

START

ABIGAIL
JOHN PROCTOR

PROCTOR. So she flies, eh? Where are her wings?

ABIGAIL. (*With a nervous laugh.*) Oh, John, sure you're not believin' she flies?

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

ABIGAIL. Oh, posh!—We were dancin' in the woods last night, and my uncle leaped in on us. She took fright, is all.

PROCTOR. (*His smile widens. Crossing to door.*) Dancin' by moonlight! (*Abigail springs into his path.*) You'll be clapped in the stocks before you're twenty.

ABIGAIL. (*Barring his way at door.*) Give me a word, John. A soft word.

PROCTOR. No—no, Abby, I've not come for that.

ABIGAIL. You come five mile to see a silly girl fly? I know you better.

PROCTOR. I come to see what mischief your uncle's brewin' now. Put it out of mind, Abby.

ABIGAIL. John—I am waitin' for you every night.

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! 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. 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. Do you tell me you've never looked up at my window?

PROCTOR. Perhaps I... have.

ABIGAIL. 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.

PROCTOR. (*Taking her hands.*) Child...

ABIGAIL. (*With a flash of anger. Throwing his hands off.*) How do you call me child!

PROCTOR. (*As three or four persons offstage begin a quiet chant—a psalm or hymn.*) 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— (*Takes her arms.*) We never touched, Abby.

ABIGAIL. (*Putting hands on his shoulders.*) Aye, but we did.

PROCTOR. (*Pushing her away.*) Aye, but we did not.

ABIGAIL. (*With a bitter anger.*) Oh, I marvel how such a (*Beating her fists against his chest.*) strong man may let such a sickly wife be...

PROCTOR. (*Coldly. Grabbing her wrists.*) 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 snivelling woman and you bend to her! Let her turn you like a...?

PROCTOR. (*Shakes her.*) Do you look for whippin'!

ABIGAIL. (*Outraged. In tears.*) I look for John Proctor that 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! (*Shakes free.*) You loved me, John Proctor, and whatever sin it is you love me yet! (*He turns abruptly to go out. She rushes to door, blocks it.*) John, pity me, pity me! (*The word "Jehovah" is heard in the psalm—the song outside— Betty claps her ears suddenly, and whines loudly.*) Betty? (*She hurries to Betty, who is sitting up and screaming. Proctor crosses D. to U. L. of Abigail, who is trying to pull Betty's hands down, calling "Betty!" Proctor is growing unnerved, calling, "What's she doing? Girl, what ails you? Stop that wailin', Girl!" Singing has stopped in the midst of this, and Parris rushes in.*)

PARRIS. What happened? What are you doing to her! Betty!... (*Rushes to bed, crying "Betty, Betty!" as Ann crosses to above Parris, feverish with curiosity, and with her Putnam, who crosses to behind her.*)

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

ANN. The psalm! The psalm!—she cannot bear to hear the Lord's name!

PARRIS. No, God forbid...

ANN. Mark it for a sign, mark it...! (*Rebecca Nurse, seventy-two, enters. She is white-haired, and leans upon her walking stick.*)

PUTNAM. That is a notorious sign of witchcraft afoot, a prodigious sign!

END