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(Enter Cheever R.)

CHEEVER. Good evening. Good evening to you, John Proctor.
(Willard enters R., to just inside door.)

PROCTOR. Why... Mister Cheever. Good evening.

CHEEVER. Good evening, all. Good evening, Mister Hale.

PROCTOR. I hope you come not on business of the court?

CHEEVER. I do, Proctor, aye. I am clerk of the court now, y'know.

COREY. It's a pity, Ezekiel, that an honest tailor might have gone to heaven must burn in hell. You'll burn for this, do you know it?

CHEEVER. You know yourself I must do as I'm told. You surely know that, Giles. And I'd as lief you'd not be sending me to hell. I like not the sound of it, I tell you, I like not the sound of it. Now believe me, Proctor, how heavy be the law, all its tonnage I do carry on my back tonight... *(Takes a warrant from pocket.)* I have a warrant for your wife.

PROCTOR. What say you? A warrant for my wife? *(To Hale.)* You said she were not charged!

HALE. *(Confounded.)* I know nothin' of it. *(To Cheever.)* When were she charged?

CHEEVER. I am given sixteen warrant tonight, sir, and she is one.

PROCTOR. *(To Cheever.)* Who charged her?

CHEEVER. Why, Abigail Williams charge her.

PROCTOR. Abigail Williams? On what proof, what proof!

CHEEVER. Mister Proctor, I have little time... The court bid me search your house, but I like not to search a house. So will you hand me any poppets that your wife may keep here.

PROCTOR. Poppets?

ELIZABETH. I never kept no poppets, not since I were a girl.

CHEEVER. I spy a poppet, Goody Proctor.

ELIZABETH. *(Gets doll.)* Oh!—Why, this is Mary's.

CHEEVER. Would you please to give it to me?

ELIZABETH. *(Handing doll to Cheever.)* Has the court discovered a text in poppets now?

CHEEVER. *(Carefully holds doll.)* Do you keep any others in this house?

PROCTOR. No, nor this one either till tonight. What signifies a poppet?

CHEEVER. Why, a poppet... a poppet may signify. Now, woman... will you please to come with me.

PROCTOR. She will not. *(To Elizabeth.)* Fetch Mary here.

CHEEVER. No—no, I am forbid to leave her from my sight.

PROCTOR. You'll leave her out of sight and out of mind, Mister. Fetch Mary, Elizabeth. (*Elizabeth goes out D. L.*)

HALE. (*Bewildered.*) What signifies a poppet, Mister Cheever?

CHEEVER. (*Turns doll over in his hands.*) Why, they say it may signify that she... (*He has lifted doll's skirt, and his eyes widen in astonished fear.*) Why, this, this...

PROCTOR. What's there?

CHEEVER. Why... (*Draws out a long needle from doll.*) It is a needle! Willard, Willard, it is a needle!

PROCTOR. And what signifies a needle!

CHEEVER. Why, this go *hard* with her, Proctor, this... I had my doubts, Proctor, I had my doubts, but here's calamity... (*Crosses to Hale, shows needle.*) You see it, sir, it is a needle!

HALE. Why? What meanin' has it?

CHEEVER. The girl, the Williams girl, Abigail Williams, sir. She sat to dinner in Reverend Parris' house tonight, and without word nor warnin', she falls to the floor. Like a struck beast, he says, and screamed a scream that a bull would weep to hear. And he goes to save her, and stuck two inches in the flesh of her belly he draw a needle out. And demandin' of her how she come to be so stabbed, she... (*To Proctor.*) testify it were your wife's familiar spirit pushed it in.

PROCTOR. Why, she done it herself! I hope you're not takin' this for proof, Mister Hale.

CHEEVER. 'Tis hard proof!—I find here a poppet Goody Proctor keeps. I have found it, sir. And in the belly of the poppet a needle stuck. I tell you true, Proctor, I never warranted to *see* such proof of Hell, and I bid you obstruct me not, for I... (*Enter Elizabeth with Mary.*)

PROCTOR. Here now! Mary, how did this poppet come into my house?

MARY. What poppet's that, sir?

PROCTOR. This poppet, this poppet.

MARY. (*Looks at it, and evasively says.*) Why, I... I think it is mine.

PROCTOR. (*A threat.*) It is your poppet, is it not?

MARY. It... is, sir.

PROCTOR. And *how* did it come into this house?

MARY. Why... I made it in the court, sir, and... give it to Goody Proctor tonight.

PROCTOR. (*To Hale.*) Now, sir—do you have it?