

THE CRUCIBLE

by Arthur Miller

ACT II

Arthur Miller's play is about the Salem witch trials. Written in reaction to the McCarthy investigations, it is also a powerful parable for our own time. Salem in 1692 was a place of political factions and struggles for land, wealth, and power; and religion became an expedient tool in this struggle. Young girls, one of them the daughter of a reverend, the other his niece, were caught dancing in the moonlight in the woods. In order to protect his shaky position in the community, the reverend declares that the girls were bewitched. The girls, to protect themselves from threats of punishment, confess their bewitchment and begin a series of accusations that shortly sends a score of citizens to the gallows.

The leader of the young girls is Abigail Williams, seventeen years old, headstrong, beautiful, sensual, and in love with John Proctor. Abigail worked on the Proctor farm, and she and Proctor had sexual relations. Elizabeth, Proctor's wife, learned of their activities and the girl was sent from the farm. In the seven months since the incident Elizabeth's suspicions and Proctor's guilt have not been dispelled.

At the time of the following scene the accusations of witchcraft have already begun. The scene takes place in the Proctors' home. John enters from outside, carrying his gun. He leans the gun against a bench, pours water from a pitcher into a washstand and begins to wash. Elizabeth enters.

ELIZABETH: What keeps you so late? It's almost dark.

PROCTOR: I were planting far out to the forest edge.

ELIZABETH: Oh, you're done then.

PROCTOR: Aye, the farm is seeded. The boys asleep? *Dips hands in water, wipes them.*

ELIZABETH, *removes water and towel, goes out left, and returns with dish of stew:* They will be soon. *Serves stew in a dish.*

PROCTOR: Pray now for a fair summer.

ELIZABETH, *goes out left, returns with another dish:* Aye.

PROCTOR: Are you well today?

ELIZABETH: I am. It is a rabbit.

PROCTOR: Oh, is it! In Jonathan's trap?

ELIZABETH: , No, she walked into the house this afternoon; I found her sittin' in the corner like she come to visit.

PROCTOR: Oh, that's a good sign walkin' in.

ELIZABETH: Pray God. It hurt my heart to strip her, poor rabbit.

PROCTOR: Oh, it is well seasoned.

ELIZABETH: I took great care. She's tender?

PROCTOR: Aye. I think we'll see green fields soon. It's warm as blood beneath the clods.

ELIZABETH: That's well.

PROCTOR: If the crop is good I'll buy George Jacobs' heifer. How would that please you?

ELIZABETH: Aye, it would.

PROCTOR: I mean to please you, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH, *it is hard to say:* I know it, John.

PROCTOR, *as gently as he can:* Cider?

ELIZABETH, *a sense of her reprimanding herself for having forgot:* Aye! *Gets jug from off left, pours drink into pewter mug, brings it to him.*

PROCTOR: This farm's a continent when you go foot by foot droppin' seeds in it.

ELIZABETH: It must be.

PROCTOR: 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. Massachusetts is a beauty in the spring!

ELIZABETH: Aye, it is.

PROCTOR: I think you're sad again. Are you?

ELIZABETH: You come so late I thought you'd gone to Salem this afternoon.

PROCTOR: Why? I have no business in Salem.

ELIZABETH: You did speak of goin', earlier this week.

PROCTOR: I thought better of it, since.

ELIZABETH: Mary Warren's there today.

PROCTOR: Why'd you let her? You heard me forbid her go to Salem any more!

ELIZABETH: I couldn't stop her.

PROCTOR: It is a fault, it is a fault, Elizabeth—you're the mistress here, not Mary Warren.

ELIZABETH: She frightened all my strength away. . . .

PROCTOR: How may that mouse frighten you, Elizabeth? You . . .

ELIZABETH: It is no 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!"

PROCTOR: Court! What court?

ELIZABETH: Ay, 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.

PROCTOR, *astonished:* Why, she's mad.

ELIZABETH: I would to God she were. There be fourteen people in the jail now, she says. And they'll be tried, and the court have power to hang them too, she says.

PROCTOR: Ah, they'd never hang. . . .

ELIZABETH: The Deputy Governor promise hangin' if they'll not confess, John. The town's gone wild, I think—Mary Warren speak of Abigail as though she were a saint, to hear her. She brings the other girls into the court, and where she walks the crowd will part like the sea for Israel. And folks are brought before them, and if Abigail scream and howl and fall to the floor—the person's clapped in the jail for bewitchin' her. *He can't look at her.*

PROCTOR: Oh, it is a black mischief.

ELIZABETH: I think you must go to Salem, John. I think so. You must tell them it is a fraud.

PROCTOR: Aye, it is, it is surely.

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?

PROCTOR, *in thought, sighing:* Aye, she did, she did.

ELIZABETH, *quietly, fearing to anger him by prodding. A step*

left: God forbid you keep that from the court, John; I think they must be told.

PROCTOR: Ay, they must, they must. . . . It is a wonder that they do believe her.

ELIZABETH: I would go to Salem now, John . . . let you go tonight.

PROCTOR: I'll think on it.

ELIZABETH, *with her courage now:* You cannot keep it, John.

PROCTOR, *angering:* I know I cannot keep it. I say I will think on it!

ELIZABETH, *hurt, and very coldly:* Good then, let you think on it.

PROCTOR, *defensively:* 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.

ELIZABETH: You were alone with her?

PROCTOR: For a moment alone, aye.

ELIZABETH: Why, then, it is not as you told me.

PROCTOR: For a moment, I say. The others come in soon after.

ELIZABETH: Do as you wish, then.

PROCTOR: Woman. I'll not have your suspicion any more.

ELIZABETH, *a little loftily:* I have no . . .

PROCTOR: I'll not have it!

ELIZABETH: Then let you not earn it.

PROCTOR, *with a violent undertone:* You doubt me yet?!

ELIZABETH: John, if it were not Abigail that you must go to hurt, would you falter now? I think not.

PROCTOR: Now look you . . .

ELIZABETH: I see what I see, John.

PROCTOR: 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 . . .

ELIZABETH: And I.

PROCTOR: Spare me! You forget nothing and forgive nothing. 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 a . . . 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!

ELIZABETH, firmly: John, you are not open with me. You saw her with a crowd, you said. Now, you . . .

PROCTOR: I'll plead my honesty no more, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH, now she would justify herself: John, I am only . . .

PROCTOR, in outburst: No more! I should have roared you down when first you told me your suspicion. But I wilted, and like a Christian, I confessed. Some dream I had must have mistaken you for God that day, but you're not, you're not. Let you remember it. Let you look sometimes for the goodness in me, and judge me not.

ELIZABETH: I do not judge you. The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you. I never thought you but a good man, John, only somewhat bewildered.

PROCTOR: Oh, Elizabeth, your justice would freeze beer.

THE OWL AND THE PUSSYCAT

by Bill Manhoff

ACT I

Bill Manhoff's comedy is about a colorful San Francisco hooker and a conservative would-be novelist. Late one night Felix Sherman is hoodwinked into letting his neighbor, Doris, into his home. She has been evicted from her apartment after her landlord received phone calls from Felix reporting on her activities with men. After a barrage of insults and revengeful threats Doris settles in for the night since she has no money and no place to go. Felix is too frightened to make her leave and des-

perately wants to get some sleep. What ensues is the beginning of an unlikely love affair.

The scene opens with Doris alone on Felix's livingroom couch, trying to get her radio to work. After being bullied into letting her stay the night, Felix has crawled into his bedroom to sleep. (The "knock" mentioned in the stage directions is from a neighbor trying to quiet the goings-on in Felix's apartment.)

DORIS, shouts: God damn it! Hey fink, fink!

Felix enters.

FELIX: Now what?

DORIS: My radio won't work. I must have banged it coming up the stairs!

FELIX: Do you really have to—?

DORIS: It's the only way I can go to sleep. You got a radio?

FELIX: No.

DORIS: What'll I do now? Why did I have to come up here?

FELIX: Why not correct your mistake? Leave!

DORIS: I should have just given a certain friend of mine a dollar to beat you up.

FELIX: A dollar? Can't be much of a beating.

DORIS: He's a friend. He would do it for nothing, but I make him take a dollar.

FELIX: I see.

DORIS, calls: What's so goddam funny? I'll send him around tomorrow. I guarantee you won't think it's so funny. Now I'll never get to sleep.

FELIX: Why can't you sleep?

DORIS: I'm very high-strung.

FELIX: I don't have any sleeping pills or I'd—

DORIS: I don't take sleeping pills. I never take them. They're enervating.

FELIX: How about a hot bath? That'll relax you.

DORIS, talking in a compulsive rush: I never take baths. They're enervating too. You know that word—"enervating"? Most people think it means just the opposite of what it really means. *Felix walks back toward the bedroom in the middle of her speech, yawning, yearning for sleep. Doris raises her voice to a*