

PROCTOR 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 Excellency . . .

DANFORTH Do you deny it, Mister Parris?

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.

PARRIS Excellency, since I come to Salem this man is blackening my name. He . . .

DANFORTH In a moment, sir. (*To MARY. Shocked.*) What is this dancing?

MARY I . . . (*She glances at ABIGAIL who is staring down at her remorselessly.*) Mister Proctor . . .

PROCTOR Abigail leads the girls to the woods, your Honor, and they have danced there naked . . . (*HALE crosses slowly, looks at ABIGAIL and the girls.*)

PARRIS Your Honor, this . . .

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 I never saw any of them naked.

DANFORTH But she have danced?

PARRIS (*Unwillingly.*) Aye, sir.

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

DANFORTH Pray, proceed.