

PROCTOR. Rebecca...?

ELIZABETH. Not Rebecca. (*He smiles slightly in admiration, nodding. She then speaks.*) She is one foot in heaven now. Naught may hurt her more.

PROCTOR. (*Looking at her.*) And Giles?

ELIZABETH. You have not heard of it?

PROCTOR. I hear nothin', where I am kept.

ELIZABETH. Giles is dead. (*He looks at her incredulously.*)

PROCTOR. When were he hanged?

ELIZABETH. (*Quietly, factually.*) He were not hanged. He would not answer aye or nay to his indictment; for if he denied the charge they'd hang him surely, and auction out his property. So he stand mute, and died Christian under the law. (*He nods.*) And so his sons will have his farm. It is the law, for he could not be condemned a wizzard without he answer the indictment, aye or nay.

PROCTOR. (*Not looking at her.*) Then *how* does he die?

ELIZABETH. (*Gently.*) ... They press him, John.

PROCTOR. (*Looking at her.*) Press?

ELIZABETH. Great stones they lay upon his chest until he plead aye or nay. (*With a tender smile for the old man.*) They say he give them but *two words*. "More weight," he says. And died.

PROCTOR. (*Nodding, smiling grimly in admiration.*) More weight!

ELIZABETH. Aye. It were a *fearsome* man, Giles Corey. (*Pause.*)

PROCTOR. (*With a shy smile. Elizabeth crossing to D.S. end of bench, sits.*) I have been thinkin' I would confess to them. (*She shows nothing.*) What say you?—if I give them that?

ELIZABETH. I cannot judge you, John.

PROCTOR. (*Taking her R. hand with his L. hand, pulls her down to bench, not looking at her.*) What would you have me do?

ELIZABETH. As you will, I would have it. (*Slight pause.*) I want you living, John. That's sure.

PROCTOR. (*Hopefully.*) Giles' wife?—have *she* confessed?

ELIZABETH. (*Shaking her head.*) She will *not*.

PROCTOR. (*Taking his hand away from her.*) It is a *pretense*, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH. What is?

PROCTOR. (*Trying to convince himself.*) I cannot mount the gibbet like a saint. It is a *fraud*. I am not that man. (*She is silent.*) My honesty is broke, Elizabeth, I am no good man. Nothing's spoiled by giving them this lie that were not rotten long before.

ELIZABETH. And yet you've not confessed till now. That speak goodness in you.

PROCTOR. (*Bitterly smiling.*) Spite. Spite only keeps me silent. It is hard to give a lie to dogs! (*He takes her R. hand, holds it.*) I would have your forgiveness, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH. It is not for me to give, John, I am...

PROCTOR. I would have you see some honesty in it. Let them that never lied die now to keep their souls. It is pretense for me, a vanity that will not blind God nor keep my children out of the wind. What say you?

ELIZABETH. John... it come to naught that I should forgive you. Will you forgive yourself? It is your soul, John. (*He bows his head.*) Only be sure of this, for I know it now: Whatever you will do, it is a good man does it. I have read my heart this three month, John. I have sins of my own to count. It needs a cold wife to prompt lechery...

PROCTOR. (*In great pain.*) Enough, enough...

ELIZABETH. Better you should know me!

PROCTOR. (*Turning away.*) I will not hear it!—I know you!

ELIZABETH. (*Trying to turn him back, taking his hands.*) You take my sins upon you, John!

PROCTOR. (*In agony.*) No, I take my own, my own!

ELIZABETH. (*She gropes for the words to express her feeling.*) I counted myself so plain, so poorly made, no honest love could come to me! Suspicion kissed you when I did; I never knew how I should say my love. It were a cold house I kept...! (*Hathorne enters.*)

HATHORNE. What say you, Proctor? The sun is soon up. (*Proctor lifts his head.*)

ELIZABETH. (*Warmly.*) Do what you will. But let none be your judge, there be no higher judge under heaven than Proctor is! Forgive me, forgive me, John—I never knew such goodness in the world!

PROCTOR. I want my life.

HATHORNE. You'll confess yourself?!

PROCTOR. I will have my life.

HATHORNE. God be praised!—It is a providence! (*Hathorne rushes out door, his voice is heard calling offstage.*) He will confess! Proctor will confess!

PROCTOR. (*With a cry. Rising.*) Why do you cry it! It is evil, is it not? It is evil.

ELIZABETH. (*Weeping.*) I cannot judge you, John, I cannot!

END