



# THE SHADOW IN SALEM

Based on the actual events that transpired in Salem,  
Massachusetts, in 1692, shortly before the infamous witch trials.

D C E A S T M A N

# *The Shadow in Salem*

*By*

*DC Eastman*

\*\*\*

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Copyright © 2023 by DC Eastman

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner without the written permission of the copyright owner except for the use of quotations in a book review.

For more information, contact [hello@dceastman.com](mailto:hello@dceastman.com)

March 2023

Book design DC Eastman

Cover photo by Felix Richter: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/light-over-woods-at-night-13396070/>

*Note to the reader...*

This was one of the original flashbacks in the book *The Undulating Shadows*. It had to be cut to decrease the length of the book.

Betty Parris and Abigail Williams played pivotal roles during the tragic events that transpired in Salem, Massachusetts. There is even mention of a black man in their room before the trials. Shortly after that, Samuel decided to move from the house.

I suggest reading more about the events that transpired there to appreciate this short story fully...

## 1691, Salem Village (Danvers), Massachusetts

Betty Parris has perched herself on a stump, lurking out from the snow carpet about fifteen yards away from her house. Behind her, white speckled trunks of naked Gray Birches reach out like gaunt hands trying to break free from the white winter's grave in search of help from the silent gray above. She wrapped a brown woolly blanket around her before leaving the house, but now it seems inefficient in protecting her from the jagged teeth of the snow-chilled air. Elizabeth is rocking back and forth while wisps of white smoke escape through her fingers during her futile attempts to breathe life into her clasped hands. Everything around her is frozen, and now her eyes seem to be too. Her gaze remains static and fixed toward the top-floor window in the far right corner of the face-brick house.

Betty is mustering up the courage to return to the warm embrace of the fire that her mother had just started in the living room, the evidence of which is clearly visible on top of the brick chimney sticking out from the tiled roof. The grey smoke rises undisturbed, straight up into the air, almost like a translucent grey ribbon being pulled upward by an invisible force.

Usually, the embers are still bright and blinking from the night before when her mother, Elizabeth Parris, gets up. She is always on the go before the sun has the chance to brighten the ashen March sky. However, this morning, Betty abandoned the house before her mother set foot out of bed.

Betty buries her hands behind the edges of the blanket, shielding her exposed skin with the brown curtains dangling from her shoulders. She closes the blanket curtains and tugs her shoulders up, trying to defrost her scarlet earlobes. Her tousled black curls hang motionless across her pale face as her eyes remain fixed on the window in the corner- her bedroom window.

Although the curtains are closed, she expects them to fly open soon or a hand, a black hand, to slowly pull them apart. Although she is certain what happened earlier was not just manifested by her 9-year-old mind, it would be terrifying yet calming to get some sign that what she experienced was indeed real.

The crisp stagnant air that seems anchored to the snow burns Betty's nose with every breath. She pulls her knees up, plants her feet on the stump, and buries her nose and mouth in the folds of the blanket between her knees. Yet, her eyes do not move from the window on the top floor. Betty had been playing a deadly game for the last month, and now it seems that it is coming back to haunt her, quite literally.

Winter in the new world is not kind to the young. The cold, lack of food, and ailments are things that kids can get used to, but boredom is a cancer on the souls of the young during winter. A tumor that begins to consume the sanity shortly after the first snow settles on the ground in October. It was boredom that finally led Betty to start playing her deadly game.

She had no long-term plans for it, but just like a forest fire, once it gets going, it's better just to stay out of its way. The little flame that Betty created out of a desperate attempt to break the boredom and attract a little attention from her parents is now an unstoppable raging inferno, spreading at an incredible speed, incinerating everything that comes in its path.

It's been just over a month since Betty started acting out symptoms of a curse, a curse bestowed upon her by witches. Her cousin, Abigail Williams, was aware of Betty's play but sworn to eternal secrecy.

Little over a month ago, Betty started screaming in the house, barking like a dog, or doing whatever she felt like doing. There was nothing else to do during that cold snipe, so why not? Of course, adults don't tolerate mischievous children, and a leather belt, wooden spoon, shoe, or pretty much any inanimate object that came close to a raging adult hand would bring swift justice to the ill-behaved. But what parent would punish their offspring for being bewitched or possessed by demonic spirits?

The plan was ingenious, and Betty was playing her part to perfection and getting all the attention she desired. Her cousin, Abigail, who lived with the Parris family, grew envious and wanted in on the action. Although Betty didn't want to share the stage with her cousin, Abigail threatened to tell Betty's secret if she couldn't join in on the fun. Abigail, being two years older than Betty, overtook the main role and sold the possession scam with more success than her supporting actress, Betty. She also came up with the idea of the screaming competition in the middle of the night, easily explained by midnight demonic attacks... the pinches and pricks of invisible pins and needles. Abigail also came up with the sly plan to get rid of the annoying slave nanny, Tituba.

Betty's father, Samuel Parris, bought Tituba, from some island in the south, for a bargain and brought her to Massachusetts. Abigail couldn't stand Tituba. Tituba was the kind of slave that didn't know her place and somehow got away with it. Samuel Parris didn't mind Tituba disciplining the children to keep them in check, but Abigail was physically repulsed by taking orders from a lessor-than. Tituba had to go.

As soon as Abigail got her ticket to the possession party, she had her sights set on Tituba. Early evenings, under the guard of the adults, Abigail would pretend to sleep and then murmur incoherent words about 'black danger' in her pretend-sleep state. She was hoping that Samuel and his wife Elizabeth would pick up what she was putting down, but the exact opposite happened. Instead of accusing Tituba, they approached her for help. Tituba was desperate to please her master and help the children and resorted to an ancient tradition upheld by the elders in the village where she grew up. It was a macabre tradition and something Tituba didn't believe in, but she couldn't think of anything else. Tituba set forth to bake the traditional witch cake, which became the accidental snare of Abigail's unplanned trap.

A witch cake is something that Tituba had never even seen in her life. It was an old wife told that she remembered hearing as a mere child herself when her grandmother and aunt visited her mother many years ago. Most of the ingredients of the witch cake the elderly ladies discussed that day in the hut in their homeland disappeared into the ether. But one of the ingredients stood out from the rest. An ingredient that would be permanently imprinted on any child's mind.

Tituba vividly remembers this one specific ingredient from that conversation so many years ago: urine. Tituba didn't think for one second that this rancid recipe would rid evil spirits, but she didn't want to disappoint her master as Mr. Parris wasn't a stranger to lifting his hand to disobedient slaves. She hoped that her effort to help might please him and also that it would have a placebo effect on the girls.

She collected urine from the bewitched girls and used it to bake the infamous witch cake. It was believed that if this witch cake was consumed by a dog, the dog would attract the evil spirit like some type of supernatural magnet. The cake she baked was plain golden brown and fluffy with no added sugar or syrup. The scent of urine was not apparent to the human noses that day. Maybe it was to Hunter, but he didn't mind at all and devoured the pee-cake with glee.

After the deed was done, Abigail increased her acting efforts and practiced her gymnastic abilities by walking around the house in contorted shapes. Her acting, at times, made Betty giggle when she wasn't part of the scene, of course, but the adults were sold on it. Their concern outweighed their wits and clouded their judgments.

Shortly after the witch cake episode, Abigail realized it was time to deliver the final blow. She told her uncle, Samuel Parris, that Tituba was the source of the evil in the house. This information led to Tituba's arrest and incarceration. Both girls had a quiet celebration in their rooms when Tituba was taken. They peered through the curtains from the top floor as the watchmen and town folk walked off with her. The two cousins hugged and stifled their giggles in their palms.

Tituba is gone now, and Abigail was sleeping in the same room as Betty last night when Betty saw the black thing- the moving shadow with the hollow eyes. Abigail didn't stir, even when Betty hurried out of the room in the early dark hours of the morning. Abigail, the fuel on the fire of an innocent attempt for attention, was still sleeping peacefully, blissfully unaware of the real evil that enveloped Betty in the room last night.

Betty is completely consumed by the window on the top floor and the horrific memories swirling through her mind that she doesn't even notice her mother opening the front door.

"Betty! What in heaven's name are you doing out in the cold? Come in at once, my love," Elizabeth Parris shouts from the front door. Betty snaps her head toward her mother. She pushes herself up from the stump and hobbles over the snow toward her mother with the crunch of every step in the snow, standing out from the cold breezeless air.

"What're you doing outside in the cold, so early in the morning? Oh, goodness, you're freezing my child," Elizabeth says as she cups her hands around the ice-cold cheeks of her shivering daughter. Elizabeth pulls Betty by her hand into the house and closes the door behind her. She guides Betty toward the fireplace in the living room and kneels down beside her, where she embraces her daughter and rubs her back like a sailor trying to scrub the barnacles off a galleon bow.

"What happened, my love? Did they attack you again?" Elizabeth asks as she pushes Betty away by her shoulders to inspect her wide glassy eyes.

"Yes... no... I don't know, Mommy," Betty says and starts to whimper. Warm tears run down her dead cheeks, but they are smudged against her face as her mother pulls her head in for another tight hug. Elizabeth has seen Betty acting extremely peculiar during the past month, and it scared her every time. But what she is seeing in her daughter now is something different. Something even more sinister than what she had seen before.

“Sit here on the rug by the nice warm fire. Mommy’s going to bring you a hot cup of tea? I’ll be right back,” Elizabeth says and guides Betty’s black curls back behind her ears. She gently tugs her daughter’s shoulders downward until Betty crosses her legs and sits down on the carpet. Elizabeth tightens the blanket around Betty’s shoulders and walks to the kitchen. Betty sniffs and wipes her face with the cold blanket. The orange glow from the fireplace kisses her cheeks and brings them back to life, just like the prince kissing the sleeping girl in *The Tale of Tales* that her mother had read to her so often before bedtime.

Betty can hear the teacup resonating like a tiny bell from the kitchen as her mother stirs the sweetened tea. Mother will be back with the tea very soon, and Betty needs to decide right now if she’ll tell her about the shadow phantom that almost smothered her to death or keep it a secret.

Abigail wouldn’t believe that there was a real haunting presence in the house now. She would think that Betty is playing the game behind her back and would resent Betty for adding new characters to the play that did not form part of the original plot. On the other hand, Betty is sick of playing the game that Abigail annexed from her. She never planned for people to get hurt, but now it seems that more people will follow Tabita’s fate, all thanks to their secret game. Regardless, she needs to tell someone about the deadly moving shadow in the house. The one with the bottomless pits for eyes.

“Here you go, my love, drink up. It’ll chase away all the silly cold from your body,” her mother says as she hands over the cup of tea with a warm smile. Elizabeth pulls the sides of her dress from her legs and kneels down next to her daughter. She extends her arm around Betty’s shoulders and watches her sip on the warm tea, clutching the cup with both her hands.

“Now, tell me. What happened?” Elizabeth says with a soothing tone that only a loving mother can engender. Betty takes tiny sips like a hummingbird, her eyes hypnotized by the dancing flames in the fireplace. She doesn’t stop suckling on the teacup’s rim and shakes her head with the utmost care to prevent spilling.

“You can tell me, Betty. There’s nobody else around. It’ll be our little secret,” Elizabeth says and begins to rub Betty’s back with long slow, gentle strokes. Betty removes the cup from her lips, stares into the fire for a moment longer, and then drops her head down, her eyes peering at the reflective surface of the dark brown liquid in the white cup. She can see her nose and eyes in the brown moving mirror inside the cup. She can even see her eyelids shivering in the reflection as she battles to keep the tears at bay.

“Last night...” Betty tries.

“There, there. You’re safe now, my love. Take your time,” Elizabeth says while increasing the pace of the strokes on the brown blanket covering her daughter’s back.

“OK...” Betty says, followed by two sniffs. She lifts the cup and takes a small sip for courage, and tries again, “There was a man last night...” and she stops again.

“Where? Outside? Outside our house?”

“No,” Betty says, the volume of her voice going lower with every sentence and the pitch higher.

“Did you dream of a man?”

“No.”

“Then where was this man, Betty?”

“He was in my room. He was there.”

“What did this man look like?” Elizabeth asks, knowing very well that her daughter will reveal a character from a dream. Elizabeth made sure that all the doors and windows were locked last night, and Hunter was sleeping by the fire. Nobody entered the house during the night. It was impossible.

“I don’t know if it was a man. It was black, like a shadow. It came from the shadows. My corner.. the corner in my room... I woke up and thought I saw something move. Then I heard it,”

“Heard what?”

“Something strange, like a summer cicada, but not so loud. Some strange noise hurt my ears... I couldn’t move after that. I couldn’t move, and I couldn’t breathe, Mommy,” Betty says, unable to keep the floodgates closed anymore; she bursts into tears and slams her face into her mother’s armpit. Elizabeth grabs the cup from her daughter’s hands and places it on the floor beside her. Free from the cup, Betty lunges with both arms and clasps her mother’s dress while her whole body convulses.

Elizabeth looks down at her trembling daughter burrowing into her armpit. She had never seen her daughter react so dramatically through all the paranormal events that transpired in their house during the last month. It’s now as if the fear and confusion from her daughter are conducting into her own body.

“Did this happen to Abigail too?”

“No... Maybe, I don’t know. I don’t think so. She was sleeping, I think. The corner moved, Mommy. The shadow in the corner came to life. I couldn’t breathe, mommy. It was there. Oh, Jesus, please forgive me. Save me, Jesus,” Betty utters through the sobbing, her voice muffled by her mother’s armpit.

“Shhhhh, it’s ok, my love. The Lord shall protect us. You’re safe now.”

“Its eyes.... Mommy... Its eyes. Black eyes with no life. Just staring while I can’t breathe, Mommy. I wanted to cry. I couldn’t. I wanted to scream. I couldn’t. It was just there, staring at me,”

Elizabeth feels the hairs on her neck and head rising while her daughter continues to convulse and smother herself in her mother’s dress. A crack in the floor causes Elizabeth to snap her head to the side. Her husband, Samual, is in the doorway with widened eyes, just staring at the petrifying scene unfolding on the rug in front of the fireplace. He doesn’t utter a word.

Elizabeth keeps her eyes on her husband for a moment and then darts them down to her daughter and back up to Samual. Then Elizabeth starts shaking her head slowly. Samual overheard enough a moment ago to decipher what his wife was trying to tell him telepathically. He had been battling to accept it throughout the last couple of weeks, but now he just received the confirmation in his wife’s eyes that he needed.

Something had to be done.

Unwillingly or not, his daughter was now an instrument of Satan himself.

\*\*\*