

# **The Crucible**

Arthur Miller

## A NOTE ON THE HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THIS PLAY

This play is not history in the sense in which the word is used by the academic historian. Dramatic purposes have sometimes required many characters to be fused into one; the number of girls involved in the "crying-out" has been reduced; Abigail's age has been raised; while there were several judges of almost equal authority, I have symbolized them all in Hathorne and Danforth. However, I believe that the reader will discover here the essential nature of one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history. The fate of each character is exactly that of his historical model, and there is no one in the drama who did not play a similar - and in some cases exactly the same - role in history.

As for the characters of the persons, little is known about most of them excepting what may be surmised from a few letters, the trial record, certain broadsides written at the time, and references to their conduct in sources of varying reliability. They may therefore be taken as creations of my own, drawn to the best of my ability in conformity with their known behavior, except as indicated in the commentary I have written for this text.

# ACT ONE (AN OVERTURE)

*A small upper bedroom in the home of Reverend Samuel Parris, Salem, Massachusetts, in the spring of the year 1692.*

*There is a narrow window at the left. Through its leaded panes the morning sunlight streams. A candle still burns near the bed, which is at the right. A chest, a chair, and a small table are the other furnishings. At the back a door opens on the landing of the stairway to the ground floor. The room gives up an air of clean spareness. The roof rafters are exposed, and the wood colors are raw and unmellowed.*

*As the curtain rises, Reverend Parris is discovered kneeling be-side the bed, evidently in prayer. His daughter, Betty Parris, aged ten, is lying on the bed, inert.*

At the time of these events Parris was in his middle forties. 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. In meeting, he felt insulted if someone rose to shut the door without first asking his permission. He was a widower with no interest in children, or talent with them. He regarded them as young adults, and until this strange crisis he, like the rest of Salem, never conceived that the children were anything but thankful for being permitted to walk straight, eyes slightly low-ered, arms at the sides, and mouths shut until bidden to speak.

His house stood in the "town" - but we today would hardly call it a village. The meeting house was nearby, and from this point outward - toward the bay or inland - there were a few small-windowed, dark houses snuggling against the raw Massa- chusetts winter. Salem had been established hardly forty years before. To the European world the whole province was a bar-baric frontier inhabited by a sect of fanatics who, nevertheless, were shipping out products of slowly increasing quantity and value.

No one can really know what their lives were like. They had no novelists - and would not have permitted anyone to read a novel if one were handy. Their creed forbade anything re-sembling a theater or "vain enjoyment." They did not celebrate Christmas, and a holiday from work meant only that they must concentrate even more upon prayer.

Which is not to say that nothing broke into this strict and somber way of life. When a new farmhouse was built, friends assembled to "raise the roof," and there would be special foods cooked and probably some potent cider passed around. There was a good supply of ne'er-do-wells in Salem, who dallied at the shovelboard in Bridget Bishop's tavern. Probably more than the creed, hard work kept the morals of the place from spoiling, for the people were forced to fight the land like heroes for every grain of corn, and no man had very much time for fooling around.

That there were some jokers, however, is indicated by the practice of appointing a two-man patrol whose duty was to "walk forth in the time of God's worship to take notice of

such as either lye about the meeting house, without attending to the word and ordinances, or that lye at home or in the fields with-out giving good account thereof, and to take the names of such persons, and to present them to the magistrates, whereby they may be accordingly proceeded against." This predilection for minding other people's business was time-honored among the people of Salem, and it undoubtedly created many of the sus-picions which were to feed the coming madness. It was also, in my opinion, one of the things that a John Proctor would rebel against, for the time of the armed camp had almost passed, and since the country was reasonably - although not wholly - safe, the old disciplines were beginning to rankle. But, as in all such matters, the issue was not clear-cut, for danger was still a possibility, and in unity still lay the best promise of safety.

The edge of the wilderness was close by. The American continent stretched endlessly west, and it was full of mystery for them. It stood, dark and threatening, over their shoulders night and day, for out of it Indian tribes marauded from time to time, and Reverend Parris had parishioners who had lost relatives to these heathen.

The parochial snobbery of these people was partly responsible for their failure to convert the Indians. Probably they also preferred to take land from heathens rather than from fellow Christians. At any rate, very few Indians were converted, and the Salem folk believed that the virgin forest was the Devil's last preserve, his home base and the citadel of his final stand. To the best of their knowledge the American forest was the last place on earth that was not paying homage to God.

For these reasons, among others, they carried about an air of innate resistance, even of persecution. Their fathers had, of course, been persecuted in England. So now they and their church found it necessary to deny any other sect its freedom; lest their New Jerusalem be defiled and corrupted by wrong ways and deceitful ideas.

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. It helped them with the discipline it gave them. They were a dedicated folk, by and large, and they had to be to survive the life they had chosen or been born into in this country.

The proof of their belief's value to them may be taken from the opposite character of the first Jamestown settlement, farther south, in Virginia. The Englishmen who landed there were motivated mainly by a hunt for profit. They had thought to pick off the wealth of the new country and then return rich to England. They were a band of individualists, and a much more ingratiating group than the Massachusetts men. But Virginia destroyed them. Massachusetts tried to kill off the Puritans, but they combined; they set up a communal society which, in the beginning, was little more than an armed camp with an auto-cratic and very devoted leadership. It was, however, an autocracy by consent, for they were united from top to bottom by a commonly held ideology whose perpetuation was the reason and justification for all their sufferings. So their self-denial, their purposefulness, their suspicion of all vain pursuits, their hard-handed justice, were altogether perfect instruments for the conquest of this space so antagonistic to man.

But the people of Salem in 1692 were not quite the dedicated folk that arrived on the *Mayflower*. A vast differentiation had taken place, and in their own time a revolution had

unseated the royal government and substituted a junta which was at this moment in power. The times, to their eyes, must have been out of joint, and to the common folk must have seemed as insoluble and complicated as do ours today. It is not hard to see how easily many could have been led to believe that the time of confusion had been brought upon them by deep and darkling forces. No hint of such speculation appears on the court record, but 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, which is about to begin in these pages, developed from a paradox. It is a paradox in whose grip we still live, and there is no prospect yet that we will discover its resolution. 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 to prevent any kind of disunity that might open it to destruction by material or ideological enemies. It was forged for a necessary purpose and accomplished that purpose. But all organization 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 in New England when the repressions of order were heavier than seemed warranted by the dangers against which the order was organized. 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.

When one rises above the individual villainy displayed, one can only pity them all, just as we shall be pitied someday. It is still impossible for man to organize his social life without repressions, and the balance has yet to be struck between order and freedom.

The witch-hunt was not, however, a mere repression. It was also, and as importantly, a long overdue opportunity for every-one so inclined to express publicly his guilt and sins, under the cover of accusations against the victims. It suddenly became possible - and patriotic and holy - for a man to say that Martha Corey had come into his bedroom at night, and that, while his wife was sleeping at his side, Martha laid herself down on his chest and "nearly suffocated him." Of course it was her spirit only, but his satisfaction at confessing himself was no lighter than if it had been Martha herself. One could not ordinarily speak such things in public.

Long-held hatreds of neighbors could now be openly expressed, and vengeance taken, despite the Bible's charitable injunctions. Land-lust which had been expressed before by constant bickering over boundaries and deeds, could now be elevated to the arena of morality; one could cry witch against one's neighbor and feel perfectly justified in the bargain. 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.

*Reverend Parris is praying now, and, though we cannot hear his words, a sense of his confusion hangs about him. He mumbles, then seems about to weep; then he weeps, then, prays again; but his daughter does not stir on the bed.*

*The door opens, and his Negro slave enters. Tituba is in her forties. Parris brought her with him from Barbados, where he spent some years as a merchant before entering the ministry. She enters as one does who can no longer bear to be barred from the sight of her beloved, but she is also very frightened because her slave sense has warned her that, as always, trouble in this house eventually lands on her back.*

Tituba, *already taking a step backward*: My Betty be hearty soon?

Parris: Out of here!

Tituba, *backing to the door*: My Betty not goin' die...

Parris, *scrambling to his feet in a fury*: Out of my sight! *She is gone.* Out of my - *He is overcome with sobs. He clamps his teeth against them and closes the door and leans against it, ex-hausted.* Oh, my God! God help me! *Quaking with fear, mum-bling to himself through his sobs, he goes to the bed and gently takes Betty's hand.* Betty. Child. Dear child, Will you wake, will you open up your eyes! Betty, little one...

*He is bending to kneel again when his niece, Abigail Williams, seventeen, enters - a strikingly beautiful girl, an orphan, with an endless capacity for dissembling. Now she is all worry and apprehension and propriety.*

Abigail: Uncle? *He looks to her.* Susanna Walcott's here from Doctor Griggs. Parris: Oh?. Let her come, let her come.

Abigail, *leaning out the door to call to Susanna, who is down the hall a few steps*: Come in, Susanna.

*Susanna Walcott, a little younger than Abigail, a nervous, hurried girl, enters.*

Parris, *eagerly*: What does the doctor say, child?

Susanna, *craning around Parris to get a look at Betty*: He bid me come and tell you, reverend sir, that he cannot discover no medicine for it in his books.

Parris: Then he must search on.

Susanna: Aye, sir, he have been searchin' his books since he left you, sir. But he bid me tell you, that you might look to un-natural things for the cause of it.

Parris, *his eyes going wide*: No - no. There be no unnatural cause here. Tell him I have sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly, and Mr. Hale will surely confirm that. Let him look to medicine and put out all thought of unnatural causes here. There be none.

Susanna: Aye, sir. He bid me tell you. *She turns to go.*

Abigail: Speak nothin' of it in the village, Susanna.

Parris: Go directly home and speak nothing of unnatural causes.

Susanna: Aye, sir. I pray for her. *She goes out.*

Abigail: Uncle, the rumor of witchcraft is all about; I think you'd best go down and deny it yourself. The parlor's packed with people, sir. I'll sit with her.

Parris, *pressed, turns on her*: And what shall I say to them? That my daughter and my niece I discovered dancing like heathen in the forest?

Abigail: Uncle, we did dance; let you tell them I confessed it - and I'll be whipped if I must be. But they're speakin' of witch-craft. Betty's not witched.

Parris: Abigail, I cannot go before the congregation when I know you have not opened with me. What did you do with her in the forest?

Abigail: We did dance, uncle, and when you leaped out of the bush so suddenly, Betty was frightened and then she fainted. And there's the whole of it.

Parris: Child. Sit you down.

Abigail, *quavering, as she sits*: I would never hurt Betty. I love her dearly.

Parris; Now look you, child, your punishment will come in its time. But if you trafficked with spirits in the forest I must know it now, for surely my enemies will, and they will ruin me with it.

Abigail: But we never conjured spirits.

Parris: Then why can she not move herself since midnight? This child is desperate! *Abigail lowers her eyes*. It must come out - my enemies will bring it out. Let me know what you done there. Abigail, do you understand that I have many enemies?

Abigail: I have heard of it, uncle.

Parris: There is a faction that is sworn to drive me from my pulpit. Do you understand that?

Abigail: I think so, sir.

Parris: Now then, in the midst of such disruption, my own household is discovered to be the very center of some obscene practice. Abominations are done in the forest -

Abigail: It were sport, uncle!

Parris, *pointing at Betty*: You call this sport? *She lowers her eyes. He pleads*: Abigail, if you know something that may help the doctor, for God's sake tell it to me. *She is silent*. I saw Tituba waving her arms over the fire when I came on you. Why was she doing that? And I heard a screeching and gibberish coming from her mouth. She were swaying like a dumb beast over that fire!

Abigail: She always sings her Barbados songs, and we dance.

Parris: I cannot blink what I saw, Abigail, for my enemies will not blink it. I saw a dress lying on the grass.

Abigail, *innocently*: A dress?

Parris - *it is very hard to say*: Aye, a dress. And I thought I saw - someone naked running through the trees!

Abigail, *in terror*: No one was naked! You mistake yourself, uncle!

PARRIS, *with anger*: I saw it! *He moves from her. Then, re-solved*: Now tell me true, Abigail. And I pray you feel the weight of truth upon you, for now my ministry's at stake, my ministry and perhaps your cousin's life. Whatever abomination you have done, give me all of it now, for I dare not be taken unaware when I go before them down there.

Abigail: There is nothin' more. I swear it, uncle.

Parris, *studies her, then nods, half convinced*: Abigail, I have sought 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. I have given you a home, child, I have put clothes upon your back - now give me upright answer. Your name in the town - it is entirely white, is it not?

Abigail, *with an edge of resentment*: Why, I am sure it is, sir. There be no blush about my name.

Parris, *to the point*: Abigail, is there any other cause than you have told me, for your being discharged from Goody Proctor's service? I have heard it said, and I tell you as I heard it, that she comes so rarely to the church this year for she will not sit so close to something soiled. What signified that remark?

Abigail: She hates me, uncle, she must, for I would not be her slave. It's a bitter woman, a lying, cold, sniveling woman, and I will not work for such a woman!

Parris: She may be. And yet it has troubled me that you are now seven months out of their house, and in all this time no other family has ever called for your service.

Abigail: They want slaves, not such as I. Let them send to Barbados for that. I will not black my face for any of them! *With ill-concealed resentment at him*: Do you begrudge my bed, uncle?

Parris: No - no.

Abigail, *in a temper*: My name is good in the village! I will not have it said my name is soiled! Goody Proctor is a gossiping liar!

*Enter Mrs. Ann Putnam. She is a twisted soul of forty-five, a death-ridden woman, haunted by dreams.*

Parris, *as soon as the door begins to open*: No - no, I cannot have anyone'. *He sees her, and a certain deference springs into him, although his worry remains. Why, Goody Putnam, come in.*

Mrs. Putnam, *full of breath, shiny-eyed*: It is a marvel. It is surely a stroke of hell upon you.

Mrs. Putnam, *glancing at Betty*: How high did she fly, how high?

Parris: No, no, she never flew -



Mrs. Putnam, *very pleased with it*: Why, it's sure she did. Mr. Collins saw her goin' over Ingersoll's barn, and come down light as bird, he says!

Parris: Now, look you, Goody Putnam, she never - *Enter Thomas Putnam, a well-to-do, hard-handed landowner, near fifty*. Oh, good morning, Mr. Putnam.

Putnam: It is a providence the thing is out now! It is a provi-dence. *He goes directly to the bed*.

Parris: What's out, sir, what's - ?

*Mrs. Putnam goes to the bed*.

Putnam, *looking down at Betty*: Why, *her eyes is closed!* Look you, Ann.

Mrs. Putnam: Why, that's strange. *To Parris*: Ours is open. Parris, *shocked*: Your Ruth is sick?

Mrs. PuTNAM, *with vicious certainty*: 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: Oh, pray not! Why, how does Ruth ail?

Mrs. Putnam: She ails as she must - she never waked this morning, but her eyes open and she walks, and hears naught, sees naught, and cannot eat. Her soul is taken, surely.

*Parris is struck*.

PuTNAM, *as though for further details*: They say you've sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly?

Parris, *with dwindling conviction now*: A precaution only. He has much experience in all demonic-arts, and I -

Mrs. Putnam: He has indeed; and found a witch in Beverly last year, and let you remember that.

Parris: Now, Goody Ann, they only thought that were a witch, and I am certain there be no element of witchcraft here.

Putnam: No witchcraft! Now look you, Mr. Parris -

PaRRis: Thomas, Thomas, 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.

A word about Thomas Putnam. He was a man with many grievances, at least one of which appears justified. Some time before, his wife's brother-in-law, James Bayley, had been turned down as minister of Salem. Bayley had all the qualifications, and a two-thirds vote into the bargain, but a faction stopped his acceptance, for reasons that are not clear.

Thomas Putnam was the eldest son of the richest man in the village. He had fought the Indians at Narragansett, and was deeply interested in parish affairs. He undoubtedly felt it poor payment that the village should so blatantly disregard his candidate for one of its more important offices, especially since he regarded himself as the intellectual superior of most of the people around him.

His vindictive nature was demonstrated long before the witch-craft began. Another former Salem minister, George Burroughs, had had to borrow money to pay for his wife's funeral, and, since the parish was remiss in his salary, he was soon bankrupt. Thomas and his brother John had Burroughs jailed for debts the man did not owe. The incident is important only in that Burroughs succeeded in becoming minister where Bayley, Thomas Putnam's brother-in-law, had been rejected; the motif of resentment is clear here. Thomas Putnam felt that his own name and the honor of his family had been smirched by the village, and he meant to right matters however he could.

Another reason to believe him a deeply embittered man was his attempt to break his father's will, which left a disproportionate amount to a stepbrother. As with every other public cause in which he tried to force his way, he failed in this.

So it is not surprising to find that so many accusations against people are in the handwriting of Thomas Putnam, or that his name is so often found as a witness corroborating the super-natural testimony, or that his daughter led the crying-out at the most opportune junctures of the trials, especially when - But we'll speak of that when we come to it.

Putnam - *at the moment he is intent upon getting Parris, for whom he has only contempt, to move toward the abyss:* Mr. Parris, I have taken your part in all contention here, and I would continue; but I cannot if you hold back in this. There are hurtful, vengeful spirits layin' hands on these children.

Parris: But, Thomas, you cannot -

Putnam: Ann! Tell Mr. Parris what you have done.

Mrs. Putnam: Reverend Parris, I have laid seven babies un-baptized in the earth. Believe me, sir, you never saw more hearty babies born, And yet, each would wither in my arms the very night of their birth. I have spoke nothin', but my heart has clamored intimations. And now, this year, my Ruth, my only - I see her turning strange. A secret child she has become this year, and shrivels like a sucking mouth were pullin' on her life too. And so I thought to send her to your Tituba -

Parris: To Tituba! What may Tituba - ?

Mrs. Putnam: Tituba knows how to speak to the dead, Mr. Parris.

Parris: Goody Ann, it is a formidable sin to conjure up the dead!

Mrs. Putnam: I take it on my soul, but who else may surely tell us what person murdered my babies?

Parris, *horrified:* Woman!

MRs. Putnam: They were murdered, Mr. Parris! And mark this proof! Mark it! Last night my Ruth were ever so close to their little spirits; I know it, sir. For how else is she struck dumb now except some power of darkness would stop her mouth? It is a marvelous sign, Mr. Parris!

Putnam: Don't you understand it, sir? There is a murdering witch among us, bound to keep herself in the dark. *Parris turns to Betty, a frantic terror rising in him.* Let your enemies make of it what they will, you cannot blink it more.

Parris, *to Abigail*: Then you were conjuring spirits last night.

Abigail, *whispering*: Not I, sir - Tituba and Ruth.

Parris turns now, with new fear, and goes to Betty, looks down at her, and then, gazing off: Oh, Abigail, what proper payment for my charity! Now I am undone.

Putnam: You are not undone! Let you take hold here. Wait for no one to charge you - declare it yourself. You have dis-covered witchcraft -

Parris: In my house? In my house, Thomas? They will topple me with this! They will make of it a -

*Enter Mercy Lewis, the Putnams' servant, a fat, sly, merciless girl of eighteen.*

Mercy: Your pardons. I only thought to see how Betty I

Putnam: Why aren't you home? Who's with Ruth?

Mercy: Her grandma come. She's improved a little, I think - she give a powerful sneeze before.

Mrs. Putnam: Ah, there's a sign of life!

Mercy: I'd fear no more, Goody Putnam. It were a grand sneeze; another like it will shake her wits together, I'm sure. *She goes to the bed to look.*

Parris: Will you leave me now, Thomas? I would pray a while alone.

Abigail: Uncle, you've prayed since midnight. Why do you not go down and -

PARRis: No - no. *To Putnam*: I have no answer for that crowd. I'll wait till Mr. Hale arrives. *To get Mrs. Putnam to leave*: If you will, Goody Ann...

PutnAM: Now look you, sir. Let you strike out against the Devil, and the village will bless you for it! Come down, speak to them - pray with them. They're thirsting for your word, Mister! Surely you'll pray with them.

Parris, *swayed*: I'll lead them in a psalm, but let you say nothing of witchcraft yet. I will not discuss it. The cause is yet unknown. I have had enough contention since I came; I want no more.

Mrs. Putnam: Mercy, you go home to Ruth, d'y'hear?

Mercy: Aye, mum.

*Mrs. Putnam goes out.*

Parris, *to Abigail*: If she starts for the window, cry for me at once.

Abigail: I will, uncle.

Orris, *to Putnam*: There is a terrible power in her arms to-day. *He goes out with Putnam.*

Abigail, *with hushed trepidation*: How is Ruth sick?

Mercy! It's weirdish, I know not - she seems to walk like a dead one since last night.

Abigail, *turns at once and goes to Betty, and now, with fear in her voice*: Betty?

*Betty doesn't move. She shakes her.* Now stop this! Betty! Sit up now!

*Betty doesn't stir. Mercy comes over.*

Mercy: Have you tried beatin' her? I gave Ruth a good one and it waked her for a minute. Here, let me have her.

Abigail, *holding Mercy back*: No, he'll be comin' up. Listen, now; if they be questioning us, tell them we danced - I told him as much already,

Mercy: Aye. And what more?

Abigail: He knows Tituba conjured Ruth's sisters to come out of the grave.

Mercy: And what more?

Abigail: He saw you naked.

Mercy: *clapping her hands together with a frightened laugh*: Oh, Jesus!

*Enter Mary Warren, breathless. She is seventeen, a subservient, naive, lonely girl.*

Mary Warren: What'll we do? The village is out! I just come from the farm; the whole country's talkin' witchcraft! They'll be callin' us witches, Abby!

Mercy, *pointing and looking at Mary Warren*: She means to tell, I know it.

Mary Warren: Abby, we've got to tell. Witchery's a hangin' error, a hangin' like they done in Boston two year ago! We must tell the truth, Abby! You'll only be whipped for dancin', and the other things!

Abigail: *Oh, -we'll be whipped!*

Mary Warren: I never done none of it, Abby. I only looked!

Mercy, *moving menacingly toward Mary*: Oh, you're a great one for lookin', aren't you, Mary Warren? What a grand peeping courage you have!

*Betty, on the bed, whimpers. Abigail turns to her at once.*

Abigail: Betty? *She goes to Betty.* Now, Betty, dear, wake up now. It's Abigail. *She sits Betty up and furiously shakes her.* I'll beat you, Betty! *Betty whimpers.* My, you seem improving. I talked to your papa and I told him everything. So there's nothing to -

Betty, *darts op the bed, frightened of Abigail, and flattens her-self against the wall:* I want my mama!

ABIGAIL, *with alarm, as she cautiously approaches Betty:* What ails you, Betty? Your mama's dead and buried.

Betty: I'll fly to Mama. Let me fly! *She raises her arms as though to fly, and streaks for the window, gets one leg out.*

Abigail, *pulling her away from the window:* I told him every-thing, ' he knows now, he knows everything we -

Betty: You drank blood, Abby! You didn't tell him that!

Abigail: Betty, you never say that again! You will never--

Betty: You did, you did! You drank a charm to kill John Proctor's wife! You drank a charm to kill Goody Proctor!

Abigail, *smashes her across the face:* Shut it! Now shut it!

Barry, *collapsing on the bed:* Mama, Mama! *She dissolves into sobs.*

Abigail: Now look you. All of you. We danced. And Tituba conjured Ruth Putnam's dead sisters. And that is all. And mark this. 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. And you know I can do it; I saw Indians smash my dear parents' heads on the pillow next to mine, and I have seen some reddish work done at night, and I can make you wish you had never seen the sun go down! *She goes to Betty and roughly sits her up.* Now, you - sit up and stop this'

*But Betty collapses in her hands and lies inert on the bed.*

Marry Warren, *with hysterical fright,* What's got her? *Abigail stares in fright at Betty.*

Abby, she's going to die! It's a sin to conjure, and we - Abigail, *starting for Mary:* I say shut it, Mary Warren!

*Enter John Proctor. On seeing him, Mary Warren leaps in fright,*

Proctor was a farmer in his middle thirties, 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. He was the kind of man - powerful of body, even-tempered, and not easily led - who cannot refuse support to partisans with-out drawing their deepest resentment. In Proctor's presence a fool felt his foolishness instantly - and a Proctor is always marked for calumny therefore.

But as we shall see, the steady manner he displays does not spring from an untroubled soul. He is a sinner, a sinner not only against the moral fashion of the time, but against his own vision of decent conduct. These people had no ritual for the washing away of sins. It is another trait we inherited from them. and it has helped to discipline us as well as to breed hypocrisy among us. Proctor, respected and even feared in Salem, has come to regard himself as a kind of fraud. But no hint of this has yet appeared on the

surface, and as he enters from the crowded parlor below it is a man in his prime we see, with a quiet confidence and an unexpressed, hidden force. Mary Warren, his servant, can barely speak for embarrassment and fear.

Mary Warren: Oh! I'm just going home, Mr. Proctor.

Proctor: Be you foolish, Mary Warren? Be you deaf? I for-bid you leave the house, did I not? Why shall I pay you? I am looking for you more often than my cows!

Mary Warren: I only come to see the great doings in the world.

Proctor: I'll show you a great doin' on your arse one of these days. Now get you home; my wife is waitin' with your work! *Trying to retain a shred of dignity, she goes slowly out.*

Mercy Lewis, *both afraid of him and strangely titillated*: I'd best be off. I have my Ruth to watch. Good morning, Mr. Proctor.

*Mercy sidles out. Since Proctor's entrance, Abigail has stood as though on tiptoe, absorbing his presence, wide-eyed. He glances at her, then goes to Betty on the bed.*

Abigail: Gah! I'd almost forgot how strong you are, John Proctor!

Proctor, *looking at Abigail now, the faintest suggestion of a knowing smile on his face*: What's this mischief here?

Abigail, *with a nervous laugh*: Oh, she's only gone silly some-how.

Proctor: The road past my house is a pilgrimage to Salem all morning. The town's mumbling witchcraft.

Abigail: Oh, posh! *Winningly she comes a little closer, with a confidential, wicked air.* We were dancin' in the woods last night, and my uncle leaped in on us. She took fright, is all.

Proctor, *his smile widening*: Ah, you're wicked yet, aren't y'! *A trill of expectant laughter escapes her, and she dares come closer, feverishly looking into his eyes.* You'll be clapped in the stocks before you're twenty.

*He takes a step to go, and she springs into his path.*

Abigail: Give me a word, John. A soft word. *Her concentrated desire destroys his smile.*

Proctor: No, no, Abby. That's done with.

Abigail, *tauntingly*: You come five mile to see a silly girl fly? I know you better.

Proctor, *setting her firmly out of his path*: I come to see what mischief your uncle's brewin' now. *With final emphasis*: Put it out of mind, Abby.

Abigail, *grasping his hand before he can release her*: John - I am waitin' for you every night.

Proctor: Abby, I never give you hope to wait for me.

Abigail, *now beginning to anger - she can't believe it*: I have something better than hope, I think!

Proctor: Abby, you'll put it out of mind. I'll not be comin' for you more.

Abigail: You're surely sportin' with me.

Proctor: You know me better.

Abigail: I know how you clutched my back behind your house and sweated like a stallion whenever I come near! Or did I dream that? It's she put me out, you cannot pretend it were you. I saw your face when she put me out, and you loved me then and you do now!

Proctor: Abby, that's a wild thing to say -

Abigail: A wild thing may say wild things. But not so wild, I think. I have seen you since she put me out; I have seen you nights.

Proctor: I have hardly stepped off my farm this sevenmonth.

Abigail: I have a sense for heat, John, and yours has drawn me to my window, and I have seen you looking up, burning in your loneliness. Do you tell me you've never looked up at my window?

Proctor: I may have looked up.

Abigail, *now softening*: And you must. You are no wintry man. I know you, John. I *know* you. *She is weeping*. I cannot sleep for dreamin'; I cannot dream but I wake and walk about the house as though I'd find you comin' through some door. *She clutches him desperately*.

Proctor, *gently pressing her from him, with great sympathy but firmly*: Child - Abigail, *with a pash of anger*: How do you call me child!

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: Aye, but we did.

Proctor: Aye, but we did not.

Abigail, *with a bitter anger*: Oh, I marvel how such a strong man may let such a sickly wife be -

Proctor, *angered - at himself as well*: You'll speak nothin' of Elizabeth!

Abigail: She is blackening my name in the village! She is telling lies about me! .She is a cold, sniveling woman, and you bend to her! Let her turn you like a -

Proctor, *shaking her*: Do you look for whippin'?

*A psalm is heard being sung below.*

Abigail, *in tears*: I look for John Proctor that took me from my sleep and put knowledge in my heart! I never knew what pretense Salem was, I never knew the lying lessons I was taught by all these Christian women and their covenanted men! And now you bid me tear the light out of my eyes? I will not, I cannot! You loved me, John Proctor, and whatever sin it is, you love me yet! *He turns abruptly to go out. She rushes to him.* John, pity me, pity me!

*The words "going up to Jesus" are heard in the psalm and Betty claps her ears suddenly and whines loudly.*

Abigail: Betty? *She hurries to Betty, who is now sitting up and screaming. Proctor goes to Betty as Abigail is trying to pull her hands down, calling "Betty!"*

Proctor, *growing unnerved*: What's she doing? Girl, what ails you? Stop that wailing!

*The singing has stopped in the midst of this, and now Parris rushes in.*

Parris: What happened? What are you doing to her? Betty! *He rushes to the bed, crying, "Betty, Betty!" Mrs. Putnam enters, feverish with curiosity, and with her Thomas Putnam and Mercy Lewis. Parris, at the bed, keeps lightly slapping Betty's face, while she moans and tries to get up.*

Abigail: She heard you singin' and suddenly she's up and screamin'.

Mrs. Putnam: The psalm! The psalm! She cannot bear to hear the Lord's name!

Parris: No. God forbid. Mercy, run to the doctor! Tell him what's happened here! *Mercy Lewis rushes out.*

Mrs. Putnam: Mark it for a sign, mark it!

*Rebecca Nurse, seventy-two, enters. She is white-haired, leaning upon her walking-stick.*

Putnam, *pointing at the whimpering Betty*: That is a notorious sign of witchcraft afoot, Goody Nurse, a prodigious sign!

Mrs. Putnam: My mother told me that! When they cannot bear to hear the name of -

Parris, *trembling*: Rebecca, Rebecca, go to her, we're lost. She suddenly cannot bear to hear the Lord's -

*Giles Corey, eighty-three, enters. He is knotted with muscle, canny, inquisitive, and still powerful.*

Rebecca: There is hard sickness here, Giles Corey, so please to keep the quiet.

GILES: I've not said a word. No one here can testify I've said a word. Is she going to fly again? I hear she flies.

Putnam: Man, be quiet now!



*Everything is quiet. Rebecca walks across the room to the bed. Gentleness exudes from her. Betty is quietly whimpering, eyes shut, Rebecca simply stands over the child, who gradually quiets.*

And while they are so absorbed, we may put a word in for Rebecca. Rebecca was the wife of Francis Nurse, who, from all accounts, was one of those men for whom both sides of the argument had to have respect. He was called upon to arbitrate disputes as though he were an unofficial judge, and Rebecca also enjoyed the high opinion most people had for him. By the time of the delusion, they had three hundred acres, and their children were settled in separate homesteads within the same estate. However, Francis had originally rented the land, and one theory has it that, as he gradually paid for it and raised his social status, there were those who resented his rise.

Another suggestion to explain the systematic campaign against Rebecca, and inferentially against Francis, is the land war he fought with his neighbors, one of whom was a Putnam. This squabble grew to the proportions of a battle in the woods between partisans of both sides, and it is said to have lasted for two days. As for Rebecca herself, the general opinion of her character 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.

As we have seen, Thomas Putnam's man for the Salem ministry was Bayley. The Nurse clan had been in the faction that prevented Bayley's taking office. In addition, certain families allied to the Nurses by blood or friendship, and whose farms were contiguous with the Nurse farm or close to it, combined to break away from the Salem town authority and set up Topsfield, a new and independent entity whose existence was resented by old Salemites.

That the guiding hand behind the outcry was Putnam's is, indicated by the fact that, as soon as it began, this Topsfield-Nurse 'faction absented themselves from church in protest and disbelief. It was Edward and Jonathan Putnam who signed the first complaint against Rebecca; and Thomas Putnam's little daughter was the one who fell into a fit at the hearing and pointed to Rebecca as her attacker. To top it all, Mrs. Putnam - who is now staring at the bewitched child on the bed - soon accused Rebecca's spirit of "tempting her to iniquity," a charge that had more truth in it than Mrs. Putnam could know,

Mrs. Putnam, *astonished*: What have you done?

*Rebecca, in thought, now leaves the bedside and sits.*

Parris, *wondrous and relieved*: What do you make of it, Rebecca?

Putnam, *eagerly*: Goody Nurse, will you go to my Ruth and see if you can wake her?

Rebecca, *sitting*: I think she'll wake in time. Pray calm yourselves. I have eleven children, and I 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. I think she'll wake when she tires of it. A child's spirit is like a child,

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