

HALE
COREY
PARRIS
ABIGAIL

PARRIS. Sssh!

HALE. (*Leafing through the book.*) Seven dead in childbirth?

ANN. Aye. (*Hale looks in book.*)

PARRIS. What book is that?

ANN. What's there, sir?

HALE. (*With a tasty love of intellectual pursuit. Looking at open book.*) Here is all the invisible world, caught, defined and calculated. (*Now looking at them. They are all enthralled with this.*) In these books the Devil stands stripped of all his brute disguises. Here are all your familiar spirits—your incubi and succubi, 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! (*Corey crosses near bed, looking at Betty.*)

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.

PARRIS. Why, Rebecca, we may open up the boil of all our troubles today!

REBECCA. Let us hope for that. (*Up toward door.*) I go to God for you, sir.

PARRIS. (*Opens door.*) I hope you do not mean we go to Satan here!

REBECCA. I wish I knew. (*She goes out.*)

PUTNAM. Come, Mister Hale, let's get on. Sit you here. (*Hale sits on stool.*)

START

COREY. Mister Hale... I have always wanted to ask a learned man—What signifies the readin' of strange books?

HALE. What books? (*Ann rises.*)

COREY. I cannot tell; she hides them.

HALE. Who does this?

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

HALE. Why, that's not necessarily...

COREY. 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!

HALE. Ah!—the stoppage of prayer—that is strange. (*Sits on bed, beside Betty.*) I'd like to speak further on that with you.

COREY. 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. 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. Mister Putnam, stand close in case she flies. (*Turns to Betty, helps her sit up.*) Now, Betty dear, will you sit up? (*Sits her up.*) H'mmmm. 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?

PARRIS. How can it be the Devil? Why would he choose my house to strike?

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

COREY. That's deep, Mister Parris, deep.

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, or any beast at all. Is there some figure bids you fly? (*Pauses. Passes his hand over her face.*) In nomine Domini Sabaoth, sui filiique ite ad Infernos. (*Betty is laid back on pillow. Looks to Abigail.*) Abigail, (*Looks back to Betty.*) what sort of dancing were you doing with her in the forest?

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. Soup? What sort of soup were in this kettle, Abigail?

ABIGAIL. Why, it were beans—and lintels, I think, and—

HALE. Mister Parris, you did not notice, did you—any living thing in the kettle? A mouse, perhaps, a spider, a frog—? (*Parris looks at her.*)

ABIGAIL. (*Hysterically, seeing Parris' look.*) That frog jumped in, we never put it in!

PARRIS. A frog, Abby!

ABIGAIL. We never put it in!

HALE. Abigail, it may be your cousin is dying—Did you call the Devil last night?

ABIGAIL. I never called him! Tiruba called him!

PARRIS. She called the Devil!

END