NURSE: (*With deference but emphasis*.) Excellency, I never thought to say it to such a weighty judge, but you are deceived. (*All turn to see Mary Warren ENTER. with Proctor and Corey. Mary is keeping her eyes to the ground, Proctor has her elbow as though she were breakable.)*

PARRIS: (*In shock.)* Mary Warren! What, what are you about here?

PROCTOR: She would speak with the Deputy-Governor.

COREY: She has been strivin’ with her soul all week, Your Honor; she comes now to tell the truth to you.

DANFORTH: Who is this?

PROCTOR: (*Unafraid.)* John Proctor, sir. Elizabeth Proctor is my wife.

PARRIS: Beware this man, Your Excellency, this man is mischief.

HALE: (*With great urgency*.) I think you must hear the girl, sir, she…

DANFORTH: (*He has become very interested in Mary Warren and only raises a hand toward Hale.)* Peace. What would you tell us, Mary Warren?

PROCTOR: (He and Mary Warren step forward.) She never saw no spirits, sir.

DANFORTH: (*With great alarm and surprise, to Mary*.) Never saw no spirits?!

COREY: (*Eagerly*.) Never.

PROCTOR: (*Has three papers in his hand.)* She has signed a deposition, sir….

DANFORTH: No, no, I accept no deposition. Tell me, Mister Proctor, have you given out this story in the village?

PROCTOR: We have not.

PARRIS: They’ve come to overthrow the court, sir! This man is…

DANFORTH: I pray you, Mister Parris. Do you know, Mister Proctor, that the entire contention of the State in these trials is that the voice of Heaven is speaking through the children?

PROCTOR: I know that, sir.

DANFORTH: And you, Mary Warren… how came you to cry out people for sending their spirits against you?

MARY: (Between Corey and Proctor.) It were pretense, sir.

DANFORTH: (*With great unbelief*.) Ah? And the other girls? Susanna Wallcott, and… the others? They are also pretending?

MARY: Aye, sir.

DANFORTH: Indeed. Now, Mister Proctor, before I decide whether I shall hear you or not, it is my duty to tell you this. We burn a hot fire here; it melts down all concealment. Are you certain in your conscience, Mister, that your evidence is the truth?

PROCTOR: It is. And you will surely know it.

DANFORTH: I take it you came here to declare this revelation in the open court before the public?

PROCTOR: (*Handing Danforth paper.)* Will you read this first, sir? It’s a sort of testament. The people signing it declare their good opinion of Rebecca and my wife, and Martha Corey. (*Danforth looks at paper.)* These are all covenant people, landholding farmers, members of the church. (*Delicately, trying to point out a paragraph.)* If you’ll notice, sir—they’ve known the women many years and never saw no signs they had dealings with the Devil.

DANFORTH: (*Glancing at long list.)* How many names are here?

NURSE: Ninety-one, Your Excellency.

PARRIS: These people should be summoned for questioning.

NURSE: (*Alarmed*.) Mister Danforth, I gave them all my word no harm would come to them for signing this.

PARRIS: This is a clear attack upon the court!

HALE: (*To Parris. Trying to contain himself*.) Is every defense an attack upon the court?

DANFORTH: (Hands Cheever the paper.) Mister Cheever, have warrants drawn for all of these—arrest for examination. (*Cheever exits. To Proctor*.) Now, Mister, what other information do you have for us? (*Nurse is still standing, horrified*.) You may sit, Mister Nurse.

NURSE: I have brought trouble on these people, I have….

DANFORTH: No, old man, you have not hurt these people if they are of good conscience. But you must understand, sir, that a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it; there be no road between. (*Mary suddenly sobs*.) She’s not hearty, I see.

PROCTOR: No, she’s not, sir. (*To Mary, bending to her, holding her shoulders, quiet and kindly*.) Now remember what the angel Raphael said to the boy Tobias. Remember it.

MARY: (Hardly audible.) Aye.

PROCTOR: (*to Mary)* "Do that which is good and no harm shall come to thee.”

DANFORTH: Mr. Putnam, I have here an accusation by Mr. Corey against you. He states that you coldly prompted your daughter to cry witchery upon George Jacobs that is now in jail.

PUTNAM: It is a lie!

DANFORTH: What proof do you submit for your charge, sir?

COREY: (*Emphatically.)* The proof is there!—I have it from an honest man who heard Putnam say it! The day his daughter cried out on Jacobs, he said she’d given him a fair gift of land.

HATHORNE: And the name of this man?

COREY: (*Quietly*.) I will not give you no name. I mentioned my wife’s name once and I’ll burn in hell long enough for that. I stand mute.

DANFORTH: (*Rather regretfully*.) In that case, I have no choice but to arrest you for contempt of this court, do you know that?

COREY: This is a hearing; you cannot clap me for contempt of a hearing.

DANFORTH: Oh, it is a proper lawyer! Do you wish me to declare the court in full session here?—or will you give me good reply?

COREY: I cannot give you no name, sir, I cannot….

DANFORTH: You are a foolish old man. Mr. Cheever, (*Cheever crosses to stool above table. Sits, opens writing box, prepares to write. Puts on glasses*.) begin the record. The court is now is session. I ask you, Mister Corey…

PROCTOR: Your Honor… he has the story in confidence, sir, and he…

PARRIS: The Devil lives on such confidences! (*To Danforth.)* Without confidences there could be no conspiracy, Your Honor!

HATHORNE: I think it must be broken, sir.

DANFORTH: (*To Corey, in friendly tone, but a little impatient*.) Old man, if your informant tells the truth let him come here openly like a decent man. But if he hides in anonymity I must know why. Now, sir, the government and central church demand of you the name of him who reported Mister Thomas Putnam a common murderer.

HALE: Excellency…

DANFORTH: Mister Hale.

HALE: (*Regretfully.)* We cannot blink it more. There is a prodigious fear of this court in the country…. (*Corey nods slightly in agreement.)*
DANFORTH: (*He is angered now.)* Reproach me not with the fear in the country; there is fear in the country because there is a moving plot to topple Christ in the country!

HALE: But it does not follow that everyone accused is part of it.

DANFORTH: No uncorrupted man may fear this court, Mister Hale! (*Directly at Proctor*.) None! Mr. Corey, you are under arrest in contempt of this court. Now sit you down and take counsel with yourself, or you will be set in the jail until you decide to answer all questions.

PROCTOR: Ay, sir. She swears now that she never saw Satan; nor any spirit, vague or clear, that Satan may have sent to hurt her. And she declares her friends are lying now.

DANFORTH: Her deposition, Mister Proctor. (*Proctor hands it to him. Hathorne goes to L. of Danforth and starts reading. Parris comes to his side.)*
PARRIS: (*Timidly*.) I should like to question…

DANFORTH: (His first real outburst, in which his contempt for Parris is clear.) Mister Parris, I bid you be silent! Sit you down, Mr. Proctor. You sit there. (*To Mary, indicating bench D.S. of table. Proctor takes Mary to bench, returns and sits L. of table*.) Mister Cheever, will you go into the court and bring the children here. (*Cheever gets up, goes out D.R. Danforth now turns to Mary.)* Mary Warren, how came you to this turnabout? Has Mister Proctor threatened you for this deposition?

DANFORTH: Has he ever threatened you?

MARY: No, sir.

DANFORTH: Then you tell me that you sat in my court, callously lying when you knew that people would hang by your evidence? Answer me!

MARY: (*Almost inaudibly*.) I did, sir.

DANFORTH: How were you instructed in your life?—Do you not know that God damns all liars? Or is it now that you lie?

MARY: No, sir—I am with God now.

DANFORTH: You are with God now.
DANFORTH: I will tell you this—you are either lying now, or you were lying in the court, and in either case you have committed perjury and you will go to jail for it. You cannot lightly say you lied, Mary. Do you know that?

MARY: I cannot lie no more. I am with God, I am with God…. (But she breaks into sobs at the thought of it. ENTER Cheever, Susanna Wallcott, Mercy Lewis, and finally Abigail D.R.)

DANFORTH: Sit you down, children. (*Silently they sit*.) Your friend Mary Warren has given us a deposition. In which she swears that she never saw familiar spirits, apparitions, nor any manifest of the Devil. She claims as well, that none of you have seen these things either. Now, children, this is a court of law. The law, based upon the Bible, and the Bible writ by Almighty God, forbid the practice of witchcraft, and describe death as the penalty thereof. But, likewise, children, the law and Bible damn all liars, and bearers of false witness. Now then… it does not escape me that this deposition may be devised to blind us; (*To Hathorne*.) it may well be that Mary Warren has been conquered by Satan who sends her here to distract our sacred purpose. If so, her neck will break for it. But if she speaks true, I bid you now drop your guile and confess your pretense, for a quick confession will go easier with you. Abigail Williams, rise. (*Abigail rises slowly*.) Is there any truth in this?

ABIGAIL: (*A contemptuous look at Mary*.) No, sir.

DANFORTH: Children, a very auger bit will now be turned into your souls until your honesty is proved. Will either of you change your positions now, or do you force me to hard questioning?

ABIGAIL: I have naught to change, sir. She lies.

DANFORTH: (*To Mary*.) You would still go on with this?

MARY: (*Faintly*.) Aye, sir.

DANFORTH: (*To Abigail*.) A poppet were discovered in Mister 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 make it, and witnessed how she herself stuck her needle into it for safe-keeping. What say you to that?

ABIGAIL: *(A slight note of indignation*.) It is a lie, sir. (*Mary looks at Abigail, then back*.)

DANFORTH: While you worked for Mister Proctor, did you see poppets in that house?

ABIGAIL: Goody Proctor always kept poppets.

PROCTOR: (*Quietly.)* Your Honor, my wife never kept no poppets. Mary Warren confesses it was her poppet.

CHEEVER: Your Excellency.

DANFORTH: Mister Cheever.

CHEEVER: When I spoke with Goody Proctor in that house, she said she never kept no poppets. But she said she did keep poppets when she were a girl.

PROCTOR: She has not been a girl these fifteen years, your Honor.

HATHORNE: But a poppet will keep fifteen years, will it not?

PROCTOR: It will keep if it is kept, but Mary Warren swears she never saw no poppets in my house, nor anywhere else. Mister Danforth, what profit Mary Warren to turn herself about? What may she gain but hard questioning and worse?

DANFORTH: (*With astonishment*.) 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: (*Incredulously.)* This child would murder your wife?

PROCTOR: It is not a child, sir. Now hear me, sir. In the sight of the congregation she were twice this year put out of this meetin’ house for laughter during prayer. (*Abigail bows head*.)

DANFORTH: (*Shocked, he turns to Abigail*.) What’s this? Laughter during…!

PARRIS: I… do believe it happened once—she is sometimes silly, but she is solemn now.

COREY: Ay, now she is solemn and goes to hang people!

DANFORTH: Quiet, man….

HATHORNE: Surely it have no bearing on the question, sir. He charges contemplation of murder.

DANFORTH: Aye…. (*Studying Abigail*.) But it strikes hard upon me that she will laugh at prayer. Continue, Mister Proctor.

PROCTOR: Mary.—Now tell the Governor how you danced in the woods.

DANFORTH: (*To Mary. Shocked*.) What is this dancing?
MARY: I… (*She glances at Abigail who is staring down at her remorselessly*.) Mister Proctor…

PROCTOR: Mister Parris discovered them there in the dead of night!—there’s the “child” she is!

DANFORTH: Mister Parris…

PARRIS: I can only say, sir, that I never found any of them—naked, and this man is…

DANFORTH: You discovered them dancing in the woods? (*Eyes on Parris, he points at Abigail*.) Abigail?

HALE: Excellency, when I first arrived from Beverly, Mister Parris told me that.

DANFORTH: Do you deny it, Mister Parris?

PARRIS: I do not, sir, but...

DANFORTH: But she have danced?

PARRIS*: (Unwillingly.)* Aye, sir.

HATHORNE: Excellency, will you permit me? (*Points at Mary*.)

DANFORTH: Pray, proceed.

HATHORNE: You say you never saw no spirits, Mary, were never threatened or afflicted by any manifest of the Devil or the Devil’s agents?

MARY: (*Very faintly.)* No, sir.

HATHORNE: And yet, when people accused of witchery confronted you in court, you would faint, saying their spirits came out of their bodies and choked you….

MARY: That were pretense, sir.

HATHORNE: Then can you pretend to faint now?

MARY: Now?

PARRIS: Why not? Now there are no spirits attacking you, for none in this room is accused of witchcraft. So let you turn yourself cold now, let you pretend you are attacked now, let you faint. Faint!

MARY: Faint?

PARRIS: Aye, faint! Prove to us how you pretended in the court so many times.

MARY: (*Looks to Proctor*.) I… cannot faint now, sir.

PROCTOR: (*Alarmed. Quietly.)* Can you not pretend it?

MARY: I… I have no sense of it now, I…
DANFORTH: Might it be that here we have no afflicting spirit loose, but in the court there were some?

MARY: *(Desperately*.) I never saw no spirits.

PARRIS: Your Excellency, this is a trick to blind the court.

MARY: It’s not a trick! I… I used to faint because… I… I thought I saw spirits.

DANFORTH: Thought you saw them!

MARY: But I did not, your Honor.

HATHORNE: How could you think you saw them unless you saw them?

MARY: I… I cannot tell you how, but I did. I… I heard the other girls screaming, and you, your Honor, you seemed to believe them and I… It were only sport in the beginning, sir, but then the whole world cried spirits, spirits, and I… I promise you, Mister Danforth, I only thought I saw them but I did not.

PARRIS: Surely your Excellency is not taken by this simple lie.

DANFORTH: (*A threat.)* Abigail Williams! (*She holds her chin up*.) I bid you now search your heart, and tell me this—and beware of it, child, to God every soul is precious and His vengeance is terrible on them that take life without cause. Is it possible, child, that the spirits you have seen are illusion only, some deception that may cross your mind when…

ABIGAIL: (*A step to him. Unafraid*.) I have been hurt, Mister Danforth; I have seen my blood runnin’ out! I have been near to murdered every day because I done my duty pointing out the Devil’s people—and this is my reward? To be mistrusted, denied, questioned like a…

DANFORTH: (*He weakens*.) Child, I do not mistrust you….

ABIGAIL: (*NOW it pours. She does not wait for his speech*.) Let you beware, Mister Danforth—think you to be so mighty that the power of Hell may not turn your wits?!—beware of it! (*She shivers and looks at Mary, then folds her arms around her.)*—there is…

HALE: This girl has always struck me false! She… (*Abigail with a weird cry screams up to ceiling*.)

ABIGAIL: You will not! Begone! Begone, I say! (*Mercy and Susanna rise, looking up*.)

DANFORTH: What is it, child? (*She is transfixed—with all the girls, in complete silence, she is open-mouthed, agape at ceiling, and in great fear.)* Girls! Why do you…?

MERCY: It’s on the beam!—behind the rafter!

DANFORTH: (*Looking up.)* Where!

ABIGAIL: Why…? Why do you come, yellow bird?

PROCTOR: Where’s a bird? I see no bird!
ABIGAIL: (*To ceiling, in a genuine conversation with the “bird” as though trying to talk it out of attacking her.)* My face? My face?! But God made my face; you cannot want to tear my face. Envy is a deadly sin, Mary.

ANN: Her claws, she’s stretching her claws!

PROCTOR: Lies—lies—

ABIGAIL: (*Backing further, still fixed above.)* Mary, please don’t hurt me!

MARY: (*To Danforth*.) I’m not hurting her!

DANFORTH: Why does she see this vision?!

MARY: (*Rises.)* She sees nothin’!

ABIGAIL: (*As though hypnotized, mimicking the exact tone of Mary’s cry.)* She sees nothin’!

MARY: Abby, you mustn’t!

ABIGAIL: (*Now all girls join, transfixed*.) Abby, you mustn’t!

MARY: (*To all girls, frantically*.) I’m here, I’m here!

GIRLS: I’m here, I’m here!

DANFORTH: Mary Warren!—Draw back your spirit out of them!

MARY: Mister Danforth…!

GIRLS: Mister Danforth!

DANFORTH: Have you compacted with the Devil? Have you?

MARY: Never, never!

GIRLS: Never, never!

DANFORTH: (*Growing hysterical*.) Why can they only repeat you?!

PROCTOR: Give me a whip—I’ll stop it!

MARY: They’re sporting…!

GIRLS: *(Cutting her off.)* They’re sporting!

MARY: (*Turning on them all, hysterically and stamping her feet*.) Abby, stop it!

GIRLS: (*Stamping their feet.)* Abby, stop it!

MARY: (*Screaming it out at top of her lungs, and raising her fists.)* Stop it!!

GIRLS: (*All raising their fists.)* Stop it!!