

**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<sup>50</sup> 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 somewhat 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, for 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, rifle 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?<sup>51</sup> 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.

**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?

50. monstrous: tremendous.

51. base: having low moral standards.

**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<sup>52</sup> 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 authority. 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!

**Hale.** 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<sup>53</sup> 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 questions, 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 candlesticks 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.

52. rebels: upsets.

53. pious (pi'əs): religious.

Hale (*thinks, then*). And yet, Mister, a Christian on Sabbath Day must be in church. (*Pause.*) Tell me—you have three children?

Proctor. Aye. Boys.

Hale. How comes it that only two are baptized?

Proctor (*starts to 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,<sup>54</sup> 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 trifle unsteadily*). I—am sure I do, sir.

Hale (*glances at her open face, then at John, then*). Let you repeat them, if you will.

Proctor. The Commandments.

Hale. Aye.

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

Hale. Aye.

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 flailing<sup>55</sup> 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

54. bring the man to book: judge the man.

55. flailing: struggling.

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<sup>56</sup> 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<sup>57</sup> 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.

56. daft: crazy; mad.

57. falter: hesitate.



**Hale.** You surely do not fly against the Gospel,<sup>58</sup> 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 cannot 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.<sup>59</sup>

**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.

58. the Gospel: in the Bible, the first four books of the New Testament.

59. an hour . . . Heaven: alludes to the Christian belief that Satan was God's favorite angel until Satan rebelled and was cast out of heaven.

**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<sup>60</sup> 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!

**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 forbid 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 him.)*

**Proctor** *(angrily, bewildered)*. And what signifies a needle!

**Cheever** *(his hands shaking)*. Why, this go hard with her, Proctor, 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?

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60. as lief (ăz lēf): rather.

**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<sup>61</sup> 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 warrant-ed 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 your-self?

**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 myself, 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!

61. *familiar spirit*: the spirit or demon, most usually in the form of an animal such as a black cat, that was a companion and helper to a witch.

**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!<sup>62</sup> 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—

62. Pontius Pilate (pŏn'chəs pī'lət): the Roman governor who presided over the trial and sentencing of Christ. Pilate publicly washed his hands to absolve himself of responsibility for Christ's death.



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 a 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<sup>63</sup> 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<sup>64</sup> on our backs, and all our old pretense is ripped away—make your peace! (*He throws her to the floor, 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.*) Aye, 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

63. lechery (lěch'ă-rē): excessive or illicit sexual activity.

64. grapple: struggle.