

**Danforth.** Accept my congratulations, Reverend Hale; we are gladdened to see you returned to your good work.

**Hale** (*coming to Danforth now*). You must pardon them. They will not budge.

(*Herrick enters, waits.*)

**Danforth** (*conciliatory*).<sup>92</sup> You misunderstand, sir; I cannot pardon these when twelve are already hanged for the same crime. It is not just.

**Parris** (*with failing heart*). Rebecca will not confess?

**Hale.** The sun will rise in a few minutes. Excellency, I must have more time.

**Danforth.** Now hear me, and beguile<sup>93</sup> yourselves no more. I will not receive a single plea for pardon or postponement. Them that will not confess will hang. Twelve are already executed; the names of these seven are given out, and the village expects to see them die this morning. Postponement now speaks a floundering on my part; reprieve or pardon must cast doubt upon the guilt of them that died till now. While I speak God's law, I will not crack its voice with whimpering. If retaliation is your fear, know this—I should hang ten thousand that dared to rise against the law, and an ocean of salt tears could not melt the resolution of the statutes. Now draw yourselves up like men and help me, as you are bound by Heaven to do. Have you spoken with them all, Mr. Hale?

**Hale.** All but Proctor. He is in the dungeon.

**Danforth** (*to Herrick*). What's Proctor's way now?

**Herrick.** He sits like some great bird; you'd not know he lived except he will take food from time to time.

**Danforth** (*after thinking a moment*). His wife—his wife must be well on with child now.

**Herrick.** She is, sir.

**Danforth.** What think you, Mr. Parris? You have closer knowledge of this man; might her presence soften him?

**Parris.** It is possible, sir. He have not laid eyes on her these three months. I should summon her.

**Danforth** (*to Herrick*). Is he yet adamant? Has he struck at you again?

**Herrick.** He cannot, sir, he is chained to the wall now.

**Danforth** (*after thinking on it*). Fetch Goody Proctor to me. Then let you bring him up.

**Herrick.** Aye, sir. (*Herrick goes. There is silence.*)

**Hale.** Excellency, if you postpone a week and publish to the town that you are striving for their confessions, that speak mercy on your part, not faltering.

**Danforth.** Mr. Hale, as God have not empowered me like Joshua to stop this sun from rising,<sup>94</sup> so I cannot withhold from them the perfection of their punishment.

**Hale** (*harder now*). If you think God wills you to raise rebellion, Mr. Danforth, you are mistaken!

**Danforth** (*instantly*). You have heard rebellion spoken in the town?

**Hale.** Excellency, there are orphans wandering from house to house; abandoned cattle bellow on the highroads, the stink of rotting crops hangs everywhere, and no man knows when the harlots' cry will end his life—and you wonder yet if rebellion's spoke? Better you should marvel how they do not burn your province!

**Danforth.** Mr. Hale, have you preached in Andover this month?

**Hale.** Thank God they have no need of me in Andover.

**Danforth.** You baffle me, sir. Why have you returned here?

92. *conciliatory* (kən-sīl'ə-tôr'ē): showing goodwill to end an argument.

93. *beguile* (bĭ-gil'): deceive.

94. *like Joshua . . . rising*: According to the Bible, after the death of Moses, Joshua became the leader of the Israelites, defeating the Amorites and leading his people to the Promised Land while the sun stood still.

**Hale.** Why, it is all simple. I come to do the Devil's work. I come to counsel Christians they should belie<sup>95</sup> themselves. (*His sarcasm collapses.*) There is blood on my head! Can you not see the blood on my head!!

**Parris.** Hush! (*For he has heard footsteps. They all face the door. Herrick enters with Elizabeth. Her wrists are linked by heavy chain, which Herrick now removes. Her clothes are dirty; her face is pale and gaunt. Herrick goes out.*)

**Danforth** (*very politely*). Goody Proctor. (*She is silent.*) I hope you are hearty?

**Elizabeth** (*as a warning reminder*). I am yet six month before my time.

**Danforth.** Pray be at your ease, we come not for your life. We—(*uncertain how to plead, for he is not accustomed to it.*) Mr. Hale, will you speak with the woman?

**Hale.** Goody Proctor, your husband is marked to hang this morning.

(*Pause.*)

**Elizabeth** (*quietly*). I have heard it.

**Hale.** You know, do you not, that I have no connection with the court? (*She seems to doubt it.*) I come of my own, Goody Proctor. I would save your husband's life, for if he is taken I count myself his murderer. Do you understand me?

**Elizabeth.** What do you want of me?

**Hale.** Goody Proctor, I have gone this three month like our Lord into the wilderness.<sup>96</sup> I have sought a Christian way, for damnation's doubled on a minister who counsels men to lie.

**Hathorne.** It is no lie, you cannot speak of lies.

**Hale.** It is a lie! They are innocent!

**Danforth.** I'll hear no more of that!

**Hale** (*continuing to Elizabeth*). Let you not mistake your duty as I mistook my own. I came into this village like a bridegroom to his beloved, bearing gifts of high religion; the very crowns of holy law I brought, and what I touched with my bright confidence, it died; and where I turned the eye of my great faith, blood

flowed up. Beware, Goody Proctor—no faith when faith brings blood. It is no law that leads you to sacrifice. Life, work is God's most precious gift; no principle ever glorious, may justify the taking of you, woman, prevail upon your husband to confess. Let him give his lie. Quail not at God's judgment in this, for it may well damn a liar less than he that throws away for pride. Will you plead with him? He will not think he will listen to another.

**Elizabeth** (*quietly*). I think that be the Devil's judgment.

**Hale** (*with a climactic desperation*). Woman, by the laws of God we are as swine! We cannot reason with His will!

**Elizabeth.** I cannot dispute with you, sir; I am learning for it.

**Danforth** (*going to her*). Goody Proctor, you are not summoned here for disputation. Be not so wifely tenderness within you? He will not stand with the sunrise. Your husband. Do you understand it? (*She only looks at him.*) What say you? Will you contend with him? (*She is silent.*) Are you stone? I tell you true, woman, had I other proof of your unnatural life, your eyes now would be sufficient evidence that you delivered up your soul to Hell! A very woman would weep at such calamity! Have the devil dried up any tear of pity in you? (*She is silent.*) Take her out. It profit nothing she should speak to him!

**Elizabeth** (*quietly*). Let me speak with him, Excellency.

**Parris** (*with hope*). You'll strive with him? (*She hesitates.*)

**Danforth.** Will you plead for his confession or will you not?

**Elizabeth.** I promise nothing. Let me speak with him.

95. belie: slander; defame.

96. like our Lord . . . wilderness: According to the New Testament, Jesus spent 40 days wandering in the wilderness.

(A sound—the sibilance<sup>97</sup> of dragging feet on stone. They turn. A pause. Herrick enters with John Proctor. His wrists are chained. He is another man, bearded, filthy, his eyes misty as though webs had overgrown them. He halts inside the doorway, his eye caught by the sight of Elizabeth. The emotion flowing between them prevents anyone from speaking for an instant. Now Hale, visibly affected, goes to Danforth and speaks quietly.)

**Hale.** Pray, leave them, Excellency.

**Danforth** (*pressing Hale impatiently aside*). Mr. Proctor, you have been notified, have you not? (Proctor is silent, staring at Elizabeth.) I see light in the sky, Mister; let you counsel with your wife, and may God help you turn your back on Hell. (Proctor is silent, staring at Elizabeth.)

**Hale** (*quietly*). Excellency, let—

(Danforth brushes past Hale and walks out. Hale follows. Cheever stands and follows, Hathorne behind. Herrick goes. Parris, from a safe distance, offers)

**Parris.** If you desire a cup of cider, Mr. Proctor, I am sure I—(Proctor turns an icy stare at him, and he breaks off. Parris raises his palms toward Proctor.) God lead you now. (Parris goes out.)

(Alone. Proctor walks to her, halts. It is as though they stood in a spinning world. It is beyond sorrow, above it. He reaches out his hand as though toward an embodiment not quite real, and as he touches her, a strange soft sound, half laughter, half amazement, comes from his throat. He pats her hand. She covers his hand with hers. And then, weak, he sits. Then she sits, facing him.)

**Proctor.** The child?

**Elizabeth.** It grows.

**Proctor.** There is no word of the boys?

**Elizabeth.** They're well. Rebecca's Samuel keeps them.

**Proctor.** You have not seen them?

**Elizabeth.** I have not. (*She catches a weakening in herself and downs it.*)

**Proctor.** You are a—marvel, Elizabeth.

**Elizabeth.** You—have been tortured?

**Proctor.** Aye. (*Pause. She will not let herself be drowned in the sea that threatens her.*) They come for my life now.

**Elizabeth.** I know it.

(*Pause.*)

**Proctor.** None—have yet confessed?

**Elizabeth.** There be many confessed.

**Proctor.** Who are they?

**Elizabeth.** There be a hundred or more, they say. Goody Ballard is one; Isaiah Goodkind is one. There be many.

**Proctor.** Rebecca?

**Elizabeth.** Not Rebecca. She is one foot in Heaven now; naught may hurt her more.

**Proctor.** And Giles?

**Elizabeth.** You have not heard of it?

**Proctor.** I hear nothin', where I am kept.

**Elizabeth.** Giles is dead.

(*He looks at her incredulously.*)

**Proctor.** When were he hanged?

**Elizabeth** (*quietly, factually*). He were not hanged. He would not answer aye or nay to his indictment; for if he denied the charge they'd hang him surely, and auction out his property. So he stand mute, and died Christian under the law. And so his sons will have his farm. It is the law, for he could not be condemned a wizard without he answer the indictment, aye or nay.

**Proctor.** Then how does he die?

**Elizabeth** (*gently*). They press him, John.

**Proctor.** Press?

---

97. sibilance: a hissing sound.

**Elizabeth.** Great stones they lay upon his chest until he plead aye or nay. (*With a tender smile for the old man.*) They say he give them but two words. "More weight," he says. And died.

**Proctor** (*numbed—a thread to weave into his agony*). "More weight."

**Elizabeth.** Aye. It were a fearsome<sup>98</sup> man, Giles Corey.

(*Pause.*)

**Proctor** (*with great force of will, but not quite looking at her*). I have been thinking I would confess to them, Elizabeth. (*She shows nothing.*) What say you? If I give them that?

**Elizabeth.** I cannot judge you, John.

(*Pause.*)

**Proctor** (*simply—a pure question*). What would you have me do?

**Elizabeth.** As you will, I would have it. (*Slight pause.*) I want you living, John. That's sure.

**Proctor** (*pauses, then with a flailing of hope*). Giles' wife? Have she confessed?

**Elizabeth.** She will not.

(*Pause.*)

**Proctor.** It is a pretense, Elizabeth.

**Elizabeth.** What is?

**Proctor.** I cannot mount the gibbet like a saint. It is a fraud. I am not that man. (*She is silent.*) My honesty is broke, Elizabeth; I am no good man. Nothing's spoiled by giving them this lie that were not rotten long before.

**Elizabeth.** And yet you've not confessed till now. That speak goodness in you.

**Proctor.** Spite only keeps me silent. It is hard to give a lie to dogs. (*Pause, for the first time he turns directly to her.*) I would have your forgiveness, Elizabeth.

**Elizabeth.** It is not for me to give, John, I am—

**Proctor.** I'd have you see some honesty in it. Let them that never lied die now to keep their souls. It is pretense for me, a vanity that will

not blind God nor keep my children out of the wind. (*Pause.*) What say you?

**Elizabeth** (*upon a heaving sob that always threatens*). John, it come to naught that I should forgive you, if you'll not forgive yourself. (*Now he turns away a little, in great agony.*) It is not my soul, John, it is yours. (*He stands, as though in physical pain, slowly rising to his feet with a great immortal longing to find his answer. It is difficult to say, and she is on the verge of tears.*) Only be sure of this, for I know it now: Whatever you will do, it is a good man does it. (*He turns his doubting, searching gaze upon her.*) I have read my heart this three month, John. (*Pause.*) I have sins of my own to count. It needs a cold wife to prompt lechery.

**Proctor** (*in great pain*). Enough, enough—

**Elizabeth** (*now pouring out her heart*). Better you should know me!

**Proctor.** I will not hear it! I know you!

**Elizabeth.** You take my sins upon you, John—

**Proctor** (*in agony*). No, I take my own, my own!

**Elizabeth.** John, I counted myself so plain, so poorly made, no honest love could come to me! Suspicion kissed you when I did; I never knew how I should say my love. It were a cold house I kept! (*In fright, she swerves, as Hathorne enters.*)

**Hathorne.** What say you, Proctor? The sun is soon up.

(*Proctor, his chest heaving, stares, turns to Elizabeth. She comes to him as though to plead, her voice quaking.*)

**Elizabeth.** Do what you will. But let none be your judge. There be no higher judge under Heaven than Proctor is! Forgive me, forgive me, John—I never knew such goodness in the world! (*She covers her face, weeping.*)

(*Proctor turns from her to Hathorne; he is off the earth, his voice hollow.*)

98. fearsome: courageous.



**Proctor.** I want my life.

**Hathorne** (*electrified, surprised*). You'll confess yourself?

**Proctor.** I will have my life.

**Hathorne** (*with a mystical tone*). God be praised! It is a providence! (*He rushes out the door, and his voice is heard calling down the corridor.*) He will confess! Proctor will confess!

**Proctor** (*with a cry, as he strides to the door*). Why do you cry it? (*In great pain he turns back to her.*) It is evil, is it not? It is evil.

**Elizabeth** (*in terror, weeping*). I cannot judge you, John, I cannot!

**Proctor.** Then who will judge me? (*Suddenly clasping his hands.*) God in Heaven, what is John Proctor, what is John Proctor? (*He moves as an animal, and a fury is riding in him, a tantalized search.*) I think it is honest, I think so; I am no saint. (*As though she had denied this he calls angrily at her.*) Let Rebecca go like a saint; for me it is fraud!

(*Voices are heard in the hall, speaking together in suppressed excitement.*)

**Elizabeth.** I am not your judge, I cannot be. (*As though giving him release.*) Do as you will, do as you will!

**Proctor.** Would you give them such a lie? Say it. Would you ever give them this? (*She cannot answer.*) You would not, if tongues of fire were singeing you you would not! It is evil. Good, then—it is evil, and I do it!

(*Hathorne enters with Danforth, and, with them, Cheever, Parris, and Hale. It is a businesslike, rapid entrance, as though the ice had been broken.*)

**Danforth** (*with great relief and gratitude*). Praise to God, man, praise to God; you shall be blessed in Heaven for this. (*Cheever has hurried to the bench with pen, ink, and paper. Proctor watches him.*) Now then, let us have it. Are you ready, Mr. Cheever?

**Proctor** (*with a cold, cold horror at their efficiency*). Why must it be written?

**Danforth.** Why, for the good instruction of the village, Mister; this we shall post upon the church door! (*To Parris, urgently.*) Where is the marshal?

**Parris** (*runs to the door and calls down the corridor*). Marshal! Hurry!

**Danforth.** Now, then, Mister, will you speak slowly, and directly to the point, for Mr. Cheever's sake. (*He is on record now, and is really dictating to Cheever, who writes.*) Mr. Proctor, have you seen the Devil in your life? (*Proctor's jaws lock.*) Come, man, there is light in the sky; the town waits at the scaffold; I would give out this news. Did you see the Devil?

**Proctor.** I did.

**Parris.** Praise God!

**Danforth.** And when he come to you, what were his demand? (*Proctor is silent. Danforth helps.*) Did he bid you to do his work upon the earth?

**Proctor.** He did.

**Danforth.** And you bound yourself to his service? (*Danforth turns, as Rebecca Nurse enters, with Herrick helping to support her. She is barely able to walk.*) Come in, come in, woman!

**Rebecca** (*brightening as she sees Proctor*). Ah, John! You are well, then, eh?

(*Proctor turns his face to the wall.*)

**Danforth.** Courage, man, courage—let her witness your good example that she may come to God herself. Now hear it, Goody Nurse! Say on, Mr. Proctor. Did you bind yourself to the Devil's service?

**Rebecca** (*astonished*). Why, John!

**Proctor** (*through his teeth, his face turned from Rebecca*). I did.

**Danforth.** Now, woman, you surely see it profit nothin' to keep this conspiracy any further. Will you confess yourself with him?

**Rebecca.** Oh, John—God send his mercy on you!

**Danforth.** I say, will you confess yourself, Goody Nurse?

**Rebecca.** Why, it is a lie, it is a lie; how may I damn myself? I cannot, I cannot.



**Danforth.** Mr. Proctor. When the Devil came to you did you see Rebecca Nurse in his company? (Proctor *is silent.*) Come, man, take courage—did you ever see her with the Devil?

**Proctor** (*almost inaudibly*). No.

(Danforth, *now sensing trouble, glances at John and goes to the table, and picks up a sheet—the list of condemned.*)

**Danforth.** Did you ever see her sister, Mary Easty, with the Devil?

**Proctor.** No, I did not.

**Danforth** (*his eyes narrow on Proctor*). Did you ever see Martha Corey with the Devil?

**Proctor.** I did not.

**Danforth** (*realizing, slowly putting the sheet down*). Did you ever see anyone with the Devil?

**Proctor.** I did not.

**Danforth.** Proctor, you mistake me. I am not empowered to trade your life for a lie. You have most certainly seen some person with the Devil. (Proctor *is silent.*) Mr. Proctor, a score of people have already testified they saw this woman with the Devil.

**Proctor.** Then it is proved. Why must I say it?

**Danforth.** Why “must” you say it! Why, you should rejoice to say it if your soul is truly purged of any love for Hell!

**Proctor.** They think to go like saints. I like not to spoil their names.

**Danforth** (*inquiring, incredulous*).<sup>99</sup> Mr. Proctor, do you think they go like saints?

<sup>99</sup>. *incredulous*: disbelieving.

**Proctor** (*evading*). This woman never thought she done the Devil's work.

**Danforth**. Look you, sir. I think you mistake your duty here. It matters nothing what she thought—she is convicted of the unnatural murder of children, and you for sending your spirit out upon Mary Warren. Your soul alone is the issue here, Mister, and you will prove its whiteness or you cannot live in a Christian country. Will you tell me now what persons conspired with you in the Devil's company? (*Proctor is silent.*) To your knowledge was Rebecca Nurse ever—

**Proctor**. I speak my own sins; I cannot judge another. (*Crying out, with hatred*) I have no tongue for it.

**Hale** (*quickly to Danforth*). Excellency, it is enough he confess himself. Let him sign it, let him sign it.

**Parris** (*feverishly*). It is a great service, sir. It is a weighty name; it will strike the village that Proctor confess. I beg you, let him sign it. The sun is up, Excellency!

**Danforth** (*considers; then with dissatisfaction*). Come, then, sign your testimony. (*To Cheever*) Give it to him. (*Cheever goes to Proctor, the confession and a pen in hand. Proctor does not look at it.*) Come, man, sign it.

**Proctor** (*after glancing at the confession*). You have all witnessed it—it is enough.

**Danforth**. You will not sign it?

**Proctor**. You have all witnessed it; what more is needed?

**Danforth**. Do you sport with me? You will sign your name or it is no confession, Mister! (*His breast heaving with agonized breathing, Proctor now lays the paper down and signs his name.*)

**Parris**. Praise be to the Lord!

(*Proctor has just finished signing when Danforth reaches for the paper. But Proctor snatches it up, and now a wild terror is rising in him, and a boundless anger.*)

**Danforth** (*perplexed, but politely extending his hand*). If you please, sir.

**Proctor**. No.

**Danforth** (*as though Proctor did not understand*). Mr. Proctor, I must have—

**Proctor**. No, no. I have signed it. You have seen me. It is done! You have no need for this.

**Parris**. Proctor, the village must have proof that—

**Proctor**. Damn the village! I confess to God, and God has seen my name on this! It is enough!

**Danforth**. No, sir, it is—

**Proctor**. You came to save my soul, did you not? Here! I have confessed myself; it is enough!

**Danforth**. You have not con—

**Proctor**. I have confessed myself! Is there no good penitence<sup>100</sup> but it be public? God does not need my name nailed upon the church! God sees my name; God knows how black my sins are! It is enough!

**Danforth**. Mr. Proctor—

**Proctor**. You will not use me! I am no Sarah Good or Tituba, I am John Proctor! You will not use me! It is no part of salvation that you should use me!

**Danforth**. I do not wish to—

**Proctor**. I have three children—how may I teach them to walk like men in the world, and I sold my friends?

**Danforth**. You have not sold your friends—

**Proctor**. Beguile me not! I blacken all of them when this is nailed to the church the very day they hang for silence!

**Danforth**. Mr. Proctor, I must have good and legal proof that you—

**Proctor**. You are the high court, your word is good enough! Tell them I confessed myself; say Proctor broke his knees and wept like a woman; say what you will, but my name cannot—

100. penitence: regret for one's sins.

**Danforth** (*with suspicion*). It is the same, is it not?  
If I report it or you sign to it?

**Proctor** (*he knows it is insane*). No, it is not the same! What others say and what I sign to is not the same!

**Danforth**. Why? Do you mean to deny this confession when you are free?

**Proctor**. I mean to deny nothing!

**Danforth**. Then explain to me, Mr. Proctor, why you will not let—

**Proctor** (*with a cry of his whole soul*). Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name!

**Danforth** (*pointing at the confession in Proctor's hand*). Is that document a lie? If it is a lie I will not accept it! What say you? I will not deal in lies, Mister! (*Proctor is motionless.*) You will give me your honest confession in my hand, or I cannot keep you from the rope. (*Proctor does not reply.*) Which way do you go, Mister?

(*His breast heaving, his eyes staring, Proctor tears the paper and crumples it, and he is weeping in fury, but erect.*)

**Danforth**. Marshal!

**Parris** (*hysterically, as though the tearing paper were his life*). Proctor, Proctor!

**Hale**. Man, you will hang! You cannot!

**Proctor** (*his eyes full of tears*). I can. And there's your first marvel, that I can. You have made your magic now, for now I do think I see some shred of goodness in John Proctor. Not enough to weave a banner with, but white enough to keep it from such dogs. (*Elizabeth, in a burst of terror, rushes to him and weeps against his hand.*) Give them no tear! Tears pleasure them! Show honor now, show a stony heart and sink them with it! (*He has lifted her, and kisses her now with great passion.*)

**Rebecca**. Let you fear nothing! Another judgment waits us all!

**Danforth**. Hang them high over the town! Who weeps for these, weeps for corruption! (*He sweeps out past them. Herrick starts to lead Rebecca, who almost collapses, but Proctor catches her, and she glances up at him apologetically.*)

**Rebecca**. I've had no breakfast.

**Herrick**. Come, man.

(*Herrick escorts them out, Hathorne and Cheever behind them. Elizabeth stands staring at the empty doorway.*)

**Parris** (*in deadly fear, to Elizabeth*). Go to him, Goody Proctor! There is yet time!

(*From outside a drumroll strikes the air. Parris is startled. Elizabeth jerks about toward the window.*)

**Parris**. Go to him! (*He rushes out the door, as though to hold back his fate.*) Proctor! Proctor! (*Again, a short burst of drums.*)

**Hale**. Woman, plead with him! (*He starts to rush out the door, and then goes back to her.*) Woman! It is pride, it is vanity. (*She avoids his eyes, and moves to the window. He drops to his knees.*) Be his helper!—What profit him to bleed? Shall the dust praise him? Shall the worms declare his truth? Go to him, take his shame away!

**Elizabeth** (*supporting herself against collapse, grips the bars of the window, and with a cry*). He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!

(*The final drumroll crashes, then heightens violently. Hale weeps in frantic prayer, and the new sun is pouring in upon her face, and the drums rattle like bones in the morning air.*)

the curtain falls