

# The Crucible

## Act II

Arthur Miller

### REVIEW AND ANTICIPATE

As Act I draws to a close, Salem is in the grip of mounting hysteria. What had begun as concern over the strange behavior of Betty—a reaction that may have stemmed from guilty feelings about her activities in the woods the night before—had swelled by the act's end to a mass hysteria, in which accusations of witchcraft were being made and accepted against a growing number of Salem's citizens. As you read, pay close attention to the nature of the accusations and the growing numbers of the accused.



- 1 *The common room of PROCTOR'S house, eight days later.*
- 2 *At the right is a door opening on the fields outside.*
- 3 *A fireplace is at the left, and behind it a stairway leading upstairs. It is the low, dark, and rather long living room of the time. As the curtain rises, the room is empty. From above, ELIZABETH is heard softly singing to the children. Presently the door opens and JOHN PROCTOR enters, carrying his gun. He glances about the room as he comes toward the fireplace, then halts for an instant as he hears her singing. He continues on to the fireplace, leans the gun against the wall as he swings a pot out of the fire and smells it. Then he lifts out the ladle and tastes. He is not quite pleased. He reaches to a cupboard, takes a pinch of salt, and drops it into the pot. As he is tasting again, her footsteps*

### NOTES

*are heard on the stair. He swings the pot into the fireplace and goes to a basin and washes his hands and face. ELIZABETH enters.*

- 4 **Elizabeth:** What keeps you so late? It's almost dark.
- 5 **Proctor:** I were planting far out to the forest edge.
- 6 **Elizabeth:** Oh, you're done then.
- 7 **Proctor:** Aye, the farm is seeded. The boys asleep?
- 8 **Elizabeth:** They will be soon. *And she goes to the fireplace, proceeds to ladle up stew in a dish.*
- 9 **Proctor:** Pray now for a fair summer.
- 10 **Elizabeth:** Aye.
- 11 **Proctor:** Are you well today?
- 12 **Elizabeth:** I am. *She brings the plate to the table, and, indicating the food:* It is a rabbit.
- 13 **Proctor, going to the table:** Oh, is it! In Jonathan's trap?
- 14 **Elizabeth:** No, she walked into the house this afternoon; I found her sittin' in the corner like she come to visit.
- 15 **Proctor:** Oh, that's a good sign walkin' in.
- 16 **Elizabeth:** Pray God. It hurt my heart to strip her, poor rabbit. *She sits and watches him taste it.*
- 17 **Proctor:** It's well seasoned.
- 18 **Elizabeth, blushing with pleasure:** I took great care. She's tender?
- 19 **Proctor:** Aye. *He eats. She watches him.* I think we'll see green fields soon. It's warm as blood beneath the clods.
- 20 **Elizabeth:** That's well.
- 21 **PROCTOR** *eats, then looks up.*
- 22 **Proctor:** If the crop is good I'll buy George Jacob's heifer. How would that please you?
- 23 **Elizabeth:** Aye, it would.
- 24 **Proctor, with a grin:** I mean to please you, Elizabeth.
- 25 **Elizabeth—it is hard to say:** I know it, John.
- 26 *He gets up, goes to her, kisses her. She receives it. With a certain disappointment, he returns to the table.*
- 27 **Proctor, as gently as he can:** Cider?
- 28 **Elizabeth, with a sense of reprimanding herself for having forgot:** Aye! *She gets up and goes and pours a glass for him. He now arches his back.*
- 29 **Proctor:** This farm's a continent when you go foot by foot droppin' seeds in it.
- 30 **Elizabeth, coming with the cider:** It must be.

- 31 **Proctor**, *drinks a long draught, then, putting the glass down*: You ought to bring some flowers in the house.
- 32 **Elizabeth**: Oh! I forgot! I will tomorrow.
- 33 **Proctor**: It's winter in here yet. On Sunday let you come with me, and we'll walk the farm together; I never see such a load of flowers on the earth. *With good feeling he goes and looks up at the sky through the open doorway*. Lilacs have a purple smell. Lilac is the smell of nightfall, I think. Massachusetts is a beauty in the spring!
- 34 **Elizabeth**: Aye, it is.
- 35 *There is a pause. She is watching him from the table as he stands there absorbing the night. It is as though she would speak but cannot. Instead, now, she takes up his plate and glass and fork and goes with them to the basin. Her back is turned to him. He turns to her and watches her. A sense of their separation rises.*
- 36 **Proctor**: I think you're sad again. Are you?
- 37 **Elizabeth**—*she doesn't want friction, and yet she must*: You come so late I thought you'd gone to Salem this afternoon.
- 38 **Proctor**: Why? I have no business in Salem.
- 39 **Elizabeth**: You did speak of going, earlier this week.
- 40 **Proctor**—*he knows what she means*: I thought better of it since.
- 41 **Elizabeth**: Mary Warren's there today.
- 42 **Proctor**: Why'd you let her? You heard me forbid her go to Salem any more!
- 43 **Elizabeth**: I couldn't stop her.
- 44 **Proctor**, *holding back a full* **condemnation** *of her*: It is a fault, it is a fault, Elizabeth—you're the mistress here, not Mary Warren.
- 45 **Elizabeth**: She frightened all my strength away.
- 46 **Proctor**: How may that mouse frighten you, Elizabeth? You—
- 47 **Elizabeth**: It is a mouse no more. I forbid her go, and she raises up her chin like the daughter of a prince and says to me, "I must go to Salem, Goody Proctor; I am an official of the court!"
- 48 **Proctor**: Court! What court?
- 49 **Elizabeth**: Aye, it is a proper court they have now. They've sent four judges out of Boston, she says, weighty **magistrates** of the General Court, and at the head sits the Deputy Governor of the Province.
- 50 **Proctor**, *astonished*: Why, she's mad.
- 51 **Elizabeth**: I would to God she were. There be fourteen people in the jail now, she says. **PROCTOR** *simply looks at her, unable to grasp it*. And they'll be tried, and the court have power to hang them too, she says.

## NOTES

**condemnation** (kon deh-m NAY shuhn)  
*n.* very strong disapproval

**magistrates** (MAJ uh strays) *n.*  
 officials who have some of the powers of a judge

## NOTES

**1. part like . . . Israel** In the Bible, God commanded Moses, the leader of the Israelites, to part the Red Sea to enable the Israelites to escape from the Egyptians into Canaan.

### CLOSE READ

**ANNOTATE:** In paragraphs 55 through 66, mark details that relate to thought, belief, or conviction.

**QUESTION:** Why does Miller repeat these sorts of references?

**CONCLUDE:** What do these details suggest about the struggle the Proctors are experiencing?

- 52 **Proctor**, *scoffing but without conviction*: Ah, they'd never hang—
- 53 **Elizabeth**: The Deputy Governor promise hangin' if they'll not confess, John. The town's gone wild, I think. She speak of Abigail, and I thought she were a saint, to hear her. Abigail brings the other girls into the court, and where she walks the crowd will part like the sea for Israel.<sup>1</sup> And folks are brought before them, and if they scream and howl and fall to the floor—the person's clapped in the jail for bewitchin' them.
- 54 **Proctor**, *wide-eyed*: Oh, it is a black mischief.
- 55 **Elizabeth**: I think you must go to Salem, John. *He turns to her.* I think so. You must tell them it is a fraud.
- 56 **Proctor**, *thinking beyond this*: Aye, it is, it is surely.
- 57 **Elizabeth**: Let you go to Ezekiel Cheever—he knows you well. And tell him what she said to you last week in her uncle's house. She said it had naught to do with witchcraft, did she not?
- 58 **Proctor**, *in thought*: Aye, she did, she did. *Now, a pause.*
- 59 **Elizabeth**, *quietly, fearing to anger him by prodding*: God forbid you keep that from the court, John. I think they must be told.
- 60 **Proctor**, *quietly, struggling with his thought*: Aye, they must, they must. It is a wonder they do believe her.
- 61 **Elizabeth**: I would go to Salem now, John—let you go tonight.
- 62 **Proctor**: I'll think on it.
- 63 **Elizabeth**, *with her courage now*: You cannot keep it, John.
- 64 **Proctor**, *angering*: I know I cannot keep it. I say I will think on it!
- 65 **Elizabeth**, *hurt, and very coldly*: Good, then, let you think on it. *She stands and starts to walk out of the room.*
- 66 **Proctor**: I am only wondering how I may prove what she told me, Elizabeth. If the girl's a saint now, I think it is not easy to prove she's fraud, and the town gone so silly. She told it to me in a room alone—I have no proof for it.
- 67 **Elizabeth**: You were alone with her?
- 68 **Proctor**, *stubbornly*: For a moment alone, aye.
- 69 **Elizabeth**: Why, then, it is not as you told me.
- 70 **Proctor**, *his anger rising*: For a moment, I say. The others come in soon after.
- 71 **Elizabeth**, *quietly—she has suddenly lost all faith in him*: Do as you wish, then. *She starts to turn.*
- 72 **Proctor**: Woman. *She turns to him.* I'll not have your suspicion any more.
- 73 **Elizabeth**, *a little loftily*: I have no—
- 74 **Proctor**: I'll not have it!

- 75 **Elizabeth:** Then let you not earn it.
- 76 **Proctor,** *with a violent undertone:* You doubt me yet?
- 77 **Elizabeth,** *with a smile, to keep her dignity:* John, if it were not Abigail that you must go to hurt, would you falter now? I think not.
- 78 **Proctor:** Now look you—
- 79 **Elizabeth:** I see what I see, John.
- 80 **Proctor,** *with solemn warning:* You will not judge me more, Elizabeth. I have good reason to think before I charge fraud on Abigail, and I will think on it. Let you look to your own improvement before you go to judge your husband any more. I have forgot Abigail, and—
- 81 **Elizabeth:** And I.
- 82 **Proctor:** Spare me! You forget nothin' and forgive nothin'. Learn charity, woman. I have gone tiptoe in this house all seven month since she is gone. I have not moved from there to there without I think to please you, and still an everlasting funeral marches round your heart. I cannot speak but I am doubted, every moment judged for lies, as though I come into a court when I come into this house!
- 83 **Elizabeth:** John, you are not open with me. You saw her with a crowd, you said. Now you—
- 84 **Proctor:** I'll plead my honesty no more, Elizabeth.
- 85 **Elizabeth—***now she would justify herself:* John. I am only—
- 86 **Proctor:** No more! I should have roared you down when first you told me your suspicion. But I wilted, and, like a Christian, I confessed. Confessed! Some dream I had must have mistaken you for God that day. But you're not, you're not, and let you remember it! Let you look sometimes for the goodness in me, and judge me not.
- 87 **Elizabeth:** I do not judge you. The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you. I never thought you but a good man, John—*with a smile—*only somewhat bewildered.
- 88 **Proctor,** *laughing bitterly:* Oh. Elizabeth, your justice would freeze beer! *He turns suddenly toward a sound outside. He starts for the door as MARY WARREN enters. As soon as he sees her, he goes directly to her and grabs her by the cloak, furious.* How do you go to Salem when I forbid it? Do you mock me? *Shaking her.* I'll whip you if you dare leave this house again!
- Strangely, she doesn't resist him, but hangs limply by his grip.*
- 89 **Mary Warren:** I am sick, I am sick, Mr. Proctor. Pray, pray, hurt me not. *Her strangeness throws him off, and her evident pallor and weakness. He frees her.* My insides are all shuddery; I am in the proceedings all day, sir.

## NOTES

**proceedings** (pruh SEE dihngz) *n.*  
events in a court of law

2. **poppet** *n.* doll.

- 90 **Proctor**, *with draining anger—his curiosity is draining it*: And what of these **proceedings** here? When will you proceed to keep this house, as you are paid nine pound a year to do—and my wife not wholly well?
- 91 *As though to compensate*, MARY WARREN goes to ELIZABETH with a small rag doll.
- 92 **Mary Warren**: I made a gift for you today, Goody Proctor. I had to sit long hours in a chair, and passed the time with sewing.
- 93 **Elizabeth**, *perplexed, looking at the doll*: Why, thank you, it's a fair poppet.<sup>2</sup>
- 94 **Mary Warren**, *with a trembling, decayed voice*: We must all love each other now, Goody Proctor.
- 95 **Elizabeth**, *amazed at her strangeness*: Aye, indeed we must.
- 96 **Mary Warren**, *glancing at the room*: I'll get up early in the morning and clean the house. I must sleep now. *She turns and starts off.*
- 97 **Proctor**: Mary. *She halts*. Is it true? There be fourteen women arrested?
- 98 **Mary Warren**: No, sir. There be thirty-nine now—*She suddenly breaks off and sobs and sits down, exhausted.*
- 99 **Elizabeth**: Why, she's weepin'! What ails you, child?
- 100 **Mary Warren**: Goody Osburn—will hang!
- 101 *There is a shocked pause, while she sobs.*
- 102 **Proctor**: Hang! *He calls into her face*. Hang, y'say?
- 103 **Mary Warren**, *through her weeping*: Aye.
- 104 **Proctor**: The Deputy Governor will permit it?
- 105 **Mary Warren**: He sentenced her. He must. To ameliorate it: But not Sarah Good. For Sarah Good confessed, y'see.
- 106 **Proctor**: Confessed! To what?
- 107 **Mary Warren**: That she—in horror at the memory—she sometimes made a compact with Lucifer, and wrote her name in his black book—with her blood—and bound herself to torment Christians till God's thrown down—and we all must worship Hell forevermore.
- 108 *Pause.*
- 109 **Proctor**: But—surely you know what a jabberer she is. Did you tell them that?
- 110 **Mary Warren**: Mr. Proctor, in open court she near to choked us all to death.
- 111 **Proctor**: How, choked you?
- 112 **Mary Warren**: She sent her spirit out.
- 113 **Elizabeth**: Oh, Mary, Mary, surely you—

- 114 **Mary Warren**, *with an indignant edge*: She tried to kill me many times, Goody Proctor!
- 115 **Elizabeth**: Why, I never heard you mention that before.
- 116 **Mary Warren**: I never knew it before. I never knew anything before. When she come into the court I say to myself, I must not accuse this woman, for she sleep in ditches, and so very old and poor. But then—then she sit there, denying and denying, and I feel a misty coldness climbin' up my back, and the skin on my skull begin to creep, and I feel a clamp around my neck and I cannot breathe air; and then—*entranced*—I hear a voice, a screamin' voice, and it were my voice—and all at once I remembered everything she done to me!
- 117 **Proctor**: Why? What did she do to you?
- 118 **Mary Warren**, *like one awakened to a marvelous secret insight*: So many time, Mr. Proctor, she come to this very door, beggin' bread and a cup of cider—and mark this: whenever I turned her away empty, she *mumbled*.
- 119 **Elizabeth**: Mumbled! She may mumble if she's hungry.
- 120 **Mary Warren**: But *what* does she mumble? You must remember, Goody Proctor. Last month—a Monday, I think—she walked away, and I thought my guts would burst for two days after. Do you remember it?
- 121 **Elizabeth**: Why—I do, I think, but—
- 122 **Mary Warren**: And so I told that to Judge Hathorne, and he asks her so. "Goody Osburn," says he, "what curse do you mumble that this girl must fall sick after turning you away?" And then she replies—*mimicking an old crone*—"Why, your excellence, no curse at all. I only say my commandments; I hope I may say my commandments," says she!
- 123 **Elizabeth**: And that's an upright answer.
- 124 **Mary Warren**: Aye, but then Judge Hathorne say, "Recite for us your commandments!"—*leaning avidly toward them*—and of all the ten she could not say a single one. She never knew no commandments, and they had her in a flat lie!
- 125 **Proctor**: And so condemned her?
- 126 **Mary Warren**, *now a little strained, seeing his stubborn doubt*: Why, they must when she condemned herself.



## NOTES

### CLOSE READ

**ANNOTATE:** In paragraphs 116–118, mark details that relate to new knowledge or awareness.

**QUESTION:** Why does Miller include these details?

**CONCLUDE:** What do these details suggest about the ways in which the characters and situation in Salem are changing?

- 127 **Proctor:** But the proof, the proof!
- 128 **Mary Warren**, *with greater impatience with him:* I told you the proof. It's hard proof, hard as rock, the judges said.
- 129 **Proctor**, *pauses an instant, then:* You will not go to court again, Mary Warren.
- 130 **Mary Warren:** I must tell you, sir, I will be gone every day now. I am amazed you do not see what weighty work we do.
- 131 **Proctor:** What work you do? It's strange work for a Christian girl to hang old women!
- 132 **Mary Warren:** But, Mr. Proctor, they will not hang them if they confess. Sarah Good will only sit in jail some time—*recalling*—and here's a wonder for you: think on this. Goody Good is pregnant!
- 133 **Elizabeth:** Pregnant! Are they mad? The woman's near to sixty!
- 134 **Mary Warren:** They had Doctor Griggs examine her, and she's full to the brim. And smokin' a pipe all these years, and no husband either! But she's safe, thank God, for they'll not hurt the innocent child. But be that not a marvel? You must see it, sir, it's God's work we do. So I'll be gone every day for some time. I'm—I am an official of the court, they say, and I—*She has been edging toward offstage.*
- 135 **Proctor:** I'll official you! *He strides to the mantel, takes down the whip hanging there.*
- 136 **Mary Warren**, *terrified, but coming erect, striving for her authority:* I'll not stand whipping any more!
- 137 **Elizabeth**, *hurriedly, as PROCTOR approaches:* Mary, promise now you'll stay at home—
- 138 **Mary Warren**, *backing from him, but keeping her erect posture, striving, striving for her way:* The Devil's loose in Salem, Mr. Proctor: we must discover where he's hiding!
- 139 **Proctor:** I'll whip the Devil out of you! *With whip raised he reaches out for her, and she streaks away and yells.*
- 140 **Mary Warren**, *pointing at ELIZABETH:* I saved her life today!
- 141 *Silence. His whip comes down.*
- 142 **Elizabeth**, *softly:* I am accused?
- 143 **Mary Warren**, *quaking:* Somewhat mentioned. But I said I never see no sign you ever sent your spirit out to hurt no one, and seeing I do live so closely with you, they dismissed it.
- 144 **Elizabeth:** Who accused me?
- 145 **Mary Warren:** I am bound by law, I cannot tell it. *To PROCTOR:* I only hope you'll not be so sarcastical no more. Four judges and

the King's deputy sat to dinner with us but an hour ago. I—  
I would have you speak civilly to me, from this out.

146 **Proctor**, *in horror, muttering in disgust at her*: Go to bed.

147 **Mary Warren**, *with a stamp of her foot*: I'll not be ordered to bed  
no more, Mr. Proctor! I am eighteen and a woman, however  
single!

148 **Proctor**: Do you wish to sit up? Then sit up.

149 **Mary Warren**: I wish to go to bed!

150 **Proctor**, *in anger*: Good night, then!

151 **Mary Warren**: Good night. *Dissatisfied, uncertain of herself, she  
goes out. Wide-eyed, both PROCTOR and ELIZABETH stand staring.*

152 **Elizabeth**, *quietly*: Oh, the noose, the noose is up!

153 **Proctor**: There'll be no noose.

154 **Elizabeth**: She wants me dead. I knew all week it would come  
to this!

155 **Proctor**, *without conviction*: They dismissed it. You heard  
her say—

156 **Elizabeth**: And what of tomorrow? She will cry me out until  
they take me!

157 **Proctor**: Sit you down.

158 **Elizabeth**: She wants me dead, John, you know it!

159 **Proctor**: I say sit down! *She sits, trembling. He speaks quietly,  
trying to keep his wits.* Now we must be wise, Elizabeth.

160 **Elizabeth**, *with sarcasm, and a sense of being lost*: Oh, indeed,  
indeed!

161 **Proctor**: Fear nothing. I'll find Ezekiel Cheever. I'll tell him she  
said it were all sport.

162 **Elizabeth**: John, with so many in the Jail, more than Cheever's  
help is needed now, I think. Would you favor me with this? Go  
to Abigail.

163 **Proctor**, *his soul hardening as he senses . . .*: What have I to say to  
Abigail?

164 **Elizabeth**, *delicately*: John—grant me this. You have a faulty  
understanding of young girls. There is a promise made in any  
bed—

165 **Proctor**, *striving against his anger*: What promise!

166 **Elizabeth**: Spoke or silent, a promise is surely made. And she  
may dote on it now—I am sure she does—and thinks to kill me,  
then to take my place.

167 PROCTOR'S *anger is rising; he cannot speak.*

## NOTES

### CLOSE READ

**ANNOTATE:** In paragraphs 146–151, mark details in both dialogue and stage directions that relate to childish behavior, and others that relate to mature behavior.

**QUESTION:** Why does Miller include these details?

**CONCLUDE:** What is the effect of these details, particularly in characterizing Mary Warren and her motivations?

- 168 **Elizabeth:** It is her dearest hope, John, I know it. There be a thousand names: why does she call mine? There be a certain danger in calling such a name—I am no Goody Good that sleeps in ditches, nor Osburn, drunk and half-witted. She'd dare not call out such a farmer's wife but there be monstrous profit in it. She thinks to take my place, John.
- 169 **Proctor:** She cannot think it! *He knows it is true.*
- 170 **Elizabeth, "reasonably":** John, have you ever shown her somewhat of contempt? She cannot pass you in the church but you will blush—
- 171 **Proctor:** I may blush for my sin.
- 172 **Elizabeth:** I think she sees another meaning in that blush.
- 173 **Proctor:** And what see you? What see you, Elizabeth?
- 174 **Elizabeth, "conceding":** I think you be somewhat ashamed, for I am there, and she so close.
- 175 **Proctor:** When will you know me, woman? Were I stone I would have cracked for shame this seven month!
- 176 **Elizabeth:** Then go and tell her she's a whore. Whatever promise she may sense—break it. John, break it.
- 177 **Proctor, between his teeth:** Good, then. I'll go. *He starts for his rifle.*
- 178 **Elizabeth, trembling, fearfully:** Oh, how unwillingly!
- 179 **Proctor, turning on her, rifle in hand:** I will curse her hotter than the oldest cinder in hell. But pray, begrudge me not my anger!
- 180 **Elizabeth:** Your anger! I only ask you—
- 181 **Proctor:** Woman, am I so base? Do you truly think me base?
- 182 **Elizabeth:** I never called you base.
- 183 **Proctor:** Then how do you charge me with such a promise? The promise that a stallion gives a mare I gave that girl!
- 184 **Elizabeth:** Then why do you anger with me when I bid you break it?
- 185 **Proctor:** Because it speaks deceit, and I am honest! But I'll plead no more! I see now your spirit twists around the single error of my life, and I will never tear it free!
- 186 **Elizabeth, crying out:** You'll tear it free—when you come to know that I will be your only wife, or no wife at all! She has an arrow in you yet, John Proctor, and you know it well!
- 187 *Quite suddenly, as though from the air, a figure appears in the doorway. They start slightly. It is MR. HALE. He is different now—drawn a little, and there is a quality of deference, even of guilt, about his manner now.*
- 188 **Hale:** Good evening.