

- ANN I take it on my soul, (*Rising.*) but who else may surely tell us what person murdered my babies.
- PARRIS Woman!
- ANN They were murdered, Mister Parris! And mark this *proof!* – mark it! Last night my Ruth were ever so close to their little spirits, I know it, sir. For how else is she struck dumb now except some power of darkness would stop her mouth! It is a marvellous sign, Mister Parris!
- PUTNAM Don't you understand it, sir? There is a murdering witch among us bound to keep herself in the dark. Let your enemies make of it what they will, you cannot blink it more.
- PARRIS (*To ABIGAIL.*) Then you were conjuring spirits last night.
- ABIGAIL Not I, sir, not I. – Tituba and Ruth.
- PARRIS Now I am undone.
- PUTNAM You are not undone. Let you take hold here. Wait for no one to charge you – declare it yourself. You have *discovered witchcraft* . . .
- PARRIS In my house!? In my house, Thomas? – they will topple me with this! They will make of it a . . . (*Enter MERCY LEWIS, a sly, merciless girl of eighteen.*)
- MERCY Your pardons . . . I only thought to see how Betty is.
- PUTNAM Why aren't you home? Who's with Ruth?
- MERCY Her grandma come. She's improved a little, I think – she give a powerful sneeze before.
- ANN Ah, there's a sign of life!

- MERCY I'd fear no more, Goody Putnam, it were a grand sneeze; another like it will shake her wits together, I'm sure.
- PARRIS Will you leave me now, Thomas, I would pray a while alone. . . .
- ABIGAIL Uncle, you've prayed since midnight. Why do you not go down and . . . ?
- PARRIS No – no. I'll wait till Mister Hale arrives.
- PUTNAM (*To PARRIS.*) Now *look* you, sir – let you strike out against the Devil and the village will bless you for it! Come down, speak to them – pray with them – they're thirsting for your word, Mister! Surely you'll pray with them.
- PARRIS I have no stomach for disputation this morning. I will lead them in a psalm. But let you say nothing of witchcraft yet. I will not discuss it. The cause is yet unknown. I have had enough contention since I came, I want no more. (*PUTNAM crosses L. to above table, gets hat, crosses and exits.*)
- ANN *Mercy*, you go home to Ruth, d'ye hear?
- MERCY Aye, Mum. (*ANN goes out.*)
- PARRIS If she starts for the window, cry for me at once. (*Crossing to door.*)
- ABIGAIL Yes, Uncle.
- PARRIS There is a terrible power in her arms today. (*Goes out with PUTNAM.*)
- ABIGAIL How is Ruth sick?
- MERCY It's weirdish, I know not – she seems to walk like a dead one since last night.