

ACT TWO

Start Act II
reading #1

The common room of Proctor's house, eight days later.

At the right is a door opening on the fields outside. A fireplace is at the left, and behind it a stairway leading upstairs. It is the low, dark, and rather long living room of the time. As the curtain rises, the room is empty. From above, Elizabeth is heard softly singing to the children. Presently the door opens and John Proctor enters, carrying his gun. He glances about the room as he comes toward the fireplace, then halts for an instant as he hears her singing. He continues on to the fireplace, leans the gun against the wall as he swings a pot out of the fire and smells it. Then he lifts out the ladle and tastes. He is not quite pleased. He reaches to a cupboard, takes a pinch of salt, and drops it into the pot. As he is tasting again, her footsteps are heard on the stair. He swings the pot into the fireplace and goes to a basin and washes his hands and face, Elizabeth enters.

Elizabeth: What keeps you so late? It's almost dark.

Proctor: I were planting far out to the forest edge. Elizabeth: Oh, you're done then.

Proctor: Aye, the farm is seeded. The boys asleep?

Elizabeth: They will be soon. *And she goes to the fireplace, proceeds to ladle up stew in a dish.*

Proctor: Pray now for a fair summer.

Elizabeth: Aye.

Proctor: Are you well today?

Elizabeth: I am. *She brings the plate to the table, and, indicating the food:* It is a rabbit.

Proctor, *going to the table:* Oh, is it! In Jonathan's trap?

Elizabeth: No, she walked into the house this afternoon; I found her sittin' in the corner like she come to visit.

Proctor: Oh, that's a good sign walkin' in.

Elizabeth: Pray God. It hurt my heart to strip her, poor rabbit. *She sits and watches him taste it.*

Proctor: It's well seasoned.

Elizabeth, *blushing with pleasure:* I took great care. She's tender?

Proctor: Aye. *He eats. She watches him.* I think we'll see green fields soon. It's warm as blood beneath the clods.

Elizabeth: That's well.

Proctor eats, then looks up.

Proctor: If the crop is good I'll buy George Jacob's heifer. How would that please you?

Elizabeth: Aye, it would.

Proctor, *with a grin:* I mean to please you, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth - *it is hard to say:* I know it, John.

He gets up, goes to her, kisses her. She receives it. With a certain disappointment, he returns to the table.

Act Two Proctor, *as gently as he can*: Cider?

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Elizabeth, *with a sense of reprimanding herself for having forgot*: Aye! *She gets up and goes and pours a glass for him. He now arches his back.*

Proctor: This farm's a continent when you go foot by foot droppin' seeds in it.

Elizabeth, *coming with the cider*: It must be.

Proctor, *drinks a long draught, then, putting the glass down*: You ought to bring some flowers in the house.

Elizabeth: Oh! I forgot! I will tomorrow.

Proctor: It's winter in here yet. On Sunday let you come with me, and we'll walk the farm together; I never see such a load of flowers on the earth. *With good feeling he goes and looks up at the sky through the open doorway.* Lilacs have a purple smell. Lilac is the smell of nightfall, I think. Massachusetts is a beauty in the spring!

Elizabeth: Aye, it is.

There is a pause. She is watching him from the table as he stands there absorbing the night. It is as though she would speak but cannot. Instead, now, she takes up his plate and glass and fork and goes with them to the basin. Her back is turned to him. He turns to her and watches her. A sense of their separation rises.

Proctor: I think you're sad again. Are you?

Elizabeth - *she doesn't want friction, and yet she must*: You come so late I thought you'd gone to Salem this afternoon.

Proctor: Why? I have no business in Salem.

Elizabeth: You did speak of going, earlier this week. Proctor - *he knows what she means*: I thought better of it since.

Elizabeth: Mary Warren's there today,

Proctor: Why'd you let her? You heard me forbid her go to Salem any more!

Elizabeth: I couldn't stop her.

Proctor, *holding back a full condemnation of her*: It is a fault, it is a fault, Elizabeth - you're the mistress here, not Mary Warren.

Elizabeth: She frightened all my strength away.

Proctor: How may that mouse frighten you, Elizabeth? You -

Elizabeth: It is a mouse no more. I forbid her go, and she raises up her chin like the daughter of a prince and lays to me, "I must go to Salem, Goody Proctor; I am an official of the court!"

Proctor: Court! What court?

Elizabeth: Aye, it is a proper court they have now. They've sent four judges out of Boston, she says, weighty magistrates of the General Court, and at the head sits the Deputy Governor of the Province.

PROCTOR, *astonished*: Why, she's mad.

Elizabeth: I would to God she were. There be fourteen people in the jail now, she says. *Proctor simply looks at her, unable to grasp it.* And they'll be tried, and the court have power to hang them too, she says.

Proctor, *scoffing, but without conviction*: Ah, they'd never hang -

Elizabeth: The Deputy Governor promise hangin' if they'll not confess, John. The town's gone wild, I think. She speak of Abigail, and I thought she were a saint, to hear her. Abigail brings the other girls into the court, and where she walks the

crowd will part like the sea for Israel. And folks are brought before them, and if they scream and howl and fall to the floor - the person's clapped in the jail for bewitchin' them.

Proctor, *wide-eyed*: Oh, it is a black mischief.

Elizabeth: I think you must go to Salem, John. *He turns to her.* I think so. You must tell them it is a fraud.

Proctor, *thinking beyond this*: Aye, it is, it is surely.

Elizabeth: Let you go to Ezekiel Cheever - he knows you well. And tell him what she said to you last week in her uncle's house. She said it had naught to do with witchcraft, did she not?

Proctor, *in thought*: Aye, she did, she did. Now, *a pause.*

Elizabeth, *quietly, fearing to anger him by prodding*: God for-bid you keep that from the court, John. I think they must be told.

Proctor, *quietly, struggling with his thought*: Aye, they must, they must. It is a wonder they do believe her.

Elizabeth: I would go to Salem now, John - let you go tonight.

Proctor: I'll think on it.

Elizabeth, *with her courage now*: You cannot keep it, John,

Proctor, *angering*: I know I cannot keep it. I say I will think on it!

Elizabeth, *hurt, and very coldly*: Good, then, let you think on it. *She stands and starts to walk out of the room.*

Proctor: I am only wondering how I may prove what she told me, Elizabeth. If the girl's a saint now, I think it is not easy to prove she's fraud, and the town gone so silly. She told it to me in a room alone - I have no proof for it.

Elizabeth: You were alone with her?

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Proctor, *stubbornly*: For a moment alone, aye. Elizabeth: Why, then, it is not as you told me.

Proctor, *his anger rising*: For a moment, I say. The others come in soon after.

Elizabeth, *quietly - she has suddenly lost all faith in him*: Do as you wish, then. *She starts to turn.*

Proctor: Woman. *She turns to him*. I'll not have your suspicion any more.

Elizabeth, *a little loftily*: I have no -

Proctor: I'll not have it!

Elizabeth: Then let you not earn it.

Proctor, *with a violent undertone*: You doubt me yet?

Elizabeth, *with a smile, to keep her dignity*: John, if it were not Abigail that you must go to hurt, would you falter now? I think not.

Proctor: Now look you -

Elizabeth: I see what I see, John.

Proctor, *with solemn warning*: You will not judge me more, Elizabeth. I have good reason to think before I charge fraud on Abigail, and I will think on it. Let you look to your own improvement before you go to judge your husband any more. I have forgot Abigail, and -

Elizabeth: And I.

Proctor: Spare me! You forget nothin' and forgive nothin'. Learn charity, woman. I have gone tiptoe in this house all seven month since she is gone. I have not moved from there to there without I think to please you, and still an everlasting funeral marches round your heart. I cannot speak but I am

doubted, every moment judged for lies, as though I come into a court when I come into this house!

Elizabeth: John, you are not open with me. You saw her with a crowd, you said. Now you -

Proctor: I'll plead my honesty no more, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth - *now she would justify herself*: John, I am only -

Proctor: No more! I should have roared you down when first you told me your suspicion. But I wilted, and, like a Christian, I confessed. Confessed! Some dream I had must have mistaken you for God that day. But you're not, you're not, and let you remember it! Let you look sometimes for the goodness in me, and judge me not.

Elizabeth: I do not judge you. The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you. I never thought you but a good man, John - *with a smile* - only somewhat bewildered.

Proctor, *laughing bitterly*: Oh, Elizabeth, your justice would freeze beer! *He turns suddenly toward a sound outside. He starts for the door as Mary Warren enters. As soon as he sees her, he goes directly to her and grabs her by her cloak, furious.* How do you go to Salem when I forbid it? Do you mock me? *Shaking her.* I'll whip you if you dare leave this house again!

Strangely, she doesn't resist him, but hangs limply by his grip.

Mary Warren: I am sick, I am sick, Mr. Proctor. Pray, pray, hurt me not. *Her strangeness throws him off, and her evident pallor and weakness. He frees her.* My insides are all shuddery; I am in the proceedings all day, sir.

Proctor, *with draining anger - his curiosity is draining it*: And what of these proceedings here? When will you proceed to keep this house, as you are paid nine pound a year to do - and my wife not wholly well?

As though to compensate, Mary Warren goes to Elizabeth with a small rag doll.

Mary Warren: I made a gift for you today, Goody Proctor. I had to sit long hours in a chair, and passed the time with sewing.

Elizabeth, *perplexed, looking at the doll*: Why, thank you, it's a fair poppet.

Mary Warren, *with a trembling, decayed voice*: We must all love each other now, Goody Proctor.

Elizabeth, *amazed at her strangeness*: Aye, indeed we must.

Mary Warren, *glancing at the room*: I'll get up early in the morning and clean the house. I must sleep now. *She turns and starts off.*

Proctor: Mary. *She halts*. Is it true? There be fourteen women arrested?

Mary Warren: No, sir. There be thirty-nine now - *She sud-denly breaks op and sobs and sits down, exhausted.*

Elizabeth: Why, she's weepin'! What ails you, child?

Mary WARREN: Goody Osburn - will hang!

There is a shocked pause, while she sobs.

Proctor: Hang! *He calls into her face*. Hang, y'say?

Mary Warren, *through her weeping*: Aye.

Proctor: The Deputy Governor will permit it?

Mary Warren: He sentenced her. He must. *To ameliorate it*: But not Sarah Good. For Sarah Good confessed, y'see.

Proctor: Confessed' To what?

Mary Warren: That she - *in horror at the memory* - she some-times made a compact with Lucifer, and wrote her name in his

black book - with her blood - and bound herself to torment Christians till God's thrown down - and we all must worship Hell forevermore,

Pause.

Proctor: But - surely you know what a jabberer she is. Did you tell them that?

MARY WARREN: Mr. Proctor, in open court she near to choked us all to death.

Proctor: How, choked you?

Mary Warren: She sent her spirit out.

Elizabeth: Oh, Mary, Mary, surely you -

Mary Warren, *with an indignant edge*: She tried to kill me many times, Goody Proctor!

Elizabeth: Why, I never heard you mention that before.

Mary Warren: I never knew it before. I never knew anything before. When she come into the court I say to myself, I must not accuse this woman, for she sleep in ditches, and so very old and poor. But then - then she sit there, denying and denying, and I feel a misty coldness climbin' up my back, and the skin on my skull begin to creep, and I feel a clamp around my neck and I cannot breathe air; and then - *entranced* - I hear a voice, a screamin' voice, and it were my voice - and all at once I re-membered everything she done to me!

Proctor: Why? What did she do to you?

Mary Warren, *like one awakened to a marvelous secret in-sight*: So many time, Mr. Proctor, she come to this very door, beggin' bread and a cup of cider - and mark this: whenever I turned her away empty, she *mumbled*.

Elizabeth: Mumbled! She may mumble if she's hungry.

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Mary Warren: But *what* does she mumble? You must re-member, Goody Proctor. Last month - a Monday, I think - she walked away, and I thought my guts would burst for two days after. Do you remember it?

Elizabeth: Why - I do, I think, but -

Mary Warren: And so I told that to Judge Hathorne, and he asks her so. "Sarah Good," says he, "what curse do you mumble that this girl must fall sick after turning you away?" And then she replies - *mimicking an old crone* - "Why, your excellence, no curse at all. I only say my commandments; I hope I may say my commandments," says she!

Elizabeth: And that's an upright answer.

Mary Warren: Aye, but then Judge Hathorne say, "Recite for us your commandments!" - *leaning avidly toward them* - and of all the ten she could not say a single one. She never knew no commandments, and they had her in a flat lie!

Proctor: And so condemned her?

Mary Warren, *now a little strained, seeing his stubborn doubt*: Why, they must when she condemned herself.

Proctor: But the proof, the proof!

Mary Warren, *with greater impatience with him*: I told you the proof. It's hard proof, hard as rock, the judges said.

Proctor, *pauses an instant, then*: You will not go to court again, Mary Warren.

Mary Warren: I must tell you, sir, I will be gone every day now. I am amazed you do not see what weighty work we do.

Proctor: What work you do! It's strange work for a Christian girl to hang old women!

Mary Warren: But, Mr. Proctor, they will not hang them it

they confess. Sarah Good will only sit in jail some time - *recall-ing* - and here's a wonder for you; think on this. Goody Good is pregnant!

Elizabeth: Pregnant! Are they mad? The woman's near to sixty!

Mary Warren: They had Doctor Griggs examine her, and she's full to the brim. And smokin' a pipe all these years, and no husband either! But she's safe, thank God, for they'll not hurt the innocent child, But be that not a marvel? You must see it, sir, it's God's work we do. So I'll be gone every day for some time. I'm - I am an official of the court, they say, and I - *She has been edging toward onstage.*

Proctor: I'll official you! *He strides to the mantel, takes down the whip hanging there.*

Mary Warren, *terrified, but coming erect, striving for her au-thority*: I'll not stand whipping any more!

Elizabeth, *hurriedly, as Proctor approaches*: Mary, promise now you'll stay at home -

MARY Warren, *backing from him, but keeping her erect pos-ture, striving, striving for her way*: The Devil's loose in Salem, Mr. Proctor; we must discover where he's hiding!

Proctor! I'll whip the Devil out of you! *With whip raised he reaches out for her, and she streaks away and yells.*

Mary Warren, *pointing at Elizabeth*: I saved her life today!

Silence. His whip comes down.

Elizabeth, *softly*: I am accused?

Mary Warren, *quaking*: Somewhat mentioned. But I said I never see no sign you ever sent your spirit out to hurt no one, and seeing I do live so closely with you, they dismissed it.

Elizabeth: Who accused me?

Mary Warren: I am bound by law, I cannot tell it. *To Proctor:* I only hope you'll not be so sarcastical no more. Four judges and the King's deputy sat to dinner with us but an hour ago. I - I would have you speak civilly to me, from this out.

Proctor, *in horror, muttering in disgust at her:* Go to bed.

Mary Warren, *with a stamp of her foot:* I'll not be ordered to bed no more, Mr. Proctor! I am eighteen and a woman, how-ever single!

Proctor: Do you wish to sit up? Then sit up.

Mary Warren: I wish to go to bed!

Proctor, *in anger:* Good night, then!

Mary Warren: Good night. *Dissatisfied, uncertain of herself, she goes out. Wide-eyed, both, Proctor and Elizabeth stand staring.*

Elizabeth, *quietly:* Oh, the noose, the noose is up!

Proctor: There'll be no noose.

Elizabeth: She wants me dead. I knew all week it would come to this!

Proctor, *Without conviction:* They dismissed it. You heard her say -

Elizabeth: And what of tomorrow? She will cry me out until they take me!

Proctor: Sit you down.

Elizabeth: She wants me dead, John, you know it!

Proctor: I say sit down! *She sits, trembling. He speaks quietly, trying to keep his wits, Now we must be wise, Elizabeth.*

Elizabeth, *with sarcasm, and a sense of being lost:* Oh, indeed, indeed!

start
Act II
reading
#2

end Act II
reading #1

Proctor: Fear nothing. I'll find Ezekiel Cheever. I'll tell him she said it were all sport.

Elizabeth: John, with so many in the jail, more than Cheever's help is needed now, I think. Would you favor me with this? Go to Abigail.

Proctor, *his soul hardening as he senses...* : What have I to say to Abigail?

Elizabeth, *delicately*: John - grant me this. You have a faulty understanding of young girls. There is a promise made in any bed -

Proctor, *striving against his anger*: What promise!

Elizabeth: Spoke or silent, a promise is surely made. And she may dote on it now - I am sure she does - and thinks to kill me, then to take my place.

Proctor's anger is rising; he cannot speak.

Elizabeth: It is her dearest hope, John, I know it. There be a thousand names; why does she call mine? There be a certain danger in calling such a name - I am no Goody Good that sleeps in ditches, nor Osburn, drunk and half-witted. She'd dare not call out such a farmer's wife but there be monstrous profit in it. She thinks to take my place, John,

Proctor: She cannot think it! *He knows it is true.*

Elizabeth, *"reasonably"*: John, have you ever shown her some-what of contempt? She cannot pass you in the church but you will blush -

Proctor: I may blush for my sin.

Elizabeth: I think she sees another meaning in that blush.

Proctor: And what see you? What see you, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth, "*conceding*": I think you be somewhat ashamed, far I am there, and she so close.

Proctor: When will you know me, woman? Were I stone I would have cracked for shame this seven month!

Elizabeth: Then go and tell her she's a whore. Whatever promise she may sense - break it, John, break it.

Proctor, *between his teeth*: Good, then. I'll go. *He starts for his rifle.*

Elizabeth, *trembling, fearfully*: Oh, how unwillingly!

Proctor, *turning on her, ripe in hand*: I will curse her hotter than the oldest cinder in hell. But pray, begrudge me not my anger!

Elizabeth: Your anger! I only ask you -

Proctor: Woman, am I so base? Do you truly think me base?

Elizabeth: I never called you base.

Proctor: Then how do you charge me with such a promise? The promise that a stallion gives a mare I gave that girl!

Elizabeth: Then why do you anger with me when I bid you break it?

Proctor: Because it speaks deceit, and I am honest! But I'll plead no more! I see now your spirit twists around the single error of my life, and I will never tear it free!

Elizabeth, *crying out*: You'll tear it free - when you come to know that I will be your only wife, or no wife at all! She has an arrow in you yet, John Proctor, and you know it well!

Quite suddenly, as though from the air, a figure appears in the doorway. They start slightly. It is Mr. Hale. He is different now - drawn a little, and there is a quality of deference, even of guilt, about his manner now.

Hale: Good evening.

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Proctor, *still in his shock*: Why, Mr. Hale! Good evening to you, sir. Come in, come in.

Hale, *to Elizabeth*: I hope I do not startle you.

Elizabeth: No, no, it's only that I heard no horse -

Hale: You are Goodwife Proctor.

Proctor: Aye; Elizabeth.

Hale, *nods, then*: I hope you're not off to bed yet.

Proctor, *setting down his gun*: No, no. *Hale comes further into the room. And Proctor, to explain his nervousness*: We are not used to visitors after dark, but you're welcome here. Will you sit you down, sir?

Hale: I will. *He sits*. Let you sit, Goodwife Proctor.

She does, never letting him out of her sight. There is a pause as Hale looks about the room.

Proctor, *to break the silence*: Will you drink cider, Mr. Hale?

Hale: No, it rebels my stomach; I have some further traveling yet tonight. Sit you down, sir. *Proctor sits*. I will not keep you long, but I have some business with you.

Proctor: Business of the court?

Hale: No - no, I come of my own, without the court's author-ity. Hear me. *He wets his lips*. I know not if you are aware, but your wife's name is - mentioned in the court.

Proctor: We know it, sir. Our Mary Warren told us. We are entirely amazed.

Hale: I am a stranger here, as you know. And in my ignorance I find it hard to draw a clear opinion of them that come accused before the court. And so this afternoon, and now tonight, I go

from house to house - I come now from Rebecca Nurse's house and -

Elizabeth, *shocked*: Rebecca's charged!

Hex,a: God forbid such a one be charged. She is, however - mentioned somewhat.

Elizabeth, *with an attempt at a laugh*: You will never believe, I hope, that Rebecca trafficked with the Devil.

Hale: Woman, it is possible.

Proctor: *taken aback*: Surely you cannot think so.

Hale: This is a strange time, Mister. No man may longer doubt the powers of the dark are gathered in monstrous attack upon this village. There is too much evidence now to deny it. You will agree, sir?

Proctor, *evading*: I - have no knowledge in that line. But it's hard to think so pious a woman be secretly a Devil's bitch after seventy year of such good prayer.

Hale: Aye. But the Devil is a wily one, you cannot deny it. However, she is far from accused, and I know she will not be. *Pause*. I thought, sir, to put some questions as to the Christian character of this house, if you'll permit me.

Proctor, *coldly, resentful*: Why, we - have no fear of ques-tions, sir.

Hale: Good, then. *He makes himself more comfortable*. In the book of record that Mr. Parris keeps, I note that you are rarely in the church on Sabbath Day.

Proctor: No, sir, you are mistaken.

Hale: Twenty-six time in seventeen month, sir. I must call that rare. Will you tell me why you are so absent?

Proctor: Mr. Hale, I never knew I must account to that man

for I come to church or stay at home. My wife were sick this winter.

Hale: So I am told. But you, Mister, why could you not come alone?

Proctor: I surely did come when I could, and when I could not I prayed in this house.

Hale: Mr. Proctor, your house is not a church; your theology must tell you that.

Proctor: It does, sir, it does; and it tells me that a minister may pray to God without he have golden candlesticks upon the altar.

Hale: What golden candlesticks?

Proctor: Since we built the church there were pewter candle-sticks upon the altar; Francis Nurse made them, y'know, and a sweeter hand never touched the metal. But Parris came, and for twenty week he preach nothin' but golden candlesticks until he had them. I labor the earth from dawn of day to blink of night, and I tell you true, when I look to heaven and see my money glaring at his elbows - it hurt my prayer, sir, it hurt my prayer. I think, sometimes, the man dreams cathedrals, not clapboard meetin' houses.

Hale, *thinks, then*: And yet, Mister, a Christian on Sabbath Day must be in church. *Pause*. Tell me - you have three chil-dren?

Proctor: Aye. Boys.

Hale: How comes it that only two are baptized?

Proctor, *starts 'o speak, then stops, then, as though unable to restrain this*: I like it not that Mr. Parris should lay his hand upon my baby. I see no light of God in that man. I'll not conceal it.

Hale: I must say it, Mr. Proctor; that is not for you to decide. The man's ordained, therefore the light of God is in him.

Proctor, *flushed with resentment but trying to smile*: What's your suspicion, Mr. Hale?

Hale: No, no, I have no -

Proctor: I nailed the roof upon the church, I hung the door -

Hale: Oh, did you! That's a good sign, then.

Proctor: It may be I have been too quick to bring the man to book, but you cannot think we ever desired the destruction of religion. I think that's in your mind, is it not?

Hale, *not altogether giving way*: I - have - there is a softness in your record, sir, a softness.

Elizabeth: I think, maybe, we have been too hard with Mr. Parris. I think so. But sure we never loved the Devil here.

Hale, *nods, deliberating this. Then, with the voice of one administering a secret test*: Do you know your Commandments, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth, *without hesitation, even eagerly*: I surely do. There be no mark of blame upon my life, Mr. Hale. I am a covenanted Christian woman.

Hale: And you, Mister?

Proctor, *a tripe unsteadily*: I - am sure I do, sir.

Hale, *glances at her open face, then at John, then*: Let you re-peat them, if you will.

Proctor: The Commandments.

Hale: Aye.

Proctor, *looking off, beginning to sweat*: Thou shalt not kill.

Hale: Aye.

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Proctor, *counting on his fingers*: Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods, nor make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain; thou shalt have no other gods before me. *With some hesitation*: Thou shalt remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. *Pause. Then*: Thou shalt honor thy father and mother. Thou shalt not bear false witness. *He is stuck. He counts back on his fingers, knowing one is missing*. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

Hale: You have said that twice, sir. Proctor, *lost*: Aye. *He is failing for it*. Elizabeth, *delicately*: Adultery, John.

Proctor, *as though a secret arrow had pained his heart*: Aye. *Trying to grin it away - to Hale*: You see, sir, between the two of us we do know them all. *Hale only looks at Proctor, deep in his attempt to define this man, Proctor grows more uneasy*. I think it be a small fault.

Hale: Theology, sir, is a fortress; no crack in a fortress may be accounted small. *He rises; he seems worried now. He paces a little, in deep thought*.

Proctor: There be no love for Satan in this house, Mister.

Hale: I pray it, I pray it dearly. *He looks to both of them, an attempt at a smile on his face, but his misgivings are clear*. Well, then - I'll bid you good night.

Elizabeth, *unable to restrain herself*: Mr. Hale. *He turns*. I do think you are suspecting me somewhat? Are you not?

Hale, *obviously disturbed - and evasive*: Goody Proctor, I do not judge you. My duty is to add what I may to the godly

wisdom of the court. I pray you both good health and good fortune. *To John:* Good night, sir. *He starts out.*

Elizabeth, *with a note of desperation:* I think you must tell him, John.

Hale: What's that?

Elizabeth, *restraining a call:* Will you tell him?

Slight pause. Hale looks questioningly at John.

Proctor, *with difficulty:* I - I have no witness and cannot prove it, except my word be taken. But I know the children's sickness had naught to do with witchcraft.

Hale, *stopped, struck:* Naught to do - ?

Proctor: Mr. Parris discovered them sportin' in the woods. They were startled and took sick.

Pause.

Hale: Who told you this?

Proctor, *hesitates, then:* Abigail Williams.

Hale: Abigail!

Proctor: Aye.

Hale, *his eyes wide:* Abigail Williams told you it had naught to do with witchcraft!

Proctor: She told me the day you came, sir.

Hale, *suspiciously:* Why - why did you keep this?

Proctor: I never knew until tonight that the world is gone daft with this nonsense.

Hale: Nonsense! Mister, I have myself examined Tituba, Sarah Good, and numerous others that have confessed to dealing with the Devil. They have *confessed* it.

Proctor: And why not, if they must hang for denyin' it? There are them that will swear to anything before they'll hang; have you never thought of that?

Hale: I have. I - I have indeed. *It is his own suspicion, but he resists it. He glances at Elizabeth, then at John.* And you - would you testify to this in court?

Proctor: I - had not reckoned with goin' into court. But if I must I will.

Hale: Do you falter here?

Proctor: I falter nothing, but I may wonder if my story will be credited in such a court. I do wonder on it, when such a steady-minded minister as you will suspicion such a woman that never lied, and cannot, and the world knows she cannot! I may falter somewhat, Mister; I am no fool.

Hale, *quietly - it has impressed him*: Proctor, let you open with me now, for I have a rumor that troubles me.' It's said you hold no belief that there may even be witches in the world. Is that true, sir?

Proctor - *he knows this is critical, and is striving against his disgust with Hale and with himself for even answering*: I know not what I have said, I may have said it. I have wondered if there be witches in the world - although I cannot believe they come among us now.

Hale: Then you do not believe -

Proctor: I have no knowledge of it; the Bible speaks of witches, and I will not deny them.

Hale: And you, woman?

Elizabeth: I - I cannot believe it.

Hale, *shocked*: You cannot!

Proctor: Elizabeth, you bewilder him!

Elizabeth, *to Hale*: I cannot think the Devil may own a woman's soul, Mr. Hale, when she keeps an upright way, as I have. I am a good woman, I know it; and if you believe I may do only good work in the world, and yet be secretly bound to Satan, then I must tell you, sir, I do not believe it.

Hale: But, woman, you do believe there are witches in -

Elizabeth: If you think that I am one, then I say there are none.

Hale: You surely do not fly against the Gospel, the Gospel -

Proctor: She believe in the Gospel, every word!

Elizabeth: Question Abigail Williams about the Gospel, not myself!

Hale stares at her.

Proctor: She do not mean to doubt the Gospel, sir, you can-not think it. This be a Christian house, sir, a Christian house.

Hale: God keep you both; let the third child be quickly baptized, and go you without fail each Sunday in to Sabbath prayer; and keep a solemn, quiet way among you. I think -

Giles Corey appears in doorway.

Giles: John!

PROCTOR: Giles! What's the matter?

Giles: They take my wife.

Francis Nurse enters.

Giles: And his Rebecca!

Proctor, *to Francis*: Rebecca's in the *jail*!

Francis: Aye, Cheever come and take her in his wagon. We've

only now come from the jail, and they'll not even let us in to see them.

Elizabeth: They've surely gone wild now, Mr. Hale!

Francis, *going to Hale*: Reverend Hale! Can you not speak to the Deputy Governor? I'm sure he mistakes these people -

Hale: Pray calm yourself, Mr. Nurse.

Francis: My wife is the very brick and mortar of the church, Mr. Hale - *indicating Giles* - and Martha Corey, there cannot be a woman closer yet to God than Martha.

Hale: How is Rebecca charged, Mr. Nurse?

Francis, *with a mocking, half-hearted laugh*: For murder, she's charged! *Mockingly quoting the warrant*: "For the marvelous and supernatural murder of Goody Putnam's babies." What am I to do, Mr. Hale?

Hale, *turns from Francis, deeply troubled, then*: Believe me, Mr. Nurse, if Rebecca Nurse be tainted, then nothing's left to stop the whole green world from burning. Let you rest upon the justice of the court; the court will send her home, I know it.

Francis: You cannot mean she will be tried in court!

Hale, *pleading*: Nurse, though our hearts break, we cannot flinch; these are new times, sir. There is a misty plot afoot so subtle we should be criminal to cling to old respects and ancient friendships. I have seen too many frightful proofs in court - the Devil is alive in Salem, and we dare not quail to follow wherever the accusing finger points!

Proctor, *angered*: How may such a woman murder children?

Hale, *in great pain*: Man, remember, until an hour before the Devil fell, God thought him beautiful in Heaven.

GiLES: I never said my wife were a witch, Mr. Hale; I only said she were reading books!

Hale: Mr. Corey, exactly what complaint were made on your wife?

Giles: That bloody mongrel Walcott charge her. Y'see, he buy a pig of my wife four or five year ago, and the pig died soon after. So he come dancin' in for his money back. So my Martha, she says to him, "Walcott, if you haven't the wit to feed a pig properly, you'll not live to own many," she says. Now he goes to court and claims that from that day to this he cannot keep a pig alive for more than four weeks because my Martha bewitch them with her books!

Enter Ezekiel Cheever. A shocked silence.

CHEEVER: Good evening to you, Proctor.

Proctor: Why, Mr. Cheever. Good evening.

Cheever: Good evening, all. Good evening, Mr. Hale.

Proctor: I hope you come not on business of the court.

Cheever: I do, Proctor, aye. I am clerk of the court. now, y'know.

Enter Marshal Herrick, a man in his early thirties, who is somewhat shamefaced at the moment.

Giles: It's a pity, Ezekiel, that an honest tailor might have gone to Heaven must burn in Hell. You'll burn for this, do you know it?

Cheever: You know yourself I must do as I'm told. You surely know that, Giles. And I'd as lief you'd not be sending me to Hell. I like not the sound of it, I tell you; I like not the sound of it. *He fears Proctor, but starts to reach inside his coat.* Now believe me, Proctor, how heavy be the law, all its tonnage I do carry on my back tonight. *He takes out a warrant.* I have a warrant for your wife.

Proctor, to Hale: You said she were not charged!

Start of
Act II,
reading
#3

end of Act II,
reading #2

Hale: I know nothin' of it. *To Cheever:* When were she charged?

Cheever: I am given sixteen warrant tonight, sir, and she is one.

Proctor: Who charged her?

Cheever: Why, Abigail Williams charge her.

Proctor: On what proof, what proof?

Cheever, *looking about the room:* Mr. Proctor, I have little time. The court bid me search your house, but I like not to search a house. So will you hand me any poppets that your wife may keep here?

Proctor: Poppets?

Elizabeth: I never kept no poppets, not since I were a girl.

Cheever, *embarrassed, glancing toward the mantel where sits Mary Warren's poppet:* I spy a poppet, Goody Proctor.

Elizabeth: Oh! *Going for it:* Why, this is Mary's.

Cheever, *shyly:* Would you please to give it to me?

Elizabeth, *handing it to him, asks Hale:* Has the court discovered a text in poppets now?

Cheever, *carefully holding the poppet:* Do you keep any others in this house?

Proctor: No, nor this one either till tonight. What signifies a poppet?

Cheever: Why, a poppet - *he gingerly turns the poppet over* - a poppet may signify - Now, woman, will you please to come with me?

Proctor: She will not! *To Elizabeth:* Fetch Mary here.

Cheever, *ineptly reaching toward Elizabeth:* No, no, I am for-bid to leave her from my sight.

Proctor, *pushing his arm away*: You'll leave her out of sight and out of mind, Mister. Fetch Mary, Elizabeth. *Elizabeth goes upstairs.*

Hale: What signifies a poppet, Mr. Cheever?

Cheever, *turning the poppet over in his hands*: Why, they say it may signify that she - *He has lifted the poppet's skirt, and his eyes widen in astonished fear.* Why, this, this -

Proctor, *reaching for the poppet*: What's there?

Cheever: Why - *He draws out a long needle from the poppet* - it is a needle!

Herrick, Herrick, it is a needle!

Herrick comes toward Aim.

Proctor, *angrily, bewildered*: And what signifies a needle!

Cheever, *his hands shaking*: Why, this go hard with her, Proc-tor, this - I had my doubts, Proctor, I had my doubts, but here's' calamity. *To Hale, showing the needle*: You see it, sir, it is a needle!

Hale: Why? What meanin' has it?

Cheever, *wide-eyed, trembling*: The girl, the Williams girl, Abigail Williams, sir. She sat to dinner in Reverend Parris's house tonight, and without word nor warnin' she falls to the floor. Like a struck beast, he says, and screamed a scream that a bull would weep to hear. And he goes to save her, and, stuck two inches in the flesh of her belly, he draw a needle out. And demandin' of her how she come to be so stabbed, she - *to Proctor now* - testify it -were your wife's familiar spirit pushed it in.

Proctor: Why, she done it herself! *To Hale*: I hope you're not takin' this for proof, Mister!

Hale, struck by the proof, is silent.

Cheever: 'Tis hard proof! *To Hale:* I find here a poppet Goody Proctor keeps. I have found it, sir. And in the belly of the poppet a needle's stuck. I tell you true, Proctor, I never warranted to see such proof of Hell, and I bid you obstruct me not, for I -

Enter Elizabeth with Mary Warren. Proctor, seeing Mary Warren, draws her by the arm to Hale.

Proctor: Here now! Mary, how did this poppet come into my house?

Mary Warren, *frightened for herself, her voice very small:* What poppet's that, sir?

Proctor, *impatiently, pointing at the doll in Cheever's hand:* This poppet, this poppet.

Mary Warren, *evasively, looking at it:* Why, I - I think it is mine.

Proctor: It is your poppet, is it not?

Mary Warren, *not understanding the direction of this:* It - is, sir.

Proctor: And how did it come into this house?

Mary Warren, *glancing about at the avid faces:* Why - I made it in the court, sir, and - give it to Goody Proctor tonight.

Proctor, *to Hale:* Now, sir - do you have it?

Hale: Mary Warren, a needle have been found inside this poppet.

Mary Warren, *bewildered:* Why, I meant no harm by it, sir.

Proctor, *quickly:* You stuck that needle in yourself?

Mary Warren: I - I believe I did, sir, I -

Proctor: *to Hale*: What say you now?

Hale, *watching Mary Warren closely*: Child, you are certain this be your natural memory? May it be, perhaps, that someone conjures you even now to say this?

Mary Warren: Conjures me? Why, no, sir, I am entirely my-self, I think. Let you ask Susanna Walcott - she saw me sewin' it in court. *Or better still*: Ask Abby, Abby sat beside me when I made it.

Proctor, *to Hale, of Cheever*: Bid him begone. Your mind is surely settled now. Bid him out, Mr. Hale.

Elizabeth: What signifies a needle?

Hale: Mary - you charge a cold and cruel murder on Abigail.

Mary Warren: Murder! I charge no -

Hale: Abigail were stabbed tonight; a needle were found stuck into her belly -

Elizabeth: And she charges me?

Hale: Aye.

Elizabeth, *her breath knocked out*: Why - ! The girl is murder! She must be ripped out of the world!

Cheever, *pointing at Elizabeth*: You've heard that, sir! Ripped out of the world! Herrick, you heard it!

Proctor, *suddenly snatching the warrant out of Cheever's hands*: Out with you.

Cheever: Proctor, you dare not touch the warrant.

Proctor, *ripping the warrant*: Out with you!

Cheever: You've ripped the Deputy Governor's warrant, man!

Proctor: Damn the Deputy Governor! Out of my house!

Hale: Now, Proctor, Proctor!

Proctor: Get y'gone with them! You are a broken minister. Hale: Proctor, if she is innocent, the court -

Proctor: If *she* is innocent! Why do you never wonder if Parris be innocent, or Abigail? Is the accuser always holy now? Were they born this morning as clean as God's fingers? I'll tell you what's walking Salem - vengeance is walking Salem. We are what we always were in Salem, but now the little crazy children are jangling the keys of the kingdom, and common vengeance writes the law! This warrant's vengeance! I'll not give my wife to vengeance!

Elizabeth: I'll go, John - Proctor: You will not go!

Herrick: I have nine men outside. You cannot keep her. The law binds me, John, I cannot budge.

Proctor, *to Hale, ready to break him*: Will you see her taken? Hale: Proctor, the court is just -

Proctor: Pontius Pilate! God will not let you wash your hands of this!

Elizabeth: John - I think I must go with them. *He cannot bear to look at her*. Mary, there is bread enough for the morning; you will bake, in the afternoon. Help Mr. Proctor as you were his daughter - you owe me that, and much more. *She is fighting her weeping*. *To Proctor*: When the children wake, speak nothing of witchcraft - it will frighten them. *She cannot go on*.

Proctor: I will bring you home. I will bring you soon. Elizabeth: Oh, John, bring me soon!

Proctor: I will fall like an ocean on that court! Fear nothing, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth, *with great fear*: I will fear nothing. *She looks about the room, as though to fix it in her mind.* Tell the children I have gone to visit someone sick.

She walks out the door, Herrick and Cheever behind her. For a moment, Proctor watches from the doorway. The clank of chain is heard.

Proctor: Herrick! Herrick, don't chain her! *He rushes out the door. From outside:* Damn you, man, you will not chain her! Off with them! I'll not have it! I will not have her chained!

There are other men's voices against his. Hale, in a fever of guilt and uncertainty, turns from the door to avoid the sight; Mary Warren bursts into tears and sits weeping. Giles Corey calls to Hale.

Giles: And yet silent, minister? It is fraud, you know it is fraud! What keeps you, man?

Proctor is half braced, half pushed into the room by two deputies and Herrick.

Proctor: I'll pay you, Herrick, I will surely pay you!

Herrick, *panting*: In God's name, John, I cannot help myself. I must chain them all. Now let you keep inside this house till I am gone! *He goes out with his deputies.*

Proctor stands there, gulping air. Horses and a wagon creaking are heard.

Hale, *in great uncertainty*: Mr. Proctor - Proctor: Out of my sight!

Hale: Charity, Proctor, charity. What I have heard in her favor, I will not fear to testify in court. God help me, I cannot

judge her guilty or innocent - I know not. Only this consider: the world goes mad, and it profit nothing you should lay the cause to the vengeance of a little girl.

Proctor: You are a coward! Though you be ordained in God's own tears, you are a coward now!

Hale: Proctor, I cannot think God be provoked so grandly by such a petty cause. The jails are packed - our greatest judges sit in Salem now - and hangin's promised. Man, we must look to cause proportionate. Were there murder done, perhaps, and never brought to light? Abomination? Some secret blasphemy that stinks to Heaven? Think on cause, man, and let you help me to discover it. For there's your way, believe it, there is your only way, when such confusion strikes upon the world. *He goes to Giles and Francis.* Let you counsel among yourselves; think on your village and what may have drawn from heaven such thundering wrath upon you all. I shall pray God open up our eyes.

Hale goes out.

Francis, *struck by Hale's mood*: I never heard no murder done in Salem.

Proctor - *he has been reached by Hale's words*: Leave me, Francis, leave me.

Giles, *shaken*: John - tell me, are we lost?

Proctor: Go home now, Giles, We'll speak on it tomorrow.

Giles: Let you think on it. We'll come early, eh?

Proctor: Aye. Go now, Giles.

Giles: Good night, then.

Giles Corey goes out. After a moment:

Mary Warren, *in a fearful squeak of n voice*: Mr. Proctor,

very likely they'll let her come home once they're given proper evidence.

Proctor: You're coming to the court with me, Mary. You will tell it in the court,

Mary Warren: I cannot charge murder on Abigail.

Proctor, *moving menacingly toward her*: You will tell the court how that poppet come here and who stuck the needle in.

Mary Warren: She'll kill me for sayin' that! *Proctor continues toward her*. Abby'll charge lechery on you, Mr. Proctor!

Proctor, *halting*: She's told you!

Mary Warren: I have known it, sir. She'll ruin you with it, I know she will.

Proctor, *hesitating, and with deep hatred of himself*: Good. Then her saintliness is done with. *Mary backs from him*. We will slide together into our pit; you will tell the court what you know.

Mary Warren, *in terror*: I cannot, they'll turn on me -

Proctor strides and catches her, and she is repeating, "I cannot, I cannot!"

Proctor: My wife will never die for me! I will bring your guts into your mouth but that goodness will not die for me!

Mary Warren, *struggling to escape him*: I cannot do it, I cannot!

Proctor, *grasping her by the throat as though he would strangle her*: Make your peace with it! Now Hell and Heaven grapple on our backs, and all our old pretense is ripped away - make your peace! *He throws her to the poor, where she sobs, "I cannot, I cannot..." And now, half to himself, staring, and*

turning to the open door: Peace. It is a providence, and no great change; we are only what we always were, but naked now. *He walks as though toward a great horror, facing the open sky.*
e, naked! And the wind, God's icy wind, will blow!

And she is over and over again sobbing, "I cannot, I cannot, I cannot," as

THE CURTAIN FALLS*

*Act II, Scene 2, which appeared in the original production, was dropped by the author from the published reading version, the *Collected Plays*, and all Compass editions prior to 1971. It has not been included in most productions subsequent to the revival at New York's Martinique Theatre in • 1958 and was dropped by Sir Laurence Olivier in his London production in 1965. it is included here as an appendix on page 148.

← end of
Act II,
reading
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