

John Proctor sits down to dinner with his wife, Elizabeth. Mary Warren, their servant, has gone to the witch trials, defying Elizabeth's order that she remain in the house. Fourteen people are now in jail. If these accused witches do not confess, they will be hanged. Whoever Abigail and her troop name as they go into hysterics is arrested for bewitching the girls.

Proctor can barely believe the craze, and he tells Elizabeth that Abigail had sworn her dancing had nothing to do with witchcraft. Elizabeth wants him to testify that the accusations are a sham. He says that he cannot prove his allegation because Abigail told him this information while they were alone in a room. Elizabeth loses all faith in her husband upon hearing that he and Abigail were alone together. Proctor demands that she stop judging him. He says that he feels as though his home is a courtroom, but Elizabeth responds that the real court is in his own heart.

When Mary Warren returns home, she gives Elizabeth a doll that she sewed in court, saying that it is a gift. She reports that thirty-nine people now stand accused. John and Mary argue over whether Mary can continue attending the trials. He threatens to whip her, and Mary declares that she saved Elizabeth's life that day. Elizabeth's name was apparently mentioned in the accusations (Mary will not name the accuser), but Mary spoke out in Elizabeth's defense. Proctor instructs Mary to go to bed, but she demands that he stop ordering her around. Elizabeth, meanwhile, is convinced that it was Abigail who accused her of witchcraft, in order to take her place in John's bed.

Hale visits the Proctors because he wants to speak with everyone whose name has been mentioned in connection with witchcraft. He has just visited Rebecca Nurse. Hale proceeds to ask questions about the Christian character of the Proctor home. He notes that the Proctors have not often attended church and that their youngest son is not yet

baptized. Proctor explains that he does not like Parris's particular theology. Hale asks them to recite the Ten Commandments. Proctor obliges but forgets the commandment prohibiting adultery.

At Elizabeth's urging, Proctor informs Hale that Abigail told him that the children's sickness had nothing to do with witchcraft. Taken aback, Hale replies that many have already confessed. Proctor points out that they would have been hanged without a confession. Giles and Francis rush into Proctor's home, crying that their wives have been arrested. Rebecca is charged with the supernatural murders of Mrs. Putnam's babies. A man bought a pig from Martha Corey and it died not long afterward; he wanted his money back, but she refused, saying that he did not know how to care for a pig. Every pig he purchased thereafter died, and he accused her of bewitching him so that he would be incapable of keeping one alive.

Ezekiel Cheever and Herrick, the town marshal, arrive with a warrant for Elizabeth's arrest. Hale is surprised because, last he heard, Elizabeth was not charged with anything. Cheever asks if Elizabeth owns any dolls, and Elizabeth replies that she has not owned dolls since she was a girl. Cheever spies the doll Mary Warren gave her. He finds a needle inside it. Cheever relates that Abigail had a fit at dinner in Parris's house that evening. Parris found a needle in her abdomen, and Abigail accused Elizabeth of witchcraft. Elizabeth brings Mary downstairs. Mary informs the inquisitors that she made the doll while in court and stuck the needle in it herself.

As Elizabeth is led away, Proctor loses his temper and rips the warrant. He asks Hale why the accuser is always considered innocent. Hale appears less and less certain of the accusations of witchcraft. Proctor tells Mary that she has to testify in court that she made the doll and put the needle in it. Mary declares that Abigail will kill her if she does

and that Abigail would only charge him with lechery. Proctor is shocked that Abigail told Mary about the affair, but he demands that she testify anyway. Mary cries hysterically that she cannot.

Setting:

- Takes place in the Proctors' home, eight days after the events of Act 1.

Key Characters:

- **John Proctor** – Main character, struggles with guilt over his affair with Abigail.
 - **Elizabeth Proctor** – John's wife, accused of witchcraft.
 - **Mary Warren** – The Proctors' servant, now an official of the court.
 - **Reverend Hale** – Arrives to investigate the Proctors' religious faith.
 - **Ezekiel Cheever** – Arrives with a warrant for Elizabeth's arrest.
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Plot Summary:

- **Proctors' Relationship:**
 - Tension between John and Elizabeth over John's affair with Abigail.
 - Elizabeth still doesn't fully trust John, but John is trying to make amends.
- **Witch Trials Escalate:**
 - Mary Warren reveals that the number of people accused of witchcraft has risen to 39.
 - Mary gives Elizabeth a poppet (doll) she made during the trials.
- **Mary's Role:**
 - Mary explains her power and newfound importance as part of the court.
 - She tells the Proctors that Elizabeth's name was mentioned in court but she defended her.
- **Reverend Hale's Visit:**
 - Hale comes to test the Proctors' Christian faith.
 - He questions them about their church attendance and their knowledge of the Ten Commandments.
 - John forgets the commandment about adultery.
- **Elizabeth's Arrest:**
 - Ezekiel Cheever and the marshal arrive with a warrant for Elizabeth's arrest.

- A needle found in the poppet is seen as proof of Elizabeth's use of witchcraft, based on Abigail's claim that Elizabeth's spirit stabbed her.
 - John is outraged and vows to fight the court.
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Key Themes:

- **Guilt and Redemption:** John's guilt over his affair with Abigail continues to affect his marriage.
 - **Hysteria:** The witch trials are escalating, and innocent people like Elizabeth are being caught up in the hysteria.
 - **Authority and Power:** Mary's newfound authority as part of the court contrasts with her previous status as a servant.
 - **Faith and Morality:** Reverend Hale tests the Proctors' religious beliefs, reflecting the merging of religion and justice in Salem.
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