

PARRIS Now look you, child – I have no desire to punish you; that will come in its time. But if you trafficked with spirits in the forest, I must know it, for surely my enemies will, and they'll ruin me with it . . .

ABIGAIL But we never conjured spirits.

PARRIS Then why can she not move herself since midnight? This child is desperate! It must come out – my enemies will bring it out. Let me know what you done there. Abigail, do you understand that I have many enemies?

ABIGAIL I know it, Uncle.

PARRIS There is a faction that is sworn to drive me from my pulpit. Do you understand that?

ABIGAIL I think so, sir.

PARRIS Now then – in the midst of such disruption, my own household is discovered to be the very center of some obscene practice. Abominations are done in the forest . . .

ABIGAIL It were only sport, Uncle!

PARRIS I saw Tituba waving her arms over the fire when I came on you; why were she doing that? And I heard a screeching and gibberish comin' from her mouth . . .

ABIGAIL She always sings her Barbados songs, and we dance.

PARRIS I cannot blink what I saw, Abigail – for my enemies will not blink it. I saw a dress lying in the grass.

ABIGAIL A dress?

PARRIS Aye, a dress. And I thought I saw a . . . someone naked running through the trees!

ABIGAIL No one was naked! You mistake yourself, Uncle!

PARRIS I saw it! Now tell me true, Abigail. Now my ministry's at stake; my ministry and perhaps your cousin's life . . . Whatever abomination you have done, give me all of it now, for I dare not be taken unaware when I go before them down there.

ABIGAIL There is nothin' more. I swear it, Uncle.

PARRIS Abigail, I have fought here three long years to bend these stiff-necked people to me, and now, just now when there must be some good respect for me in the parish, you compromise my very character. I have given you a home, child, I have put clothes upon your back – now give me upright answer – your name in the town – it is entirely white, is it not?

ABIGAIL Why, I am sure it is, sir, there be no blush about my name.

PARRIS Abigail, is there any other cause than you have told me, for Goody Proctor dischargin' you? It has troubled me that you are now seven months out of their house, and in all this time no other family has ever called for your service.

ABIGAIL They want slaves, not such as I. Let them send to Barbados for that, I will not black my face for any of them! (*Enter MRS. ANN PUTNAM. She is a twisted soul of forty-five, a death-ridden woman, haunted by dreams.*)

PARRIS No – no, I cannot have anyone. Why, Goody Putnam, come in.

ANN It is a marvel. It is surely a stroke of hell upon you . . .

PARRIS No, Goody Putnam, it is . . .