

The Crucible – Act III -- Reader's Theatre – On the Stand

Setting – Salem Court House -- Characters – Judge Danforth, Abigail, Mary Warren, Proctor, Parris, Hale, Elizabeth DANFORTH on the Judge's throne, PROCTOR, PARRIS, and Hale sitting to one side, The girls sitting across from them

Danforth: Mary Warren has given us a disposition I which she swears that she had not seen familiar spirits, apparitions, not any manifest of the Devil. She claims as well that none of you have see these things either. The law, based upon the Bible, forbids the practice of witchcraft. It does not escape me that Mary Warren might be under a Devil's spell right now – sent to distract us from the truth. Abigail, please rise. Is there any truth in this?

Abigail: No, sir

Danforth: Mary, do you still want to go on with your story?

Mary Warren: Yes, sir.

Danforth: A poppet were discovered in Mr. Proctor's house, stabbed by a needle. Mary Warren claims that you sat beside her in the court when she made it, and that you saw her stick the needle in it. Abigail, what say you to that?

Abigail: It is a lie, sir.

Danforth: While you worked for Mr. Proctor, did you see any poppets in the house?

Abigail: Good Proctor always kept poppets.

Proctor: Your Honor, my wife never kept no poppets. Mary Warren confesses it was her poppet.

Parris: Why could there not have been poppets hidden where no one could see them?

Proctor: *furious,* There might also be a dragon with five legs in my house, but no one has ever seen it.

Danforth: You are charging Abigail Williams with a marvelous cool plot to murder, do you understand that?

Proctor: I do, sir. I believe she means to murder.

Danforth: This child would murder your wife?

Proctor: She is not a child. Now hear me! In the sight of this congregation she were twice this year put out of this meetin' house for laughter during prayer.

Danforth: *shocked,* What's this? Laughter during.....

Parris: She was under Tituba's power at that time.

Danforth: Quiet, man! Continue Mr. Proctor.

Proctor: Mary. Now tell the Governor how you danced in the woods. Abigail leads the girls to the woods, Your Honor, and they have danced there naked. Mr. Parris discovered there in the dead of night. *Angrily,* There's the "child" she is.

Danforth: *to Parris*, You discovered them in the woods? Do you deny it, Mr. Parris?

Parris: I do not, sir, but I never saw any of them naked.

Danforth: Mary, why when people accused you have witchery, you would faint, saying their spirits came out of their bodies and choked you –

Mary Warren: *quietly*, That was false, sir.

Parris: But you turned cold, did you not?

Proctor: She was only pretending. There are no spirits attacking her.

Parris: Mary, pretend to faint now as you did before.

Mary: I cannot faint now, sir. I never saw no spirits.

Parris: Then faint and prove you can do it on your own now or confess that it was spirits making you do it before.

Mary: I cannot now. I thought I saw spirits before.

Danforth: *shocked*, Thought you saw spirits. How could you think you saw spirits unless you saw them?

Parris: Surely, your Honor, you cannot be struck by this lie.

Danforth: Abigail, I want you to search your heart and tell me the truth. It is possible, child, that the spirits have you seen are an illusion only, some deception that may cross your mind when ---

Abigail: I have been hurt, Mr. Danforth. I have seen my blood runnin' out! I have been near murdered every day because I done my duty pointing out the Devil's people – and this is my reward? *Hatefully*, To be mistrusted, denied, questioned? *With attitude and hatefully*, Let you beware, Danforth, Think you be so mighty that the power of Hell may not turn your wits? Beware of it!! There is..... *shocked and gasping..*

Danforth: What is it?

Abigail: *claspng her arms around her own body*, A cold wind has come.

Proctor: She's pretending!

Mary: *screaming*, Abby don't do that!

HYSTERICALLY AND CRYING, MARY RUNS TO LEAVE. PROCTOR CATCHES HER.

Mary: Let me go!

Proctor: *to Abigail*, You are a liar and a home wrecker!

Danforth: *shocked*, What are you chagrining, Proctor?

Abigail: He is lying!

Danforth: Proctor, you must prove this!!

Proctor: *trembling*, I have known her! I have known her!

Danforth: *horrified*, You have committed adultery?

Proctor: I wish I could blame it on the Devil, some evil, but I cannot. It was about eight months ago. She used to serve me in my house. I beg you, sir – see her for what she is. Abigail wants to dance with me on my wife’s grave. I lusted after her once, but I was wrong. This is her attempt for revenge. You must see this truth.

Danforth: Go get Elizabeth and do not tell her what has been said here. Proctor, you say your wife is an honest woman. She put this girl out of our house as a harlot. And you knew her for a harlot?

Proctor: In her life, Elizabeth has never lied. We knew Abigail to be a harlot.

ENTER ELIZABETH.

Danforth: Come here, Elizabeth. We are given to understand that at one time you dismissed your servant.

Elizabeth: Yes, sir.

Danforth: Why did you dismiss her?

Elizabeth: *very nervously*, She dissatisfied me. And my husband.

Danforth: In what way did she dissatisfy you? Was she lazy? Did she cause a disturbance?

Elizabeth: *not making eye contact*, Your Honor, I was sick during that time and I think my husband began turning from me. And I think he came to fancy Abigail. And so one night, I lost my wits and put her out.

Danforth: Did your husband indeed turn from you?

Elizabeth: My husband is a good man, sir. *Looking away*

Danforth: Look at me!! Then he did not turn from you?

Elizabeth: He did not, sir.

Proctor: *shouting*, Elizabeth, tell the truth!! Elizabeth, I have confessed it!!

Elizabeth: *falling to the ground*, Oh my God!

Proctor: She was only trying to save my name.

Hale: Your Honor, she was only trying to save her husband’s name. Please stop this before someone else gets condemned. I believe this man. He is telling the truth. Abigail is lying.

Abigail: *with a weird, chilling cry, screams and points to the ceiling, You begone!! Begone!!*

EVERYBODY LOOKS UP THE CEILING ASKING WHAT?? WHAT??

Abigail: Why do you come, yellow bird?

Proctor: Where's a bird? I don't see a bird.

ABIGAIL PRETENDS TO TALK TO THE BIRD

Abigail: Oh little bird, why are you here? Oh bird, please don't hurt me. Mary, don't hurt me!!

Mary: I'm not hurting her.

Danforth: Mary, have you compacted with the Devil?

Mary: *screaming* NO! NO!

Proctor: Give me a whip – I'll stop it!!

Mary: She's making it up. Abby, stop it.

MARY NOW BECOMES OVERWHELMED AND STARTS TO WHIMPER, FALLING TO THE GROUND

Danforth: What is the matter with you? Are you now afflicted again?

Proctor: *angry, screaming,* They are all liars.

Abigail: Look up. It's an angel. Her wings are spreading.

Hale: I don't see anything.

Abigail: She's coming down!!

MARY GETS UP AND BEGINS RUNNING TOWARD PROCTOR SCREAMING IN HORROR.

Mary: *pointing at Proctor,* You are the Devil's man! I will not hang with you. I love God. Proctor asked me to sign his Devil's book each night. He tells me he will murder me if his wife hangs. He said we must overthrow the court.

Hale: Your Honor, this child's gone wild.

Danforth: Will you confess this black allegiance?

Proctor: *laughing insanely and utterly shocked,* I will say God is dead!! A fire, a fire is burning! I hear the boot of Lucifer. I see his filthy face! And it is my face, and yours, Danforth! For the ignorant, who know in your hearts that this is all fraud. We will burn together.

Danforth: Take him out –

Hale: *throwing up his hands,* I quit this court!!

Readers' Theater Script prepared by Julie Faulkner (original by Arthur Miller ☺)
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We do read the entire play, but we only act a portion of each act. Grab some costumes, make an impromptu stage, and you will be ready to go!



*The person playing Mary Warren here is my principal! He popped in to evaluate me the day we were acting, and being a former English teacher, he couldn't resist!

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