

**Putnam.** You are not undone! Let you take hold here. Wait for no one to charge you—declare it yourself. You have discovered 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 is.

**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.

**Parris (to Putnam).** There is a terrible power in her arms today. (He goes out with Putnam.)

**Abigail (with hushed trepidation).**<sup>19</sup> 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

19. *trepidation* (trɛp'ɪ-dā'shən): alarm or dread.

**subservient** (səb-sūr've-ənt) *adj.* acting like a servant

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 off the bed, frightened of Abigail, and flattens herself 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 everything; 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!

Betty (*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.<sup>20</sup> 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*.)

Mary 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 without drawing their deepest resentment. In Proctor's presence a fool felt his foolishness instantly—and a Proctor is always marked for calumny<sup>21</sup> 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

20. bring . . . shudder you: inflict a terrifying punishment on you.

21. calumny (käl'əm-nē): slander; lies about someone.

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 forbid 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 somehow.

Proctor. The road past my house is a pilgrimage<sup>22</sup> 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.



22. pilgrimage: a journey to a religious shrine, often made in groups.

**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 flash 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<sup>23</sup> 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!

23. covenanted (*kūv'ə-nən'tīd*): in Puritan religious practice, the men of a congregation would make an agreement, or a covenant, to govern the community.

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<sup>24</sup> 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,<sup>25</sup> 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. ❀

24. prodigious (prə-dī'j'əs): extraordinary.

25. delusion (dī-lōō'zhən): witchcraft.

WORDS  
TO  
KNOW

arbitrate (ār'bī-trāt) v. to judge or act as referee  
iniquity (ī-nīk'wī-tē) n. wickedness; immorality

**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 bow-legged keeping up with their mischief. I think she'll wake when she tires of it. A child's spirit is like a child, you can never catch it by running after it; you must stand still, and, for love, it will soon itself come back.

**Proctor**. Aye, that's the truth of it, Rebecca.

**Mrs. Putnam**. This is no silly season, Rebecca. My Ruth is bewildered, Rebecca; she cannot eat.

**Rebecca**. Perhaps she is not hungered yet. (*To Parris*) I hope you are not decided to go in search of loose spirits, Mr. Parris. I've heard promise of that outside.

**Parris**. A wide opinion's running in the parish that the Devil may be among us, and I would satisfy them that they are wrong.

**Proctor**. Then let you come out and call them wrong. Did you consult the wardens<sup>26</sup> before you called this minister to look for devils?

**Parris**. He is not coming to look for devils!

**Proctor**. Then what's he coming for?

**Putnam**. There be children dyin' in the village, Mister!

26. wardens: officers appointed to keep order.



The Nurse House

**Proctor.** I seen none dyin'. This society will not be a bag to swing around your head, Mr. Putnam. (To Parris) Did you call a meeting before you—?

**Putnam.** I am sick of meetings; cannot the man turn his head without he have a meeting?

**Proctor.** He may turn his head, but not to Hell!

**Rebecca.** Pray, John, be calm. (*Pause. He defers to her.*) Mr. Parris, I think you'd best send Reverend Hale back as soon as he come. This will set us all to arguin' again in the society, and we thought to have peace this year. I think we ought rely on the doctor now, and good prayer.

**Mrs. Putnam.** Rebecca, the doctor's baffled!

**Rebecca.** If so he is, then let us go to God for the cause of it. There is prodigious danger in the seeking of loose spirits. I fear it, I fear it. Let us rather blame ourselves and—

**Putnam.** How may we blame ourselves? I am one of nine sons; the Putnam seed have peopled this province. And yet I have but one child left of eight—and now she shrivels!

**Rebecca.** I cannot fathom that.

**Mrs. Putnam** (*with a growing edge of sarcasm*). But I must! You think it God's work you should never lose a child, nor grandchild either, and I bury all but one? There are wheels within wheels in this village, and fires within fires!

**Putnam** (*to Parris*). When Reverend Hale comes, you will proceed to look for signs of witchcraft here.

**Proctor** (*to Putnam*). You cannot command Mr. Parris. We vote by name in this society, not by acreage.

**Putnam.** I never heard you worried so on this society, Mr. Proctor. I do not think I saw you at Sabbath meeting since snow flew.

**Proctor.** I have trouble enough without I come five mile to hear him preach only hellfire and bloody damnation. Take it to heart, Mr. Parris. There are many others who stay away from

church these days because you hardly ever mention God any more.

**Parris** (*now aroused*). Why, that's a drastic charge!

**Rebecca.** It's somewhat true; there are many that quail<sup>27</sup> to bring their children—

**Parris.** I do not preach for children, Rebecca. It is not the children who are unmindful of their obligations toward this ministry.

**Rebecca.** Are there really those unmindful?

**Parris.** I should say the better half of Salem village—

**Putnam.** And more than that!

**Parris.** Where is my wood? My contract provides I be supplied with all my firewood. I am waiting since November for a stick, and even in November I had to show my frostbitten hands like some London beggar!

**Giles.** You are allowed six pound a year to buy your wood, Mr. Parris.

**Parris.** I regard that six pound as part of my salary. I am paid little enough without I spend six pound on firewood.

**Proctor.** Sixty, plus six for firewood—

**Parris.** The salary is sixty-six pound, Mr. Proctor! I am not some preaching farmer with a book under my arm; I am a graduate of Harvard College.

**Giles.** Aye, and well instructed in arithmetic!

**Parris.** Mr. Corey, you will look far for a man of my kind at sixty pound a year! I am not used to this poverty; I left a thrifty business in the Barbados to serve the Lord. I do not fathom it, why am I persecuted here? I cannot offer one proposition but there be a howling riot of argument. I have often wondered if the Devil be in it somewhere; I cannot understand you people otherwise.

**Proctor.** Mr. Parris, you are the first minister ever did demand the deed to this house—

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27. quail: fear.

**Parris.** Man! Don't a minister deserve a house to live in?

**Proctor.** To live in, yes. But to ask ownership is like you shall own the meeting house itself; the last meeting I were at you spoke so long on deeds and mortgages I thought it were an auction.

**Parris.** I want a mark of confidence, is all! I am your third preacher in seven years. I do not wish to be put out like the cat whenever some majority feels the whim. You people seem not to comprehend that a minister is the Lord's man in the parish; a minister is not to be so lightly crossed and contradicted—

**Putnam.** Aye!

**Parris.** There is either obedience or the church will burn like Hell is burning!

**Proctor.** Can you speak one minute without we land in Hell again? I am sick of Hell!

**Parris.** It is not for you to say what is good for you to hear!

**Proctor.** I may speak my heart, I think!

**Parris** (*in a fury*). What, are we Quakers?<sup>28</sup> We are not Quakers here yet, Mr. Proctor. And you may tell that to your followers!

**Proctor.** My followers!

**Parris** (*now he's out with it*). There is a party in this church. I am not blind; there is a faction and a party.

**Proctor.** Against you?

**Putnam.** Against him and all authority!

**Proctor.** Why, then I must find it and join it.

(*There is shock among the others.*)

**Rebecca.** He does not mean that.

**Putnam.** He confessed it now!

**Proctor.** I mean it solemnly, Rebecca; I like not the smell of this "authority."

**Rebecca.** No, you cannot break charity<sup>29</sup> with your minister. You are another kind, John. Clasp his hand, make your peace.

**Proctor.** I have a crop to sow and lumber to drag home. (*He goes angrily to the door and turns to*

*Corey with a smile.*) What say you, Giles, let's find the party. He says there's a party.

**Giles.** I've changed my opinion of this man, John. Mr. Parris, I beg your pardon. I never thought you had so much iron in you.

**Parris** (*surprised*). Why, thank you, Giles!

**Giles.** It suggests to the mind what the trouble be among us all these years. (*To all*) Think on it. Wherefore is everybody suing everybody else? Think on it now, it's a deep thing, and dark as a pit. I have been six time in court this year—

**Proctor** (*familiarly, with warmth, although he knows he is approaching the edge of Giles' tolerance with this*). Is it the Devil's fault that a man cannot say you good morning without you clap him for defamation?<sup>30</sup> You're old, Giles, and you're not hearin' so well as you did.

**Giles** (*he cannot be crossed*). John Proctor, I have only last month collected four pound damages for you publicly sayin' I burned the roof off your house, and I—

**Proctor** (*laughing*). I never said no such thing, but I've paid you for it, so I hope I can call you deaf without charge. Now come along, Giles, and help me drag my lumber home.

**Putnam.** A moment, Mr. Proctor. What lumber is that you're draggin', if I may ask you?

**Proctor.** My lumber. From out my forest by the riverside.

**Putnam.** Why, we are surely gone wild this year. What anarchy<sup>31</sup> is this? That tract is in my bounds, it's in my bounds, Mr. Proctor.

**Proctor.** In your bounds! (*Indicating Rebecca*) I bought that tract from Goody Nurse's husband five months ago.

28. Quakers: a radical English religious sect, much hated by the Puritans, who often "spoke their heart" during their religious meetings.

29. break charity: break off; end the relationship.

30. clap . . . defamation (klăp . . . dəf'ə-mā'shən): imprison him for slander.

31. anarchy (ăn'ər-kē): disorder and confusion.



**Putnam.** He had no right to sell it. It stands clear in my grandfather's will that all the land between the river and—

**Proctor.** Your grandfather had a habit of willing land that never belonged to him, if I may say it plain.

**Giles.** That's God's truth; he nearly willed away my north pasture but he knew I'd break his fingers before he'd set his name to it. Let's get your lumber home, John. I feel a sudden will to work coming on.

**Putnam.** You load one oak of mine and you'll fight to drag it home!

**Giles.** Aye, and we'll win too, Putnam—this fool and I. Come on! *(He turns to Proctor and starts out.)*

**Putnam.** I'll have my men on you, Corey! I'll clap a writ on you!

*(Enter Reverend John Hale of Beverly.)*

**M**r. Hale is nearing forty, a tight-skinned, eager-eyed intellectual. This is a beloved errand for him; on being called here to ascertain witchcraft he felt the pride of the specialist whose unique knowledge has at last been publicly called for. Like almost all men of learning, he spent a good deal of his time pondering the invisible world, especially since he had himself encountered a witch in his parish not long before. That woman, however, turned into a mere pest under his searching scrutiny, and the child she had allegedly been afflicting recovered her normal behavior after Hale had given her his kindness and a few days of rest in his own house. However, that experience never raised a doubt in his mind

as to the reality of the underworld or the existence of Lucifer's many-faced lieutenants. And his belief is not to his discredit. Better minds than Hale's were—and still are—convinced that there is a society of spirits beyond our ken. One cannot help noting that one of his lines has never yet raised a laugh in any audience that has seen this play; it is his assurance that "We cannot look to superstition in this. The Devil is precise." Evidently we are not quite certain even now whether diabolism is holy and not to be scoffed at. And it is no accident that we should be so bemused.

Like Reverend Hale and the others on this stage, we conceive the Devil as a necessary part of a respectable view of cosmology.<sup>32</sup> Ours is a divided empire in which certain ideas and emotions and actions are of God, and their opposites are of Lucifer. It is as impossible for most men to conceive of a morality without sin as of an earth without "sky." Since 1692 a great but superficial change has wiped out God's beard and the Devil's horns, but the world is still gripped between two diametrically opposed absolutes. The concept of unity, in which positive and negative are attributes of the same force, in which good

and evil are relative, ever-changing, and always joined to the same phenomenon—such a concept is still reserved to the physical sciences and to the few who have grasped the history of ideas. When it is recalled that until the Christian era the underworld was never regarded as a hostile area, that all gods were useful and essentially friendly to man despite occasional lapses; when we see the steady and methodical inculcation into humanity of the idea



32. cosmology (kōz-mōl'ə-jē): a branch of philosophy dealing with the structure of the universe.

WORDS TO KNOW  
ascertain (as'er-tān') v. to find out

of man's worthlessness—until redeemed—the necessity of the Devil may become evident as a weapon, a weapon designed and used time and time again in every age to whip men into a surrender to a particular church or church-state.

Our difficulty in believing the—for want of a better word—political inspiration of the Devil is due in great part to the fact that he is called up and damned not only by our social antagonists but by our own side, whatever it may be. The Catholic Church, through its Inquisition,<sup>33</sup> is famous for cultivating Lucifer as the arch-fiend, but the Church's enemies relied no less upon the Old Boy to keep the human mind enthralled. Luther<sup>34</sup> was himself accused of alliance with Hell, and he in turn accused his enemies. To complicate matters further, he believed that he had had contact with the Devil and had argued theology with him. I am not surprised at this, for at my own university a professor of history—a Lutheran, by the way—used to assemble his graduate students, draw the shades, and commune in the classroom with Erasmus.<sup>35</sup> He was never, to my knowledge, officially scoffed at for this, the reason being that the university officials, like most of us, are the children of a history which still sucks at the Devil's teats. At this writing, only England has held back before the temptations of contemporary diabolism. In the countries of the Communist ideology, all resistance of any import is linked to the totally malign capitalist succubi, and in America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of alliance with the Red hell. Political opposition, thereby, is given an inhumane overlay which then justifies the abrogation of all normally applied customs of civilized intercourse. A political policy is equated with moral right, and opposition to it with diabolical malevolence. Once such an equation is effectively made, society becomes a congerie of plots and counterplots, and the main role of government changes from that of the arbiter to that of the scourge of God.

The results of this process are no different now from what they ever were, except sometimes in the degree of cruelty inflicted, and not always

even in that department. Normally the actions and deeds of a man were all that society felt comfortable in judging. The secret intent of an action was left to the ministers, priests, and rabbis to deal with. When diabolism rises, however, actions are the least important manifests of the true nature of a man. The Devil, as Reverend Hale said, is a wily one, and, until an hour before he fell, even God thought him beautiful in Heaven.

The analogy, however, seems to falter when one considers that, while there were no witches then, there are Communists and capitalists now, and in each camp there is certain proof that spies of each side are at work undermining the other. But this is a snobbish objection and not at all warranted by the facts. I have no doubt that people *were* communing with, and even worshiping, the Devil in Salem, and if the whole truth could be known in this case, as it is in others, we should discover a regular and conventionalized propitiation of the dark spirit. One certain evidence of this is the confession of Tituba, the slave of Reverend Parris, and another is the behavior of the children who were known to have indulged in sorceries with her.

There are accounts of similar *klatches* in Europe, where the daughters of the towns would assemble at night and, sometimes with fetishes, sometimes with a selected young man, give themselves to love, with some bastardly results. The Church, sharp-eyed as it must be when gods long dead are brought to life, condemned these orgies as witchcraft and interpreted them, rightly, as a resurgence of the Dionysiac<sup>36</sup> forces it had crushed long before. Sex, sin, and the Devil were early

33. Inquisition (in'kwī-zīsh'ən): a tribunal in the Roman Catholic Church dedicated to the discovery and punishment of heresy.

34. Luther: Martin Luther (1483-1546), the German theologian who led the Protestant Reformation.

35. Erasmus (ĭ-răz'məs): Desiderius Erasmus (1466?-1536), a Dutch scholar and humanist who sought to restore simple Christian faith by a study of the Scriptures and classical texts.

36. Dionysiac (dī'-ə-nīs'ē-ăk') wild and chaotic; refers to Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and madness.

linked, and so they continued to be in Salem, and are today. From all accounts there are no more puritanical mores in the world than those enforced by the Communists in Russia, where women's fashions, for instance, are as prudent and all-covering as any American Baptist would desire. The divorce laws lay a tremendous responsibility on the father for the care of his children. Even the laxity of divorce regulations in the early years of the revolution was undoubtedly a revulsion from the nineteenth-century Victorian immobility of marriage and the consequent hypocrisy that developed from it. If for no other reasons, a state so powerful, so jealous of the uniformity of its citizens, cannot long tolerate the atomization of the family. And yet, in American eyes at least, there remains the conviction that the Russian attitude toward women is lascivious. It is the Devil working again, just as he is working within the Slav<sup>37</sup> who is shocked at the very idea of a woman's disrobing herself in a burlesque show. Our opposites are always robed in sexual sin, and it is from this unconscious conviction that demonology gains both its attractive sensuality and its capacity to infuriate and frighten.

Coming into Salem now, Reverend Hale conceives of himself much as a young doctor on his first call. His painfully acquired armory of symptoms, catchwords, and diagnostic procedures are now to be put to use at last. The road from Beverly is unusually busy this morning, and he has passed a hundred rumors that make him smile at the ignorance of the yeomanry<sup>38</sup> in this most precise science. He feels himself allied with the best minds of Europe—kings, philosophers, scientists, and ecclesiasts<sup>39</sup> of all churches. His goal is light, goodness and its preservation, and he knows the exaltation of the blessed whose intelligence, sharpened by minute examinations of enormous tracts, is finally called upon to face what may be a bloody fight with the Fiend himself. ❀

*(He appears loaded down with half a dozen heavy books.)*

Hale. Pray you, someone take these!

Parris (*delighted*). Mr. Hale! Oh! it's good to see you again! (*Taking some books*) My, they're heavy!

Hale (*setting down his books*). They must be; they are weighted with authority.

Parris (*a little scared*). Well, you do come prepared!

Hale. We shall need hard study if it comes to tracking down the Old Boy. (*Noticing Rebecca*) You cannot be Rebecca Nurse?

Rebecca. I am, sir. Do you know me?

Hale. It's strange how I knew you, but I suppose you look as such a good soul should. We have all heard of your great charities in Beverly.

Parris. Do you know this gentleman? Mr. Thomas Putnam. And his good wife Ann.

Hale. Putnam! I had not expected such distinguished company, sir.

Putnam (*pleased*). It does not seem to help us today, Mr. Hale. We look to you to come to our house and save our child.

Hale. Your child ails too?

Mrs. Putnam. Her soul, her soul seems flown away. She sleeps and yet she walks . . .

Putnam. She cannot eat.

Hale. Cannot eat! (*Thinks on it. Then, to Proctor and Giles Corey*) Do you men have afflicted children?

Parris. No, no, these are farmers. John Proctor—Giles Corey. He don't believe in witches.

Proctor (*to Hale*). I never spoke on witches one way or the other. Will you come, Giles?

Giles. No—no, John, I think not. I have some few queer questions of my own to ask this fellow.

37. Slav (slāv): a generic reference to Russians and other Slavic-speaking peoples of Eastern Europe who were under the control of the former Soviet Union.

38. yeomanry (yō'mən-rē): the farmers; common people.

39. ecclesiasts (ĭ-klē'zē-āsts): religious officials; clergy.

Proctor. I've heard you to be a sensible man, Mr. Hale. I hope you'll leave some of it in Salem.

(Proctor goes. Hale stands embarrassed for an instant.)

Parris (quickly). Will you look at my daughter, sir? (Leads Hale to the bed.) She has tried to leap out the window; we discovered her this morning on the highroad, waving her arms as though she'd fly.

Hale (narrowing his eyes). Tries to fly.

Putnam. She cannot bear to hear the Lord's name, Mr. Hale; that's a sure sign of witchcraft afloat.

Hale (holding up his hands). No, no. Now let me instruct you. We cannot look to superstition in this. The Devil is precise; the marks of his presence are definite as stone, and I must tell you all that I shall not proceed unless you are prepared to believe me if I should find no bruise of hell upon her.

Parris. It is agreed, sir—it is agreed—we will abide by your judgment.

Hale. Good then. (He goes to the bed, looks down at Betty. To Parris) Now, sir, what were your first warning of this strangeness?

Parris. Why, sir—I discovered her—(indicating Abigail) and my niece and ten or twelve of the other girls, dancing in the forest last night.

Hale (surprised). You permit dancing?

Parris. No, no, it were secret—

Mrs. Putnam (unable to wait). Mr. Parris's slave has knowledge of conjurin', sir.

Parris (to Mrs. Putnam). We cannot be sure of that, Goody Ann—

Mrs. Putnam (frightened, very softly). I know it, sir. I sent my child—she should learn from Tituba who murdered her sisters.

Rebecca (horrificed). Goody Ann! You sent a child to conjure up the dead?

Mrs. Putnam. Let God blame me, not you, not you, Rebecca! I'll not have you judging me any more! (To Hale) Is it a natural work to lose seven children before they live a day?

Parris. Sssh!

(Rebecca, with great pain, turns her face away. There is a pause.)

Hale. Seven dead in childbirth.

Mrs. Putnam (softly). Aye. (Her voice breaks; she looks up at him. Silence. Hale is impressed. Parris looks to him. He goes to his books, opens one, turns pages, then reads. All wait, avidly.)

Parris (hushed). What book is that?

Mrs. Putnam. What's there, sir?

Hale (with a tasty love of intellectual pursuit). Here is all the invisible world, caught, defined, and calculated. In these books the Devil stands stripped of all his brute disguises. Here are all your familiar spirits—your incubi and succubi;<sup>40</sup> your witches that go by land, by air, and by sea; your wizards of the night and of the day. Have no fear now—we shall find him out if he has come among us, and I mean to crush him utterly if he has shown his face! (He starts for the bed.)

Rebecca. Will it hurt the child, sir?

Hale. I cannot tell. If she is truly in the Devil's grip we may have to rip and tear to get her free.

Rebecca. I think I'll go, then. I am too old for this. (She rises.)

Parris (striving for conviction). Why, Rebecca, we may open up the boil of all our troubles today!

Rebecca. Let us hope for that. I go to God for you, sir.

Parris (with trepidation—and resentment). I hope you do not mean we go to Satan here! (Slight pause.)

Rebecca. I wish I knew. (She goes out; they feel resentful of her note of moral superiority.)

Putnam (abruptly). Come, Mr. Hale, let's get on. Sit you here.

40. incubi (in'kyə-bī') and succubi (sūk'yə-bī'): male and female demons.

Giles. Mr. Hale, I have always wanted to ask a learned man—what signifies the readin' of strange books?

Hale. What books?


Giles. I cannot tell; she hides them.

Hale. Who does this?

Giles. Martha, my wife. I have waked at night many a time and found her in a corner, readin' of a book. Now what do you make of that?

Hale. Why, that's not necessarily—

Giles. It discomfits me! Last night—mark this—I tried and tried and could not say my prayers. And then she close her book and walks out of the house, and suddenly—mark this—I could pray again!

 Old Giles must be spoken for, if only because his fate was to be so remarkable and so different from that of all the others. He was in his early eighties at this time, and was the most comical hero in the history. No man has ever been blamed for so much. If a cow was missed, the first thought was to look for her around Corey's house; a fire blazing up at night brought suspicion of arson to his door. He didn't give a hoot for public opinion, and only in his last years—after he had married Martha—did he bother much with the church. That she stopped his prayer is very probable, but he forgot to say that he'd only recently learned any prayers and it didn't take much to make him stumble over them. He was a crank and a nuisance, but withal a deeply innocent and brave man. In court once, he was asked if it were true that he had been frightened by the strange behavior of a hog and had then said he knew it to be the Devil in an animal's shape. "What frightened you?" he was asked. He forgot everything but the word "frighted," and instantly replied, "I do not know that I ever spoke that word in my life." ❀

Hale. Ah! The stoppage of prayer—that is strange. I'll speak further on that with you.

Giles. I'm not sayin' she's touched the Devil, now, but I'd admire to know what books she reads and why she hides them. She'll not answer me, y' see.

Hale. Aye, we'll discuss it. (*To all*) Now mark me, if the Devil is in her you will witness some frightful wonders in this room, so please to keep your wits about you. Mr. Putnam, stand close in case she flies. Now, Betty, dear, will you sit up? (*Putnam comes in closer, ready-handed. Hale sits Betty up, but she hangs limp in his hands.*) Hmmm. (*He observes her carefully. The others watch breathlessly.*) Can you hear me? I am John Hale, minister of Beverly. I have come to help you, dear. Do you remember my two little girls in Beverly? (*She does not stir in his hands.*)

Parris (*in fright*). How can it be the Devil? Why would he choose my house to strike? We have all manner of licentious<sup>41</sup> people in the village!

Hale. What victory would the Devil have to win a soul already bad? It is the best the Devil wants, and who is better than the minister?

Giles. That's deep, Mr. Parris, deep, deep!

Parris (*with resolution now*). Betty! Answer Mr. Hale! Betty!

Hale. Does someone afflict you, child? It need not be a woman, mind you, or a man. Perhaps some bird invisible to others comes to you—perhaps a pig, a mouse, or any beast at all. Is there some figure bids you fly? (*The child remains limp in his hands. In silence he lays her back on the pillow. Now, holding out his hands toward her, he intones*) In nomine Domini Sabaoth sui filii que ite ad infernos.<sup>42</sup> (*She does not stir. He turns to Abigail, his eyes narrowing.*) Abigail, what sort of dancing were you doing with her in the forest?

41. licentious (lī-sĕn'shəs): lacking moral restraint.

42. In . . . infernos *Latin*: "In the name of the Father and Son, get thee back to Hell."

Abigail. Why—common dancing is all.  
Parris. I think I ought to say that I—I saw a kettle  
in the grass where they were dancing.  
Abigail. That were only soup.  
Hale. What sort of soup were in this kettle,  
Abigail?  
Abigail. Why, it were beans—and lentils, I think,  
and—  
Hale. Mr. Parris, you did not notice, did you, any  
living thing in the kettle? A mouse, perhaps, a  
spider, a frog—?  
Parris (*fearfully*). I—do believe there were some  
movement—in the soup.  
Abigail. That jumped in, we never put it in!  
Hale (*quickly*). What jumped in?  
Abigail. Why, a very little frog jumped—  
Parris. A frog, Abby!  
Hale (*grasping* Abigail). Abigail, it may be your  
cousin is dying. Did you call the Devil last  
night?  
Abigail. I never called him! Tituba, Tituba . . .  
Parris (*blanched*).<sup>43</sup> She called the Devil?  
Hale. I should like to speak with Tituba.  
Parris. Goody Ann, will you bring her up? (*Mrs.  
Putnam exits.*)  
Hale. How did she call him?  
Abigail. I know not—she spoke Barbados.  
Hale. Did you feel any strangeness when she called  
him? A sudden cold wind, perhaps? A trem-  
bling below the ground?  
Abigail. I didn't see no Devil! (*Shaking* Betty)  
Betty, wake up. Betty! Betty!  
Hale. You cannot evade me, Abigail. Did your  
cousin drink any of the brew in that kettle?  
Abigail. She never drank it!  
Hale. Did you drink it?  
Abigail. No, sir!  
Hale. Did Tituba ask you to drink it?  
Abigail. She tried, but I refused.

Hale. Why are you concealing? Have you sold  
yourself to Lucifer?  
Abigail. I never sold myself! I'm a good girl! I'm a  
proper girl!  
(*Mrs. Putnam enters with Tituba, and instantly  
Abigail points at Tituba.*)  
Abigail. She made me do it! She made Betty do it!  
Tituba (*shocked and angry*). Abby!  
Abigail. She makes me drink blood!  
Parris. Blood!!  
Mrs. Putnam. My baby's blood?  
Tituba. No, no, chicken blood. I give she chicken  
blood!  
Hale. Woman, have you enlisted these children for  
the Devil?  
Tituba. No, no, sir, I don't truck with no Devil!  
Hale. Why can she not wake? Are you silencing  
this child?  
Tituba. I love me Betty!  
Hale. You have sent your spirit out upon this child,  
have you not? Are you gathering souls for the  
Devil?  
Abigail. She sends her spirit on me in church; she  
makes me laugh at prayer!  
Parris. She have often laughed at prayer!  
Abigail. She comes to me every night to go and  
drink blood!  
Tituba. You beg me to conjure! She beg me make  
charm—  
Abigail. Don't lie! (*To Hale*) She comes to me  
while I sleep; she's always making me dream  
corruptions!<sup>44</sup>  
Tituba. Why you say that, Abby?  
Abigail. Sometimes I wake and find myself stand-  
ing in the open doorway and not a stitch on my  
body! I always hear her laughing in my sleep. I  
hear her singing her Barbados songs and tempt-  
ing me with—

43. blanched: turned pale with shock or fear.

44. corruptions: evil, immoral thoughts.

**Tituba.** Mister Reverend, I never—

**Hale** (*resolved now*). Tituba, I want you to wake this child.

**Tituba.** I have no power on this child, sir.

**Hale.** You most certainly do, and you will free her from it now! When did you compact with the Devil?

**Tituba.** I don't compact with no Devil!

**Parris.** You will confess yourself or I will take you out and whip you to your death, Tituba!

**Putnam.** This woman must be hanged! She must be taken and hanged!

**Tituba** (*terrified, falls to her knees*). No, no, don't hang Tituba! I tell him I don't desire to work for him, sir.

**Parris.** The Devil?

**Hale.** Then you saw him! (*Tituba weeps.*) Now Tituba, I know that when we bind ourselves to Hell it is very hard to break with it. We are going to help you tear yourself free—

**Tituba** (*frightened by the coming process*). Mister Reverend, I do believe somebody else be witchin' these children.

**Hale.** Who?

**Tituba.** I don't know, sir, but the Devil got him numerous witches.

**Hale.** Does he! It is a clue. Tituba, look into my eyes. Come, look into me. (*She raises her eyes to his fearfully.*) You would be a good Christian woman, would you not, Tituba?

**Tituba.** Aye, sir, a good Christian woman.

**Hale.** And you love these little children?

**Tituba.** Oh, yes, sir, I don't desire to hurt little children.

**Hale.** And you love God, Tituba?

**Tituba.** I love God with all my bein'.

**Hale.** Now, in God's holy name—

**Tituba.** Bless Him. Bless Him. (*She is rocking on her knees, sobbing in terror.*)

**Hale.** And to His glory—

**Tituba.** Eternal glory. Bless Him—bless God . . . .

**Hale.** Open yourself, Tituba—open yourself and let God's holy light shine on you.

**Tituba.** Oh, bless the Lord.

**Hale.** When the Devil comes to you does he ever come—with another person? (*She stares up into his face.*) Perhaps another person in the village? Someone you know.

**Parris.** Who came with him?

**Putnam.** Sarah Good? Did you ever see Sarah Good with him? Or Osburn?

**Parris.** Was it man or woman came with him?

**Tituba.** Man or woman. Was—was woman.

**Parris.** What woman? A woman, you said. What woman?

**Tituba.** It was black dark, and I—

**Parris.** You could see him, why could you not see her?

**Tituba.** Well, they was always talking; they was always runnin' round and carryin' on—

**Parris.** You mean out of Salem? Salem witches?

**Tituba.** I believe so, yes, sir.  
(*Now Hale takes her hand. She is surprised.*)

**Hale.** Tituba. You must have no fear to tell us who they are, do you understand? We will protect you. The Devil can never overcome a minister. You know that, do you not?

**Tituba** (*kisses Hale's hand*). Aye, sir, oh, I do.

**Hale.** You have confessed yourself to witchcraft, and that speaks a wish to come to Heaven's side. And we will bless you, Tituba.

**Tituba** (*deeply relieved*). Oh, God bless you, Mr. Hale!

**Hale** (*with rising exaltation*). You are God's instrument put in our hands to discover the Devil's agents among us. You are selected, Tituba, you are chosen to help us cleanse our village. So speak utterly, Tituba, turn your back on him and face God—face God, Tituba, and God will protect you.

Tituba (*joining with him*). Oh, God, protect Tituba!

Hale (*kindly*). Who came to you with the Devil? Two? Three? Four? How many?

(*Tituba pants, and begins rocking back and forth again, staring ahead.*)

Tituba. There was four. There was four.

Parris (*pressing in on her*). Who? Who? Their names, their names!

Tituba (*suddenly bursting out*). Oh, how many times he bid me kill you, Mr. Parris!

Parris. Kill me!

Tituba (*in a fury*). He say Mr. Parris must be kill! Mr. Parris no goodly man, Mr. Parris mean man and no gentle man, and he bid me rise out of my bed and cut your throat! (*They gasp.*) But I tell him "No! I don't hate that man. I don't want kill that man." But he say, "You work for me, Tituba, and I make you free! I give you pretty dress to wear, and put you way high up in the air, and you gone fly back to Barbados!" And I say, "You lie, Devil, you lie!" And then he come one stormy night to me, and he say, "Look! I have white people belong to me." And I look—and there was Goody Good.

Parris. Sarah Good!

Tituba (*rocking and weeping*). Aye, sir, and Goody Osburn.

Mrs. Putnam. I knew it! Goody Osburn were mid-wife to me three times. I begged you, Thomas, did I not? I begged him not to call Osburn because I feared her. My babies always shriveled in her hands!

Hale. Take courage, you must give us all their names. How can you bear to see this child suffering? Look at her, Tituba. (*He is indicating Betty on the bed.*) Look at her God-given innocence; her soul is so tender; we must protect her, Tituba; the Devil is out and preying on her like a beast upon the flesh of the pure lamb. God will bless you for your help.

(*Abigail rises, staring as though inspired, and cries out.*)

Abigail. I want to open myself! (*They turn to her, startled. She is enraptured, as though in a pearly light.*) I want the light of God, I want the sweet love of Jesus! I danced for the Devil; I saw him; I wrote in his book; I go back to Jesus; I kiss His hand. I saw Sarah Good with the Devil! I saw Goody Osburn with the Devil! I saw Bridget Bishop with the Devil!

(*As she is speaking, Betty is rising from the bed, a fever in her eyes, and picks up the chant.*)

Betty (*staring too*). I saw George Jacobs with the Devil! I saw Goody Howe with the Devil!

Parris. She speaks! (*He rushes to embrace Betty.*) She speaks!

Hale. Glory to God! It is broken, they are free!

Betty (*calling out hysterically and with great relief*). I saw Martha Bellows with the Devil!

Abigail. I saw Goody Sibber with the Devil! (*It is rising to a great glee.*)

Putnam. The marshal, I'll call the marshal! (*Parris is shouting a prayer of thanksgiving.*)

Betty. I saw Alice Barrow with the Devil! (*The curtain begins to fall.*)

Hale (*as Putnam goes out*). Let the marshal bring irons!<sup>45</sup>

Abigail. I saw Goody Hawkins with the Devil!

Betty. I saw Goody Bibber with the Devil!

Abigail. I saw Goody Booth with the Devil! (*On their ecstatic cries*)

the curtain falls

45. irons: iron chains and manacles for criminals.