

ACT *Four*

(A cell in Salem jail, that fall.

At the back is a high barred window; near it, a great, heavy door. Along the walls are two benches.

The place is in darkness but for the moonlight seeping through the bars. It appears empty. Presently footsteps are heard coming down a corridor beyond the wall, keys rattle, and the door swings open. Marshal Herrick enters with a lantern.

He is nearly drunk, and heavy-footed. He goes to a bench and nudges a bundle of rags lying on it.)

Herrick. Sarah, wake up! Sarah Good! *(He then crosses to the other bench.)*

Sarah Good *(rising in her rags)*. Oh, Majesty! Comin', comin'! Tituba, he's here, His Majesty's come!

Herrick. Go to the north cell; this place is wanted now. *(He hangs his lantern on the wall. Tituba sits up.)*

Tituba. That don't look to me like His Majesty; look to me like the marshal.

Herrick *(taking out a flask)*. Get along with you now, clear this place. *(He drinks, and Sarah Good comes and peers up into his face.)*

Sarah Good. Oh, is it you, Marshal! I thought sure you be the devil comin' for us. Could I have a sip of cider for me goin'-away?

Herrick *(handing her the flask)*. And where are you off to, Sarah?

Tituba *(as Sarah drinks)*. We goin' to Barbados, soon the Devil gits here with the feathers and the wings.

Herrick. Oh? A happy voyage to you.

20 **Sarah Good.** A pair of bluebirds wingin' southerly, the two of us! Oh, it be a grand transformation, Marshal! *(She raises the flask to drink again.)*

Herrick *(taking the flask from her lips)*. You'd best give me that or you'll never rise off the ground. Come along now.

Tituba. I'll speak to him for you, if you desires to come along, Marshal.

Herrick. I'd not refuse it, Tituba; it's the proper morning to fly into Hell.

30 **Tituba.** Oh, it be no Hell in Barbados. Devil, him be pleasure-man in Barbados, him be singin' and dancin' in Barbados. It's you folks—you riles him up 'round here; it be too cold 'round here for that Old Boy. He freeze his soul in Massachusetts, but in Barbados he just as sweet and—*(A bellowing cow is heard, and Tituba leaps up and calls to the window.)* Aye, sir! That's him, Sarah!

Sarah Good. I'm here, Majesty! *(They hurriedly pick up their rags as Hopkins, a guard, enters.)*



John Proctor going to the gallows

40 **Hopkins.** The Deputy Governor's arrived.
Herrick (*grabbing Tituba*). Come along, come along.
Tituba (*resisting him*). No, he comin' for me. I goin' home!
Herrick (*pulling her to the door*). That's not Satan, just a poor old cow with a hatful of milk. Come along now, out with you!
Tituba (*calling to the window*). Take me home, Devil! Take me home!
Sarah Good (*following the shouting Tituba out*). Tell
50 him I'm goin', Tituba! Now you tell him Sarah Good is goin' too!
(In the corridor outside Tituba calls on—"Take me home, Devil; Devil take me home!" and Hopkins' voice orders her to move on. Herrick returns and begins to push old rags and straw into a corner. Hearing footsteps, he turns, and enter Danforth and Judge Hathorne. They are in greatcoats and wear hats against the bitter cold. They are followed in by Cheever, who carries a dispatch case¹ and a flat
60 *wooden box containing his writing materials.)*
Herrick. Good morning, Excellency.
Danforth. Where is Mr. Parris?
Herrick. I'll fetch him. (*He starts for the door.*)
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
70 now. And Mr. Parris with him.
Danforth. Indeed. That man have no authority to enter here, Marshal. Why have you let him in?
Herrick. Why, Mr. Parris command me, sir. I cannot deny him.
Danforth. Are you drunk, Marshal?

Herrick. No, sir; it is a bitter night, and I have no fire here.
Danforth (*containing his anger*). Fetch Mr. Parris.
Herrick. Aye, sir.
80 **Danforth.** There is a prodigious stench in this place.
Herrick. I have only now cleared the people out for you.
Danforth. Beware hard drink, Marshal.
Herrick. Aye, sir. (*He waits an instant for further orders. But Danforth, in dissatisfaction, turns his back on him, and Herrick goes out. There is a pause. Danforth stands in thought.*)
Hathorne. Let you question Hale, Excellency; I should not be surprised he have been preaching
90 in Andover² lately.
Danforth. We'll come to that; speak nothing of Andover. Parris prays with him. That's strange. (*He blows on his hands, moves toward the window, and looks out.*)
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?
100 **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.
Danforth. Perhaps he have some sorrow.
Cheever (*stamping his feet against the cold*). I think it be the cows, sir.
Danforth. Cows?
Cheever. There be so many cows wanderin' the high-roads, now their masters are in the jails, and much
110 disagreement who they will belong to now. I know Mr. Parris be arguin' with farmers all yesterday—

1. **dispatch case:** a case for carrying documents.

2. **Andover:** a town in Massachusetts northwest of Salem.

there is great contention, sir, about the cows. Contention make him weep, sir; it were always a man that weep for contention. (*He turns, as do Hathorne and Danforth, hearing someone coming up the corridor. Danforth raises his head as Parris enters. He is gaunt, frightened, and sweating in his greatcoat.*)

Parris (*to Danforth, instantly*). Oh, good morning, sir, thank you for coming, I beg your pardon wakin' you so early. Good morning, Judge Hathorne.

Danforth. Reverend Hale have no right to enter this—

Parris. Excellency, a moment. (*He hurries back and shuts the door.*)

Hathorne. Do you leave him alone with the prisoners?

Danforth. What's his business here?

Parris (*prayerfully holding up his hands*). Excellency, hear me. It is a providence. Reverend Hale has returned to bring Rebecca Nurse to God.

Danforth (*surprised*). He bids her confess?

Parris (*sitting*). Hear me. Rebecca have not given me a word this three month since she came. Now she sits with him, and her sister and Martha Corey and two or three others, and he pleads with them, confess their crimes and save their lives.

Danforth. Why—this is indeed a providence. And they soften, they soften?

Parris. Not yet, not yet. But I thought to summon you, sir, that we might think on whether it be not wise, to—(*He dares not say it.*) I had thought to put a question, sir, and I hope you will not—

Danforth. Mr. Parris, be plain, what troubles you?

Parris. There is news, sir, that the court—the court must reckon with. My niece, sir, my niece—I believe she has vanished.

Danforth. Vanished!

Parris. I had thought to advise you of it earlier in the week, but—

Danforth. Why? How long is she gone?

Parris. 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.

Danforth. They are both gone?!

Parris (*in fear of him*). They are, sir.

Danforth (*alarmed*). I will send a party for them. Where may they be?

Parris. 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.*)

Hathorne (*astonished*). She have robbed you?

Parris. Thirty-one pound is gone. I am penniless. (*He covers his face and sobs.*)

Danforth. Mr. Parris, you are a brainless man! (*He walks in thought, deeply worried.*)

Parris. Excellency, it profit nothing you should blame me. I cannot think they would run off except they fear to keep in Salem any more. (*He is pleading.*) Mark it, sir, Abigail had close knowledge of the town, and since the news of Andover has broken here—

Danforth. Andover is remedied.³ The court returns there on Friday, and will resume examinations.

Parris. I am sure of it, sir. But the rumor here speaks rebellion in Andover, and it—

Danforth. There is no rebellion in Andover!

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.

Hathorne. Riot! Why at every execution I have seen naught but high satisfaction in the town.

3. **remedied**: no longer a problem.

Parris. 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
190 to ruin. (*to Danforth*) I would to God it were not so, Excellency, but these people have great weight yet in the town. Let Rebecca stand upon the gibbet⁴ and send up some righteous prayer, and I fear she'll wake a vengeance on you.

Hathorne. Excellency, she is condemned a witch. The court have—

Danforth (*in deep concern, raising a hand to Hathorne*). Pray you. (*to Parris*) How do you propose, then?

200 **Parris.** Excellency, I would postpone these hangin's for a time.

Danforth. There will be no postponement.

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
210 lost in their tears.

Danforth (*after thinking a moment, then going to Cheever*). Give me the list.
(*Cheever opens the dispatch case, searches.*)

Parris. It cannot be forgot, sir, that when I summoned the congregation for John Proctor's excommunication⁵ there were hardly thirty people come to hear it. That speak a discontent, I think, and—

Danforth (*studying the list*). There will be no postponement.

220 **Parris.** Excellency—

Danforth. Now, sir—which of these in your opinion may be brought to God? I will myself strive with him⁶ till dawn. (*He hands the list to Parris, who merely glances at it.*)

Parris. There is not sufficient time till dawn.

Danforth. I shall do my utmost. Which of them do you have hope for?

Parris (*not even glancing at the list now, and in a quavering voice, quietly*). Excellency—a dagger—
230 (*He chokes up.*)

Danforth. What do you say?

Parris. 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!

(*Reverend Hale enters. They look at him for an instant in silence. He is steeped in sorrow, exhausted, and more direct than he ever was.*)

240 **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*). 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?

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

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

4. **gibbet** (jɪb'ɪt): gallows.

5. **excommunication**: banishment from a church. For the Puritans in New England, this punishment resulted in the loss of church privileges.

6. **strive with him**: struggle with him through prayer.

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
 260 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?

270 **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.

280 **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.

290 **Danforth.** Mr. Hale, as God have not empowered me like Joshua to stop this sun from rising,⁷ 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?

300 **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?

310 **Hale.** Why, it is all simple. I come to do the Devil's work. I come to counsel Christians they should belie 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.*)

320 **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*)

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

7. **like Joshua . . . rising:** According to the Bible, Joshua became leader of the Israelites after Moses died. He led the people to the Promised Land while the sun stood still.

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.⁸ 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—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.

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

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

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

Danforth (*going to her*). Goody Proctor, you are not summoned here for disputation. Be there no wifely tenderness within you? He will die 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 no other proof of your unnatural life, your dry eyes now would be sufficient evidence that you delivered up your soul to Hell! A very ape 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. (*A sound—the sibilance 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.*)

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

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.*)

410 (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?

420 **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.

430 (*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.

440 **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
450 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?

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
460 weight," he says. And died.

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

Elizabeth. Aye. It were a fearsome⁹ 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.

470 (*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.

9. **fearsome:** courageous.

(*pause*)

Proctor. It is a pretense, Elizabeth.

480 **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*
490 *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—

510 **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.*)

520 **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.*)

530 **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!

550 (*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 tongs of fire were singeing you you would not! It is evil. Good, then—it is evil, and I do it!

560 (*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?

570 **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!



John and Elizabeth Proctor before the marshal

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*). Mr. Proctor, do you think they go like saints?

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
660 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?

670 **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.*)

680 **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!

690 **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 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
710 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!

710 **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—

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!

720 **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

730 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.*)

Comprehension

- 1. Recall** Why has Reverend Hale returned to Salem?
- 2. Clarify** Why does Danforth summon Elizabeth Proctor?
- 3. Summarize** What does John Proctor do when asked to sign a confession?



READING 4 Understand the structure and elements of drama. Analyze themes and characteristics of modern American drama.
RC-11(B) Make complex inferences and use textual evidence to support understanding.

Literary Analysis

- 4. Infer Character Motives** Explain why each of the following characters wants John and the other prisoners to confess. Support your answer with evidence.
 - Danforth
 - Parris
 - Hale
- 5. Examine Dialogue** Reread Elizabeth Proctor’s dialogue at the end of Act Four (lines 782–783) when she says of her husband, “He have his goodness now.” What do you think she means? Do you agree with her?

- 6. Analyze Conventions of Drama** Much of the **plot** of *The Crucible* is built around the internal and external conflicts of John Proctor. An **internal conflict** is a struggle between opposing forces within a character. An **external conflict** pits a character against nature, society, or another character. Use a chart like the one shown to show the internal and external conflicts of John Proctor. How is each resolved?

<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Internal or External?</i>	<i>How Resolved</i>

- 7. Draw Conclusions About Characters** Refer to the chart of character traits you have created. Which characters have changed over the course of the play? How have they changed? Cite specific details from the play.
- 8. Interpret Symbol** A crucible is a severe test or trial. It is also a vessel in which materials are melted at high temperatures to produce a more refined substance. What do you think a crucible might symbolize in this drama?
- 9. Synthesize Themes** A theme is a central idea the writer wishes to share with the reader. This idea may be a lesson about life or about people and their actions. What do you think are some of the themes of *The Crucible*?

Literary Criticism

- 10. Critical Interpretations** Many critics have observed that Miller’s play goes beyond the historical events of 17th- and 20th-century America and explores universal conflicts. What universal conflicts does the play deal with?

What fuels a MOB?

In Act Four, what motivates several of the characters to resist the mob mentality that has swept through Salem?

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Decide whether the words in each pair are synonyms or antonyms.

1. iniquity/goodness
2. contentious/argumentative
3. adamant/unsure
4. immaculate/filthy
5. deference/impudence
6. anarchy/disorder
7. corroborate/substantiate
8. imperceptible/unnoticeable
9. subservient/subordinate

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

- document
- illustrate
- interpret
- promote
- reveal

The plot of *The Crucible* **illustrates** how rapidly a situation can spiral out of control. Write about an experience in which you lost control of a situation. What could you have done to prevent it? In your response, try to use at least one additional Academic Vocabulary word.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: CONTEXT CLUES

The words, sentences, paragraphs, and even punctuation marks that surround a word make up its **context**. Often context can help you figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word or help you better understand the various shades of meaning that words can have.

PRACTICE Locate each word below in its context in the play. Then write the letter of the correct definition for each.

1. **subservient** (page 147): (a) forceful, (b) vengeful, (c) lower in importance
2. **iniquity** (page 151): (a) forgetfulness, (b) act of not caring, (c) wickedness
3. **ameliorate** (page 168): (a) improve, (b) aggravate, (c) move farther along
4. **contentious** (page 182): (a) angry, (b) generous, (c) misguided
5. **effrontery** (page 188): (a) patience, (b) presumptuousness, (c) desire to talk a lot

WORD LIST

adamant
anarchy
contentious
corroborate
deference
immaculate
imperceptible
iniquity
subservient



READING 1B Analyze textual context to draw conclusions about the nuance in word meanings.

Interactive Vocabulary **THINK** central
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KEYWORD: HML11-214

Conventions in Writing

◆ GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Use Realistic Dialogue

A play consists almost entirely of dialogue, so it is important that the characters' speech match the setting. In *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller's **word choice** and use of **inverted sentences** reflect the speech of the time, contributing to the author's realistic depiction of life in 17th-century Salem. Here are some examples:

Parris. . . . Let him look to medicine and put out all thought of unnatural causes here. **There be none.** (Act One, lines 50–52)

Susanna. **Aye, sir.** . . . (Act One, line 52)

Abigail. **Now look you.** All of you. We danced. . . (Act One, line 353)

Here, Miller uses *be* rather than *are*, the verb form we use in this context today. Instead of *yes*, he uses the word *aye*, a word that was commonplace in the 1600s but is rarely used today. Finally, he uses a type of inverted word order common to 17th-century speech, with the verb preceding the subject.

PRACTICE Rewrite the following sentences so that they better reflect the 17th-century speech patterns that Miller employs.

EXAMPLE

You go to the house!

Go you to the house!

1. Yes, it is true I saw the devil with Rebecca Nurse.
2. Are you sure of their guilt?
3. You confess to these sins!

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Expand your understanding of Miller's play by responding to this prompt. Then, use the **revising tips** to improve your essay.

WRITING PROMPT

ANALYZE MOTIVATIONS Why does John Proctor change his mind and tear up the confession? In **four or five paragraphs**, discuss Proctor's perception of a morally righteous person and how that perception affects his decision. Think about Rebecca Nurse's reaction to his confession and Elizabeth's assertion that "there be no higher judge under Heaven than Proctor is!"

REVISING TIPS

- Explain the choices Proctor must make to arrive at his decision
- Clarify how Proctor's idea of morality differs from that of the judges
- Use quotations and examples from the play to support key points



WRITING 15C Write an interpretation of a literary text. **ORAL AND WRITTEN CONVENTIONS 17B** Use correctly structured sentences.

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