

The Crucible

Act One

(The Home of Rev. Samuel Parris)

(about Parris) In history he cut a villainous path, and there is very little good to be said for him. He believed he was being persecuted wherever he went, despite his best efforts to win people and God to his side.

This predilection for minding other people's business was time-honoured among the people of Salem, and it undoubtedly created many of the suspicions which were to feed the coming madness. It was also, in my opinion, one of the things that a John Proctor would rebel against.

They believed, in short, that they held in their steady hands the candle that would light the world. We have inherited this belief, and it has helped and hurt us.

... social disorder in any age breeds such mystical suspicions, and when, as in Salem, wonders are brought forth from below the social surface, it is too much to expect people to hold back very long from laying on the victims with all the force of their frustrations.

The Salem tragedy ... developed from a paradox. It is a paradox in whose grip we still live ... simply, it was this: for good purposes, even high purposes, the people of Salem developed a theocracy, a combine of state and religious power whose function was to keep the community together, and prevent any kind of disunity that might open it to destruction by material or ideological enemies. But all organisation is and must be grounded on the idea of exclusion and prohibition, just as two objects cannot occupy the same space. Evidently, the time came... when the repressions of order were heavier than seemed warranted ... The witch-hunt was a perverse manifestation of the panic which set in among all classes when the balance began to turn toward greater individual freedom.

The witch-hunt was not, however, a mere repression. It was also, and as importantly, a long overdue opportunity for everyone so inclined to express publicly his guilt and sins, under the cover of accusations against the victims.

Long held hatreds of neighbours could now be openly expressed, and vengeance taken, despite the Bible's charitable injunctions.

Old scores could be settled on a plane of heavenly combat between Lucifer and the Lord; suspicions and the envy of the miserable toward the happy could and did burst out in the general revenge.

ABIGAIL: Uncle, the rumour of witchcraft is all about.

PARRIS: It must come out – my enemies will bring it out... Abigail, do you understand that I have many enemies? ... There is a faction that is sworn to drive me from my pulpit.

PARRIS: Abigail, I have fought here three long years to bend these stiff-necked people to me, and now, just now when some good respect is rising for me in the parish, you compromise my very character.

ABIGAIL: (about Elizabeth) She hates me, uncle, she must, for I would not be her slave. It's a bitter woman, a lying, cold, snivelling woman, and I will not work for such a woman!

MRS PUTNAM: I'd not call it sick; the Devil's touch is heavier than sick. It's death, y'know, it's death drivin' into them, forked and hooped.

PARRIS: I pray you, leap not to witchcraft. I know that you – you least of all, Thomas, would ever wish so disastrous a charge laid upon me. We cannot leap to witchcraft. They will howl me out of Salem for such corruption in my house.

PUTNAM: There are hurtful, vengeful spirits layin' hands on these children.... There is a murdering witch among us, bound to keep herself in the dark ... Let your enemies make of it what they will, you cannot blink it more.

PARRIS: In my house? In my house, Thomas? They will topple me with this.

MARY WARREN: What'll we do? The village is out! I just came from the farm; the whole country's talkin witchcraft! They'll be calling us witches, Abby! ... Witchery's a hangin error!

BETTY: You drank blood, Abby! ... You did! You drank a charm to kill John Proctor's wife!

ABIGAIL: Now look you. All of you. We danced ... And that is all... Let either of you breathe a word, or the edge of a word, about the other things, and I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you ... I have seen some reddish work done at night, and I can make you wish you had never seen the sun go down!

Proctor was a farmer ... He need not have been a partisan of any faction in the town, but there is evidence to suggest that he had a sharp and biting way with hypocrites... In Proctor's presence a fool felt his foolishness instantly – and a Proctor is always marked for calumny therefore... He is a sinner, a sinner not only against the moral fashion of the time, but against his own vision of decent conduct.

ABIGAIL: I know how you clutched my back behind your house and sweated like a stallion whenever I come near! ... I saw your face when she put me out, and you loved me then and you do now!

PROCTOR: Abby, I may think of you softly from time to time. But I will cut off my hand before I'll ever reach for you again. Wipe it out of mind. We never touched, Abby.

ABIGAIL: Oh, I marvel at how such a strong man may let such a sickly wife be -- ...She is blackening my name in the village! She is telling lies about me! She is a cold, snivelling woman, and you bend to her! ... I never knew what pretence Salem was, I never know the lying lessons I was taught by all these Christian women and their covenanted men!

As for Rebecca herself, the general opinion of her was so high that to explain how anyone dared cry her out for a witch – and more, how adults could bring themselves to lay hands on her – we must look to the fields and boundaries of that time.

REBECCA: Pray, calm yourselves. I have eleven children, and am twenty-six times a grandma, and I have seen them all through their silly seasons, and when it come on them they will run the Devil bowlegged keeping up with their mischief... A child's spirit is like a child, you can never catch it by running after it; you must stand still, and, for love, it will soon itself come back... I hope you are not decided to go in search of lose spirits, Mr Parris. I've heard promise of that outside.

PARRIS: A wide opinion's running in the parish that the Devil may be among us, and I would satisfy them that they are wrong.

MRS PUTNAM: There are wheels within wheels in this village, and fires within fires!

PARRIS: Where is my wood? ... I am paid little enough without I spend six pound on firewood ... I am not some preaching farmer with a book under my arm; I am a graduate of Harvard College.... Why am I persecuted here? I cannot offer one proposition but there be a howling riot of argument. I have often wondered of the Devil be in it somewhere; I cannot understand you people otherwise.

PARRIS: There is either obedience or the church will burn like Hell is burning... There is a party in this church. I am not blind to it; there is a faction and a party.

Mr Hale is nearing forty, a tight-skinned, eager-eyed intellectual. This is a beloved errand for him; on being called here to ascertain witchcraft he felt the pride of the specialist whose unique knowledge has at last been publicly called for. ... Better minds than Hale's were – and still are – convinced that there is a society of spirits beyond our ken.

Like Reverend Hale and the others on this stage, we conceive the Devil as a necessary part of a respectable view of cosmology. Ours is a divided empire in which certain ideas and emotions and actions are of God, and their opposites are of Lucifer. ... Since 1692 a great but superficial change has wiped out God's beard and the Devil's horns, but the world is still gripped between two diametrically opposed absolutes.

Our difficulty in believing the – for want of a better word – political inspiration of the Devil is due in great part to the fact that he is called up and damned not only by our social antagonists but by our own side, whatever that may be. ... In the countries of the Communist ideology, all resistance of any import is linked to the totally malign capitalist succubi, and in America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of allegiance with the Red hell. Political opposition, thereby, is given an inhumane overlay which then justifies the abrogation of all normally applied customs of civilized intercourse. A political party is equated with moral right, and opposition to it with diabolical malevolence. Once such an equation is effectively made, society becomes a congerie of plots and counter-plots, and the main role of the government changes from that of the arbiter to that of the scourge of God.

PROCTOR: I've heard you to be a sensible man, Mr Hale. I hope you'll leave some of it in Salem.

HALE: No, no. Now let me instruct you. We cannot look to superstition in this. The Devil is precise, the marks of his presence as definite as stone.

PARRIS: How can it be the Devil? Why would he chose my house to strike? We have all manner of licentious people in the village!

ABIGAIL: I want the light of God, I want the sweet love of Jesus! I danced for the Devil; I saw him, I wrote in his book; I go back to Jesus; I kiss his hand. I saw Sarah Good with the Devil! I saw Goody Osburn with the Devil! I saw Bridget Bishop with the Devil!

Act Two

(The Proctor House)

PROCTOR: I mean to please you, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: *(it is hard to say)* I know it, John.

ELIZABETH: *(about Mary Warren)* It is a mouse no more. I forbid her go, and she raises up her chin like a daughter of a prince and says to me, 'I must go to Salem, Goody Proctor; I am an official of the court!' ... 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.

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 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.

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

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: *(with a 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. ... Spare me! You forget nothin' and forgive nothin' ... 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! ... Let you look sometime 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 -- only somewhat bewildered.

MARY WARREN: *(Mary Warren goes to Elizabeth with a small rag-doll)* I made a gift for you today, Good Proctor. I had to sit long hours in a chair, and passed the time with sewing.

MARY WARREN: Goody Osburn - will hang! ... But not Sarah Good. For Sarah Good confessed y'see. ... That she – she sometimes 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.

MARY WARREN: The Devil's loose in Salem, Mr Proctor; we must discover where he's hiding.

ELIZABETH: Oh, the noose, the noose is up! ... She wants me dead. I knew all week it would come to this. ... You have a faulty understanding of young girls. There is a promise made in any bed – spoke or silent, a promise is surely made. And she may dote on it now – and I'm sure she does – and thinks to kill me, then to take my place.

PROCTOR: I will curse her hotter than the oldest cinder in hell. But pray, begrudge me not my anger. ... The promise that a stallion gives a mare I gave that girl!

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.

HALE: In the book of record that Mr Parris keeps, I note that you are rarely in the church on Sabbath Day.

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.

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: Let you repeat them, if you will. (The commandments)

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.

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: 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?

FRANCIS NURSE: 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: (*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. ... 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! ...Man, remember, until an hour before the Devil fell, God thought him beautiful in Heaven.

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.

ELIZABETH: (*her breath knocked out*) Why – ! The girl is murder! She must be ripped out of the world!

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!

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

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

PROCTOR: Now Hell and Heaven grapple on our backs, and all our old pretence is ripped away – make your peace! Peace, It is a providence, and no great change. We are only what we always were, but naked now. Aye, naked! And the wind, God's icy wind, will blow!

Act Three

On his appearance, silence falls. Danforth is a grave man in his sixties, of some humor and sophistication that does not, however, interfere with an exact loyalty to his position and his cause.

FRANCIS NURSE: Excellency, we have proof for your eyes; God forbid you shut them to it. The girls, sir, the girls are frauds. ... We have proof of it, sir. They are all deceiving you.

DANFORTH: Do you know who I am, Mr. Nurse? ... And do you know that near to four hundred are in the jails from Marblehead to Lynn, and upon my signature? ... And seventy-two condemned to hang by that signature?

DANFORTH: Do you know, Mr. Proctor, that the entire contention of the state in these trials is that the voice of Heaven is speaking through the children?

DANFORTH: We burn a hot fire here; it melts down all concealment.

DANFORTH: I tell you straight, Mister – I have seen marvels in this court. I have seen people choked before my eyes by spirits; I have seen them stuck by pins and slashed by daggers. I have until this moment not the slightest reason to suspect that the children may be deceiving me. Do you understand my meaning?

PROCTOR: (*handing Danforth a paper*) Will you read this first, sir? It's a sort of testament. The people signing it declare their good opinion of Rebecca, and my wife, and Martha Corey. (*Danforth looks down at the paper.*) ... These are all landholding farmers, members of the church. (*Delicately, trying to point out a paragraph*) If you'll notice, sir – they've known the women many years and never saw no sign they had dealings with the Devil.

DANFORTH: (*glancing down a long list*) How many names are here?

FRANCIS: Ninety-one, Your Excellency. ... Mr. Danforth, I gave them all my word no harm would come to them for signing this. ... I have brought trouble on these people. I have –

DANFORTH: No, old man, you have not hurt these people if they are of good conscience. But you must understand, sir, that a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between. This is a sharp time, now, a precise time – we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world. Now, by God's grace, the shining sun is up, and them that fear not light will surely praise it. I hope you will be one of those.

PROCTOR: "Do that which is good, and no harm shall come to thee."

GILES: My proof is there! (*Pointing to the paper*) If Jacobs hangs for a witch he forfeit up his property – that's law! And there is none but Putnam with the; coin to buy so great a piece. This man is killing his neighbors for their land!

GILES: I will not give you no name, I mentioned my wife's name once and I'll burn in hell long enough for that. I stand mute.

HALE: We cannot blink it more. There is a prodigious fear of this court in the country –

DANFORTH: Then there is a prodigious guilt in the country. Are *you* afraid to be questioned here?

HALE: I may only fear the Lord, sir, but there is fear in the country nevertheless.

DANFORTH: (*angered now*) Reproach me not with the fear in the country; there is fear in the country because there is a moving plot to topple Christ in the country!

HALE: But it does not follow that everyone accused is part of it.

DANFORTH: No uncorrupted man may fear this court, Mr. Hale! None!

HALE: Excellency, I have signed seventy-two death warrants; I am a minister of the Lord, and I dare not take a life without there be a proof so immaculate no slightest qualm of conscience may doubt it.

DANFORTH: Mr. Hale, believe me; for a man of such terrible learning you are most bewildered – I hope you will forgive me. I have been thirty-two year at the bar, sir, and I should be confounded were I called upon to defend these people. Let you consider, now – (*To Proctor and the others*) And I bid you all do likewise. In an ordinary crime, how does one defend the accused? One calls up witnesses to prove his innocence. But witchcraft is *ipso facto*, on its face and by its nature, an invisible crime, is it not? Therefore, who may possibly be witness to it? The witch and the victim. None other. Now we cannot hope the witch will accuse herself; granted? Therefore, we must rely upon her victims – and they do testify, the children certainly do testify. As for the witches, none will deny that we are most eager for all their confessions.

MARY WARREN: I – I cannot tell how, but I did. I – I heard the other girls screaming, and you, Your Honor, you seemed to believe them, and I – It were only sport in the beginning, sir, but then the whole world cried spirits, spirits, and I – I promise you, Mr. Danforth, I only thought I saw them but I did not.

ABIGAIL: I have been hurt, Mr. Danforth; I have seen my blood runnin' out! I have been near to murdered every day because I done my duty pointing out the Devil's people – and this is my reward? To be mistrusted, denied, questioned.

PROCTOR: (*breathless and in agony*) It is a whore! Danforth ... (*trembling, his life collapsing about him*) I have known her, sir. I have known her. ... (*his voice about to break, and his shame great*) In the proper place – where my beasts are bedded. On the last night of my joy, some eight months past. She used to serve me in my house, sir. (*He has to clamp his jaw to keep from weeping.*) A man may think God sleeps, but God sees everything, I know it now. I beg you, sir, I beg you – see her what she is. My wife, my dear good wife, took this girl soon

after, sir, and put her out on the highroad. And being what she is, a lump of vanity, sir – (*He is being overcome*) Excellency, forgive me, forgive me. (*Angrily against himself, he turns away from the Governor for a moment. Then, as though to cry out is his only means of speech left*) She thinks to dance with me on my wife's grave! And well she might, for I thought of her softly. God help me, I lusted, and there is a promise in such sweat. But it is a whore's vengeance, and you must see it; I set myself entirely in your hands, I know you must see it now.

PROCTOR: I have made a bell of my honor! I have rung the doom of my good name – you will believe me, Mr. Danforth! My wife is innocent, except she knew a whore when she saw one! ... In her life, sir, she have never lied. There are them that cannot sing, and them that cannot weep – my wife cannot lie. I have paid much to learn it, sir.

HALE: Excellency, it is a natural lie to tell; I beg you, stop now before another is condemned! I may shut my conscience to it no more – private vengeance is working through this testimony! From the beginning this man has struck me true. By my oath to Heaven, I believe him now, and I pray you call back his wife before we –

DANFORTH: (*to Proctor*) What are you? (*Proctor is beyond speech in his anger.*) You are combined with anti-Christ, are you not? I have seen your power; you will not deny it! What say you, Mister?

PROCTOR: (*his mind wild, breathless*) I say – I say – God is dead! ... A fire, a fire is burning! I hear the boot of Lucifer, I see his filthy face! And it is my face, and yours, Danforth! For them that quail to bring men out of ignorance, as I have quailed, and as you quail now when you know in all your black hearts that this be fraud – God damns our kind especially, and we will burn, we will burn together! ... You are pulling Heaven down and raising up a whore!

HALE: I denounce these proceedings, I quit this court! (*He slams the door to the outside behind him.*)

Act Four

DANFORTH: Marshal. (*Herrick stops.*) When did Reverend Hale arrive?

HERRICK: It were toward midnight, I think.

DANFORTH: (*suspiciously*) what is he about here?

HERRICK: He goes among them that will hang, sir. And he prays with them. He sits with Goody Nurse now. And Mr. Parris with him.

HATHORNE: Excellency, I wonder if it be wise to let Mr. Parris so continuously with the prisoners. (*Danforth turns to him, interested.*) I think, sometimes, the man has a mad look these days.

DANFORTH: Mad?

HATHORNE: I met him yesterday coming out of his house, and I bid him good morning – and he wept and went his way. I think it is not well the village sees him so unsteady.

CHEEVER: There be so many cows wanderin' the highroads, now their masters are in the jails, and much disagreement who they will belong to now. I know Mr. Parris be arguin' with farmers all yesterday – there is great contention, sir, about the cows. Contention make him weep, sir; it were always a man that weep for contention.

PARRIS: There is news, sir, that the court – the court must reckon with. My niece, sir, my niece – I believe she has vanished. ... This be the third night. You see, sir, she told me she would stay a night with Mercy Lewis. And next day, when she does not return, I send to Mr. Lewis to inquire. Mercy told him she would sleep in *my* house for a night. ... Excellency, I think they be aboard a ship. (*Danforth stands agape.*) My daughter tells me how she heard them speaking of ships last week, and tonight I discover my – my strongbox is broke into. (*He presses his fingers against his eyes to keep back tears.*) ... Thirty-one pound is gone. I am penniless. (*He covers his face and sobs.*)

PARRIS: I tell you what is said here, sir. Andover have thrown out the court, they say, and will have no part of witchcraft. There be a faction here, feeding on that news, and I tell you true, sir, I fear there will be riot here. ... Judge Hathorne – it were another sort that hanged till now. Rebecca Nurse is no Bridget that lived three year with Bishop before she married him. John Proctor is not Isaac Ward that drank his family to ruin. (*To Danforth*) I would to God it were not so, Excellency, but these people have great weight jet in the town. Let Rebecca stand upon the gibbet and send up some righteous prayer, and I fear she'll wake a vengeance on you.

PARRIS: Now Mr. Hale's returned, there is hope, I think – for if he bring even one of these to God, that confession surely damns the others in the public eye, and none may doubt more that they are all linked to Hell. This way, unconfessed and claiming innocence, doubts are multiplied, many honest people will weep for them, and our good purpose is lost in their tears. ... Tonight, when I open my door to leave my house – a dagger clattered to the ground. (*Silence. Danforth absorbs this. Now Parris cries out*) You cannot hang this sort. There is danger for me. I dare not step outside at night!

DANFORTH: Now hear me, and beguile 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: 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!

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 – cleave to no faith when faith brings blood. It is mistaken law that leads you to sacrifice. Life, woman, life is God's most precious gift; no principle, however glorious, may justify the taking of it. I beg you, woman, prevail upon your husband to confess. Let him give his lie. Quail not before God's judgment in this, for it may well be God damns a liar less than he that throws his life away for pride. Will you plead with him? I cannot think he will listen to another.

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.

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.

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: 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!

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?

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

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

PROCTOR: No, no. I have signed it, You have seen me. It is done! You have no need for this. ... Damn the village! I confess to God, and God has seen my name on this! It is enough! ... I have confessed myself! Is there no good penitence 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! ... I have three children – how may I teach them to walk like men in the world, and I sold my friends? ... Beguile me not! I blacken all of them when this is nailed to the church the very day they hang for silence!

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!

HALE: Man, you will hang! You cannot!

PROCTOR: (*his eyes fully of tear*) 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*)

DANFORTH: Hang them high over the town! Who weeps for these, weeps for corruption!

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.