

~~brought to God? I will myself strive with him till dawn. (*Crosses to Cheever, hands him list.*)~~

PARRIS. There is not sufficient time till dawn...

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

PARRIS. (*In a quavering voice, quietly.*) Excellency... a dagger... (*He chokes up.*)

DANFORTH. (*Irritated.*) What do you say?

PARRIS. Tonight, when I open my door to leave my house—a dagger clattered to the ground. (*Pleading plaintively.*) You cannot hang this sort. There is danger for *me*. I dare not step outside at night. (*Hale enters. They look at him for an instant in silence. He is steeped in sorrow, exhausted, and more direct than he ever was.*)

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

HALE. You must pardon them. They will not budge.

DANFORTH. You misunderstand, sir; I cannot pardon these when twelve are already hanged for the same crime. It is not just.

PARRIS. Rebecca will not confess?

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

DANFORTH. Now hear me, and beguile 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 at dawn. Postponement, now, speaks a... a floundering (*Willard enters.*) 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, Mister Hale?

HALE. All but Proctor. He is in the dungeon.

DANFORTH. (*To Hathorne.*) What's Proctor's way now? (*Hale sits bench R.*)

WILLARD. (*In doorway. Drunkenly.*) He sits like some great bird; you'd not know he lived except he will take food from time to time.

DANFORTH. (*Thinks.*) His wife... his wife must be well on with child now.

WILLARD. She is, sir.

DANFORTH. What think you, Mister Parris?—You have closer knowledge of this man; might her presence soften him?

PARRIS. It is possible, sir—he have not laid eyes on her these three months. I should summon her.

DANFORTH. (*To Willard.*) Is he yet adamant?—Has he struck at you again?

WILLARD. (*Smiling drunkenly.*) He cannot, sir, he is chained to the wall now.

DANFORTH. Fetch Goody Proctor to me. Then let you bring him up. (*Sits bench U.S. of Parris.*)

WILLARD. Aye, sir. (*Willard goes out. Silence.*)

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

DANFORTH. Mister Hale, as God have not empowered me like Joshua to stop this sun from rising, so I cannot withhold from them the perfection of their punishment.

HALE. (*Rising, crossing up to door.*) If you think God wills you to raise rebellion, Mister Danforth, you are mistaken.

DANFORTH. You have heard rebellion spoken in Salem?

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. Mister 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?

HALE. Why, it is all simple. I come to do the Devil's work. I come to counsel Christians they should belie themselves. There is blood on my head! Can you not see the blood on my head!!

PARRIS. Hush! (*All face entrance. Willard and Elizabeth enter. Willard goes out again.*)

DANFORTH. (*Very politely.*) Goody Proctor. I hope you are hearty?

ELIZABETH. 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.*) Mister Hale, will you speak with the woman?

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

ELIZABETH. (*Quietly.*) I have heard it.

HALE. (*He finds it difficult to look at her.*) You know, do you not, that I have no connection with the court? I come of my own, Goody Proctor. (*She knows this to be untrue.*) 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. 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. No more. No more. I'll hear no more of that.

HALE. (*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. (*She looks at him, then front.*) 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. With loathing.*) I think that be the Devil's argument.

HALE. Woman, before the laws of God we are as swine. We cannot read His will.

ELIZABETH. (*Sincerely—simply.*) I cannot dispute with you, sir, I lack learning for it.

DANFORTH. (*Irritated.*) 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? What say you? Will you contend with him? (*She is silent, staring at him.*) 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. ~~64~~

~~*Willard—the sibilance of dragging feet on stone. They turn. Pause. Willard enters with Proctor. His wrists are chained. Willard removes them and exits. He is another man; bearded, filthy, his eyes misty as webs had overgrown them. Halts inside doorway, his eye caught by the sight of Elizabeth. The emotion flowing between them prevents anyone from speaking for an instant. Hale looks upstage. Proctor crosses down slowly toward Elizabeth, looks around, then Hale speaks.)*~~

~~HALE. Pray, leave them, Excellency. *(Exits.)*~~

~~DANFORTH. *(Parris and Cheever rise.)* Mister 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. Danforth exits. Cheever follows, then Hathorne.)*~~

~~PARRIS. If you desire a cup of cider, Mister Proctor, I am sure I... *(Proctor turns an icy stare at him and he breaks off. Parris raises his palms toward him.)* God lead you now. *(Parris goes out. It is as though Elizabeth and Proctor stood in a spinning world. It is beyond sorrow, above it. They move together, clasp hands.)*~~

~~ELIZABETH. You have been chained?~~

~~PROCTOR. *(Feeling his wrists.)* Aye. The child?~~

~~ELIZABETH. It grows.~~

~~PROCTOR. There is no word of the boys?~~

~~ELIZABETH. They're well. Rebecca's Daniel keeps them.~~

~~PROCTOR. You have not seen them?~~

~~ELIZABETH. I have not...~~

~~PROCTOR. You are a... marvel, Elizabeth. They come for my life now.~~

~~ELIZABETH. I know it.~~

~~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; *(He turns his head away.)* Isaiah Goodkind is one... There be many.~~