

Salem's Daughter

Written By CRAIG SODARO

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SALEM'S DAUGHTER

By CRAIG SODARO

CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance.)

	<u># of lines</u>
JUSTICE MARKHAM* a judge	1
SARAH BROOKS about twenty-one	36
HEATHER NAUGHTON a young woman	327
DOTTIE her friend	152
JEANNIE another friend	112
MARCY another	126
TONI..... another	112
JENNIFER..... Heather's closest friend	185
COREY DAYTON* Heather's husband	14
SAM HALLOWAY* a contractor	15
MIKE CASON* his assistant	7
DETECTIVE ELLEN BRENT** .. a policewoman	70

*Optional character

**Can be played by the same actress who plays SARAH BROOKS.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE: The Meeting House at Salem, 1692.

SCENE TWO: The Naughton house, Fall evening, present.

SCENE THREE: The same, an hour later.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE: Outside the Naughton house, Fall, eight years later.

SCENE TWO: The Naughton house, Fall evening, one month later.

SCENE THREE: The same, a half-hour later.

SALEM'S DAUGHTER

ACT ONE Scene One*

Played before the curtain. A blue light comes up to reveal SARAH BROOKS at STAGE RIGHT. She is dressed in a long black dress that shows a great deal of wear. Her apron is soiled. Her bowed head wears a white cap, as was typical of the women in Salem in 1692. Her hands are bound, but a strange fire burns in her eyes. At STAGE LEFT, seated high above the poor woman, sits JUSTICE MARKHAM in a black robe, white collar and white wig. His face shows no mercy. [NOTE: If the character of MARKHAM is being omitted, please consult PRODUCTION NOTES.]

MARKHAM: In the judgment of this court, Sarah Brooks, you are, in fact, a witch! You have been given every opportunity to defend yourself and your actions, but at every turn have chosen silence. It is the silence of evil when confronted with good. The silence of villainy when confronted with righteousness. Indeed, there can be no defense for your crimes, and, consequently, this court sentences you to hang as a witch at dawn tomorrow! *(SARAH looks at MARKHAM. She laughs low and heartily.)*

SARAH: Oh, this is a grand moment for you, Justice Markham. Another witch dispatched to punishment. One less troublesome soul wandering about the village. But where is your triumph, your honor? I am nothing but a poor woman whose husband died. I have no family left to rely on, so I have been forced to sell herbs and potions to those brave enough to buy my elixirs. It was all I could do to keep from starving. I live in the woods because that is where my poor husband built our house. He intended to clear a plot for farming, but fell ill before he could do so. I seldom come to the village because I do not have the appropriate dress. I know I am talked about. I have felt the laughter on my back as I walked the streets. True, I have no friends because no one in the village has courage. But I am no witch. Nor have I ever wronged anyone, in thought or word. I know you don't believe that because you have witnesses. You have those who judge only with their eyes, for they have no hearts. And they will go on living. As for me...you send me to my rest. I know it will be sweet, for I am tired. Too tired of breathing air contaminated by mistrust and deceit. I shall lie still and calm, and woe to he who touches my bones. Disturb me and my death will know no bounds! You hear that, Justice Markham? My death will know no bounds! *(MARKHAM slams the gavel rhythmically as LIGHT FADES OUT. SARAH chuckles to herself.)*

* Consult PRODUCTION NOTES
at back of playbook.

ACT ONE
Scene Two

Fall, present.

The living room of HEATHER NAUGHTON'S house. A French door stands UP CENTER, dominating the room. On either side of the door are bookshelves and paintings, including a portrait. At LEFT is a fireplace with a small couch and chair set before it. At RIGHT is a table, complete with two chairs. On a shelf or desk At LEFT is a telephone. Entrance DOWN LEFT leads to dining room and kitchen. Entrance DOWN RIGHT leads to hall, upstairs and outside. Flowers and plants soften the room. In all, the room gives the impression that the Naughton's are long-time residents of the community, have a substantial income and good taste.

AT RISE: Doorbell rings.

HEATHER'S VOICE: *(OFF LEFT.)* Coming! *(HEATHER bursts IN LEFT. She is eighteen, dressed casually. She carries two bowls of chips, with dip and salsa on top. Doorbell rings again.)* You're early! The invitation said seven, not five to seven! *(She drops bowls on table and EXITS RIGHT.)*

DOTTIE'S VOICE: *(OFF RIGHT.)* Where were you?

JEANNIE'S VOICE: *(OFF RIGHT.)* We do have the right night, don't we? *(HEATHER leads DOTTIE and JEANNIE IN RIGHT. Like her, they are seniors, and each carries an overnight bag.)*

HEATHER: I was up to my elbows in chips.

DOTTIE: *(Moving to table.)* Thank goodness! I'm starving!

JEANNIE: What else is new?

DOTTIE: *(Munching away.)* Is this ranch dip?

HEATHER: Yeah. Mom got a bunch of snacks and left them in the fridge with a note. *(Quoting.)* "Have a great final fling!"

JEANNIE: *(Soberly.)* Hard to think this is the last time.

HEATHER: Yeah. But we're seniors. Who knows where we'll end up next year?

JEANNIE: I wish we could stay right here. We've had so much fun that... well, don't tell anybody, but I almost don't want to graduate. *(JEANNIE sits on the couch, sadly.)*

HEATHER: *(Sitting next to her.)* Maybe we'll all end up at the same school. I'm thinking about State. You said you're probably going there.

JEANNIE: But it won't be the same.

HEATHER: Sure it will!

DOTTIE: That's not what my sister said. She and her best friend went to State, and well, remember that Ricki Lake show (*or other current popular talk show*) about best friends who tried to kill each other?

HEATHER: Dottie, your sister never tried to kill anybody!

DOTTIE: Her roommate did. She got really weird. She started going out with this guy that worked in a pet shop. He had his ear pierced seven times. I mean, during a rainstorm he was a walking lightning rod! Anyhow, he gave her a river asp for her birthday.

JEANNIE: A snake?

DOTTIE: A deadly snake. And one night the snake got loose and slithered into my sister's bed.

JEANNIE: Did it bite her?

DOTTIE: It tried. Thank goodness it was cold!

HEATHER: (*Sarcastically.*) The snake froze?

DOTTIE: No, smarty. My sister was wearing long johns under her pajamas. Saved her life, but not the friendship. She moved out the next morning! (*Doorbell rings.*)

HEATHER: (*Holding up right hand.*) I promise never to have a pet snake!
(*HEATHER EXITS RIGHT.*)

JEANNIE: I guess I just need to look on the bright side.

DOTTIE: Yeah, and have a chip. It'll keep you stress-free. (*HEATHER leads MARCY, TONI and JENNIFER IN RIGHT. Each carries a pillow and overnight bag.*)

MARCY: I might have known you'd be eating, Dottie!

TONI: I saw the fattest woman today in Safeway! She was huge! When she walked down the aisles, she knocked cans and boxes off the shelves. That whale couldn't fit by the register.

DOTTIE: I am not a whale!

HEATHER: Guys, calm down. It's going to be a long night if you start fighting this early! (*Brightly.*) Hey, Jennifer, happy birthday!

JENNIFER: (*Flatly.*) Thanks.

HEATHER: You don't seem too excited.

MARCY: (*Itching to tell.*) She had a close encounter of the worst kind today.

JENNIFER: Marcy!

HEATHER: What happened?

JENNIFER: Nothing. (*Covering.*) Hey, does anybody remember our first party?

TONI: That was in kindergarten! And you liked Troy. Remember Troy Arnold?

DOTTIE: That short little red-headed kid?

JENNIFER: I did not!

MARCY: You did, too!

TONI: Well, Jennifer, I've got news for you! I saw Troy Arnold last week. He works at a printing shop in Grove Point. And you know something?

DOTTIE: He's still in love with Jennifer!

TONI: Nope. Doesn't remember her at all. But don't feel bad, Jen. He's still short and has red hair, but now he's got zits to match!

JEANNIE: Oh, gross!

MARCY: (*Looking around the room.*) Hey, Heather, your folks do something in here?

HEATHER: (*Sarcastically.*) Do something to this room? You're kidding! This room is exactly the way Grandfather Naughton left it. See this ashtray? (*She holds up ashtray.*)

DOTTIE: Why do you keep it around when nobody smokes?

HEATHER: Because Grandfather Naughton always had it right here.

TONI: No offense, but I don't understand people like your parents.

HEATHER: The Naughtons were founding fathers of this town. Remember how we used to do seventh grade history reports on them? If we don't uphold the traditions, who will?

JENNIFER: Who wants to?

HEATHER: Father did break one tradition. He had a shed built behind the house. And do you know what they found when they dug the hole for the foundation? Bone chips.

MARCY: (*Chilled.*) Human bone chips?

JEANNIE: I'll bet they were! Wasn't this—

MARCY: Let's not be ghoulish!

HEATHER: Speaking of ghoulish, has anyone noticed the kids moving in lately?

TONI: (*Coyly.*) There's this one guy I've noticed. Gotta handle it with care.

HEATHER: (*Disgustedly.*) Really?

DOTTIE: What's wrong with 'em?

HEATHER: They just don't belong here.

TONI: They're a little rough around the edges.

HEATHER: The edges! Their clothes are stupid! I swear they all shop at Goodwill. And it's like they never wash or anything. Have you noticed their hair? It stands up by itself.

JENNIFER: (*Playing with her necklace.*) Well, maybe they can't afford to—

HEATHER: Please, Jennifer! Everybody can afford shampoo, for crying out loud.

MARCY: My mom says it's the new assembly plant.

TONI: My dad's sure happy about it.

HEATHER: Sure. He owns the bank. But he doesn't have to go to school with any of them. At least they won't follow us to college.

MARCY: Yeah, it's time to break out of here and go someplace with some real class!

DOTTIE: You mean classes for a change.

HEATHER: Why do you keep playing with that necklace, Jen?

JENNIFER: No reason.

TONI: It's a birthday present.

HEATHER: We don't give birthday presents.

MARCY: (*Knowingly, sarcastically.*) It's not from one of us.

HEATHER: Troy Arnold?!

JENNIFER: No!

TONI: It's from that weird new girl in choir.

JEANNIE: The one who wears white socks?

JENNIFER: There's nothing wrong with wearing white socks.

HEATHER: With a skirt? She just came about two weeks ago, right?
What's her name?

MARCY: Sadie

JENNIFER: Sarah.

HEATHER: That's right. Sarah. Like out of the Bible. So she gave you a present? You aren't like friends or anything, are you?

JENNIFER: I see her once in a while.

DOTTIE: She's the one who carries everything with her, right? I mean she doesn't have a locker or anything?

JENNIFER: Hers keeps getting jammed.

HEATHER: Well, she looks stupid carrying everything with her. *(She looks closely at the necklace.)* What is that thing anyway?

JENNIFER: A cat.

HEATHER: Look at its eyes. They kind of glow. *(The other girls move in for a look.)*

MARCY: Yeah! That's weird.

JEANNIE: Is it electric?

DOTTIE: I saw something like that in a movie once. A witch wore a necklace like that. *(JENNIFER moves away.)*

JENNIFER: *(Lightly.)* Sarah's no witch.

DOTTIE: I didn't say she was, Jennifer. What's wrong with you?

JENNIFER: You're acting like there's something wrong with her.

HEATHER: Well, she's new, and she's kind of like the others. It'll take a while for them to fit in, you know?

TONI: Speaking of witches, they used to bury the bodies around here, didn't they, Heather?

HEATHER: *(Cautiously.)* That's... that's just what my mother told me.

JENNIFER: There's no such thing as a witch!

HEATHER: We know that. But that didn't stop them from hanging a few back in the 1600s.

TONI: And they couldn't tell where the bodies were buried, right?

HEATHER: Yeah, they figured if somebody knew where the bodies were

buried, they'd dig them up and then they'd come back to life.

JEANNIE: That's horrible and I don't want to talk about it anymore. I don't want our last birthday party to be—well—

TONI: Something out of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*?

HEATHER: You're right. Why don't you go out to the fridge and get something to drink, okay? We've got everything that comes in a bottle or can.

TONI: Want something to drink, Heather?

HEATHER: Sure. Bring me a Dr. Pepper. Jennifer, you want anything?

JENNIFER: No, I'm fine.

MARCY: Well, I'm ready for something, even as tame as Coke. (MARCY, JEANNIE, DOTTIE EXIT LEFT. TONI moves LEFT.)

TONI: Don't go doing any serious gossiping. I don't want to miss a word! (TONI EXITS LEFT.)

HEATHER: You're sure quiet tonight, Jennifer.

JENNIFER: Sorry. Tired, I guess.

HEATHER: You must have been too tired this afternoon to talk.

JENNIFER: Look, Heather, I was busy.

HEATHER: I had something important I wanted to ask you.

JENNIFER: (*Tiredly.*) Yes, I think Corey Dayton's worth pursuing.

HEATHER: You make him sound like an antelope.

JENNIFER: Sorry. But it's not that big a deal.

HEATHER: (*Sitting, concerned.*) What is a big deal to you these days, Jen? (JENNIFER shrugs.) Your new friend, is that it?

JENNIFER: Heather, you've been my best friend since kindergarten. Don't worry. We're friends 'til the end.

HEATHER: But you don't seem to care about the same things anymore. I really have to ask you something. Why did you ever join the school Welcome Club?

JENNIFER: I think it's a good idea. New kids in school need someone who will help them out.

HEATHER: Let the geeks do that.

JENNIFER: Look, Heather, don't you ever put yourself in someone else's

place? Think about how you'd feel the first time you walked into Salem High. Wouldn't it be nice to know that there's a group ready to help you out and give you a place to go just to talk if you had a question or something?

HEATHER: It's noble. But if anything, we ought to be getting rid of some of these kids!

JENNIFER: That's not for us to say.

HEATHER: Salem High is overcrowded. They should be bussed to Shelbyville. There are plenty of lockers there.

JENNIFER: You really believe that?

HEATHER: Why mess up our school? But I guess that doesn't matter to you. Not a whole lot does.

JENNIFER: Like you said, different things matter. I decided now that I'm a senior that I'd try to be a bit less shallow in my thinking.

HEATHER: Are you saying I'm shallow?

JENNIFER: I'm saying I've been shallow. I want to expand a bit. (*HEATHER moves away, hurt.*)

HEATHER: I see. So being friends with the lowlifes like Sarah What's-her-name is your idea of expanding?

JENNIFER: You're not being fair.

HEATHER: And neither are you! Our friendship goes way back.

JENNIFER: Isn't it strong enough to allow a few new thoughts here and there?

HEATHER: Remember that cake we had when we were ten?

JENNIFER: The pirates?

HEATHER: The ballerinas.

JENNIFER: Oh, yeah!

HEATHER: Six ballerinas, all alike. And it said, "Always in step." Are we still? (*JEANNIE, TONI, DOTTIE and MARCY ENTER LEFT with soda cans.*)

DOTTIE: (*Admonishingly.*) I thought you said you have everything that comes in bottles or cans, Heather!

HEATHER: I am sorry my mother didn't buy Diet Dr. Pepper, Dottie.

DOTTIE: It's okay. I'll live with Seven-Up.

HEATHER: Hey! We've got a great idea.

JENNIFER: What?

HEATHER: Let's ask that new girl Sarah over for the party.

JENNIFER: (*Concerned.*) Why?

TONI: Yeah! It'd be fun. Somebody new.

JEANNIE: We've never had anybody different at our birthday parties.

DOTTIE: I think it's a stupid idea.

HEATHER: Oh, c'mon! We'll be doing her a favor, right? I mean, she'll be making some great new friends. How about it?

MARCY: I'm game. Maybe she can tell great ghost stories or something.

JENNIFER: Look, I'm not really that good of friends with her. I don't even think she'd come. And she doesn't know anybody else here.

HEATHER: How do you know?

MARCY: She's got a crush on a guy. Even I know that.

JENNIFER: So?

MARCY: Do you know who it is?

TONI: I can't imagine.

MARCY: Corey Dayton!

JEANNIE: (*Glancing at HEATHER, nervously.*) Corey Dayton! Oh, gosh.

HEATHER: A little out of her league, don't you agree?

MARCY: Especially since he's taking you to the Fall Fling, Heather.

HEATHER: (*Mockingly.*) Little ole moi?

MARCY: He's asking you tomorrow, you know that!

JENNIFER: She can still like a guy, can't she?

HEATHER: Jennifer, you act like some kind of spy or something. She can like Corey all she wants.

TONI: The poor kid just needs to get out a bit and meet some of the kids at school.

DOTTIE: Like us.

HEATHER: Really. I can't imagine spending another Friday night at home in that trailer. You know she lives in a trailer somewhere in the woods?

JENNIFER: It's just temporary.

HEATHER: It's okay. Good houses are hard to find around here.

MARCY: Especially if you can't pay too much.

JENNIFER: Can't we just stick together like old times?

HEATHER: Do we need a vote? *(She looks one to another.)* It'll be fun!
(HEATHER moves to phone.) Oh, gosh! I just thought of something.
Does she have a phone?

JEANNIE: *(Laughing.)* Heather! *(JENNIFER stares into fireplace, and holds the cat on her necklace.)*

HEATHER: You really like that necklace, don't you, Jen?

DOTTIE: I know! Her phone number's probably in that student directory update.

TONI: You got one, Heather? *(HEATHER moving to bookshelf.)*

HEATHER: I wouldn't be caught dead without one. *(She finds the book.)*
Do you want to call her, Jen?

JENNIFER: You know, I don't think she's home.

MARCY: Probably out with Corey.

JENNIFER: No, she said something about going to Grove Point to visit some relatives.

HEATHER: No harm in trying.

JENNIFER: Heather, please?

HEATHER: You've gotten to be such a stick in the mud lately, Jen. Let's loosen up.

DOTTIE: Yeah, drain that stress from your life! *(She eats some more chips as HEATHER looks up the number.)*

HEATHER: Sarah... Sarah... Sarah Brooks. *(HEATHER dials.)*

MARCY: That name rings a bell.

TONI: She's in your first period English class.

MARCY: *(Thinking.)* English... English...

HEATHER: Sarah? Hi! This is Heather. Heather Naughton. You know, fifth period choir? Yeah. Listen, Sarah, there's a group of us over at my house, and we're having a birthday party. Oh, no! It's only Jennifer's birthday, but ever since kindergarten, we've all celebrated our birthdays on the same day. Kind of a community party. Anyway,

I wonder if you'd like to come over. Sure, I mean it! We love the necklace you gave Jennifer, and it'd be fun for you to get in with the crowd. I know how hard it is trying to get started in a new school, especially senior year. Oh, and Sarah, Corey's going to be stopping by. Corey Dayton. Well, I hear you've got the hots for him. And you know something? I've heard him mention your name.

JENNIFER: Heather!

HEATHER: Sure, bring your sleeping bag. We're all sleeping over. Yeah, my house is the one on top of the hill. Okay, see you, bye! (*HEATHER hangs up.*) She is so happy!

TONI: And you are so mean!

HEATHER: We are so mean.

JENNIFER: What are you going to do?

MARCY: How about a little initiation?

JEANNIE: What are you talking about?

DOTTIE: Remember how we got initiated into volleyball?

TONI: Who can forget? I'm still combing jello out of my hair.

HEATHER: We don't want to do anything like that.

JENNIFER: You do and I'm leaving.

HEATHER: Jen! You're my best friend! I'm not going to risk my friendship with you on some stupid prank. You're right. The whole idea is dumb. Let's just have a nice time, okay?

MARCY: Sounds like a drag, Heather!

HEATHER: I changed my mind, alright? How about you guys take the stuff upstairs now, and then we'll put a video on?

JENNIFER: Sure. (*JENNIFER leads the group in picking up the bags and moving RIGHT. Only MARCY and HEATHER don't help.*)

DOTTIE: Gosh! Whose is this?

MARCY: Mine. Will you take it up for me?

DOTTIE: What's in there? Bricks?

MARCY: Just make up and stuff.

DOTTIE: I knew you had a lot to cover up, but there must be enough in here to make over Mt. Rushmore! (*TONI, DOTTIE, JENNIFER and JEANNIE EXIT RIGHT.*)

MARCY: Not like you to cave in, Heather.

HEATHER: Nobody caved in.

MARCY: Then what happened to initiation?

HEATHER: What Jennifer doesn't know won't hurt her.

MARCY: But will it hurt Miss Sarah Dipwad?

HEATHER: It'll teach her a thing or two about getting interested in people who I like.

MARCY: What are you going to do?

HEATHER: I've got an old family recipe.

MARCY: What? From a book of spells or something like that?

HEATHER: Come on! This stuff is to die for! (*HEATHER and MARCY EXIT LEFT as the CURTAIN FALLS.*)

ACT ONE
Scene Three

A short time later.

AT RISE: HEATHER ENTERS LEFT carrying birthday cake. MARCY follows her ON. JENNIFER, DOTTIE, JEANNIE and TONI stand around the room. SARAH sits in chair, no one near her.

HEATHER: (*Singing.*) Happy birthday to us! (*MARCY, DOTTIE, TONI and JEANNIE sing cheerfully, while JENNIFER adds her voice weakly.*)
Happy birthday to us! Happy birthday, happy birthday! Happy birthday to us!

MARCY: Eighteen candles! Can you believe it!

TONI: Whose turn is it to blow them out?

HEATHER: How about Sarah? (*The GIRLS look at SARAH, who wears unfashionable clothes. Her hair is pulled back severely. The only touch of color in her outfit is a bright scarf around her neck.*)

SARAH: (*Self-consciously.*) Oh, no... it's not my birthday.

MARCY: It's okay. It's really only Jennifer's birthday!

HEATHER: And Jennifer won't mind, will you?

JENNIFER: No. Really, Sarah. Go ahead.

DOTTIE: And you better do it soon before the cake catches on fire!
(*SARAH shyly rises and moves to cake, which HEATHER has placed on the table with the chips.*)

End of Script Sample

PROPERTY LIST

ACT ONE

ONSTAGE: Small couch and chair, table with two chairs, shelf or desk with telephone, ashtray, phone directory, portrait hanging on wall. Plants, flowers or other set dressing as desired.

BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE, Scene Two: Bowls with snacks, dips (HEATHER); overnight bag, soda can (DOTTIE, TONI, MARCY, JEANNIE); overnight bag, necklace (JENNIFER).

BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE, Scene Three: Birthday cake with eighteen candles, tray of drinks (HEATHER); glass of water (JENNIFER).

ACT TWO

ONSTAGE: The furniture from ACT ONE can remain. In addition there should be placards reading “Save Our City” and “No Squatters Allowed,” and a bottle of pills in desk. If flowers or plants have been used, they are removed for this Act. The changes are subtle but should reflect an even colder atmosphere.

BROUGHT ON, ACT TWO, Scene One: Stick (COREY).

BROUGHT ON, ACT TWO, Scene Three: Tea trays with teapot and cups, cake (HEATHER); notebook, necklace (DETECTIVE BRENT).

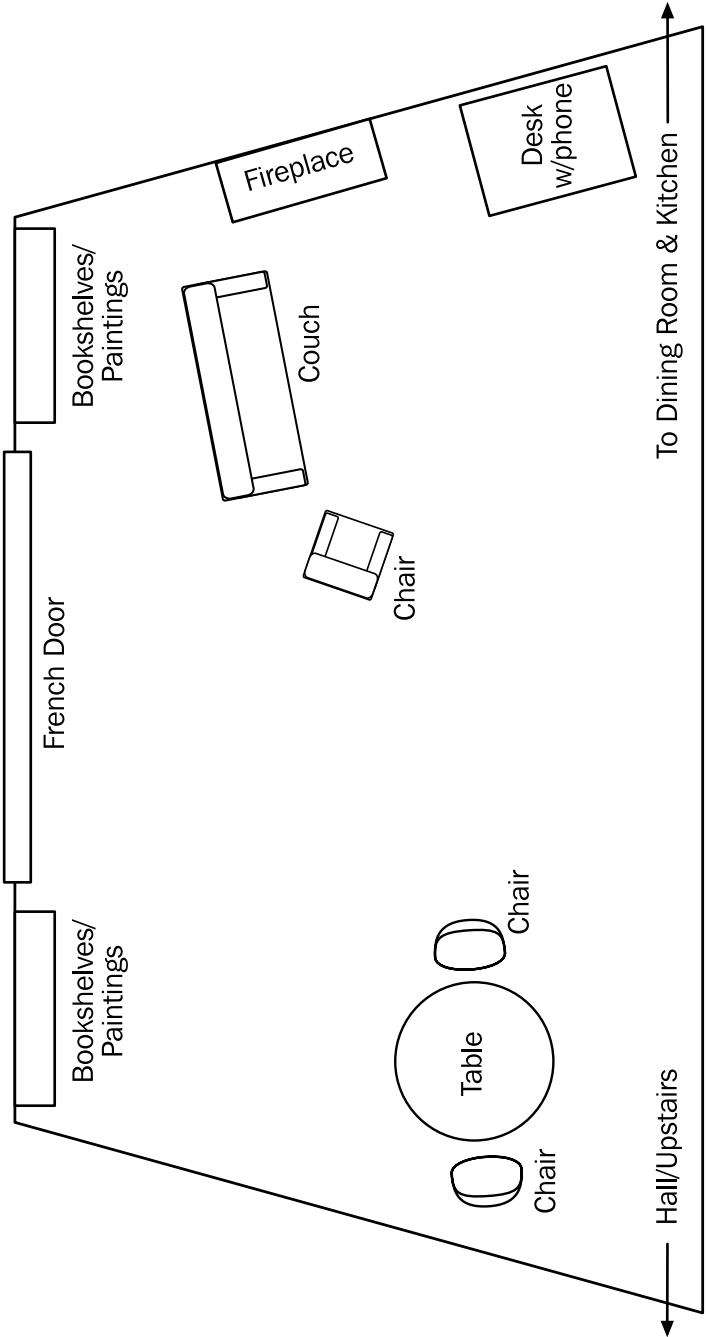
PRODUCTION NOTES

OPTIONAL CHARACTERS/SCENES: As the cast list indicates, several characters can be omitted. If this is done, for ACT ONE, Scene One, MARKHAM’S role can be done as an offstage voice. ACT TWO, Scene One, can be eliminated and the act would then begin with Scene Two.

SET: The only requirement is that the French door at UPSTAGE CENTER be functional. The cast must be able to open the door and exit or enter through it.

CHARACTERS’ AGE: The age difference between acts can be indicated with the costume changes and the way the characters handle themselves. Remember the strain JENNIFER has been under the past years, and the changes in each of their lives.

SALEM'S DAUGHTER
Basic Floor Plan



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