money. You don't really want anything material. No one does. You want hope for your granddaughter, you want health, you want love. Is this true?



SCENE 1:
WITCH and
BECKY

WITCH
So you're looking for a new job?

BECKY
Yeah.

WITCH
Good, I don't do revenge.

BECKY
I didn't say revenge.

WITCH
For the new job part, burn these, then
put the ashes under your pillow.
The witch gives her a little package.

BECKY
Okay.

WITCH
I can also see that you lack love in your
life.

BECKY
I didn't come here for that.

WITCH
I see that you once had a love but it was
a very painful love. Is this right?

BECKY
Yes.

WITCH
I see that you have some bad luck in
your life, caused by a curse, way back.

BECKY
My great-great-great-great

grandmother is Rebecca Nurse.

WITCH
Oh no! That's bad.

BECKY
Yeah.

WITCH
We have to remove that curse.

BECKY
Can you do that?

WITCH
Yes. For 400 dollars.

BECKY
Jesus, 400 dollars!

WITCH
To remove a curse like that, as old as
that, I have to do rituals non-stop for a
week.

BECKY
I don't have that kind of money.

WITCH
I can also see you're worried about a
young woman. Your daughter? No.
Your daughter is not with us. Am I
right or wrong?

BECKY
Right.

WITCH
Then your grand-daughter. Am I right?

BECKY
Oh goddamit.

WITCH
You're worried that what happened
to your daughter will happen to your
grand-daughter.

Am I right?
Becky nods.

WITCH
We can't mess around with this. We
have to remove that curse. I can see
you hesitating. Becky—don't worry—I
only use my power for good, not for
evil. You have to trust me. Do you trust
me?

BECKY
Okay.

WITCH
You have to follow all my instructions
to the letter. And don't tell anyone what
you're doing. When can you get me the
400 dollars by?

BECKY
Tomorrow, I guess.

SCENE 2:
GAIL AND
BECKY

BECKY
It's bull, Gail. I want you to be happy.
That is the wish of mothers and
grandmothers for their children. Even if
we ourselves are not happy, even if deep
down we're not sure if happiness even
exists, still we have this dumb certain
hope that happiness will and must exist
for our children, for our grand-children,
and if we cannot provide that for them –
well, then we are the worst f-ing failures
on this planet.

JAILER
(Over the loudspeaker.) Visiting time is
over.

BECKY
Bye Gail.

GAIL
Bye Grandma. They hug. I'm scared.

BECKY
Of what?

GAIL
When I pretend to be Betty, and twitch
and shake, it's like I'm not in my body,
and I think of mom, and then Betty
has to scream for her dead mother, and
I scream that I'm flying to her – and
suddenly I'm not pretending at all – and
I worry I'm going to end up like Mom
somehow –

BECKY
No. You're not going to end up like her.
You're different.

JAILER
Oky-doke.
GAIL. Maybe I should go back to the
hospital while you're in jail?

BECKY
We can't afford the hospital. And I'll be
out any day. Just sit tight, okay?

JAILER
(Over the loudspeaker.) Come on now.

SCENE 3:
BECKY AND
GAIL

BECKY
I'm just so goddam glad you're home.

GAIL
Me too.

BECKY
Come sit. Cuddle.

GAIL
GAIL. I'm getting too old to cuddle.

BECKY
C'mon. I think I got two more worry
lines since you've been gone.

GAIL
Sorry...

BECKY
It's okay. I'm glad I have wrinkles, you
know why?

GAIL
Why?

BECKY
Because each wrinkle is something
I did with you. These smile lines, me
smiling at you. These worry lines here
– me worrying about you. These lines
here – me making funny faces at you
when you were a baby. Becky makes a
funny face. Gail smiles for the first time
since she's been home.

GAIL
Yeah.

BECKY
So what'd they do with you at the
hospital? Did your bad thoughts go
away?

GAIL
I don't really want to talk about it.

BECKY
You feel better though?

GAIL
Yeah.

BECKY
You sure?

GAIL
I think so. I'm just glad to be home.

BECKY
You hungry?

GAIL
Yes, so hungry.

BECKY
I'll make you some grilled cheese?

GAIL
Yes! You home all day?

BECKY
Yeah, your first day back, of course I'm
home.

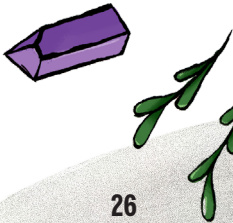
GAIL
That's so nice of Shelby. She gave you
the day off?

BECKY
Yup. So I'll make you some grilled
cheese...then we could – walk around
Walden pond...or a movie...what do you
want to do? The doorbell rings. Who
could that be?

GAIL
Maybe Stan?

BECKY
Who the hell is Stan?

GAIL
A guy I met at the hospital. We were in
group therapy together. He got out last
week. I'm just going to run and change.





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