

8

~~ELIZABETH. That's well.~~

~~PROCTOR. If the crop is good I'll buy George Jacobs' heifer. How would that please you?~~

~~ELIZABETH. Aye, it would.~~

~~PROCTOR. I mean to please you, Elizabeth.~~

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

~~PROCTOR. *(As gently as he can.)* Cider?~~

~~ELIZABETH. *(A sense of her reprimanding herself for having forgot.)*~~

~~*Aye! *(Gets jug from off L., pours drink into powder mug, brings it to him.)**~~

PROCTOR. This farm's a continent when you go foot by foot droppin' seeds in it.

ELIZABETH. It must be.

PROCTOR. On Sunday let you come with me and we'll walk the farm together; I never see such a load of flowers on the earth. Massachusetts is a beauty in the spring!

ELIZABETH. Aye, it is.

PROCTOR. I think you're sad again. Are you?

ELIZABETH. You come so late I thought you'd gone to Salem this afternoon.

PROCTOR. Why? I have no business in Salem.

ELIZABETH. You did speak of goin', earlier this week.

PROCTOR. I thought better of it, since.

ELIZABETH. Mary Warren's there today.

PROCTOR. Why'd you let her? You heard me forbid her go to Salem any more!

ELIZABETH. I couldn't stop her.

PROCTOR. It is a fault, it is a fault, Elizabeth—you're the mistress here, not Mary Warren.

ELIZABETH. She frightened all my strength away...

PROCTOR. How may that mouse frighten you, Elizabeth? You...

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

PROCTOR. Court! What court?

ELIZABETH. Ay, 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.

PROCTOR. *(Astonished.)* Why, she's mad.

ELIZABETH. I would to God she were. There be fourteen people

in the jail now, she says. And they'll be tried, and the court have power to hang them too, she says.

PROCTOR. Ah, they'd never hang...

ELIZABETH. The Deputy Governor promise hangin' if they'll not confess, John. The town's gone wild, I think—Mary Warren speaks of Abigail as though she were a saint, to hear her. She brings the other girls into the court, and where she walks the crowd will part like the sea for Israel. And folks are brought before them, and if Abigail scream and howl and fall to the floor—the person's clapped in the jail for bewitchin' her. *(He can't look at her.)*

PROCTOR. Oh, it is a black mischief.

ELIZABETH. I think you must go to Salem, John. I think so. You must tell them it is a fraud.

PROCTOR. Aye, it is, it is surely.

ELIZABETH. Let you go to Ezekiel Cheever—he knows you well. And tell him what she said to you last week in her uncle's house. She said it had naught to do with witchcraft, did she not?

PROCTOR. *(In thought. Sighing.)* Aye, she did, she did.

ELIZABETH. *(Quietly, fearing to anger him by prodding. A step L.)* God forbid you keep that from the court, John; I think they must be told.

PROCTOR. Ay, they must, they must... It is a wonder that they do believe her.

ELIZABETH. I would go to Salem now, John... let you go tonight.

PROCTOR. I'll think on it.

ELIZABETH. *(With her courage now.)* You cannot keep it, John.

PROCTOR. *(Angering.)* I know I cannot keep it. I say I will think on it!

ELIZABETH. *(Hurt, and very coldly.)* Good then, let you think on it.

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

ELIZABETH. You were alone with her?

PROCTOR. For a moment alone, aye.

ELIZABETH. Why, then, it is not as you told me.

PROCTOR. For a moment, I say. The others come in soon after.

ELIZABETH. Do as you wish, then.

PROCTOR. Woman. I'll not have your suspicion any more.

ELIZABETH. *(A little loftily.)* I have no...

PROCTOR. I'll not have it!

ELIZABETH. Then let you not earn it.

PROCTOR. *(With a violent undertone.)* You doubt me yet?!

ELIZABETH. John, if it were not Abigail that you must go to hurt, would you falter now? I think not.

PROCTOR. Now look you...

ELIZABETH. I see what I see, John.

PROCTOR. 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. I have forgot Abigail, and...

ELIZABETH. And I.

PROCTOR. Spare me! You forget nothing and forgive nothing. Learn charity, woman. I have gone tiptoe in this house all sevenmonth since she is gone; I have not moved from there to there without I think to please you, and still a... 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!

ELIZABETH. *(Firmly.)* John, you are not open with me. You saw her with a crowd, you said. Now, you...

PROCTOR. I'll plead my honesty no more, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH. *(Now she would justify herself.)* John, I am only...

PROCTOR. *(In outburst.)* No more! I should have roared you down when first you told me your suspicion. But I wilted, and like a Christian, I confessed. Some dream I had must have mistaken you for God that day, but you're not, you're not. Let you remember it. Let you look sometimes 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.

PROCTOR. Oh, Elizabeth, your justice would freeze beer. ~~*(He*~~

~~*turns suddenly toward a sound outside. Mary Warren enters R.)* How do you go to Salem when I forbid it! Do you mock me! I'll whip you if you dare leave this house again!~~

~~MARY. *(Weakly, sickly.)* I am sick, I am sick, Mister Proctor. Pray, pray, hurt me not. My insides are all chuddery; I am in the proceedings all day, sir.~~

~~PROCTOR. *(Angrily, in a loud voice as Mary is crossing.)* And what of these proceedings here? when will you proceed to keep this~~