

BETTY
ABIGAIL
MERCY
MARY

table, gets hat, crosses and exits.)

ANN. Mercy, you go home to Ruth, d'ye hear?

MERCY. Aye, Mum. *(Ann goes out.)*

PARRIS. If she starts for the window, cry for me at once. *(Crossing to door.)*

ABIGAIL. Yes, Uncle.

PARRIS. There is a terrible power in her arms today. *(Goes out with Putnam.)*

START

ABIGAIL. How is Ruth sick?

MERCY. It's weirdish, I know not—she seems to walk like a dead one since last night.

ABIGAIL. Betty? *(Betty doesn't move. She shakes her.)* Now stop this! Betty! Sit up now!

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. No, he'll be comin' up. Now look you, if they be questioning us tell them we danced—I told him as much already.

MERCY. And what more?

ABIGAIL. He saw you naked.

MERCY. Oh, Jesus! *(Falls back on bed. Enter Mary Warren, breathless. She is seventeen, a subservient, naive girl.)*

MARY. What'll we do, the whole village is out!

MERCY. *(Mimicking her.)* "What'll we do?" *(Sitting up.)*

MARY. I just come from the farm, the whole country's talkin' witchcraft! They'll be callin' us witches, Abby!

MERCY. *(Mimicking her.)* "They'll be callin' us witches, Abby." She means to tell, I know it.

MARY. Abby, we've got to tell. Witchery's a hangin' error, a hangin' like they done in 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. I never done none of it, Abby, I only looked!

MERCY. Oh, you're a great one for lookin', aren't you, Mary Warren? *(Betty whimpers.)*

ABIGAIL. Betty? Now, Betty, dear, wake up now. It's Abigail. *(She sits Betty up, 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. I want my mama!

ABIGAIL. What ails you, Betty? Your mama's dead and buried...

BETTY. I'll fly to Mama, let me fly...! (*Raises her arms as though to fly. Mercy and Abigail thrust them down.*)

ABIGAIL. I told him everything, he knows now, he knows everything we... (*Betty suddenly springs off bed, rushes across room to window, where Abigail catches her.*)

BETTY. You drank blood, Abby, you drank blood!

ABIGAIL. (*Dragging Betty back to bed and forcing her into it.*) 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. (*Slaps her 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. 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! (*Betty cries louder. She goes to Betty, sits L. side of bed U.S. of Mercy, and roughly sits her up.*) Now you... sit up and stop this! (*Betty collapses in her hands.*)

MARY. What's got her? Abby, she's going to die! It's a sin to conjure and we...

ABIGAIL. I say shut it, Mary Warren! (*Enter John Proctor.*)

MARY. Oh! I'm just going home, Mister 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. 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; (*Mary crosses up and out.*) my wife is waitin' with your work!

MERCY. (*Rising, crossing to entrance. Titillated. Being aware of their relationship.*) I'd best be off. I have my Ruth to watch... Good morning, Mister Proctor. (*Mercy sidles out. Since Proctor's entrance, Abigail has stood absorbing his presence, wide-eyed.*)

ABIGAIL. She's only gone silly, somehow. She'll come out of it.

END