

THE WITCHES OF WICKEN

by

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THE WITCHES OF WICKEN

TIME: 1950

PLACE: The village of Wicken in Cambridgeshire.

SET: Rural scenes.

ACTION

ACT 1

Scene 1 Mayday early afternoon.
Scene 2 Early evening same day.
Scene 3 Early afternoon next day.

ACT 2

Scene 1 Late afternoon the next day.
Scene 2 The same day just before midnight.
Scene 3 Just before sunrise next day.

CHARACTERS

DAISY: As the May Queen. In love with PETER.
THOMAS: Her father.
PETER: A vicar. In love with DAISY.
NANCY: Also in love with PETER.
JOAN: NANCY'S friend.
JOSH The Rabbit man.
BERT: Friend of JOSH.
CLIVE: Rich Farmer.
WITCHES:
MAYPOLE DANCERS:

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Though the story is set in the village of Wicken, in Cambridgeshire, the names for the characters have been chosen at random and are not meant to represent any actual person, living or dead

Prologue

CLIVE: Hark the chiming midnight bell,
Summon the Prince of Power from hell,
I see him there in Devil's Hall,
Where the thunder flashes fall,
And hear the goblins grovel and growl,
Curse the hounds of hell that howl.
My spirit at one with the Prince of Power,
Above hell fire this midnight hour,
Where knights light up in the flashing storm,
Hearken to the piercing battle horn.
I watch them mount their skeleton steeds,
Breathing out their brimstone breeze,
Waiting there on unhallowed ground,
And hear the drawbridge lowered down.
I see the hundreds of Valpurgis knights
Ride into the starry heights,
Where the heavens flash and flame,
In a storm that brings no rain,
Wielding their glowing swords and shields,
Reflect like fire in the Wicken fields.
Above the sleeping moonlit roofs,
I hear the riders' horses hoofs,
And thunder flashes in Wicken Fen,
Awake the ancient spirits and men.
Among blue flame from the will of the wisps,
I hear them hiss at Valpurgis.
And see the knights all gather round,
Waiting to possess the hallowed ground.

I guide the Prince and Power of the air,
Whose chosen a Wicken virgin so fair,
I see her presence brighten her way,
Often around the middle of day,
Walking across Maid's Head Green,
Her mincing steps so clearly seen,
Betray her heart so full of pride,
A sense of purity she cannot hide.
Her family curse she'll not escape,
Nor her fortune, nor her fate,
But offered as a human sacrifice,
There in the dawn of the summer solstice,
To ignite the power of ancient rites,
And raise the spirits on pagan sites.

WITCHES: Before the cauldron glowing red hot,

We scrape our fingers inside the pot,
This powder dried from boiling broth,
Kindles in the sparkling flames of wrath.
The first ingredient an adder's tongue,
Mix with bits of dragon's dung,
Then sprinkle with some seasonal herbs,
To mix with blood from new born birds.
Toads once buried at Dragon's green,
Their bones once moved and danced upstream,
Young bats blood that's burned to a crisp,
Silvered right in the moon's eclipse.
We throw this powder high in the air,
And see the spirits flash and flare,
Casting our witch's magic spells,
Arouse the demons that dwell in hell,
We invite these demons, fiends and beasts,
And greet them here at Wicken feast.

ACT 1 SCENE 1: May Day - early afternoon - NANCY and JOAN are standing on Wicken village green in their summer dresses near the maypole placed at stage centre.

- NANCY: [Yawns] The sun's shining, it's May Day. [Yawns]
- JOAN: Yawning again Nancy, you sound as though you've spent a night on the tiles.
- NANCY: Much more than that Joan. I heard the bones rattling in the graves when the Walpurgis Knights passed over last night.
- JOAN: Walpur...knights, what on earth were you doing in a graveyard?
- NANCY: [Looks around and whispers to JOAN] Walpurgis night. [Sighs] Witches' night....
- JOAN: Nancy, funny you should say that, I bumped into Josh Martin he was telling me how scared stiff he were in the fen last night.[Excited] He saw will of the wisps with lanterns lighting up the marshes, ghosts of the dead groaning and ogres crawling out of the pits and -
- NANCY: [Cutting in] And...and you do go on?
- JOAN: There's no need to be like that Nancy. I'll have you know that some children had nightmares in Wicken. [Holds her chin and stares at NANCY puzzled] How can you stand there and rave about last night! [Pause]
- NANCY. [Stares at JOAN] Have you guessed?
- JOAN: You're a witch [Steps backwards from NANCY]
- NANCY: [Yawns] At last the penny's dropped.
- JOAN: [Fearful] You're a witch....that black cloak in your wardrobe and those books on black magic. That witch's broom standing in the corner, the black cauldron in the inglenook-
- NANCY: [Over lapping] That's what you get for snooping around.
- JOAN: [Shakes] Er..have you heard the latest about Daisy?-
- NANCY: Stop your grass hopping and listen.[Angry]If you so much as breath a word about this so help me I'll.....
- JOAN: Alright Nancy. Er..is this why you're leaving the farm?[Takes her handkerchief and fiddles with it.]
- NANCY: No, I've been offered more money.

JOAN: You haven't told me where yet.

NANCY: [Annoyed] Clive Bradley's farm. Now that's enough, you know too much for your own good.

JOAN: [Surprised] What at Spinney Abbey, that place is enough to give anybody the creeps. I've heard there's rattling chains in the cellar, gurgling sounds under the floorboards, you must have heard about the three monks who murdered the prior. Nancy, what the devil's got into you?

NANCY: [Laughs] You're right there Joan and some of his fiends.

JOAN: [Droops her head] I don't feel too happy about-

NANCY: Me being a witch?

JOAN: [Firm] No I don't.

NANCY: [Nasty and points her finger at JOAN] I'll repeat, if you just breathe a single word, I'll put a death curse on you, is that clear....

JOAN: [Shakes] I..I feel as though I've got myself into something I can't get out of.

NANCY: You'll be fine, as long as you keep your big mouth shut. Now what's this about Daisy?

JOAN: [Looks towards stage right] Shhhh here she comes.

NANCY: Talk of the Devil. Look at her Miss prim and proper, I've got a couple of plans sorted out to take her down a peg or two.

JOAN: [Whispers] What's that..?

NANCY: Not now, I'll tell you later, just be nice to her.

ENTER DAISY

DAISY: [Bouncy and smiling] Hello girls.

JOAN: Hi Daisy.

NANCY: It's a lovely day.

DAISY: [Holds her head in the air] I'm so full of the joys of spring, the red and pink may blossom looks so beautiful. The buttercups shining in the meadows. [Turns and looks in the audience] Looks as though the crowds are gathering.

JOAN: [Whispers to NANCY and imitates DAISY] I'm so full of the joys...

DAISY: [Turns sharply] Stop showing off in front of Nancy?.

NANCY: [Trying to control her laughter] She's only having a bit of fun.

DAISY: [Sharp] Some fun.

NANCY: [Sarcastic] Don't forget our Daisy's a sensitive toffy nosed Ely high schoolgirl.

DAISY: [Annoyed] That...was years.. you've got some room to talk, walking around like some sour puss.-

NANCY: [Over lapping] And don't you push your luck with me Daisy Fuller.

JOAN: [Finger to lips] Shs.. calm down Nancy, people are watching..

DAISY: Good point Joan, it looks as though the whole of Wicken has turned out. [Looks around] Where have the other maypole dancers got to?

NANCY: They're having a drink down at the Maid's Head.

DAISY: [Shouts]What! Let's hope they'll be sober enough to dance.

NANCY: They're celebrating May day.

DAISY: [Anxious] That may be so but don't you think it's about time they showed up.

NANCY: Alright, you go and have a word with them.

DAISY: You know very well I don't drink or go into pubs.

NANCY: You don't know what you're missing, [Turns to JOAN] hey Joan.

JOAN: I don't see the harm in it.

NANCY: [Grabs JOAN'S arm] Nor do I, we've gotta keep up with the times. Come on Joan, a cool ale will go down very nicely.

EXIT NANCY AND JOAN

DAISY: [Speaks to herself] She's been such a thorn in my flesh for years, even more so recently. I wonder if she... [She doesn't see PETER approaching]

ENTER PETER

PETER: Hello Daisy.[Touches her on the shoulder and startles her] Sorry I didn't mean to startle you.

DAISY: [Excited] Peter, it's so good to see you, sorry I was miles away.

PETER: Anything wrong. I thought I heard you speaking to yourself?

DAISY: Just thinking out aloud.

PETER: [Looks around] Where are the rest of the may pole dancers?

DAISY: [Sighs] Don't ask, having too much to drink in the Maid's Head.

PETER: And you've decided to stick to your principles.

DAISY: [Firm] Lock, stock and barrel.

PETER: [Pats her on the shoulder] Good for you, talking about principles. I don't go along whole heartedly with may pole dancing, it has pagan origins.

DAISY: [Surprised] Oh, most people think it's just a bit of harmless fun. I look upon it more as a tradition.

PETER: [Messes about with his hands in nerves] Err..sorry it's difficult for a clergyman, most of the villagers have turned out, but I must say these customs aren't compatible with Christianity.

DAISY: I can't get out of it at this stage.

PETER: Of course not Daisy, I'm not doing very well [Nervous cough and dithers] ur...what I meant to say that I enjoyed our walk yesterday afternoon.

DAISY: [Her face lights up] So did I Peter.

PETER: Tuesday's my day off, I wondered if you'd care to join me in a picnic tomorrow afternoon?

DAISY: Sounds a wonderful idea.

PETER: [Sighs] I forgot you're working tomorrow.

DAISY: That's no problem, we're not very busy at the moment and my boss owes me some time.

PETER: Good, that's settled.

ENTER NANCY AND JOAN

[They drink beer from their glasses and observe PETER and DAISY at stage right]

JOAN: [Drains her glass and puts it down] That were nice. Daisy hasn't wasted any time.[NANCY remains silent] They've been going together for a couple of weeks now. Are you alright?

NANCY: [Drains her glass and puts it down in temper] No I'm not alright. She's really got my goat this time. Why the hell didn't you tell me about this before.

JOAN: [Messes about with her handkerchief] It's not my fault, I only found out yesterday, I tried to tell you earlier but you jumped down my throat.

NANCY: [Upset] And rightly so, I'm not having a very good day.

JOAN: I didn't know you were sweet on the vicar, and you go to church, I'm confused, you said you're a witch.

NANCY: Keep your voice down, we witches go to learn the bible and create confusion in the church.

JOAN: Nancy, I don't like what I'm hearing.

NANCY: What's the church done for you, and anybody else for that matter?

JOAN: (Apathetic) You're right.

NANCY: Of course I'm right.

JOAN: [Smiles] So you're gonna kill two birds with one stone.

NANCY: [Pats JOAN on the back] That's the spirit Joan.

JOAN: I shouldn't worry Nancy, you always get what you want sooner or later.

NANCY: [Swishes around] I'll have him defrocked in more ways than one. [They laugh out loud and DAISY overhears]

DAISY: [Exasperated] Nancy, where are the maypole dancers?

NANCY: How should I know, I only went for a drink, [Turns to JOAN] didn't we Joan?

JOAN: And we enjoyed it.

DAISY: So it seems the way you've been parading it around, but did you see the May pole dancers?

NANCY: Yea, on pond green, near the pump.

DAISY: Did you have a word with them?

NANCY: I couldn't be bothered.

DAISY: Oh...[Turns to PETER] what's the time please?

PETER: [Pulls out his pocket watch] Ten minutes past two. [Returns pocket watch]

DAISY: We're ten minutes late starting, I don't like keeping the crowd waiting.

PETER: Quite, Daisy's got a point..

NANCY: It's not my fault Vicar.

PETER: I'm not so sure about that Nancy.

NANCY: What's that supposed to mean?

PETER: Can't you see Daisy's upset?

NANCY: She's sensitive, likes everything just so. She doesn't drink, that's not my problem.

PETER: I think she's entitled to her opinion.

NANCY: She drinks communion wine.

PETER: [Annoyed] How dare you there's a difference between boozing and drinking communion wine that represents the blood of Christ.

NANCY: [Shakes and stumbles] I...I..feel...[Peter steadies and releases her] Thanks.....

PETER: Anything wrong Nancy?

NANCY: [Yawns] No, I'll be fine, I've just been over doing things this past week.

DAISY: [Turns to Joan] Would you go and see where the dancers are.

JOAN: What do you think Nancy?

DAISY: Haven't you got a mind of your own, [Pause] Very well, I'll go myself.[Goes to stage left]

EXIT DAISY

PETER: I think I ought to be going

NANCY: There's no rush Vicar, are you enjoying your new parish?
[Rubs her hand up and down the maypole]

PETER: [Coughs and ill at ease] Yes, so far, I think I preached a good sermon last night. [Pause] I didn't see you at Evensong.

NANCY: [Takes her hand off the maypole and looks away] No, as I've said before I've been rather busy.

PETER: Busy is the operative word, I visited a couple of families in Wicken last night who were terrified... nightmares apparently.

NANCY: So I heard. Wicken Fen's all that remains of old East Anglia and we get haunting from time to time. Evil spirits still roam around Spinney Abbey. There's lots of ghosts about when the fen fog's looming around.

PETER: So I'm informed, did you experience anything unusual last night?

NANCY: No I stayed at home with Joan, [Turns to JOAN] isn't that so?

JOAN: If you...we had a great evening together.

PETER: Right, I'm off, enjoy your maypole dancing.

NANCY: Bye Vicar.

EXIT PETER

JOAN: That didn't go very well.

NANCY: [Sighs] No it didn't, you nearly let your tongue runaway with you.

JOAN: It's not my fault that he's on to you.

NANCY: I doubt it, he's fishing

JOAN: I'm not so sure, why were you so upset when he mentioned the blood-

NANCY: [Overlapping] Keep your mouth shut, okay.

JOAN: [Sulks] Alright....

NANCY: I think he believed me about staying at home with you.

JOAN: He might, but one thing's certain you can forget about him.

NANCY: Don't you believe it, where there's a will there's a way.

The MAYPOLE DANCERS are heard
at stage right.

It's the girls, my little plan worked. This should soften Daisy up.

JOAN: [Laughs] Yeah, nice one Nancy

ENTER MAY POLE DANCERS

NANCY, JOAN and the MAY POLE DANCERS hold the ribbons of the Maypole.

ENTER DAISY

DAISY: [Surprised] You're.. all here, it's a miracle.

NANCY: And you're late, dreamer. After all your groaning [All the girls laugh]

DAISY: [Annoyed] What's come over you Nancy Dixon, did you get out of the wrong side of the bed this morning?

JOAN: I shouldn't stand for that Nancy.

NANCY: [Nasty] I can take care of myself Joan. You want to watch that big mouth of yours Daisy Fuller.

DAISY: I didn't hear that, I'm determined to enjoy the dancing.

JOAN: Who does she think she is? [Brushes her nose upwards with her hand]

DAISY: I think we girls should take this dancing more serious, should the spirits of nature strike us with a curse-

NANCY: [Cutting in] Like your mother's blood that soaked the earth.

DAISY: [Shocked] What are...I don't know what you're talking about.

NANCY: Try asking that hermit father of yours.

DAISY: [Tearful] Nancy I've just had enough. Leave my father out of this.

JOAN: That's soon changed her tune.

The music starts and the girls dance around the maypole, when the dancing stops one of the MAY POLE DANCERS crowns DAISY with a garland of flowers.

[The girls altogether] The May Queen of Wicken.

A loud clap of thunder's heard.

NANCY: [Shouts] Hark at the thunder! [Points at DAISY] You're cursed. [All the girls move away from DAISY]

DAISY: [Annoyed] I'm not listening to this superstitious rubbish any longer.

JOAN: Why can't we leave the poor girl alone. [Winks and smiles at NANCY, and DAISY moves to stage right.]

NANCY: [Looks to stage left] Here comes her prince charming. [All the girls laugh]

ENTER PETER

[He passes by the girls swiftly and joins DAISY]

NANCY: [Girls move to stage right] You off girls, I'll join you later in a drink.

JOAN: Yeah, see you later girls.

EXIT MAY POLE DANCERS

NANCY: [She watches PETER and DAISY and fumes with jealousy] Look at her swishing about in them fancy clothes. She's got nothing to be proud about, Thomas Fuller's bastard.

JOAN: But she makes a lovely May Queen.

NANCY: Heh! You wouldn't be saying that if you knew what I knew.

JOAN: (Puzzled) What's that?

NANCY: I saw her hanging around with Harry the other day.

JOAN: I don't believe you, when?

NANCY: That's more like it.

JOAN: [Droops her head] Harry were like a father to me. He made me feel somebody for the first time in my life. I felt so safe in his strong arms.

NANCY: [Put her arm around her] Never mind Joan.

JOAN: Now she's flirting with the Vicar.

NANCY: [Shakes and looks evil] The cow, I'd love to sink my claws into her lily white flesh.

[PETER puts his arm around DAISY'S waist as they leave]

EXIT PETER and DAISY

JOAN: Nancy, you worry me sometimes, you look so evil. You seemed to have got worse these past few months.

NANCY: I'm still the same old Nancy. I'll have that vicar by hook or by crook.

JOAN: I can't put you together at times, a man in a dog collar just doesn't seem your cup of tea-

NANCY: [Cutting in] Sometimes I think you've got a brain the size of a pea.

JOAN: [Hurt] I... I can't help it, can I? [Messes around with her handkerchief]

NANCY: Sorry, I'm just feeling cheesed off.

JOAN: I'm still puzzled, that Vicar's not a hunk like my Harry.

NANCY: Ex-Harry, are we gonna let Daisy get away with it?

JOAN: No, let's have it out with her.[Walks away and NANCY grabs her]

NANCY: Joan, there's no need to be hasty, there's more than one way to skin a cat.

JOAN: What do you mean?

NANCY: This is my plan, Daisy will lead the procession of may pole dancers, when I give the signal this is what we'll do. [Looks around and whispers in JOAN'S ear]

JOAN: Nancy, you're terrible, how did you think of such a thing?

NANCY: [Laughs] I'll give you three guesses.

JOAN: But what will the crowd think?

NANCY: I've softened them up with a little bit of gossip.

JOAN: Whatever did you say?

NANCY: That Daisy Fuller's thinks she's a cut above Wicken people.

JOAN: That's true, you think of everything.

NANCY: The crowd will see it as a bit of fun, it weren't that many years ago when families went to a public hanging. You'll see they'll lap it up.

JOAN: [Walks around with head down] I don't feel too er..happy about this.

NANCY: [Grabs JOAN] Keep still, all the other dancers have agreed. Surely you don't want to be the odd one out.

JOAN: [Sighs] U'm..I'm still not sure.

NANCY: But you've always craved to be somebody Joan.

JOAN: Chance would be a fine thing, [Fiddles around with her handkerchief] suppose that's why you're the housekeeper and I'm the cleaner. I'll show people one of these days.

NANCY: [Puts her arm around JOAN] That's the spirit my girl, you won't regret this, [Pause] As I said earlier I'm not gonna be a housekeeper for much longer.

JOAN: But you didn't say what you're gonna do at Clive Bradley's farm.

NANCY: [Proud] His personal secretary.

JOAN: Cor..you've got it made Nancy.

NANCY: [Smirks] I agree, it's not everybody who works so close to a millionaire.

JOAN: [Stares at NANCY] Er.. has this got anything to do-.

NANCY: [Overlapping] Has this got..[angry] Remember what I told you earlier.

JOAN: I see...[Sniffles] There's no need to bite my head off.

NANCY: Now dry those tears, I'm just warning you.

JOAN: [Sighs] Alright, I won't mention it ever again.

NANCY: That's the spirit.

JOAN: Nancy, you're moving too fast for me.

NANCY: In what way...?

JOAN: The more you get the more you want..

NANCY: That's human nature. Listen, I want to be somebody and I don't care how I do it. I want to be looked up to, admired. I want to become rich and powerful and woe betide whoever stands in my way.

JOAN: [Upset] Then why do you knock about with somebody like me. I...I just can't keep up with you.

NANCY: [Looks around and moves closer to JOAN] Joan, you know how deeply fond I am of you, that's our little secret.

JOAN: [Emotional] Nancy, I don't know what I'd do without you. [She hugs NANCY who breaks away]

NANCY: Not here....Joan, we don't want the whole world to know.

JOAN: [Looks around] Daisy's coming...

NANCY: Be nice, we don't want her to suspect anything.

JOAN: Okay.

ENTER DAISY

DAISY: Still chatting together?-

NANCY: [Overlapping] What about it?

DAISY: As long as it isn't gossip.

NANCY: Wrong, we're saying that you're a beautiful May Queen, weren't we Joan.

JOAN: Sure thing.

DAISY: [Smiles] Thanks, I feel on top of the world at the moment. [JOAN slips behind her and mocks her and Daisy senses it and turns sharply] What do you think you're doing?

JOAN: Admiring your golden curls. [Touches her curls while NANCY puts her arm around her]

NANCY: We love you Daisy.

DAISY: [Moves away from them] Why this sudden change of heart?

NANCY: Relax, just trying to be friendly.

DAISY: Better late than never.

NANCY: I think it would be better if we got on together in the procession.

DAISY: I couldn't agree more, you almost ruined the may pole dancing.

NANCY: You look as though you enjoyed it.

DAISY: I did, dancing in my bare feet and feeling the pulse of the earth vibrating through my whole body. I felt so at one with nature I could feel the flowers and grass growing. Also I felt in touch with the spirits of our ancestors.

NANCY: We all have these kind of feelings, but in your case I think it's an omen.

DAISY: [Excited] What do you mean?

NANCY: You'll find out soon enough.

DAISY: [Annoyed] And what's this about my mother's blood soaking the earth?

NANCY: You're getting warmer.

DAISY: [Anxious] I..I do wish you'd stop beating around the bush.

NANCY: Ask your father, you're a big girl now.

DAISY: I'm determined not to be gloomy, have you heard?

NANCY: Heard what?

JOAN: We're all ears.

DAISY: [Pause]Now it's my turn to be secretive. [Gives a taunting smile]

NANCY: [Annoyed] I...couldn't give a damn.

DAISY: [Smiles and so does JOAN] You could have fooled me.

NANCY: [Angry] Don't you try and be clever with me Daisy Fuller.

DAISY: Suppose I shouldn't keep you guessing-

NANCY: [Cutting in] Come on...stop pussy footing around.

DAISY: [Pause] I'm going out with Peter. [Joan grins at NANCY] We're going for a picnic tomorrow afternoon.

NANCY: [Upset but manages to control her temper] Is...that...so?

DAISY: Are you alright? [Puts her arm around NANCY who pushes her away]

JOAN: No, Nancy's had a lot of worry.

DAISY: Anything I can do to help?-

NANCY: Just go...get out of my sight.

DAISY: The shoe's on the other foot this time hey. Alright I'll go and hopefully see you at the procession and be nice to me.

NANCY: [Taken aback] Why of..I wouldn't miss it for anything in the world.

DAISY: You seem to have cheered up all of a sudden. I wonder why? ...bye.

EXIT DAISY

JOAN: That were straight from the horse's mouth.

NANCY: [Nasty] How I kept my hands off her I'll never know. I'll give her picnic, just you wait and see. She shouldn't have told me about tomorrow afternoon.

JOAN: You'll get your own back soon enough. [Nancy grabs JOAN] What have I done?

NANCY: I saw you grinning, whose side are you on? [Lets go of JOAN]

JOAN: It's no good you taking it out on me, your face was a picture.

NANCY: Jealous are we?

JOAN: A bit, and there's another thing, Daisy seems to have the measure of you.

NANCY: [Pushes JOAN] She's a bit too clever for her own good.

JOAN: I wish I could handle things the way she does.

NANCY: [Angry] Go on say it then....

JOAN: [Excited and stutters] Alright, well for a start I'm backing out of this little scheme of yours, it's...it's evil.

NANCY: [Mocks] Daisy's really heightened your spirit. You're too late, the trap's been set.

JOAN: It's not too late, I'm gonna warn her about your evil plan. [Walks away and NANCY grabs her by the arm.]

NANCY: Where do you think you're going?

JOAN: I just told you.

NANCY: Is this the way you treat me, after all what I've done for you?

JOAN: I never thought....

NANCY: You never do, [Points to herself] I do the thinking, you're my friend aren't you?

JOAN: Yes.....

NANCY: [Puts her arm on JOAN'S shoulder] We're in this together, I'm sure we'll enjoy it.

JOAN: [Smiles] Sounds like it will be fun.

NANCY: [Rubs her hands together] Sure thing, today we'll see what Daisy Fuller's made of.

JOAN: She might crack up.

NANCY: All the better. [Laughs] Come it's time for the procession. [JOAN dithers and Nancy grabs hold of her arm] Come on....

EXIT NANCY AND JOAN

Music is played as the procession's about to begin on Maid's Head green.

ENTER DAISY, NANCY, JOAN AND MAY POLE DANCERS

DAISY leads the procession of the MAYPOLE DANCERS, who wear fertility masks and hold green boughs as they circle the may pole. NANCY'S plan is soon put in operation.

NANCY: Daisy Fuller's a stuck up cow.....[Sticks out her tongue and the others mock and mimic DAISY]

JOAN: The most wonderful May Queen in all the world

NANCY: Nice one Joan.

The DANCERS encircle DAISY and push her to and fro and give her the bumps.

She's not so high and mighty now.. [All the girls laugh]

DAISY: [Hysterical] What the Devil's got into you all?

NANCY: Altogether girls, she's the village bastard. [The girls join in]

DAISY: Stop it, stop it...I can't take much more of this.

JOAN: [Slaps DAISY around the face several times] That should teach you for hanging around with my Harry.

DAISY: [Shouts and cries] I..I don't know what you're talking about.

JOAN: [Shouts back] Liar.....

NANCY: [Pats JOAN on the shoulder] I'm proud of you.

JOAN: I've never felt so good in all my life.[The girls hold DAISY while JOAN cuts Daisy's golden locks off with a pair of scissors until she's cropped] Have you had enough Daisy?

NANCY: We've only just started. All together girls, Daisy, Daisy give us your answer do. We're half crazy all for the love of you. [The girls join in] Give her a soaking Joan.

JOAN: With pleasure...[She throws a muddy pail of water over DAISY]

NANCY: [Picks up a garland of flowers] I crown you May Queen of the century.

The girls taunt and dance around DAISY who stands at the maypole. Darkness descends and thunder is heard. Strange voices are heard in a wind. JOAN and the girls panic, scream and scatter.

EXIT JOAN AND MAY POLE DANCERS

NANCY: [Points at DAISY] She's bewitched.....

ENTER PETER

PETER: [He supports DAISY who's crying and turns to Nancy in anger] You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you seem to have evoked the Devil himself.

NANCY: You blaming me?

PETER: Indeed I am.

NANCY: [Points at DAISY] She brought this curse like her mother.

PETER: [Shouts] Nancy, that's evil-.

NANCY: [Takes the huff] Oh what's the use I'm off....

EXIT NANCY

The wind gradually fades.

DAISY: [Revives and looks at her clothes] I'll kill Nancy Dixon for this...

PETER: That's not the right way.

DAISY: That may be, but I've got a personal score to settle with Nancy Dixon.[She bursts into tears and PETER assists her]

PETER: Come, let's go to the vicarage and get you cleaned up.

EXIT PETER AND DAISY

ACT 1 SCENE 2 Early evening same day

THOMAS is in his garden standing at his shrine with flowers beneath at back stage centre. A shotgun leans against the shrine

ENTER PETER AND DAISY

THOMAS: [Approaches DAISY] Daisy, I've been worried sick, whatever's happened to you... look at your hair, your clothes?

DAISY: Father, the girls played a stupid prank on me. Peter's been so kind, his housekeeper's given me this change of clothes.

THOMAS: [Turns to PETER] Some prank, thanks for taking care of her Vicar. [Shakes hands with Peter] Please to meet yeah er...

PETER: Peter, it's my pleasure Mr Fuller.

THOMAS: Thomas, if you don't mind.[Pause]

DAISY: We can manage now Peter, [Turns to PETER] I know you're in a bit of a hurry.

PETER: Yes, sorry it's been so brief Thomas, some other time perhaps, some of my parishioners were scared out of their wits last night.[Looks towards the shrine]

THOMAS: [Uneasy] I.I. won't keep you then Peter.

PETER: [Smiles at DAISY] I'll see you tomorrow afternoon Daisy. [Stops at stage centre] I sense a....

THOMAS: Presence...anything a matter er Vic..Peter.

PETER: [Pause] I think I ought to be going.

EXIT PETER

THOMAS: What's the matter with him, he seems to know far too much for his own good.

DAISY: You mean he's too nosy.

THOMAS: If you want to put it like that.

DAISY: Everybody's nosy according to you, can't you see he's had a trying day and so have I for that matter.

THOMAS: [Pause] Point taken, what's this about tomorrow afternoon?

DAISY: [Smiles] We're going on a picnic.

THOMAS: [Surprised] What...with a vicar?

DAISY: Father, I'm very fond of him.

THOMAS: I can see that. He seems nice enough, but he could do with a little more meat on him. Still, that's only my opinion.

DAISY: He's refined and highly intelligent.

THOMAS: Suppose he would be a vicar and all that. He didn't think a lot of my shotgun.

DAISY: Can you wonder at it. You approve of him then?

THOMAS: [Sighs] I didn't say that. It's your life.

DAISY: [Kisses him on the cheek] Thanks....

THOMAS: Now please tell me what happened this afternoon.

DAISY: [Excited and hurries her speech] After the procession the girls gave me the bumps and cropped my hair. [Touches her hair] Joan chucked a muddy pail of water over me. Nancy said I was bewitched. [Upset]

THOMAS: [Takes hold of her hand] Try and calm down Daisy.

DAISY: I just want to forget about this, I better go and put the meat on the stove.

THOMAS: What, just at this minute.

DAISY: I'm starving, I only had a sandwich for lunch and we haven't got any thing in for tomorrow. The village shop's shut.

THOMAS: [Doesn't answer and goes in a trance] Er...yes...what...

DAISY: [Touches him and he jumps] Are you okay, you seem...

THOMAS: [Recoils] Stop fussing and go and see to the meat..

DAISY: [Hurt] Alright, I shan't be a minute.

EXIT DAISY

THOMAS: [Still in a trance and speaks to himself] My wife's presence seems much stronger these last couple of days. I mustn't miss this golden chance to speak with her.[He takes the key from his pocket and unlocks his shrine] Mary are you there? [Long pause] Mary please speak to me. How I enjoy your presence. [Long Pause]

The light goes darker on stage except behind the shrine.

ENTER DAISY

DAISY: [She watches him and speaks softly] Father...father...what are you doing...?

THOMAS: [Doesn't hear her] Mary this is the first time I've seen you, this is wonderful. Where are you? [Pause] A beautiful garden...

DAISY: [Touches him on his shoulder] Father..stop this..

The lighting returns to normal.

THOMAS: [Jumps] Don't you ever do that again. [He locks the shrine] You were quick.

DAISY: I forgot I'd prepared the food earlier I only had to turn the gas on. Now look father I've often heard you speak here at night over the years and I've turned a blind eye, but you shouldn't speak to the dead.

THOMAS: That's my business, but you saw her....

DAISY: [Upset] I can't be sure, it looked more like an ancient druid to me, now please tell me am I a bastard?

THOMAS: [Sighs] Yes.

DAISY: Why... didn't... you tell me this before?

THOMAS: I kept meaning to, but you get hurt so easy.

DAISY: [Annoyed] You should have told me.

THOMAS: [Pause] Suppose I should. Sometime ago I went out with Nancy's mother, but it didn't work out. Soon after I met your mother and she fell pregnant, it were the talk of Wicken. To cut a long story short Nancy's mother was jealous and cursed us. [Buries his hands in his face]

DAISY: Do you want to carry on?

THOMAS: You might as well know the rest, you were only two when the corn circle came. The crops were never any good in that field, so the following year I left it fallow. But to my surprise no weeds grew in that circle. [Points to stage centre]

DAISY: I often asked you about that circle in the lawn but you always seemed to fobb me off.

THOMAS: Okay, please bear with me. Once this used to be a cornfield until I turffed and fenced it over and made it into a garden.

DAISY: But why for goodness sake?

THOMAS: Now bear with me. I'll never forget that summer storm the night it shook the whole of Wicken. I heard evil spirits screaming in the wind, blood for the earth. Your mother ran out of the house into the night. [Shakes] It were terrible.

DAISY: [Puts her hand on his shoulder] Take your time.

THOMAS: [Upset] I...I tried to follow her, but the windows and doors wouldn't open.

DAISY: Don't blame yourself.

THOMAS: After the storm I found your mother stabbed to death, her blood soaked the earth where the corn circle was [Points at stage centre] Right there...

DAISY: [Upset] How horrible....Did Nancy's mother murder her?

THOMAS: No, some evil force, witchcraft, take your pick.

DAISY: Evil force, witchcraft?

THOMAS: I thought it were Nancy's mother, but she were at home with her husband and friends that night.

DAISY: So you think it was a curse?

THOMAS: There's been witchcraft in Nancy's family, one of her ancestors were hanged on Maid's Head green.

DAISY: Did you tell this to the police?

THOMAS: No, they only want facts.

DAISY: I see.

THOMAS: They thought I done it, but it's a good job Josh and Bert were close at hand on that foul night.

DAISY: How did this all finish up?

THOMAS: At the inquest, the verdict were cause of death by person or persons unknown. Most of the folks in Wicken thought I done the murder.

DAISY: So they condemned you for making her pregnant and for her murder. They still give me black looks whenever I go into the village, they'll never forget.

THOMAS: That's about the size of it.

DAISY: [Emotional] Why, oh why, didn't you tell me about this before?

THOMAS: I wanted to protect you Daisy.

DAISY: [Walks around] Protect me, protect me... that's all you ever think about, protect this, protect that, protect the other.[She cries and Thomas puts his arm around her]

THOMAS: It's not my fault, it's just the way things are. What are you gonna do?

DAISY: [Moves away from him] Well ...I'll tell yeah, have a word with Peter of course, this is a spiritual problem.

THOMAS: [Angry] I knew it, that Vicar was trouble ever since I set eyes on him. I don't trust him and that's that.

DAISY: You don't trust anybody, not even God for that matter.

THOMAS: I..I.. gave up on God a long time ago, look what's happening.

DAISY: [Stamps her foot on the ground] Don't you think there's a Devil on the loose.

THOMAS: Stubborn just like your mother.

DAISY: I've lived in a dream world for years.

THOMAS: I kept you from reality as long as I could.

DAISY: You've done that alright, what's inside the shrine?

THOMAS: I've told you before, that's my business. [Gets a key out of his pocket] This key stays with me.

DAISY: At least tell...oh I've just remembered I've left something on the stove it must almost be boiling over.

THOMAS: Boiling...[Puts his key away and looks to stage left] Just a minute Daisy, I think Josh's coming, what's he doing working on May Day and all dressed up in his Sunday suit. Wait for it it's it's.....

ENTER JOSH

JOSH: It's the rabbit man. Hello yeah, I've got a nice rabbit here, last one in fact. [Pulls rabbit out of sack]

DAISY: [Takes the rabbit] Thanks Josh, you're a God send, just what we need for tomorrow's dinner.

JOSH: That will be a tanner, if you please.

THOMAS: [Fiddles around in his pocket] It looks as though I've left my money on the sideboard. I won't be a minute Josh.

DAISY: It's alright, I'll go, I'm on my feet

THOMAS: No I'll go I know how much you two like a natter. I'll take that. [Takes rabbit off DAISY and goes to stage right]

EXIT THOMAS

DAISY: [Turns to JOSH] My father wondered what you're doing working on May Day and all dressed up?

JOSH: Killing two birds with one stone. I can always do with a few extra bob, but the main reason is I'm looking for support for tomorrow's parish council election.

DAISY: Josh, you have my full support but unfortunately I'm not quite twenty one and my father hasn't voted for years.

JOSH: Thanks Daisy I knew I could rely on your support.

DAISY: What sort of response have you had so far Josh?

JOSH: [Unsure of himself] Well a lot of folk said they'd vote for me, whether they will or not, I'm not so sure, but a little appreciation wouldn't go amiss. [Sniffs] Smells like something's burning.

THOMAS: [Off stage] Daisy the kitchen's full of smoke.

DAISY: I've got a head like a sieve.[Runs to stage right]

EXIT DAISY

[As Josh waits he doesn't notice NANCY approaching stage left.]

ENTER NANCY

JOSH: [Turns sharply] Where did you spring from Nancy, you scared the living daylight out of me, it's my nerves. [Shakes]

NANCY: [Cold] That's your problem.[Touches his sack] What's this and all dressed up like a dog's dinner. Blackmail and bribery that's what I'd call it.

JOSH: [Taken aback] Your mouth gets fouler by the day Nancy Dixon.

NANCY: And you've been getting on my nerves for years rabbiting on about saving Wicken from starving in the war.

JOSH: [Hurt]There's no need to rub it in and you've got the cheek of old Nick showing your face around here after what you did to Daisy this afternoon..

NANCY: Let's just call it a twist of fate.

JOSH: [Angry]Fate my arse, blood's thicker than water.

NANCY: What's that supposed to mean?

JOSH: Like mother like daughter, stop acting all innocent, there's no doubt in my mind[Pause] that your mother murdered Daisy's mother.

NANCY: There's not an ounce of proof.

JOSH: There wouldn't be, witchcraft that's what it were-

NANCY: [Cutting in] You want to watch that mouth of yours you silly old bugger, besides hardly anybody believes in witchcraft these days. Another thing I'll make you regret your words slating my family. I'll make sure you wont get voted on the parish council, you'll be the laughing stock of Wicken. [Points] Now on your way.

JOSH: [Shaken but walks defiantly]]I've had my say.

EXIT JOSH

NANCY: [Speaks to herself] I'll cast a spell on him tonight and stop his sniffing around. There's no doubt that Clive Bradley will get voted on the parish council, we witches must have complete control over Wicken. [Rubs her hands together]

THOMAS: [Off stage] Hurry up Daisy.

DAISY: Coming...

NANCY: [Speaks to herself] I better disappear for a moment to prepare my magic.[Goes to stage left]

EXIT NANCY

ENTER DAISY AND THOMAS

THOMAS: [Looks around] Wherever on earth has Josh got to?

DAISY: Not to worry, we'll settle up with him next week, now where were we, ah the shrine.

THOMAS: Alright, if you must know. [He goes and unlocks the shrine and shows her the objects] Your mother's trinkets, clothes and photos. Here's two blue glass balls to ward off the evil eye, that didn't do her a lot of good. But the thing I treasure most is a stone sprinkled with her drops of blood from the corn circle.

DAISY: [Shocked] I'd rather not see that if you don't...mind. I think you need help I'll have a word-

THOMAS: [Overlapping] You'll do no such thing, is that clear? [He puts the objects back in the shrine and locks it.]

DAISY: Very well if that's the way you feel.[Pause] What's that wind blowing up?

The wind gets louder and voices are heard whispering.

[Moves closer to THOMAS] Father, I'm frightened, there's some one coming. Evil attracts evil. Why it's Nancy, what an ill wind she's brought

ENTER NANCY

THOMAS: Nancy, you foul fiend.

NANCY: Silence old man, go to the shrine for the sign, your wife's waiting for you.[Goes in a trance and goes to the shrine]

EXIT THOMAS

DAISY: [Shouts] Nancy, what have you done to him?.

NANCY: He sees what I want him to see, now shut up and listen to me Daisy.

DAISY: I'm not listening to you.[Her voice fades and finds she can't move] I can't move, what's going on, Nancy what are you doing.....?

NANCY: That's enough questions, now listen carefully, I serve my master the Prince of Powers the primeval force of darkness who rules over East Anglia. He demands a human sacrifice to strengthen his power on the old pagan sites. There's one right here where your mother died.

DAISY: [Distressed] Nancy, you're sick, I'd never thought you'd sink so low, witchcraft at that. I suppose the Prince of Powers was responsible for last night and after the maypole dancing and now?

NANCY: You're learning Daisy, my familiar.

DAISY: But what has all this to do with me?

NANCY: [Smug] Stop being so naive, can't you guess..

DAISY: [Pause] I'm to be the sacrifice?

NANCY: [Lisps] Right on the nail Daisy.

DAISY: [Hysterical] Like my mother, no...never...I'll leave Wicken.

NANCY: I've always admired your spirit, but there's no escape, you can't fight against supernatural forces. Can't you see Daisy this is your destiny.

DAISY: Can't I, I'm going to report you Nancy.

NANCY: [Sighs] What proof have you got and besides hardly anybody believes in witchcraft these days and what about your father?

DAISY: [Angry]What about my father?.

NANCY: [Nasty and points her finger] If you as much take one step out of Wicken your father will drop down dead. Another thing don't mention this to Peter or he and your father will die, is that clear?

DAISY: [Pause and tearful] Suppose so.

NANCY: Lost for words are we? .Try to be like a fried egg and keep your sunny side up. [Laughs] See you at the summer solstice.

DAISY: [Defiant] Over my dead body.

NANCY: I shall look forward to that, your signs about to come from the shrine.

The wind drops and the voices fade.

EXIT NANCY

DAISY: [Sighs] I must pull myself together, its gone quiet, much too quiet.

THOMAS: [Unlocks the shrine and brings a stone red with blood and offers it to DAISY who drops it] Your mother's blood.

DAISY: Keep away from me. [She screams and breaks down in tears]

THOMAS: [Awakes from his trance] What..what happened? Daisy you look white as a sheet, I think you ought to lie down for a while. [Helps her]

EXIT DAISY AND THOMAS

ACT 1 SCENE 3 : Early afternoon the next day

A meadow in Wicken, some bushes are at stage left.

ENTER PETER AND DAISY.

PETER'S carrying a picnic basket. He puts it down, opens it and produces a bottle of lemonade. DAISY sits down beside him.

PETER: Glass of cool lemonade.

DAISY: That looks refreshing. [He gives her a lemonade and pours one for himself] Thanks Peter.

PETER: [Drinks and looks around] Isn't this a beautiful old meadow?

DAISY: Yes, this is my favourite haunt. I often used to sit here as a child and soak up the sun, under a shady oak of course, as I have a very fair skin.

PETER: Fair indeed, but what a wonderful way to relax. [He opens the picnic basket] Sandwich? There's cheese and tomato or ham.

DAISY: Cheese and tomato please. [Offers her the sandwiches on a plate]

PETER: I think I'll try the ham? Er..I felt rather concerned about your father's shrine and shotgun.

DAISY: Hmm this cheese has got a nice bite to it. Sorry, he uses the shotgun just to scare intruders away.

PETER: I see, but what about that circle on the lawn?

DAISY: Yes that seemed to make you feel uneasy. I'm more concerned about Nancy at the moment her eyes went almost black when she looked at me.[Pause] I also think she fancies you.

PETER: Come to think of it, she has been over familiar recently, but I feel there's something sinister about her.

DAISY: Has she now? Yes, her family were into witchcraft.

PETER: There's no need to worry. I understand a witch was hanged on Maid's Head green three hundred years ago.

DAISY Nancy's great, great, great grandmother, whatever.

PETER: This answers a lot of my questions. [DAISY becomes uneasy and droops her head] I can't help wondering if Nancy took part in those activities around the church graveyard the other night. [DAISY doesn't answer]

DAISY: [Looks up] I'm sorry Peter, you were saying.

PETER: Is there anything wrong Daisy?

DAISY: [Defensive] Of course not...

PETER: I sense there's something's worrying you.

DAISY: Sorry, it's personal.

PETER: Are you sure I can't help?

DAISY: Sorry I promised not to share it with anybody.

PETER: Very well, as I was saying, do you think Nancy.....[She breaks down in tears and he puts his arm around her shoulder] Daisy what's troubling you?

DAISY: Let's change the subject if you don't mind.

PETER: I'm sorry for being so insensitive.

DAISY: [Touches his hand] |It's not your fault.

PETER: What would you like to talk about?

DAISY: [Smiles] You.....

PETER: Anything in particular?

DAISY: Something about your childhood, whatever.

PETER: I was born in south London, the son of a lawyer. My brother and I went to a public school in Sussex.

DAISY: How I envy you, I often wish I'd been given the chance to go to a public school.

PETER: Oh it's nothing really one seems to take the privilege for granted after a while.

DAISY: Chance would have been a fine thing.

PETER: Suppose so, [Pause] now where was I?

DAISY: Public school in Sussex.

PETER: Eventually I went to Cambridge, where I studied history and theology and got my degree. I enjoyed my time at university and went to lots of garden parties. In my leisure time I used to love punting on the river Cam in the early summer and also enjoyed playing cricket. As for the may ball, that was really special. However I did spend sometime studying during the last three years doing my P.H.D.

DAISY: A P. H. D. this gets better all the time, but what made you become a Vicar?

PETER: A call from God.

DAISY: That simple?

PETER: I couldn't see myself making a mark in any other profession, certainly not as a lawyer in the family business, much to my parents' regret.

DAISY: I can understand that, but you must obey God.

PETER: [Smiles] Thanks Daisy, I was delighted when the Bishop of Ely offered this church in Wicken. I used to spend some time in the fens during my vacation.

DAISY: [Excited] Did you.....?Pity I didn't see you around.

PETER: Likewise, I almost forgot, there's some Dundee cake.

DAISY: I'd love a piece of Dundee cake. [He puts some Dundee cake on a plate and offers it to her] Thanks, what do you like about Wicken?

PETER: The wildness of the fen and its link with the past.

DAISY: What about the people?

PETER: I feel there's still a community spirit here.

DAISY: Everyone knows everybody else.

PETER: Exactly, the complete contrast to city life.

DAISY: You should know.

PETER: I think we'll see great change towards the latter half of this century.

DAISY: Like what?

PETER: I think there will be an enormous increase in motor cars and air travel. As for the spiritual I think we're in mid century crisis, church attendance has dropped considerably since the war and something has to fill the spiritual vacuum in people. I think we'll see an increase in the occult and different religions, you mark my words. God help us, when the soul of the community disappears.

DAISY: Most folk around here don't drift far from the village all their lives.

PETER: Exactly, there's something else I like about this area.

DAISY: What's that?

PETER: Its past heroes and saints, it's not far from here where Hereward the Wake fired the reeds.

DAISY: It was at Aldreth near Haddenham.

PETER: Thanks Daisy,[Burns with enthusiasm] there's Ethelreda abbess of Ely, Edmund the martyr, Oliver Cromwell, the Countess of Huntingdon, William Cowper and John Bunyan in Bedford. All of them lived around East Anglia.

DAISY: Spurgeon was baptized in the river Lark at Isleham.

PETER: I didn't know that, I've got such a vision for the church in Wicken.

DAISY: I'm sure you'll be at Saint Lawrence's for many years.

PETER: I do hope so, please forgive me.

DAISY: What for?

PETER: Talking so much about myself, now it's your turn.

DAISY: Not so exciting as your life.

PETER: Let me be the judge of that.

DAISY: What would you like to know about me?

PETER: Your childhood for a start.

DAISY: My childhood days were happy and I loved roaming through the flowery meadows like today. [Looks around] I used to recite some of my favourite poems. I often sung 'where the bee sucks, there suck I.'

PETER: [Smiles] Really, I used to sing that at boarding school.

DAISY: What a coincidence.

PETER: Indeed, carry on.

DAISY: I left Ely High school at sixteen. I worked on my father's farm until I was eighteen, fortunately I was good at figures and found myself doing accounts on the Farm at Padney. This is the time when I found God.

PETER: Fortunate indeed and a chance to break away from your father.

DAISY: [Downcast] He has been good to me, but he's a bit of a loner.

PETER: I see, you made a wise decision.

DAISY: [Starts crying] I can't take much more.

PETER: [Concerned] Daisy, what is it?

DAISY: [Rises] Sorry, I can't share it with you.

PETER: [Rises] Calm down, I know all about your family. [Puts his hand on her shoulder]

DAISY: [Surprised] You do....?

PETER: We clergymen are informed of this kind of event.

DAISY: [Uneasy] Well..er..what's that's that?

PETER: Would you like to talk about it?

DAISY: No...not at the moment we're on a picnic. [Sits down and he sits beside her]

PETER: Very well, enjoying the food?

DAISY: Very much, particularly the....

PETER: Dundee cake. [They gaze into each others eyes] Daisy, you're so beautiful...[He strokes her hair and then kisses her]

DAISY: Oh Peter....[He stops kissing her and looks around] Anything wrong?

PETER: No, making sure there's no one around.

DAISY: It's quiet here. [She lies down and he kisses her passionately]

ENTER NANCY

NANCY hides behind the bushes at stage left and watches.

NANCY: [Whispers] My spell will soon be taking effect. Their passion will soon burn like fire....[Rubs her hands together]

DAISY: [The spell takes hold and he unbuttons her blouse] Peter.....oh...[DAISY freezes as she sees NANCY standing over them]

PETER: Daisy, what's wrong? [Pause] I feel a shadow's been cast over me.[He turns and rises as DAISY buttons up her blouse and rises]

NANCY: A shadow of sin.

PETER: [Embarrassed] Er..I really don't think it's any of your business.

NANCY: You've preached enough sermons on sins of the flesh.

PETER: [Angry] There's no need to be impertinent.

NANCY: It'll take more than a long word to get you out of this one.

PETER: What are you driving at?

NANCY: [Smirks] Nothing at the moment, you're only human after all.

PETER: [Recomposes himself] Quite, but I think we both owe you an apology. [Turns to DAISY]

DAISY: [Uneasy] Um...we're so sorry about this Nancy.

PETER: We're sorry we've put you in this embarrassing situation.

NANCY: [Thrust her palms of her hands outwards] There's no need to worry.

PETER: And you'll be discreet about this matter.

NANCY: Why of course....

DAISY: [Turns to PETER] I'd like a word with Nancy in private.

PETER: [Sighs] Is this really necessary?

DAISY: Women's talk, if you don't mind, please.

PETER: As you wish.

EXIT PETER

NANCY: What's on your mind?

DAISY: [Firm] Firstly witchcraft, secondly spying on us-

NANCY: Sss keep your voice down remember what I told you, as for spying you should have kept your big mouth shut

DAISY: Alright, what are you really after?

NANCY: [Cold] Can't you guess? [Moves away]

DAISY: [Pause] Peter...

NANCY: I'm crazy about him.

DAISY: [Upset] But can't you see we're in love.

NANCY: So what....?

DAISY: [More agitated] So what, you're like chalk and cheese!

NANCY: Makes it more interesting. Remember this what Nancy wants Nancy gets.

DAISY: [Points her finger in temper] Of...of.. all the nerve, if you so much as interfere, I'll....

NANCY: [Pushes DAISY] Don't you dare point your finger at me, it's not very nice.

DAISY: [Hysterical] Did...did.. you hear what.. I said, I'll kill you?

NANCY: You and whose army? [Daisy loses her temper and strikes NANCY around the face, they grapple and DAISY falls to the ground] Count yourself lucky, I didn't beat your brains in. I eat people like you for breakfast. So long for now.

EXIT NANCY

DAISY: Peter.....

ENTER PETER

PETER: [Helps her to her feet] What's this all about, what happened?

DAISY: I lost my temper, I could have killed her.

PETER: Are you sure you're alright, whatever did she do?

DAISY: [Straightens her clothes] We had a little rough and tumble that's all. I'm fine, except for my pride, she's strong as a lion.

PETER: [Sighs] It seems we're both in quite a predicament.

DAISY: She's crazy about you.

PETER: As I said before she's been hanging around me at every opportunity. I should have realised.

DAISY: Yes, you should.

PETER: Don't worry, she's not my type.

DAISY: Glad to hear it.

PETER: [Sighs] Daisy, you know what this means?

DAISY: I sense there's a foreboding in your voice. [He sits down and droops his head and DAISY puts her arm around him] Try and look on the bright side.

PETER: I wish I could, I once had a vision for Wicken.[Rises and walks around uneasy] My whole world's come tumbling down in a moment.

DAISY: I once had a vision, what are you trying to say?

PETER: [Buries his hands in his face] Oh Daisy, can't you see, I'm finished here in Wicken.

DAISY: [Upset] Leave..leave Wicken.

PETER: There's no option.

DAISY: What about us?

PETER: [Takes hold of her hand] I'm sorry Daisy.

DAISY: [Snatches her hand away] You don't love me.

PETER: You know I do with all my heart, but how can I look the parishioners in the face if Nancy gossips.

DAISY: Are you sure it's not your pride?

PETER: Look here Daisy, I'm a very black and white person, there's no place for compromise in my life.

DAISY: (Sighs) Nancy may not say anything, don't forget she fancies you.

PETER: [Looks to stage right] Talk of the Devil.

DAISY: She's got the cheek of old Nick.

PETER: Probably she's come to apologize.

DAISY: [Sighs] I very much doubt it.

ENTER NANCY.

NANCY: [Smiles] I've come to say sorry.

PETER: [Cheers up] That's wonderful.

NANCY: I'd like a word with you in private Vicar.

PETER: Certainly, [Turns to DAISY] would you excuse us for a moment please? [Daisy moves to stage left]

NANCY: I'll come straight to the point.

PETER: Good.

NANCY: I can't stop thinking about your passion.

PETER: [Angry] Now look here Nancy, it's none of your business.

NANCY: I'm making it my business.

PETER: [Surprised] Oh....?

NANCY: I'm making you an offer.

PETER: (Shocked) An offer? [Messes about with his hands]

NANCY: I'll keep my mouth shut on the condition that you come to my cottage tomorrow at eight.

PETER: (Pause) For what purpose?

NANCY: You're being a bit naive.

PETER: And if I refuse?

NANCY: I'll have you defrocked one way or the other.

PETER: How dare you, you really are a devil.

NANCY: I don't pretend to be a saint. [She takes hold of his hands and puts them around her waist] I'm a woman, flesh and blood. [He takes his hands from her waist]

PETER: [Recoils from her] You--disgust me.

NANCY: Why---you hypocrite, you're no different to any other church goer.[Gives a dirty laugh] See you tomorrow at eight. [Starts walking and turns to PETER] You better turn up or else you'll be on the end of every wagging tongue, that's a promise.

EXIT NANCY.

DAISY: [He rejoins DAISY looking upset] Peter,...whatever did she say?

PETER: [Sighs] I'm in a terrible dilemma.

DAISY: [Anxious] What... is it?

PETER: I'm in deep trouble.

DAISY: You're going round in circles.

PETER; (Pause) She's invited me around to her cottage tomorrow evening.

DAISY: Whatever for?

PETER: Can't you guess.

DAISY: [Angry] Why...the brazen bitch, you're not going, that's final.

PETER: But if I don't she'll have me defrocked, and we'll be the laughing stock of Wicken.

DAISY: [Clenches her fists and stamps on the ground] You're not going....[Bursts into tears]

PETER: [Puts his arm around her] Calm down, what else am...I to do?

DAISY: If you go around to her cottage tomorrow, that's the end of us.

PETER: I agree, there's no point in doing evil to escape evil.

DAISY: [Sighs] I'm beginning to think like you. [Starts crying]

PETER: What's that?

DAISY: Your days are numbered in Wicken.

PETER: And we haven't done anything wrong.

DAISY: What would have happened if Nancy hadn't turned up?

PETER: I would have restrained myself.

DAISY: [Looks him in the face] Would you.....?

PETER: [Sighs] Look it's not in my character to lose control. I can't think what possessed me.

DAISY: What's done is done, but what are we going to do?

PETER: I think we should wait a week to see where the land lies.

DAISY: Good idea.

PETER: We'll meet here at the same time. [Picks the picnic basket up]

DAISY: Put that basket down, come here.[He puts the basket down and they kiss and embrace] Thanks for a lovely picnic.

PETER: [Kisses her again] Daisy, I love you so much.

DAISY: I love you too. [They break from their embrace and he picks up the basket, and walks to stage left. He stops and throws the basket down in temper]

PETER: [Sits on the basket and bangs his fist on his knees] Damn, damn, damn....

DAISY: Peter what is it?

PETER: Look what's happened, all because I slipped into sin.

DAISY: [Kneels beside him] Don't be too hard on yourself.

PETER: It's no good, when I get back to the vicarage I'll pack and leave first thing in the morning.

DAISY: [Sniffles] What so soon?

PETER: I just can't face the smirks and sneers.

DAISY: [Upset] But...but..what about me?

PETER: You can leave Wicken.

DAISY: [Sighs] I wish I could.

PETER: What's stopping you?

DAISY: There's my father...then...[Burst into tears]

PETER: Then what?

DAISY: I can't say, [Pause] if only I could leave with you.

PETER: I'm sorry, that's not possible the way things are at the moment.

DAISY: [Moves away from him] Don't you love me enough?

PETER: [Moves towards her] Daisy, you know I love you with all my heart.

DAISY: [Stern] You've got a funny way of showing it.

PETER: [Dithers] It's difficult to explain.

DAISY: Try....

PETER: The truth is that I love God more and must put Him first.

DAISY: [Shocked] What kind of God is that?

PETER: Daisy, you must respect Him.

DAISY: [Hysterical] He's left me with a fate worse than death.

PETER: [Sighs] Here we go....[NANCY and JOAN'S voices are heard off stage at stage right] I've had enough of her for one day, let's go home. [Picks up picnic basket]

DAISY: I agree, we've had enough of her.

EXIT PETER AND DAISY
ENTER NANCY AND JOAN

NANCY: They're gone.

JOAN: Who?

NANCY: Daisy and the Vicar.

JOAN: What were they doing here?

NANCY: [Laughs] Don't ask!

JOAN: Come on you've really got me guessing now.

NANCY: I'll tell you after I've found my amulet. [JOAN stands gazing while NANCY looks around, then she looks up] Don't just stand there, give me a hand.

JOAN: Keep your hair on. [Helps NANCY]

NANCY: It must be around here somewhere.

JOAN: [Excited] I've found it. [Picks up the amulet and gives it to NANCY who puts it around her neck]

NANCY: Of course, that's where I had the scuffle with Daisy.

JOAN: Scuffle?

NANCY: Daisy got wild with me. She had good reason to be.

JOAN: [Impatient] What happened?

NANCY: I caught them in the grip of passion.

JOAN: What with the Vicar?

NANCY: He's no different from everybody else. Don't be taken in by his dog collar.

JOAN: I'm still surprised.

NANCY: [Laughs] Mind you, I gave them a little help.

JOAN: What did you do?

NANCY: I cast a spell on them, it worked like a treat.

JOAN: You used your witchcraft.

The light gradually fades into semi-darkness.

[Looks around] It's gone dark and eerie. Nancy I'm scared, what's going on?

NANCY: [Looks up] You're imagining things, it's just a black cloud blotting out the sun.

JOAN: [Moves closer to NANCY] I feel creepy.

NANCY: Look Joan, there's nothing to worry about. [CLIVE BRADLEY'S voice is heard at stage right] It's Clive Bradley, I'd recognize his voice and presence anywhere.

ENTER CLIVE

CLIVE: [Smooth and sophisticated] Why hello Joan you look so smartly dressed today.

JOAN: [Surprised] Why thanks Mister Bradley [She thrusts her arm out and accidentally touches CLIVE'S arm who brushes it with contempt and turns his back on her] Er...sorry Mister...

NANCY: [Interrupts] What's the pleasure of this visit Clive?

CLIVE: Just out for an afternoon stroll. Nancy I wonder if I could have a word with you in private..

NANCY: Sure, would you mind Joan.

JOAN: That's fine, I've got a pile of ironing to finish, eh...thanks again Mister Bradley.

EXIT JOAN

NANCY: What's on your mind Clive?

CLIVE: That vicar's making me feel uncomfortable in church, I feel he could be a problem, he's far too spiritual for his own good.

NANCY: [Smiles] Not to worry, Nancy's taken care of him.

CLIVE: [Delighted] Really.....but how?.

NANCY: I caught him and the vicar in the height of passion with a little help from my spell.

CLIVE: Nancy, I couldn't have done better myself old fashioned scandal never fails. The gossip will spread through Wicken like wildfire. [Rubs his hand together] That's the end of him the sooner the better.

NANCY: [Sighs] The end...

CLIVE: Nancy, I know you're a little sweet on him yourself but he had to go.

NANCY: Yes, like you I felt he's on to us.

CLIVE: But he's got no proof and one thing's in our favour hardly anybody believes in witchcraft these days, so we'll just stay calm and spread the gossip that's alive and well. [Laughs]

NANCY: I've already told Joan, you know what she's like.

CLIVE: Exactly, that's why you have to get rid of her.

NANCY: [Surprised] But why? She's harmless as a fly.

CLIVE: I realize this may be distressing for you but I'm following the command from the Prince of Powers.

NANCY: Very well I'll see to it, she has been snooping around.

CLIVE: Good, that's settled, there's another fly in the ointment Josh Marriot's been sniffing around.

NANCY: [Smiles] I've taken care of that to.

CLIVE: [Pleased] You never cease to amaze me Nancy, but how?

NANCY: You'll just have to wait after the election.

CLIVE: Come on Nancy stop keeping me in suspense. [Pause and thinks and gradually starts laughing] A non event.....

NANCY: Spot on as usual Clive.

CLIVE: It's not me but the spirit within, oh by the way have you approached Daisy about her sacrifice?

NANCY: [Sticks her thumb up]Right on course.

CLIVE: Nancy, you've done your work well, if you keep following me I promise you won't lack for anything.

NANCY: Thanks Clive those words are like music to my heart. At last I'm in the embrace of what I've always wanted riches, position and power.

CLIVE: And so you shall as long as I'm leader of the coven. Things couldn't be better for all your good work. I'm guaranteed a seat on the Parish Council. There also looks like a good yield from my harvest fields and I'll soon be a millionaire. Still I mustn't count the chickens before they hatch.

NANCY: I sense there's a problem.

CLIVE: You can almost read my mind Nancy, that Vicar's bound to blab to the Bishop of Ely about his suspicions, but fortunately for us the Bishop's away for a couple of days

NANCY: I sense a change of plan.

CLIVE: Indeed, we'll sacrifice Daisy in a couple of days.

NANCY: And if the Vicar ever returns the deed will have been done.

CLIVE: Exactly, she'll disappear into thin air, only no evidence for the police this time, and protection from the powers that be.

NANCY: I'll enjoy seeing Daisy sacrificed the sooner the better.

CLIVE: [Intense] Then power will return to the old pagan sites. The gods' of England will be revived. Hark the winds of time are blowing. [Laughs] Wicken will be mine....

The wind is heard increasing in strength.

CURTAIN

