Peace, My Daughters

A Novel

by SHIRLEY BARKER

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By the same Author

THE DARK HILLS UNDER (poetry)

PEACE,

My Daughters

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Contents

EXORCISM

"*Exorcism--the act of calling up or casting out evil spirits.*"

WHEN I was a child growing up in southeastern New Hampshire, just where the valleys stop being cup-shaped and start opening seaward, part of every spring holiday was a trip to Boston. The shortest way took us over the Newbury marshes where the double-headed snake had wriggled in Cotton Mather's time, north of Rowley Common, up and down the sides of Hathorne's Hill, and in through Saugus, where they do not smelt bog iron any more. Or there was the longer way of going, round by the shore, under the Ipswich elms, and through a little harbor city with gables and diamond-shaped panes--houses that could never have been built, that must have grown up in a dark night no man remembered.

"This is Salem where they hanged the witches," we were told, and we were not told any more. But something about the curving roofs and crooked streets, the craggy ledges overhanging the town, something, finally, about every acre of gnarled, sea-washed Essex County, fascinated me and drew me back whenever I was free to go.

Not so much that I was a poet, but because I loved poetry and was not always able to find in a book the exact poem I wanted, I began to devise poems of my own. As a freshman at Durham I read ballads and decided to write a ballad. Of course it would be about Salem Witchcraft. I knew nothing about the Great Delusion then--I only knew what I felt when I crossed Essex County--and the "Ballad of Betsy Staire," later appearing in my volume in the Yale Younger Poets Series, *The Dark Hills Under*, is interesting only as my first attempt to exorcise the spirit that I found in Salem, the spirit that seemed to want to use my voice to speak with.

It was more than ten years after, that I found myself with time, and tranquility, and the resources of the New York Public Library at hand. I decided to find out all I could about the Salem witches. I began to read. And what a vast amount their countrymen had had to say about them! How many other minds had felt the call to exorcise something that still lingered there--after two hundred and fifty years--in that wry little east-coast county, not dead, for the dead lie still. In spite of all that had been said, there was much that had not been--or there would not be this terrible need arising in so many minds to carry

forward the exorcism.

I read the actual testimony taken down in the trials, and the letters and diaries of men who had been there. Comprehensive histories of the incident I read, genealogies, stray paragraphs in historical collections, intellectual histories of the period, histories of witchcraft itself, here and in its home abroad, psychologists' attempts to explain the phenomenon, novels, plays, poems.

And at the end of my reading, one truth seemed to stand out like a single tree on a sharp hilltop. In spite of all that had been said, there was still something more. The vast amount of facts was well organized and complete. I knew the color of Witch Carrier's eyes and the name of Giles Corey's first wife. I knew that there was a walnut tree by Salem Village parsonage, the color of Bridget Bishop's bodice, and what Parson Noyes died of. I knew the explanations given by the most careful students of the tragedy, and I could trace the parish quarrels and disputed land grants that had set Salem men at each other's throats. I knew a little about the ecclesiastical history of Massachusetts, and why just such a spectacle as this might have been a godsend to the reverend ministers at that time. But there was something I did not know; something I could not find in all the books I read. My five senses told me about it whenever I went back there and stood under the evergreens over Rebecca Nourse's grave or climbed beyond the apple trees and up the junipered hillsides where George Burroughs is said to have blown his horn to summon his witches to the Sabbath. My reason reported it missing whenever I laid down a learned commentary. *Living evil had walked in Salem*--a deus ex machina--*and no one had given a name to it*. Some had accused Samuel Parris, and some had said it was the Putnam family, and it has long been the fashion to blame all the ills of his time on Cotton Mather. True, none of these men had played a noble part at Salem, but when all the evidence was in, there was much that the evidence against them could not explain.

And then I began to see my story--for it is a story--forming in the interstices of history. Who now could say that the Devil had *not* come to Salem? To believe that he had was quite in line with the thinking of their own day, and who are we to think for another time? Today we believe that there is no Devil, so we say he could not possibly have been there. The seventeenth century men and women saw evidence of an evil force at work in the universe, threatening mankind with confusion and ruin--and they called it "Satan." We do not call it Satan, but can we say that we have not seen it?

So with this premise, and against an historical background, as accurate as I could make it, I began to write. My main characters I have imagined so that I could move them in and out of actual scenes with perfect freedom. Remember

is what I think I would have been if I had lived in Salem in 1692. She and Jonathan, Tom, Stephen, Briony, Polly Wicom, I have created. The others are real--except for John Horne. Whether you call him real or not depends upon when you were born--or upon your willing suspension of disbelief.

I feel no call to go back to Salem now and tramp its bogs and watersides and crooked lanes, as I did when I was writing this book. Whatever the genius of the place wanted me to say has been said. I have played my small part in a great cultural exorcism.

SHIRLEY BARKER

PEACE, MY DAUGHTERS

CHAPTER 1
The Blood and the Book

ANOTHER such night it must have been that the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. Remember Winster thought thus of her Creator as she lifted an iron lanthorn against the white moon that seemed to be driven hither and thither among the clouds like a puff of milkweed down. Then she lowered her arm and blew against the shielding mesh till the candle behind it flickered out. Under her feet, in the moving light and darkness, the valley sloped seaward to the shining rivers that curved and widened into Salem Harbor. All around her, autumn elms and oaks tossed in the harsh wind off the brow of Hathorne's Hill, and she could see them writhing, matted and tangled in the sharp moonlight, all the way down to Salem where the bell of the First Church already rang for nine. Her eyes followed wandering lines of stone wall that marked off the uneven fields, and stopped at the hedge of shadow where alder thickets showed that water ran. Under the peaked roofs and behind the gable ends of the Village, the moonlight struck faint gold on darkened windowpanes. Godly people had betaken themselves to bed--all except the Reverend Samuel Parris, for the window of his study shone like the pillar of fire that led Moses' little band out of Egypt long ago. Mr. Parris must be conning over his sermon for tomorrow, filling it full of the long words like *sapientia* and *scientia* that she could never understand. Now a light, dim, reluctant, stirred a few rods further down. That would be at Ingersoll's tavern, and Remember smiled, for everybody in the Village knew that good Deacon Ingersoll, the tavern-keeper, was always forgetting to put the cat out, and his Hannah, though kindly-hearted, disliked to have furry, big-eyed puss bouncing on her bed in the nighttime and clawing the good linen sheets that came from Boston. Then the light vanished. The Deacon had completed his forgotten chore which he would likely forget again tomorrow night.

Remember walked on. How white the sloping lands gleamed, as if the snows of winter were already upon them! Winter in this land, and she had known no other, began when the swamp maples brightened at the touch of early frost, and ended when the same trees shook out their buds irrepressibly in the midst of an April snow-storm. If winter ever ended . . . It faded, rather, into an old man ghost that stalked this hill and valley country, bringing a chill wind with

him, even in the hot summer noons. And it was not summer now. The maples had blown themselves bare in the rain two weeks ago. The cornstalks that Jonathan had banked around the house wall lay stiff and white every morning when she looked out at them through the cold, red sunrise. No provision you could make against winter was enough, not all the birch and hickory logs piled in the leanter. No cellarful of apples and turnips, cider and rum, no smoked meats and dried herbs hung in plenty from her kitchen rafters, could keep Remember from shuddering when she thought of winter, and that the mellow countryside around her must soon turn into ice and iron, lashed by weathers more relentless than the will of God.

Pulling her rough cloak tighter, she turned from the path, clambered over a stone wall, and started up the slope of plowed land that felt no more uneven under her good leather shoes than the more traveled way behind her. Half a mile over the spur of the great hill and she would be at home. Jonathan must still be awake, for she could sometimes see the light behind the panes in the kitchen window, sometimes the oak boughs with a few brown leaves clinging to them whipped between her and his sign of welcome. Jonathan had told her when she left home that afternoon to be sure and take the rowan walking stick that his father had cut in the Welsh mountains in the old country, and a wise woman had blessed for him in Widdicombe. She would likely be coming home after dark--and on November Eve!

"Witches an' warlocks be about on that night," Jonathan had warned, drawing the shaggy brows down over his bright, old eyes, "and we do have them, even here in the New Jerusalem. I hear they put one in gaol in Newbury two weeks back, and another ran off into Piscataqua Government. But rowan wood's a charm. Take this old stick, Remember, and rap the Devil right smart if so be ye meet him or any of his creatures."

But she had not taken the stick, and for all the old tales of wicked spirits that prowl on November Eve, she had not needed it. Ministers said much of evil powers abroad in the Bay Colony working to destroy it, and this might be so, but at least they were not keeping their autumn Sabbath on Salem Farms tonight. Or perhaps they were, and she not *fey* enough to know it. *Fey* you must be, her mother had told her, to witness such unholy revels, and her mother, Jonet Thrale, the Scottish lass from Ayr, had told her too that no Thrale was ever *fey*.

"*Aye, witches wear goats' horns, birdie, an' dance in a ring o' fire blasphemin', but ye'll nae be seeing them, nae more than will yon brown earth crock on the dresser--ye're both made too fast out of clay.*"

Not all the Ayrshire farmers had been Thrales, and Jonet could spin a tale of

lost souls who had signed the Devil's book in their own blood, from Agnes Sampson and Barbara Napier down to the coven in Forfar churchyard, but her tales were all still now, under a slate gravestone up in Rowley.

Remember sighed with more than the grief of a pious daughter, for she had loved her mother, but she feared no evil now. The Lord was with her. She was not of the Elect, but she was still in His protection. Nothing walked abroad more harmful than the autumn wind. Nothing moved but herself and--oh!

A rush of darkness beat across the air before her, brushing by in clammy folds for one horrible moment. Then a great, black bat recovered itself and flapped drunkenly off into the woodland west of the cleared field around her.

She gave a weak cry of relief. The musty odor of bat's wings smelling like stale cheese still clung in the air behind the swooping creature. Black bats lived in the dead oak in John Putnam's pasture. She had seen baby bats hanging head down--soft, webbed creatures. She was not afraid of a bat! Still, it would do no harm to think godly thoughts to protect her during the few moments left before she reached her own door. She did not want to think about the hours just behind her that she had spent working with the midwife in Dame Constance Craniver's bedroom. She would not think of blood on clean linen, nor the sweat on Constance's brow, nor of the pink, crumpled thing, now safe in the new cradle built soundly and with all of Richard Craniver's pride in the building and the filling of it. She had no need for cradles in Jonathan Winster's house, and his children that she was rearing belonged to a dead woman. No, she would not think of that. She would think of the Gospel and how Mr. Parris had preached from it last Lecture Day. His text had been--why, it had been--she stopped, startled.

"*Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee!*"

Suppose her soul were required of her this night? What would the Lord say to her at His bar of judgment? And how would she answer Him? He must know her already--all she had done, of good or evil. Everything, surely! It was all written down in a book just as real as the old black Bible on her oak chest or the church book of Samuel Parris. How would it read, she wondered, stooping to disentangle her cloak from the small horns of a thorn tree, her fingers moving swiftly in the chilling moonlight.

The book would read: "Remember Winster, goodwife, of the church at Salem Village; daughter of Dan Wicom the weaver of Rowley and his wife Jonet, born in Ayr; eleven years married to Jonathan Winster, planter of Salem Farms, in this year, 1691. She has her father's loom and can weave cloth as well as he could in his days. She keeps her house and is a Gospel woman--"

"Yes," spoke a laughing, masculine voice from the shadows beyond the thorn tree, "but she is sinful proud, is Mrs. Remember. Proud of her white flesh when she bares it in her chamber, and her ruddy hair when she lets it down in the candlelight. Her husband is an old man, and she still remembers Tom Purchas when the wind blows east out of England over the salt sea."

Remember did not start at the sound of the voice, for she did not realize that it was speaking from without, and was not a challenge from her own mind which she was accustomed to examine constantly for evidence of ungodliness. She replied to it hotly, answering what seemed at first to be her own question.

"Tom Purchas' ship went down near twelve years ago--the spring before my wedding--and no one was saved from it. The deacons can set no scarlet 'A' on me for mourning the dead."

"Dealing with God is not dealing with deacons, Remember."

Then she looked up into the face of a young man who stood taller than the little, gnarled tree. The moonlight showed him as plainly as a thousand candles could have done--his bright, dark eyes, wide-spaced, his curving mouth, cleft chin. He wore a gray coat and breeches, a broad-brimmed hat and square shoes like any good Salem man. He was smiling. She felt angry rather than frightened. Then it seemed as if all the spirit went out of her like blown mist, leaving her body standing by, alone and empty. It was the mist that answered him.

"Who are you, and how do you know what I think in my chamber?"

"You think what every woman thinks in her chamber: that she is still fair and the man with her is not worthy of her. My name? I have answered to many. Can you guess it?"

Remember looked him up and down coldly. He reminded her of a picture she had seen on the wall of a tavern in Boston when her father had taken her there to sell their winter's weaving in the springtime, the picture of a gay, bold man, with fine clothes and a little dog--the late King Charles, of gracious memory.

"Is it Charles?" she asked the stranger.

"Charles is a fine name, well thought of in my country. But I do not answer to it."

Now that she was mist, Remember felt a wit and courage she had not known when she was dust of the ground like the brown earth crock, so she sneered at him.

"Perhaps you would like me to believe that you are Lucifer, Great Prince of

Darkness?"

He seemed to meditate.

"No. Nothing so high-sounding for these sparse hills and niggard valleys. Too popish a name for Massachusetts Bay. There have been many who believed my name was Charles, just as there will be those who believe my name is Frank--but I shall be John to you. John--John--John Horne! A good yeoman's name!"

"We had an elder of that name in Salem Town. He died lately, full of good works."

"And I am not he nor any of his stock. I say that, here and now, that we may have no cries of libel from his kindred."

"If you are not his kin, you must come on other business to Salem Village."

John Horne laughed, a laugh that echoed.

"Do you want to know that business for yourself, or so that you may tell it to the gossips on Sabbath noon between sermons? God's blood, I thought the women of the Bay would be different! But no! Let a strange mouse scurry across the beams of the Meeting House, and their ears flap forward for news of its passage, just as our maids-in-waiting prick up their ears when a new girl goes in to the King."

"We have no mice in our Meeting House. If you will stand out of my way, John Horne, I will go home to my husband."

"Your husband is asleep and will not miss you, and the hands of the brass clock he is so proud of are locked tight and still. I am a stranger in Salem Village, but I heard much of it afar off--"

"If you heard the truth of it, you heard that the land is taken and we have no need of strangers here."

"Still, a village can always use one more"--he seemed to consider, then finished decisively--"one more shoemaker."

When Jonet Thrale was a girl in Ayr she had drawn a plow yoked with her father's mule, and something mulish had entered into her spirit. It was out of that mulishness that her daughter now spoke.

"You did not come to Salem to make shoes?"

"No." His voice came through the darkness, taut and sober. "I have a great work to do, and it may be done here. But I could not have come if certain brethren of your church had not sent for me. I am not a god. When men call

me, I come to them."

"I doubt your name is in the parish book as being summoned."

"Does everything that goes on in this parish go into the parish book?"

Remember's cheeks tingled with more than the cold. She put out her fingers and gripped the little thorn tree, then drew back sharply as its barbs pierced her flesh in a dozen places. When she looked up at her companion she found him silent, his gaze fixed on the stains welling in the palm of her hand. In his hand he was holding something. It seemed to be a square, leather book with wrought-iron corners.

"You have hurt your hand," he muttered, the laughter gone from about him, "and your blood is dripping down--"

He held the book. He watched the dark drops of blood plunge and lose themselves in the dark grass at her feet. She stepped back, stood with her head lifted, like a deer ready to run.

"The Book!" she found herself murmuring. "The Book--and the blood!"

The light that had kindled hot in his eyes died down. He thrust the book under his cloak that swayed about him in the wind.

"Ah well. You may prick your fingers another evening. But perhaps I shall cobble your shoes before that. Look for me tomorrow at the Meeting House."

Mockingly he swung off his high-crowned hat, bowed, and turned down the valley.

If he vanishes, thought Remember, huddling against the thorn tree, if he fades away in air or is caught up in a burst of flame, I shall know he was a devil or the King of Devils, and what he meant with the book--for me to sign it and be one of them. But John Horne did not vanish. He walked with long strides, whistling, across the straight furrows of Winster Farm. Down the hill he walked, past the Training Ground and Captain Walcott's house. The walnut tree at the north side of the parsonage cast a shadow, and if he stepped into this shadow, either man or devil, he must disappear. Finally she lost sight of him among the young trees of the orchard. She stood quite still for a moment and then his voice came back, blown on the wind along with a breath of salt air from the marshes of Endicott River.

"Lodging! Lodging for a stranger this day out of Boston and benighted on the road!"

After a moment a dim light appeared again in an upper window of the tavern.

The deacon might just as well have waited to put the cat out. Remember drew a long breath. Strange as this man might be, it did not seem likely that an evil spirit would ask for a bed at Deacon Ingersoll's, even on November Eve. The air was cold enough for snow. The warmth that had filled her while the young man stood there had died out. She stumbled, shivering, across the strip of plowed land that separated her from her own door, half fell over the threshold and into the quiet of the long room. Jonathan nodded in the wainscot chair by the fireplace, a tired old man who had helped clear Orchard Farm for the Governor, and built good land out of wilderness, tough as the roots of the Essex oak trees. The betty lamp burned low, sputtered before going out. His wife's dragging steps awoke him and he stood up yawning, a little bent as always.

"Got back without the rowan stick, did ye? Old Serpent's not what he was in my days o' sinful youth, I doubt not. Was it a lad for Craniver?"

"Yes," murmured Remember, keeping her back to him as she took off her hood, "a fine boy."

"She's young enough to have many such, an' so be ye. Come, can't go to bed without prayer Sabbath Eve! Set ye there, Remember."

Remember sat and bowed her head but she did not listen to Jonathan's prayer. After all, had it really happened? She had torn her hand on the thorn tree, fainted at the pain, been mazed like one taken with the falling sickness, and dreamed this evil of a wandering shoemaker who talked of Tom Purchas and brought a devil's book with him. Yes, that had been the way of it. Tomorrow there would be Mr. Parris' sermoning to purge her soul of this adventure, and after the cold dinner--for Jonathan was too pious to allow her to keep a bake-fire on Sunday--she would walk out to Martha Corey's and take the good soul a cutting from that new bolt of checked linen in her loom room, borrow a pattern for Briony's tiffany hood, maybe. Tomorrow would be like any other day in Salem Village; this year like any other year, God willing. Why, what was Jonathan doing? He had finished prayers and stood by the mantel shaking the new brass clock one of Philip English's captains had bought for him in London.

"'Tis not worth a farthing, this clock, and I am out of pocket what I paid for it."

"But why? I can hear it ticking."

"Aye, now you can. But it was not--till I shook it. Stopped at nine, it had, and First Church bell rang for nine sometime back."

"Yes," said Remember, "I heard it as I crossed the field--I--"

"Locked tight and still," John Horne had said of the brass clock. How had he known there was such a clock and that Jonathan took such pride in it?

"Ah well. Upstairs to bed with us." He lifted the betty lamp off its hook by the fireplace and swung it in his shaking hand. "Devil take the clock!"

CHAPTER 2
Perchance to Dream

BECAUSE two people lie every night in bed together does not mean that they share a common life. Every soul is shut in its own world as in a square of glass; it may look out, as others may look in and observe it, but there is no blending, no touching of souls with each other or with a great all-soul. At least, it is not so in life, and when a man goes mad, this is the cause of it--that he can no longer stand the awful isolation of his own soul in its glass cell.

The waning moon of that November Eve shone through the diamond-shaped panes of Remember's bedroom, but she was not awake to see it; she slept troubledly. Her chestnut hair lay tumbled over the linen pillow and her breath came soft and even. Jonathan beside her was not awake either to delight in her loveliness. He lay, bunchy, limp, like a greatcoat worn but still serviceable, flung down, empty of its wearer. Now and then a gnarled arm struck out stiffly, as he dreamed of how he had felled the trees on the Governor's Orchard Farm forty years ago.

He was born in Salem in the fourth year of its settlement, and he still remembered his parents a little, but not the night when they had gone abroad in the Merrimack Country, and a party of Penacooks, wild at their first taste of rum, had made an orphan of him. Housed and fed by the neighbors until he was eleven years old, he went to work on Orchard Farm, helping to make land. After that, the time he dated his manhood from, his life was a clear road and he liked to think back over it. Out beyond the North Fields, between the Crane and Cowhouse River, the General Court had set aside a great acreage of land for the use of the Governor, and he, like a thrifty and industrious man--indeed, as the General Court had intended he should when they gave it to him--worked hard to clear it and make farms and meadowland out of wilderness. This work was some years under way by the time Jonathan Winster grew big enough to help at it; and since most of the activities a man might be called upon to perform in his life, from brewing to bridge-building, were carried on there, Orchard Farm was not only a great estate a-making, but a sort of agricultural academy where boys from all over the colony went to learn for themselves the uses land may be put to and how to create that land in the first place.

He had been an apprentice under Ben Scarlett, along with Nat Ingersoll and

John Putnam, and as for the rest of it--they could have it. Nursing the apple trees, that is, treading down the roads, and cosseting the livestock. What he liked was to make land. They could have the plowing, too, and the seeding down, roofing the houses, and taking care of what was already finished and complete. He would be always going a little further along the swamp or the upland to prepare a place for them. To fell the trees in the spring, lifting the axe up into the blue air and making the chips fly, white and amber, like foam flakes from the prow of a cleaving ship! Swinging an axe and loving a woman--those were the times a man was a man. He wouldn't tell Parson about that last, though if someone didn't tell him, 'twas like he'd never know. The chips flew, and the great trees came down, and it gave you a fine feeling the first time you made your tree fall just where you planned it should. In the autumn you burnt them over, the old, thick trunks writhen like great snakes; trunks that had grown in the wood since the seven days of Creation, likely. You burnt them, and dragged what was left into piles and burnt them again. Then you sifted the seed in, corn and barley between the stumps and roots, till in time the fine, wiry plants sapped away the strength of the great ones. Finally you drove in the oxen, fastened hooks and chains to the crooked, evil stubs, and drew them out like rotten teeth. They could have it then! You were finished with it. Take up the broadaxe, and off to the far woods still spread west and north, where there were chips to fling up, white and amber, on the blue air.

Twenty-one years Jonathan had lived at Orchard Farm, and worked on it as lovingly as if it had been his own. When the old Governor lay dying he had called him in and given him a piece of it, a tidy piece on the south shore, set close to Salem Town, and the next year Jonathan built his own house and took a wife to keep it for him. When he grew restless there, long before her death which freed them both after eleven years of marriage, it was not because her frail beauty had been lost in bearing too many dead children. It was because he could not be happy where he must hold the plow to the same furrows year after year. He went off, then, to fight the Indians at Bloody Brook and Narragansett Fort where he came down twice, once with an arrow wound in his knee, once with a musket ball in his shoulder. The musket ball still lay there, embedded in the thickening flesh, and it seemed to grow heavier whenever he did a hard day's work; the surrounding muscles pained him when the east wind blew. He had seen Captain Lathrop die, full of arrows as a dog shot full of quills when the hedgehog turns on him; and come home to tell Bethia Lathrop, haltingly, how her husband had gone. He had come second only when John Raymond led the charge across Wickford Swamp--a good fighter, John, as all the Raymonds were.

Home from the wars, and a widower, Jonathan took two steps, the steps of a

wise man. He married a pretty girl, and he traded his tame land for some wilder acres out along the spur of Hathorne's Hill where the men of Salem Farms were already forming their own parish, quite distinct from the opulent seaport that was Salem Town. Once again Jonathan swung his axe and was happy. One of the first felled trees went to make a cradle for his twin daughters, Prudence and Tamar. The same cradle served for their brother Neddy, born two years after them, but not born into Salem Village at all, into a world of his own, rather, for his blank, smiling eyes never changed with the changing colors of Salem weather, and his stumbling feet never strengthened and learned to run true, the way the twins ran. One of the last trees of Jonathan's felling made a coffin for his second wife. The embedded musket ball hurt him too much when he was chopping, shortened the down stroke, making the blow feeble and worthless. He cut no more trees after that, but he went looking for another pretty girl.

He found her up in Rowley that September in the house of Dan Wicom the weaver, and he married her just before Christmas, when the Great Comet that men would talk about for a century after hung burning and awful in the low sky. The thought that a woman might love as a man loved, or in a way of her own, had never come to him. By the time a woman was twenty or getting on for it, she wanted her own house and a family of children. His other wives had wanted that; this girl must want the same and he would give it to her. Remember had been a good wife since then, thrifty in the kitchen, pleasant to have in his chamber: the best of the three, probably--not answering his body like little, lost Mary buried on Orchard Farm. Somehow Remember's children never did get themselves born, but she was good to the girls and that poor Tom o' Bedlam child, Neddy. She kept her house and earned more pinetree shillings at her father's loom than either of them cared for spending.

He, Jonathan, was not a young man. He could not make the white chips fly any longer, nor take a woman to him with the pleasure that he once had. But the acres he owned were good ones and his goodwife worthy and easy to live with. He had a tight roof to his house and money enough to buy a brass clock if he took a fancy for one. Best of all, he could still linger over a noggin of ale in the sunset time after supper, while he talked with Ben Scarlett and Nat Ingersoll about the time when they had gone, empty-handed boys, to Orchard Farm.

The shifting moonlight crept across his face and an owl hooted in the wood. Jonathan stirred, shrugged the shoulder with the musket ball in it, and heaved the madder-dyed blanket over his whitening head. He slept. He dreamed of chips flying up, white and amber, into the spring blue.

As the moon moved coldly over to Jonathan's side of the bed, it left

Remember's sleeping face a pale blur, outlined by the hair flowing darkly around it. Not sound asleep enough to be dreaming, memory ran through her mind more poignantly than she would allow it to run in the daytime.

If you had asked her for the first scene she remembered, she would have told you of something that happened before she was born, a familiar story, that seemed to her to be her own beginning. It happened on Boston Common where Jonet Thrale followed a flock of geese under the leafless trees on a sharp spring morning in 1662. Jonet, pale after being seasick all the way from Glasgow, had been in America one week and five days, and so had the plaid shawl wrapped around her shoulders, for she had brought little else with her, only a tight bundle befitting the servant wench she was. Young Daniel Wicom happened to be crossing the Common too, that morning, riding toward the north road that would take him back to Rowley, his pockets full of money for the cloth he had sold in town. He had never seen a girl with such blue eyes before--a square-shouldered girl, with firm, freckled hands. Before he got back to Rowley he had spent all the money in his pocket to buy Jonet's time from her mistress, but it was a month before he could get the banns cried properly in church and take his wife home.

Rowley belonged in its first days to a company of Yorkshire weavers who had received free lands from the Bay Colony because knowledge and practice of their craft were needed there. After a quarter of a century many of that town still followed the weaver's trade, and the thump and clack of the loom, the scattered thread and lint in corners, and the swift-growing patterns of warp and woof made a background for Remember's childhood that seemed like one long bright day with no one day in it that she could set apart from the others. She had no brothers or sisters. Jonet may have been injured at her birth, for afterward no child could cling in her womb for more than a month or two. Once the three of them spent a winter in Andover where Daniel and his wife set up their loom and wove for the townspeople and Remember went to work in the great kitchen of Governor Bradstreet, not because she needed wages, rather because the Bradstreets needed another pair of hands, and the tall eager child wanted to find out what life in their fine house was like. Mrs. Anne, the Governor's wife, who wrote books as well as a man could, had been dead scarcely a year, and books, her own and other people's, overflowed shelves and chimney cupboards, though her great library brought from England had burned some years before. Remember learned to read in that first winter at Bradstreet's, a thing Jonet could never do. She did not go back to Rowley with her parents in the spring, but she did not have her wish--to work for Mr. Simon until she had finished every book in the house. Two years from the time she left her father's roof she came back again, and set about learning to handle the

loom, weaving her first coarse, uneven webs of cloth.

A stripling elm shadowed the low, peaked house, and before it spread a flat doorstone cut from the quarry at Marblehead. One night in March of the year she was seventeen, Remember opened the door in answer to a knock on it. On the doorstone stood two men--and one of them, Tom Purchas! There it was again, just as it had been for Dan Wicom and Jonet Thrale, love between a man and a woman that lasted them both to the graveyard. Tom, tall and fair and slow-spoken, looked at her out of very blue eyes. The thin, dark man with him, his brother-in-law Stephen Malbon, did all the talking. He had come to see Dan Wicom with an order for cloth, fifty bolts, and more if that proved good, for he was one of the richer merchants of Salem, rivaling Philip English, their leader. He talked in the kitchen with Daniel and his wife till the fire in the blackened chimney burned low and the moon climbed to the middle of the sky. Tom and Remember sat and looked at each other.

There were meetings after that, and before the apple trees blossomed at the end of April, Tom sailed for England on one of Stephen's ships, *The Plover's Wing*, and left Remember weaving her marriage linen to be used when he returned in the late summer. In June she went to Salem to visit his sister Rose, Stephen's wife. Rose, ailing and worn after a winter of illness, welcomed the gay strong girl into her house for companionship and to help with her child, Briony.

There was never a moment in Briony Malbon's life when she was not beautiful. Even at three years old, when Remember first knew her, she reminded her of a soft flame burning itself away. Pale gold hair, blue eyes--Tom's blue eyes, except that his were set in a strong face and hers in a petal-soft one--these, and a bright, gentle nature--everything about Briony warmed you and drew you to her. Remember loved the child, first because of Tom, later for herself, finally because there was nothing else that she could love for love and not because of duty. She had Briony in her arms, feeding her bread and milk in the candlelight of a sultry evening, when Stephen blundered in, black-browed and shaken, to tell them *The Plover's Wing* had gone down in mid-ocean with all on board. Rose wept and clung to her husband. Remember made no sound, watched Briony's eyes cloud with sleep. The next day she went back to Rowley and put her linen away.

Jonathan Winster came courting her that fall, and Dan and Jonet seemed to agree with him that it was time she went to her own house. It did not matter to Remember where she went or what she did. Tom Purchas was drowned in the salt sea. The marriage took place one evening in December, with the glare of the Great Comet falling on the snow outside, and the next day Jonathan drove her home to his well-stocked house on the spur of Hathorne's Hill, where two

little girls watched with their noses flattened against the windowpane, and the idiot baby smiled vacantly from its cradle.

Remember was mistress of that house for three years before Briony came into it in the spring of 1683. Rose Malbon died that winter when her lungs filled so from the cold that she could breathe no longer. Dan Wicom died too, of the same thing, and a month before her, and his Jonet never spoke one sensible word after she looked on his dead face, but raved herself into a fever in time to go into the grave with him, sharing his bed forever, as they both must have wished it.

Death seemed at that time to be a tangible presence to Remember--a man in a black cloak stalking through the colony, and wherever he breathed, men died. One day in the late afternoon she looked out of the window and saw a man riding toward the house, black against the low, red sun. Was this Death, then, coming to Winster House for herself or for some other there? But no, it was Stephen Malbon with Briony wrapped in his greatcoat. Climbing from his horse he bore the child carefully into the house and set her down on the sanded floor. Briony ran to Remember and threw warm arms around her neck, rubbing her cold little nose against Remember's face, like a kitten. Remember looked down into Tom Purchas' eyes, blue as the sea he lay under.

Stephen was speaking. He asked her to take care of Briony for him. He said that he meant to close his great house, dreary now without Rose, and sail far to the east on a trading voyage as soon as the winter broke. He put a bag of money on the table.

From that day on, Briony had grown up in the house by Hathorne's Hill. Jonathan looked on her as another daughter, a delicate one, to be humored and cozened. Prudence and Tamar quarreled and played with her. Neddy stumbled lovingly after wherever she went. Remember loved the child with such a fierce, protective love that she had to turn away sometimes and bite her lips to keep the tears from coming. It was not right to love so. It was blasphemy. But Briony was beautiful flesh and loving spirit--and all that was left of Tom Purchas. So Remember loved on. Stephen Malbon cruised unhappily from one port to another. He came to see his daughter once or twice a year, bringing her a packet of rich presents, but he never took her away. He must not take her away! Remember shuddered in her sleep, and a tear slipped under her closed eyelids. Not that she wanted to keep Briony always a child, always by her, to shut her out from the sweets of life she herself could only guess at. No, Briony must have everything. She should have a fine husband, kin to the Hathornes, or the Corwins, or Philip English. Tall, and handsome, and loving he must be, with a fine mansion to take her to. She can ride out here in her coach to see me,

dreamed Remember, for the roads will be run better by then, and she will ask me to stay the night when I've stopped too long in Town on market day. But come to harm she must not, nor go where I cannot see her--ever. Briony!

The moon went down, dropping slowly into the oak wood west of the cleared land, and the air in Remember's bedroom turned from black to blurred gray. Red light filtered through from the east, touching the frosty grasses around the house, the cornstalks left from harvest home. Jonathan, waking, reached out to touch his wife, but after a look at her sleeping face stayed his hand and turned over, and not because he was an old man. He could sense that she had deeply withdrawn into the fastness of her own soul and would brook no attempt at intrusion.

CHAPTER 3
Autumn Thunder

"'When present times look back to ages past,
And men in being fancy those are dead,
It makes things gone perpetually to last
And calls back months and years long since fled.
It makes a man more aged in conceit
Than was Methuselah--'"

BRIONY'S sweetly flowing voice stopped. She laid the book down on the oak settle beside her and picked up her crewel work.

"I'm sure she was a great lady, Remember, but I do not like to read her *Works*."

"I'm not sure that I like to hear you read them. But the mote is in our eyes. All the learned men of the colony say she was great. I have heard 'Zekiel Cheever's father, the old schoolmaster, say so."

"But I do not care for the things she writes about. Babylon's far, and Semiramis sounds like a bad woman."

"You can read in her about crickets and the seasons of apple trees. You love crickets in the hayfield, Briony. You always have."

Briony wrinkled her little nose, drew up her slim shoulders, lithe as a tree too young to blossom.

"Ah, Remember! Because you were a kitchen maid in her house once, and for no other reason, you think Mistress Anne Bradstreet is pure gold."

They sat together in the loom room on the east side of the chimney that climbed up the middle of Jonathan Winster's house. Remember was hackling flax, smoothing the long, whitish filaments and combing through them, first with a coarse comb, then with the finer ones. Her neighbors brought their wool to her and she wove it for hire into stout cloth, but it was turning the flax into linen that she really loved, and Jonathan, to please her, had seeded more and more of his fields with the blue-eyed flax plant. Briony could turn the flax wheel deftly when she was told, but otherwise she was more likely to spread out the bright yarns for her crewel work, or to hem herself a kerchief from the

fine India cotton her father brought her. Remember had not tried to make the girl too diligent. The twins could spin as well, and three spinners were more than enough to keep one weaver busy; besides, the rank wool, smelling of animal fat, came to her already spun. Mary as well as Martha had a place in the Word, she thought, as she reached over to move the tea trivet nearer the fire. Stephen always left her a packet of bohea. She liked a cup of it well brewed in the late afternoon.

Jonathan clumped through the fire room that ran across the front of the house. He had just come from the woods, and his boots left a trail of leaf mould on the sanded floor. He carried his old blunderbuss in one hand and a mass of limp purple and gold feathers in the other.

"Got a wild turkey, Remember. They're none so plenty now."

Remember stood up, shaking little strands of tow from her gray skirt, and reached for the dead bird.

"I'll make a broth of it for Goodwife Craniver," she said.

"Ye missed Meeting to sit with her yesterday, and now ye would give her my turkey!"

"Not all of it." She smiled, knowing that his gruffness had no meaning. "Only a little of the broth."

"If I judge the lass rightly, she'd rather have the wing feathers to deck herself with than a gallon of the best broth in Essex County. But do as ye please and be done with it."

He turned to Briony. "And ye're making your pretties all alone. Where are my girls that should be helping ye?"

"The twins took Neddy and went a-leafing," smiled Briony, snipping a length of indigo wool for her needle.

Jonathan snorted. He knew the need for going a-leafing, gathering the oak leaves in autumn so there would be a supply of them to line the oven on baking days, but he knew, too, that this should have been done before the leaves were so sere and dry. He seemed to remember that there had been leafing expeditions earlier that fall.

"You can't expect them to spin all the time, Jonathan," said Remember reasonably. "They're children yet--younger than Briony. And they weren't born old and wise."

"No more were they born rich. They'd better be spinning against marriage."

"Someone else is not working, Uncle Jonathan," interrupted Briony. "Who left the field-work to go a-hunting and came home from hunting in time to have tea with the women folk?"

"You *are* home early, Jonathan," said his wife. "Does your shoulder ache?"

Jonathan dragged a buckskin jacket over his scarlet waistcoat and she stepped behind him to smooth it down in the back.

"If ye'd gone with the godly to Meeting yesterday, ye'd know that Mr. Parris wants the church members at his house this Monday, November second, an hour and a half before sunset. I'm off for it."

"You're late then. The sun's about set."

Jonathan drew his brows together. "He'll see us when we're able to be there. It's not his slaves in Barbados he's dealing with now, but Salem freemen."

"It's all well and good not to like Mr. Parris, for he's indeed hard and grasping for a man of God, but better not to say so outside your own house. There's been too much said already," counseled his wife.

He only muttered, drawing close the leather fastening of his jacket, shouldering the blunderbuss from habit, not because he needed it on his short walk through settled country.

"Take your cup while it's hot, Remember," called Briony who had been pouring the tea.

But Remember stood between her husband and the doorway. She thought suddenly of her encounter two nights ago with the man who had called himself John Horne. He had said he would be in Meeting yesterday--like a goodman of Salem Village. She had not been there to see if he had kept his word; she had been nursing Constance Craniver. Neither Briony nor the twins, when she questioned them, could tell her one way or the other. It would be a year or two yet before they would scan the men's side of the church with much interest.

"Jonathan," she asked coaxingly, trying to delay him, "were there any strangers in church yesterday?"

"I didn't take note of any. I was listening to sermon--what I went there for. Don't save any porridge for me. I'll know where the bread and milk is when I come home."

He tramped out. Remember turned back into the shadowy room and reached for the cup Briony held out to her. Instead of thinking about a strange young man, she had better think of the milking she would have to do tonight with

Jonathan away.

Although the meeting had been called for an hour and a half before sunset, there was nothing left of the sun but rose and purple light behind Hathorne's Hill, and shadows marched in from the forest like an exiled people come back by night to take over their old country, as Jonathan passed the lighted windows of John Darling's gabled house and plunged into the weeds by Beaver Dam Brook. The water flowed sluggishly, he noticed, as he crossed the log-shored fording place, and a skim of ice had formed along the sandy edges. He felt it crunch under his boot soles. No leaves clung to the spreading willows or to the curious knobby ones that Daniel Rea, when he owned the land, had tried to cut like pollard trees in the old country. The scattering elms and maples were leafless too. Praise God for the oak! There was a tree for you! Fine as they grew in Framlingham, a great country for oaks, his father had told him. The oak leaves browned and dried, but they hung on till the new ones came in April. An old leaf should not fall till a new one grew. He sighed, thinking of his old age, of Remember's childlessness, and babbling Neddy.

But he was as firm as an oak tree yet! Men were not leaves! They were like the trees. Women were the foliage; soft and bright, but somehow feeding the tree. The others had gone like willow leaves, but Remember was like the oak leaf and she would not go. He passed John Hutchinson's. Through the lighted windows he could see the family gathered about their trestle table for the evening meal. He could see John's rugged profile bowed for the blessing. John must have decided to stay away from this foolish meeting that could only end in a parish quarrel. Jonathan half wished he had done the same. Captain Walcott's house had a light, too. A blooming wench, his daughter Mary. Either her father would find her a husband or she'd find herself trouble. Jonathan entered the orchard sloping gently down to a salt box house, the parsonage of Salem Village.

That house belonged to the parish, he stubbornly told himself, no matter what Mr. Parris said. It was not in their power to deed it away to any one minister even if they had wanted to--which they didn't. How Parson could claim that it belonged to him and his heirs forever, Jonathan could not understand. If he wasn't suited now with the salary he had agreed to come there for, let him take his troubles in prayer to God, the way he was always telling other people to do with theirs.

Jonathan lifted his head into the clear dusk with a yellow sky behind it and uttered a deep animal growl of disgust. Everybody in Salem Villiage seemed to be at the throat of somebody else. They would sit in the Meeting House on Sabbath and bow their heads to the text of "Love thy neighbor," and

meanwhile, underneath, they hated each other like Hell, like Hell and fury. Nathaniel Putnam hated Francis Nourse with the hatred of a man born well-to-do for a man who has made himself that way. All the Putnams hated young Joseph Putnam because they said he had fared too well by his father's will. Hatred and land-greed, his own and others, had been behind it when Governor Endicott's son, Zerubabel, died mad in middle life, and some of the men who had maddened him and thieved his land lived prosperously in Salem now, thieving more. The Salem Village men hated the Topsfield men for clearing the green forest; hated them, and fought in the border woods with them, and wanted them prayed against. They wanted prayers, too, against Bridget Bishop over by Ryall Side, because she wore a red paragon bodice and ran a game of shovelboard in her tavern. Half the church hated the other half for voting out old minister Bayley. Reverend Parris hated Salem Village because he could not make money out of it and run the church as he had run his father's ships and warehouses--until he lost them. Everybody hated everybody else who gained a bit of land or put by a pinetree shilling, and asked why the good had gone to another instead of to themselves.

Beside the parsonage Jonathan drew himself up and took a clean breath of the fall night before he stepped inside. Did he hear or feel it--that heavy, ill-boding rumble like thunder, in the gray east over Salem Town? Trouble was coming. He knew it as surely as the farm animals knew before a storm fell. Praise God, if he were able to shield himself and his from the blast of it. He knew that the room within, the home of God's minister, would be thick and tense with hatred, and no place to praise God in. "Praise God," he said aloud, as he put his hand to the latch.

Abigail Williams, the minister's niece, showed him into a room where sixteen men of the parish sat together on carven chairs and rough benches. Abigail was a thin-faced girl of twelve with fading freckles, her eyes too large, too bright. She motioned Jonathan to a bench on the side of the room farthest from the fire. He felt cold there and he did not doff his buckskin, but he could see the face of everyone present in the uneven light of the bayberry candles. For the most part, they were good men here today. Some of the best, though, like some of the worst, had not come. Jonathan could read in their eyes that their minister would meet a thorny resistance if he sought to hound them for money, his salary not being in arrears.

Down in front sat the patriarch, Bray Wilkins, a rich man whom other men listened to; and Nathaniel Ingersoll, looking mild yet acrid, like the smoke of a wood fire or the tang of good cider not too old. You could make neither a knave nor a fool of Nat Ingersoll, thought Jonathan, getting up and going

forward to take an empty seat behind and a little to the left of his old companion. Directly in front of him sat Peter Cloyse, so close that Jonathan could see the spreading stain which the bear's grease Peter slicked through his hair had left on his woolen collar. Peter came close to being a Topsfield man, and some folk said he sided with them--his enemies, most like. His wife Sarah was a sister to Francis Nourse's Rebecca, and Francis' son-in-law, John Tarbell, sat with Peter now. You couldn't trifle with John Tarbell. He'd quarreled with the Putnams and held his own at it. Jonathan wondered where Francis was. He liked Francis. Why shouldn't a tray-maker turn himself into a landowner if he had the wits to do it? Wasn't that why their fathers had come to America--that, and to praise the Lord?

Reverend Samuel Parris rose and stood facing the company, his back to the two logs of wood charring in a fireplace that would have held twenty like them. His wife's tiring glass had often told him that he had a face like a hatchet, but since it was *his* face, he was proud of it--a battle-axe of God. His youth in England, his few terms at Harvard, his years as a slave owner and merchant in the Barbados, were all behind him. Ordained now, a true minister, he was going to make this church of God a paying proposition, both for God and for Samuel Parris. He knew that he had inherited a long church feud, made more bitter by individual quarrels, but he was not like his predecessors, the genial Bayley; clever, courteous George Burroughs; or brilliant, unstable Deodat Lawson. He knew that certain leading clergymen of the Bay talked of a living force of evil at work, complained that their power over the people was waning. Such clergymen tilted with shadows! These farmers had hired him to pray for them and to run their town, and they must pay him for doing it. He would turn the force of prayer to his own just ends. He opened the meeting. He prayed. Then he went to the gist of the matter.

"Brethren, I shall speak, although so few of our membership have found themselves in such a state of grace as to be present. I have not much to trouble you with--" His tones moved up from the gracious to the plaintive. "But you know that at the last Town Meeting a committee was here chosen--chosen to see that your community provided me with firewood for the parsonage as it was promised."

He looked at the two slim sticks charring on the wide hearth. He turned to the parish clerk, Thomas Putnam. Thomas opened the parish book ostentatiously. He called the names of the committee, pausing after each one, answered only by silence.

"Joseph Porter! Joseph Hutchinson! Joseph Putnam! Daniel Andrew! Francis Nourse!"

None of the committee was present. The minister continued.

"What they have done or intend to do, you know, it may be, better than I. But you see--I have hardly any wood to burn--" His hand shot out flatly, like the head of a serpent leaping for the fireplace. "I need say no more"--he drew back and bowed--"but leave the matter to your serious and godly consideration."

In the following silence the ugly babble of black Tituba, the Parris servant, welled out of the kitchen at the rear of the house. Some men looked at their neighbors' faces; some at the toes of their square boots greased for winter. Some faces were timid, others hostile. All preferred to hold their peace. Finally a chair scraped back and Joshua Rea arose.

"As I mind it, Mr. Parris," he remarked mildly, "we, the church members of Salem Village, added six pounds to your salary on the condition that you furnish your own wood. We find that six pounds to have been paid for this year, 1691."

The minister looked straight before him. "You mistake the terms of the contract, Goodman Rea. Will you read the record from the parish book, Mr. Putnam."

Again Thomas Putnam rose, shaking back his dark hair worn a little longer than most of the Salem men wore theirs.

"The terms of the contract are here," he droned, and he read--a long list of perquisites guaranteed by Salem Village Church to Mr. Samuel Parris if he should come to settle there.

Whispers broke out in the group, as when a seething pot bursts over its rim.

"I was one of the men who called him," muttered John Tarbell. "Can't say I promised him any o' that."

The Reverend Parris heard him. He turned flecked eyes, the eyes of an adder, on the young farmer. He said nothing.

"I don't know," murmured Nat Ingersoll. "We needed a minister then--bad. Mr. Lawson had gone back to Scituate, and we was without preaching. But we couldn't have promised him so much--"

"Could be those fine terms was never in parish book till after Parson got his hands on it," whispered Peter Cloyse. "Wouldn't sell my birthright for no mess of pottage like him."

"We never promised to give him this house 'in fee simple,' or any other way," said Jonathan, hauling himself to his feet. "The parsonage and its fields and

orchards belong to whatsoever man is preaching the gospel to us, only while he is preaching it."

A pleasant murmur of agreement went around the room. Farmer Dodge and John Raymond, who had fought beside Jonathan at Narragansett, applauded their old comrade-in-arms with a subdued cheer. The minister's face darkened. Bray Wilkins stood up.

"I'm cold here. I'm going home--where there's a fire. Mr. Parris, a man of God better spend his salary for wood if he wants wood, and not go hounding the freemen."

Coats were pulled closer, benches pushed back. Everybody seemed to take pleasure in agreeing with Bray's wisdom. Hate lay black in the minister's eyes.

Thomas Putnam, the parish clerk, interrupted. "May we vote?" he asked shrilly. "May we vote that my uncle, Captain John Putnam, whom we all know--"

"Aye, that we do," hissed John Tarbell, "the old devil!"

"--that my uncle and the two deacons go as messengers to the aforesaid committee and ask them to lay a special tax rate for the minister for his necessary supplies, and that we all meet here again, say on November tenth, to discuss it and to see that they have discharged their duty?"

"Aye," boomed Bray Wilkins, "leave it to Francis Nourse and Dan Andrew. They'll see just debts are paid and no other. Vote yes, men. I want to get home. But I'll not be back on November tenth"--he looked directly at Samuel Parris--"unless it be decently warm here."

Parris looked back at him, covering his hatred with a sleek self-righteousness. "It will not be warm here unless your committee furnishes the wood to make it so," he said.

Bray Wilkins lumbered out, followed by William Way. Feeble "ayes" sounded for the vote. The men trooped after them, too dispirited to talk with one another or to stop at Ingersoll's tavern just across the green. A fair fight was one thing, and they could stand being beaten in it, but this meeting had been a low wrangle in the house of God. Their honest spirits felt unclean. And they were confused. Had they been niggardly with God in trying to protect their substance from His unworthy representative? After all, they had paid Sam Parris six pounds for wood, and if he had no wood to show for it, it was his own fault. Mr. Parris stood by the dead fire, offering no farewells. Jonathan's fingers, stiff with the cold, had trouble fastening the leather hasp at his collar. While he struggled with it he heard what Nathaniel Ingersoll said as he drew

close to the parson.

"Could we put up his name in Meeting next Lord's Day, Mr. Parris? He seems like a godly man, and he cobbled Hannah's boots most skillfully, for sure he did."

"We will see, Ingersoll, after the matter of my rights has been attended to," said Parris disinterestedly, turning toward the door of his study.

The deacon moved away, letting a hand fall on Jonathan's shoulder.

"Come home with me, Jon Winster, and have a noggin of cider--or Madeira, if you prefer it. Your pretty Remember will keep your supper hot. There's a stranger put up at my tavern I'd like your opinion on. A traveling shoemaker he is, John Horne by name, like our old elder but no kin, and he wants to set up in Salem Village. I've put his name in to Mr. Parris, for he'd like to join with our church, and no man who wants the Word of God should go without it. He'll cobble your boots free to show you how well he can do it."

Jonathan might have accepted the invitation for a drink at the tavern if it had not been for this John Horne whom he felt too disturbed to meet.

"Ah no, Nat. I do not need my shoes cobbled. I'll come in and souse with you in a day or two, for you'll still dip your nose if you are a deacon, I warrant. But there's trouble coming, and I can't drink it off, I don't feel."

"Trouble, Jonathan? Is aught wrong at your house? The girls, or Mrs. Remember?"

"No, no. Not us. All this fighting in the parish. Parson hates us all."

The two men were walking through the starlight now.

"And too many of us hate each other. We covet, Nat. Houses, and land, and maidservants and menservants, that are within the gates. We even covet the gates. And if we do not covet our neighbor's wife, 'tis because she's not fair--"

"You'd best leave preaching for Parson, Jonathan. He does it better and we pay him for it, whatever he says about that. Come have a drink. There'll be no trouble. We're a little sharp, but we're all good men here. We wouldn't hurt each other. Come meet John Horne."

"I don't want to meet John Horne," said Jonathan, turning north through the parsonage orchard. "I am cold and my shoulder aches. And if the Devil's not loose in Salem Village he soon will be."

CHAPTER 4
The Circle

SHARP autumn went over Salem with the wild geese over the salt meadows, and bitter, white cold settled in, whirling against the diamond-shaped panes and down the smoking chimneys. Industry moved indoors now; the fields had been put away for a season and the woods were too wild to hunt in, except on mild, gray days when the snow settled. Many farmers set about repairing tools and harnesses, or whittling out the extra shelf or trencher that had been so long demanded for the kitchen. Each family had its own special task to work at; they would all be plowmen again when the earth showed darkly in April, but now they turned coopers, tailors, dish-turners. Jonathan tensed his muscles at the heavy wooden flax-brake, later swingling and hackling the dried fibres. The girls spun. Remember wove, and her weaving was known from Plymouth to Piscataqua. All that their bodies needed lay under one tight roof--stored in the leanter, hanging dried from the rafters, pickled in brine in the cellar. They worked, and slept, and worked again, and seldom left the house except to go to Meeting on Sunday.

On clear nights Jonathan might put on his greatcoat and fur cap and trudge across the snow to Ingersoll's tavern, not so much for a drink, for he had rum and cider at home, but in order to talk with the other men he knew would be there. They would sit late around the fire, gesturing with a half-empty mug that the deacon was always quick to replenish, or a half-smoked pipe that went out sometimes in the middle of an argument. They talked about the unsavory land quarrels of their neighbors, of the threatening Indians who still burnt a house in Salmon Falls or scalped a goodwife at Cape Ann now and then, just to prove that they could do it. They mulled over the scant news that made port in Salem Town when world-wise ships beat in from the winter sea, and they fought and prayed over the future of the Colony that they had given body and soul to when they left their cradles.

Old king had been given to priests and harlots, sure enough, but at least he had let Salem Farms alone for the most of his reign, and in his rule they had prospered. But in his last year of life he had taken away their Charter, and his brother had sent them Governor Andros, who wore gold-lace ruffles and beggared the people. Just what Massachusetts could expect from the Dutchman

new-come to the throne of England, Salem farmers did not know any more than did wiser men in the Colony, but they liked to conjecture. In the opinion of most of them, their country was in an evil way and its feet took hold on Hell. The fathers, the first generation, had all died out now, and their aging sons missed their wisdom. General Court still met, and Lt. Governor Danforth did what he could--arresting a witch now and then. Not that it wasn't necessary to make war on witches and their master, the everlasting Devil. For Deacon Ingersoll's patrons believed in a spirit of evil, black and tangible, and in witches, legions of human beings sworn to assist him, just as firmly as they believed in the bread they ate, or the pewter trays on the sacrament table in church, which Mr. Parris insisted should be replaced by a silver service.

Salem farmers talked about all these matters in Ingersoll's tavern during the evenings of early winter, 1691. They remarked also, chuckling into their mugs and pipes, that Mr. Parris was still finding his own firewood--if he had any--and for all of them he might continue to find it.

The evening of December 24 fell on a Thursday--a clear, cold Christmas Eve with bright stars in the sky and a hard crust on the snow, strong enough for a man to walk on. Christmas was a popish holiday that Salem Village paid little attention to. This night it was Remember who drew on her cloak after supper while Jonathan filled his pipe and settled close to the fire.

"I don't know it'll do Mistress Parris much good seeing ye," he looked up through a cloud of tobacco smoke to tell his wife. "If I had to live with that man o' hers, I'd be sick myself, I would."

"Hush, Jonathan! He's a man of God. Elizabeth Parris has a fever and chest pains, and I'll rub her well with this goose grease if she'll let me." Remember slipped a covered crock into the basket on her arm.

From the loom room came the merry laughter of Briony and the twins.

"Briony," called Remember, "do not try the loom while I'm gone. It is too heavy for you, and you might mar the pattern I've laid down. Stay with your spinning."

No answer came, but more laughter. Remember sighed.

"I know well that the moment I'm gone they'll be into the kitchen boiling down sugar for marchpane. And you'd not be likely to stop them, Jonathan?"

Jonathan drew on his pipe. "No, I'd not be likely to."

She laughed and fastened her fur-bordered hood.

"I won't be late."

"You better not be. There's wolves been seen by Haverhill, I heard at Nat Ingersoll's last night."

"You men at the tavern are worse gossips than a quilting of women. Can't a wolf run over the snow but you have word of it. If you spent your time--"

A smart rap beat on the door. Remember and Jonathan looked at each other. He rose, crossed the room, and opened it a little. She could not see around the scarlet shoulder of his waistcoat, but she could hear his greeting.

"Aye, come in, lad. Ye're here to look at the hides, and I've a good choosing of 'em for ye, sure."

John Horne, dark, bright, so handsome it made her heart ache, walked over Remember's threshold and she stood staring at him.

"Don't know, Remember, that ye've met Goodman Horne. New shoemaker, he is. Set up in old cabin Giles Corey built when he first cleared land. I told him last night at Nat's I'd some good hides he might want to look at."

"I've seen him in church," murmured Remember, looking down at her basket.

It was true. John Horne had been in church every Sunday since his coming to Salem Village. She had looked over from the women's side of the congregation and watched him secretly. He had repeated the Lord's prayer. He had sung from the Bay Psalm Book. He had taken the Sacrament. How could she have imagined that he was the Devil because of their meeting in the field on November Eve!

Jonathan went into the leanter to bring out the hides he wanted to sell the shoemaker. John Horne stood slim and straight in his buckskins.

"Are you ready to help me yet, Mrs. Remember? You'd be fair aid to a man, I warrant."

"And what can I help you at that is so pressing?"

"Ho! I am come unto you having great wrath because I have but a short time."

"I do not help the wrathy."

"Nevertheless, you shall help me with my work in Salem Village. You shall do me a service this night and before midnight."

"That I doubt, sir."

She flung out of the house and into the sharpness of the dark. Behind her a man's mocking laugh rang out from her own fireside. When she had met John Horne before there had been something of the court gentleman about him--as

she had found court gentlemen described in the books in Anne Bradstreet's library. Tonight he seemed less like a man than like a drawn blade, sleek and sharp, the candlelight glittering along the length of him. Who was he and where had he come from? "From Boston," he had told Nat Ingersoll. Once in Rowley she had known a demented girl who swore herself bewitched, who said she knew the Devil and that he was a tall man from Boston. But Mr. Mather had said that Boston was so blessed it should last till the great burning of all, so it was not likely the Devil lived there. Still--perhaps in one of those crooking streets like a bent elbow; behind an overhanging gable, perhaps--No, in the forest with the red Indians was a more likely place for a fiend's dwelling. All the Bay Colony knew, having heard it in church from their first baptizing, that Satan had fled backward before the cross of Christ, out of the cathedraled continent, out of godly England, till there was no place left for him but these thick forest reaches of the new world. America was his last stronghold on earth, and in America he must wage his last battle with the Church of God. Church members of the Bay Colony must therefore expect him to rise against them on every hand, and they must fight him hard and strong whenever he appeared. She was not a fool, Remember decided, to fear the Devil, but she was foolish to see him in this young man, merely because he had a handsome face and his talk sounded strange. But what did he mean by saying she would do him a service before midnight? She would comfort good Mrs. Parris in her illness and then betake herself home to bed. That could serve neither an upstart shoemaker nor a malicious power.

The snow fields glistened around her in the pale starlight. A shadowy figure with streaming hair and vague eyes started up suddenly from a juniper bush and gabbled something inarticulate at her.

"Go home, Abbie," counseled Remember gently. "You'll freeze one of these nights, child, and there are wolves and Indians about."

"Heehee!" chortled Abigail Hobbs, half-witted daughter of a Topsfield farmer, who roamed the countryside nightly, causing much grief to her good parents thereby. "Heehee! I ain't afeerd. Old Boy'll take care o' me, he will."

She scuttled away, going across the crust toward John Putnam's pasture with long hops like a rabbit. Remember shuddered and hurried down through the parsonage orchard. There were no lights in the front of the house, which meant, most likely, that the minister was off on a parish errand. But pale glimmers from an upper window showed where Mrs. Elizabeth lay in her fever. It would be best, Remember thought, to go around to the little door at the rear that led directly into the kitchen. She slipped under the maples in the front yard to let herself in by it. She stumbled on the icy doorstone, lifted the

latch, stepped into the hot, smoky room.

Full of people as the Parris kitchen certainly was that night, nobody noticed Remember's entrance or turned to watch her as she stood, appalled, back in the shadows under the slanting roof. Before her a group of girls and young women huddled on chairs and benches placed in a circle, their eyes fixed as one woman's eyes on the Negro servant, Tituba, who stood before them, her back to the fireplace. Tituba had wrapped a shawl of turkey red over her ordinary rough gray garment. The shawl was sewn with bluejay feathers and little ivory blobs, that Remember could see, when she stood closer, were the teeth of animals. Bits of broken glass chattered on a string around her neck. She held one shining black arm high, her face uplifted toward it, her usually good-natured eyes turned mean and shifty. The hand clutched a small, gray-clad poppet stuck with a long iron pin. Tituba chanted some strange West Indian words from the island where she was born, then some words that Remember could understand.

"Fire and brimstone! Fire and brimstone!
Judgment on men! Judgment on men!"

How tensely the young faces watched her! How the slim shoulders twitched! How oblivious they were of everything except the performing Negress with a black candle burning on either side of her!

Dimly, Remember began to try to work out the meaning of the scene before her. Tituba, she had heard, had been a witch in her own country, but she had been known to work no spells since the Parris family had brought her to Massachusetts Bay. But what else could she be doing now? To make a rag poppet and stick pins in it was to try to kill a man by magic, but whom should Tituba want to kill, and why were these girls behaving so? They were not witches. Betty Parris, the minister's daughter, and little Ann Putnam were children, Mrs. Ann Putnam a pretty, petted wife, the others mostly servant wenches, some greensick, some plump as puddings. They would make only dull scholars at the black art. "For not all can learn it," her mother used to tell her as they sat shelling peas by the hearthside after supper. "The Devil will not have us all, any more than God will--only his Chosen. But he's not a-hoof here like he was in Ayr when I came away." Jonet had known a good many witch tales and told them in the evenings, and as they ran through Remember's mind her fear and confusion left her. She herself would never stick iron pins in a poppet, but she knew as much about it as Tituba did. She stepped forward and spoke, her words sounding in her own ears, stiff and prim.

"Tituba! Does your mistress allow you to practice wicked magic?"

Tituba whipped the poppet under her scarlet robe. Her face changed, became smooth, cunning. The assembled women turned, not sharply, but slowly, as if waking, reluctant, from sleep. They stared at Remember.

"This doll no man. Nobody!" smiled Tituba eagerly. "Tituba no kill. Make play--please girls. Evenings long. They like laugh--like be afraid."

"It's naught to laugh at, what you're doing," said Remember sternly. "It is witchcraft, and witchcraft is evil even in jest."

How strange their faces looked, turned toward her, drooping like sick flowers on flaccid stems! And how many of them there were, drawn close here in the hot, slanting kitchen where the light from the black candles flickered on Elizabeth Parris' orderly rows of pewterware!

"Why, Goodwife Winster," chaffed Mary Walcott gaily, but with an air of dragging herself back from a long way off, "how you frightened us! You're not too godly for a little jest, I hope, and we girls must have some fun! Tituba was not working a spell. She was showing us how to work one. She has seen ghosts in Barbados, and she has promised to help us see some. And she can tell fortunes. Let her tell your fortune for you."

"Yes! Yes!" chorused the girls. The circle opened, made a place for her. Remember sat down, her face grim.

"I do not want my fortune told," she said sternly, "and I can tell you that if you had ever seen one ghost you would not want to see another. There are merrier ways to spend an evening than calling the Devil to come among you."

Mrs. Ann Putnam's great brown eyes rolled, she twisted her fingers nervously in her lap. "We did not call the Devil," she said.

"But you were practicing spells, and he's always like to come wherever that's going on."

Tituba arched her long neck and narrowed her eyes.

"How you know so much about Devil?" she asked Remember.

The group leaned forward. Their eyes glistened. Mary Walcott shook back her bright hair in the candlelight and asked the question for all of them.

"Are you a witch, Goodwife Winster?"

"I?" cried Remember, startled. "Never! After all my mother told me about it, I would not want to be one!"

"What did she tell you?"

"The year she left Scotland they burned a coven of witches who used to meet in Forfar Churchyard. The Devil met with them, sometimes as a black man, sometimes as a yellow bird that sucked between the fingers of those poor lost girls who had signed his book in their own blood and promised to serve him. Sometimes he sent them spirits in horrid shapes to be their familiars. They danced among the graves and the turf burned like a flame under their feet, and the flame lighted the gray old church till the country folk thought Hell had moved into it. And they held a Witches' Sabbath--"

"What's that?" asked yellow-eyed Mercy Lewis. The others listened, hushed.

"A Witches' Sabbath is a most evil gathering to do worship to the Devil. The witches ride to it on broomsticks across the sky. They dance, and sing vile songs, and tell of what evils they have done since the last Sabbath, and how they have tormented people."

"How do they torment them?" asked little Ann Putnam, her soft hair falling into her eyes.

"They pinch and bite and bruise them, choke them and make them fall in fits to the ground. They make them pine and waste. Sometimes they kill them."

"How?"

"By a touch--by a look--my mother was not a witch! She did not tell me how. And they mock the Blessed Sacrament. They eat red bread instead of the holy crust, and drink red wine that may be their master's blood for aught I know. And they blaspheme against Christ. And the godly pursue them. They fling the witches into ponds to try them, for pure water will not receive a body pledged to the Evil One. Oh, the black art of witchcraft is as bad for those who practice it as for those who suffer from it! Do not ever pretend to it! Such jest invites the Devil!"

"But what else do the witches do?" urged Mercy Lewis. "What else that is horrible?"

Remember stood up.

"At Forfar," she finished, "they dug up from the churchyard the corpse of an unborn baby, and they made it into a pie and ate it and washed it down with rum!"

Mrs. Ann Putnam gave a shriek and sank back in her chair. Remember walked slowly toward the stairs; Tituba barred her way.

"That good *obi*," she leered. "Tituba *obi* woman in own country. You come again. Tell more."

Remember pushed past her, turned back, her feet on the bottom step.

"Please, please," she pleaded, "can't you see it is horrible? Men and women are burned to death for it as well as swum!"

Horrid laughter filled the kitchen.

Remember ran upstairs, leaving her willow basket forgotten at Tituba's feet. She found Mrs. Parris weak, coughing, too ill to be told what her household was about, and she sat with her for a long time, not only because the poor woman needed care, but to delay her return through the kitchen till the meeting should have had time to break up. When it grew so late that she feared lest Jonathan should take his gun and lanthorn and come looking for her, she wrapped herself in her cloak, bade Mrs. Parris good night, and tiptoed downstairs.

On her way she became aware of a very low, throbbing beat like a small skin drum, and sure enough, it was a drum, and Tituba was beating it. She was chanting. The girls stood, each one holding a mug, about to drain it. Their bodies twitched. Their eyes were glassy. A smell like the inside of a rotting rum keg moved in the close air. The girls drank, dropped their mugs with a clatter they did not notice. They began to dance, a wild, wheeling dance, like drunken seagulls, flopping ever closer to each other, closer to Tituba. Tituba's chant changed to three repeated raucous notes that thrust into Remember's mind the image of thread and spinning wheel. The wheel turned. The thread drew tighter--tighter--tighter! As the thread drew tighter, Remember's muscles tightened till she thought she must die. Tituba screeched--the screech of a taut thread. At the screech, the stiff bodies of the girls dropped to the floor in convulsive fits. They shivered and shook, beat their heads and gnashed their jaws noisily.

Remember clung to the wall for support and looked back at the stairway, wondering if Mrs. Parris had heard and might come tottering down to learn the cause of the uproar. Then she remembered that she had left the woman half mazed with fever and medicines. Tituba, seeing her, crossed swiftly through the squirming girls and shook a bit of discolored bone in her face.

"Parrot's beak!" she grinned. "Brought from Tituba's home. Good medicine!"

Remember pointed to the girls on the floor. "They will hurt themselves," she whispered through stiff lips.

Tituba shrugged her shoulders under the scarlet mantle.

"Body wind tight. Hurt no show. Hurt show when body loose again," she said indifferently.

Remember felt her way along the wall to the outside door. "Tituba," she asked, "what did they drink? What did you give them to drink?"

"Drink? Ha! Good *obi* drink! Much rum, one drop blood, one grain dirt of grave, shaking of gunpowder. No harm!"

Remember tried to find words for an agonizing thought.

"My girls have never come here? The twins--or Briony?"

Again Tituba grinned. She shook her head. "No, Mis'. Twins spoil *obi* magic. Gold-haired one might bring them. We no want your three."

Having gained the door at last, she opened it and turned on the Negress.

"Please," she said, "as you fear God, do not teach those girls any more evil."

"Tituba fear no God. Only her own God in ceiba tree. Ceiba tree far from here. *You* teach them witch-work too. You tell much they never hear before, now they ask for. Now we have red bread and yellow birds--maybe baby pie."

Incredulous with horror, Remember stared at her. "God forgive me, I did! But I tried to disgust them with the wickedness of witchcraft--not to teach it!"

The Negress smiled as if contemplating a lovely secret. Remember crept feebly away from the parsonage.

Two things happened on her walk home. Old Sarah Good, the beggar woman, stopped her and asked for the loan of a shilling. As she turned once to look back at the parsonage, she noticed that Tituba still stood in the low doorway watching her. A shadow joined her and she ushered it inside. The door closed. The shadow moved with the sure grace and decisive strength of John Horne.

CHAPTER 5
The Shadow of Bedlam

NOTHING seemed quite real to Remember again, nothing seemed to have about it the quality of earth and of life drawn from the earth, until the next day just past noon, when she picked her way along the cart ruts that led to Giles Corey's farm southwest of Salem Village. There she saw stiff spikes of yellow grass poking through the slush in the center of the road bed, and yellowed snow about them, dyed by the water and patient sweat of horses. Dead grass, bared by a brief thaw as if the world already sloped toward spring, spoke to her of healthy, wholesome life. The dead brown leaves clicking together as a little wind walked among the oak trees spoke of life too, even in their death; stood in her mind against the fish-belly pallor the girls' faces had worn when Tituba chanted in the midst of the Circle.

Keeping Fairmaid's Hill to the left and Bald Hill to the right, east of the watershed of Norris Brook, she hastened along as fast as the slippery traveling would permit, conscious that the sun moved with her and that noonday and twilight telescoped together at this season of the year, leaving little run of clear light between them. Overhead the sky, almost a summer sky, burned blue and thin. Did God, perchance, look out at her, a poor, scuttling figure going from anthill to anthill, intent on the petty business of a world that had nothing in it more reassuring than brown oak fronds and yellow grass shoots? But what of her treasure in heaven where thieves could not break through and steal? The years for laying it up were so short, and the moment of doom so swift, in which the soul might be taken.

Last night she had come home hysterical after her adventure at the minister's, and Jonathan had listened in silence to her babble, saying nothing, but pouring her a noggin of kill-devil, and leading her upstairs to bed once she was comfortably mazed by the liquor. This morning he did not speak of it at all, but his glance followed her, keenly meditative, wherever she went. It was not Jonathan's way to speak out all he knew. Finally Remember had slipped away from him and gone alone to the cellar to fetch a pumpkin for baking. There in the darkness, passing slowly from apple barrel to turnip bin, she made up her mind what she would do. She was in trouble and she needed help and counsel. She wanted to talk to another woman about what she had seen in Parson's

kitchen; not to Jonathan, nor to good Deacon Ingersoll--certainly not to Mr. Parris. A woman could best advise her, a strong and a godly one, such as Jonet Wicom had been in her days. Who else, now living, could be as Jonet had been, sharp and kindly, understanding all wisdom? Remember leaned her cheek against the frosty stones of the cellar wall.

Bridget Bishop was a strong woman who did not scruple to beat a strong man over the head and shoulders with a birch broom, if she thought he needed it. But her tavern was on Ryall Side, not easy to come to, and apt to be crowded on winter days when the men could be neither in the fields nor a-hunting. Nor was Remember so certain of Bridget's piety. Twelve years back they had accused her of bewitching a child and a mad woman who later split her own throat with her sewing shears--but the courts could not prove it, and Bridget's minister, Mr. Hale, believed her innocent. Then she had married Edward Bishop, the sawyer, a well-liked and honest man, so the talk had died down. Still--no, not to Bridget.

Rebecca Nourse was a godly creature, with a soul as white and pleasant as bread new-baked out of English flour, but she was old now, and often bedridden, living only in her eight fine children, in the quavering echoes of her own voice as it told of her childhood in Yarmouth before her father had taken his young family to ship beyond the western ocean. Rebecca had carried a slip of English ivy from her old home, but it would not thrive in the salt marshes off Massachusetts Bay. She had thrived though, and so had the man she married there, Francis Nourse, the tray-maker from Skerry's on the North River. She had made her peace with God, and was ready to go from her peaked house with the trim fields around it whenever He should call her. It would be cruel and useless to upset this good old woman with a tale of the pitch-black doings at Parson's house. Remember kept well to the west of the Nourse farm when she set out that afternoon, bearing toward Lynn rather than toward Salem.

Martha Corey, she thought, would be best to go to. Martha, not young, but spry and keen-eyed, pious wife to the old sinner Giles. Martha could pray as well as a man. Perhaps she could pray the mists out of Remember's mind, for they had been there, certainly, ever since she had looked into a young man's dark eyes across a thorn tree. Perhaps she was truly mad and had imagined the whole scene in Parris' kitchen. How much more likely that the fault should lie in her own mind than in the household of a minister of God. Yes! She must be mad! But Martha would pray her out of it! Otherwise, when her plight was known, Jonathan would have to chain her between the bins in the cellar. He might even send her beyond the seas to that cruel madhouse in Moorfields where they had

moved the old Bedlamites near twenty years ago. Stephen Malbon had walked through it once to see the sights there, and sights he had seen that would trouble his dreams for a lifetime after, so he told the Winsters as he sat by their fireside roasting chestnuts. Blind men, men covered with sores, chained like dogs and howling, the bones coming sharp through their blue flesh and their own filth strong around them. And what would become of Briony with herself gone mad and witless? The thought of Briony struck her like an arrow plunged through her cloak into the curving bodice of her gray gown.

She dug her boot heels into the soft snow as she plodded along in the winter sunshine. Now she came abreast of the rough cabin with the turfs on the roof of it that Giles Corey had lived in while he built the good, tight house that his third wife, Martha, kept so well for him. She could see Martha's chimney smoke rise up now, straight into the air, just beyond the hill. The cabin seemed to be tenantless, but over its crazy door, swaying in the wind, hung a carved wooden boot painted bright blue. The sign of the shoemaker! It was here that John Horne had set himself up to ply the trade he seemed so ill-fitted for. Few customers would come down this lonely stretch of road--and as well, perhaps. Had he really gone into the parsonage kitchen last night? What was he to Tituba? To the Circle? Had he met Sarah Good begging in the dark, or the idiot girl from Topsfield who prowled looking for "Old Boy?" Or was she, Remember, too quick to see his shape in every shadow? No smoke climbed from his toppling chimney now; no movement stirred up light and shadow behind the dusty panes. But there were tracks in the snow outside, not cloven, the honest, square tread of a man's boot soles. Remember went on.

Giles Corey came out of his kitchen door as she toiled up the rounded strip of snow that would be clipped grass in the summertime. The whiteness here was all cut and churned with brown mud under the feet of the farm animals. Giles, tall and shaggy, reminded her of Jonathan, except that his mouth hung sullenly at the corners, while her husband's mouth turned merrily upward. Not a wicked man, he had a faculty for quarreling, going to law and getting himself in gaol; wry as one of God's own crooked crab-trees--and just as honest.

He swung down from the house now, like the young man he had been some fifty years back, and big, bluff John Procter followed him. Remember smiled gently when she saw John. His wife Elizabeth, more dearly loved than God could quite approve of, had plucked her sleeve last Sabbath as they were filing out of the Meeting House; plucked her sleeve and whispered that it now seemed their next child would be born about the end of corn harvest. Did either John or his wife know what their serving girl, Mary Warren, had been doing last night in Parson's kitchen? It was not good for a sour wench who trafficked

in death and evil to be much with a woman who carried life in her as Elizabeth Procter carried it.

"Good day to ye, Goodwife Winster," welcomed Giles gruffly, stepping into the snow to let her pass on the trampled strip. "Got nothing to do but gadding?"

"I came to see Martha. Is she at home?"

"She'd be nowhere else."

"But you're abroad, I see." Remember's eyes sparkled. She pushed a fallen lock of ruddy hair back under her hood.

"Aye. John, here, has a sick cow. Carrots in her maw, most like. I'm off to help him."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Goodman Procter. I hope she can be saved. You will need her."

John's kind, heavy face reddened. "Aye," he said. "Thank ye."

Remember went to the kitchen door in the leanter and the men turned east at the cart track. She lifted the latch, cleaning her boots on the pine sill. Martha Corey, brisk, tiny, bright-eyed, laid her Bible down on the chest under the window and moved toward her visitor.

"Remember Winster! Set ye down, my dear, and take your cloak off. No! Not there! Here by the fire. Your skirt's draggled in the mire and should be a-drying. Sit close, but watch out a spark does not snap and catch your petticoat. I was just to make tea, now Giles has gone. He's no patience with such doing. Three meals each day are enough, he says. Not that he minds being out of pocket but he hates the folly of it. Now how are all your folk? Briony, and Jonathan's children? I never get to meeting any more, since Giles joined First Church down in Salem Town just to be on off side."

"Perhaps," said Remember slowly, "it's just as well Giles does not go to Mr. Parris' church."

Martha put her pewter teapot on the settle and sank down beside it.

"Why?" she breathed. "Why do you say that? Your face tells me you've good reason."

"Because of this," said Remember. And she told her. But she began with her trip to the parsonage the night before. She said nothing of what had happened to her across a thorn bush at Hallowmas, and she did not mention John Horne, the shoemaker.

As she talked, Martha's brown old face whitened, and she turned the pewter

pot round in her moistening hands.

"And why did you come to tell me this?" she asked finally.

"Because you are so good. And so strong. And I needed help. And I was afraid to tell--! Martha! Do you think I am mad? That I only *thought* I saw those girls trying that awful magic?"

"No," said Martha cautiously, "I do not think you are mad. I think you really saw them."

"But why do they do it? My girls do not do so of an evening. They sing and make marchpane."

"But you let them sing and make marchpane--or any innocent thing. You are not sinful, Remember, but you are not as godly as some in Salem Village."

"What do you mean?"

Martha did not answer at once. She looked out at the white fields, and shadows gathered around her seeming to reflect the shadows on the snow.

"When I was a young thing," she said finally. "Oh, it was long ago, and not in Salem--we had other ways to spend an evening, ways that would not be approved of here. Here the girls may scour the trenchers and sew and spin, read the Bible and listen to old folk pray, cut up pumpkin, set beans a-soaking--and go to bed. That's all they may do. But we used to go out and pick hawthorn in May and nuts when the time came, dance on the green, and watch the strolling players, and walk holding hands with the lads sometimes--and nobody thought there was wrong in our doing it. But here there's none of the things we were so happy in. Black dark comes after a hard day's work, and snow piles to the eaves, and there they sit, poor things, and look at each other, and then down at a page of the Word of God, and back again. And the Word of God's no joy to a maid sixteen."

"But--that's blasphemy!"

"You know it's not blasphemy. You know it's truth. You've been sixteen."

Remember did not answer and Martha went on.

"It's the time with them when the blood's meant to run hot and cold by turns, and the flesh to shiver with the knowledge of what it's meant for. Are they going to spend it running hems and thinking on the Chief End of Man? Myself, I'd rather kiss a lad than dance a witch dance, but if I'm forbid the one, I might well get so tired of staring at the wainscot I'd take to the other."

She had paced the floor while she talked, but now she flung herself down on

the low chest across the room, clasped her arms around her knees as a young woman might, and kept on.

"And all our ways in Massachusetts are like that. We try to be good--too good--better than God ever meant us to be--and I have long feared that we should fall into great wickedness this way. Perhaps these poor girls have already fallen so."

"Then pray for them! Pray that their spells will not work and that they will give them up before Satan really comes to Salem!"

But Martha shook her head; her face turned sad. She seemed to be looking at something Remember could not see. "Satan is already here, I think. There is only one prayer for them, and it is not a prayer for any wife of Salem Farms to make. It was made by God's Son on the Cross, and it says to forgive them for they know not what they do."

"You are so wise, Martha."

"I'm wise enough to know that it's past your strength and mine. You must not stop for tea. The sun's none too high and you must go 'round by the Village and tell Mr. Parris all of the matter. It's not for the arm of flesh to settle, Remember. Trust it all to God's minister. He is armed against evil as we are not. He'll pray with you and clear your soul. Then he will move to stop it."

Remember stood up and fastened her cloak. "I will go," she said, "and I will tell him all."

She left the Corey farm and walked east with her back to the falling sun. Shadows purpled the snow and lay thick under the hemlocks in the gully beyond the parsonage as she climbed the little ridge past the Meeting House. She rapped at the front door, hoping wildly that neither Betty nor Abigail would come to let her in.

Upstairs, Samuel Parris sat by his wife's bedside, reading aloud from the Bible. He preferred a good, meaty chapter from the prophets of the Old Testament, insisting bleakly that the wages of sin are death. Elizabeth liked to have him read the stories of God's Son. Strange it was, thought the minister, how women's faces always softened and whatever they had of beauty shone about them when they listened to the legend of the virgin who went with child. It was as if they saw, with their feebler spirits, a light that even a minister of God could not see. It made him uncomfortable. Today he was reading from Matthew, a chapter that had always pleased him, though it did cause him to wonder blasphemously if Christ had quite as good store of motherwit as the rest of men.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil.
2. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights he was afterward an hungred.
3. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.
4. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.
5. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple.
6. And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash they foot against a stone.
7. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.
8. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.
9. And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Someone tapped on the front door just under Elizabeth's window. Parris stopped reading and waited a long moment to see if Tituba or the girls would answer it. Nobody did, so he put the book into his wife's hand, she smiling weakly up at him, and went downstairs to open the door for Remember Winster.

Remember looked into the face of the minister, pallid and unfriendly, as he set back the iron-bound door for her and allowed her to enter the fireroom. One log charred on the great hearth. A blue and green tapestry across the north window shut out the light and the outdoor cold. A curious, creeping cold of its own lay in the low-ceiled room, making one look about with a shudder, expecting to see a white face in an open coffin. She had seen open coffins there in the past; the earlier ministers, Bayley, Burroughs, and Lawson, had all said good-bye to wives or children under this forbidding rooftree. Now she saw only chests and chairs, a spinning wheel, and an unlit lamp.

"What do you want?" rasped Samuel Parris.

"I wanted to ask--" faltered Remember. "Is your wife better today? She seemed so ill last night when--"

"She does well enough," said the minister. Then he added ungraciously, "But you did not come here for that."

"No." Remember tried to summon all her wit and courage. "I came because I need your help. You are my pastor. You--"

Parris relaxed. He felt on familiar ground. She had not come to haggle over church business--only to seek grace of him.

"Ah! You cannot stand the burden of your sins through the dark hours of another night," he said coldly, "so you would lay them on my shoulders."

Remember, in her mind, had to admit that he spoke part of the truth. For all the pompous cruelty of him, she still believed in his prayers. He preached the Word and he walked with God. He had the power to purge and to intercede. She would never rise with the chosen, she feared--at least, she had never felt regeneration stirring within her spirit. If she was made too fast out of clay to see apparitions of evil, perhaps she was too earthy ever to be allowed in the same heaven that waited for blessed souls like Martha Corey and Mr. Parris. Remember had no illusions about her own worth. She held as well as she could by the law of the church and the customs of Salem Village, but she felt the guiding of no holy light within her. She had got herself into trouble now, as had others not many miles off. Mr. Parris would pray over her and cleanse her soul of its innocent part in evil. If she were mad, he would tell her how she might be cured. And not only for herself must she confess. If he did not know of the evil that had entered his household, how could he move to thrust it forth?

"Aye," she said, bowed her head and plucked at her sleeve. "It is a long tale, but you must hear me out. As I was going home last November Eve--"

As she told her story for the second time that afternoon--the whole of it now--she did not lift her eyes, but she could feel the changes that crossed the cold face watching her. Boredom, interest, disbelief--finally, chilling anger.

"So I went to Goodwife Corey for her advice, and she said I must come straight to you. She believes no evil thing can live if you pray against it."

Samuel Parris spoke, and his voice was low, just as low as God's voice must be when He visits eternal damnation.

"Woman," he said, "you have committed an abomination! Consorted--in your mind--with sorcerers, and named God's house--my house--as their meeting place. I do not know whom you wander with on the hillsides when your goodman is asleep"--his glance burned through her clothing--"but I do know that the damned art of witchcraft is not practiced under my roof, as you in your madness have babbled to the congregation!"

"But I only told my husband--a little--and Martha--!"

"If I did not deem you mad, I should see that you were whipped at the cart's tail all around the Meeting House on the Sabbath. If I hear that you have spread this story any further, I shall act as the instrument of God to so punish you. Now begone to your home! Pray God to restore your wits and sweeten your foul tongue!"

"But Mr. Parris--Will you pray with me?"

"No!"

He flung open the door and held it wide. She crept silently through it and started up the slope toward home. Hannah Ingersoll called to her from her kitchen behind the tavern. Mary Walcott peered at her from the front window of her father's house beside the Training Ground. There were no yellow grasses poking through the snow here, only stiffening gray mud, pools in the wheel ruts with ice glazing over them, and red sunset reflected in the icy meadows tilted west. Little pictures of the scenes she had been describing to Samuel Parris wheeled round and round swiftly in her mind, while she tried to answer her own frantic question. Suddenly all the pictures stopped wheeling, stood still and clear in her mind as the great mountains to the north stood out in autumn weather. She flung her head up, paused for a moment before she slipped into the thicket of dark trees that stood between her and her home.

"*I am not mad*," she said to the rising moon, "*I am not mad*!"

Behind her, the Reverend Samuel Parris was just stepping out of his front door, his great coat donned hastily, his broad-brimmed hat awry. He stalked down

the road that led to Giles Corey's farm.

CHAPTER 6
To the Glory of God

SAMUEL PARRIS hastened along over the snow that had turned purple with twilight. A few stars flickered in the colorless sky stretched above Salem Town and the wide sea beyond it. To his right, the sunset red burned out into pale orange and aquamarine. Everywhere the black branches of trees writhed upward like arms of stricken sinners reaching to God. He crossed the brook that flowed from the woods into Francis Nourse's meadows, looking toward the high roof and chimney of the Nourse house. Francis was his enemy, he was sure. Francis stood with those who denied his claim to the parsonage, and Francis refused to get him any firewood. What a fine story he and his wife could make of the Winster woman's rambling if she had taken it to them instead of to Goodwife Corey! Not that Giles was any friend to his cause. With Martha he had striven to convert her sin-hard husband and draw Giles into the church of Salem Village, and Giles had impudently defied them by riding down to Salem Town and joining Mr. Noyes's church there. But the minister knew that if he spoke a few stern words to Martha now, the story would go no farther, though he was not so sure Remember Winster would not tell it again. He knew that he had silenced her for the moment, just as he was on his way now to silence Martha, but he had realized as he watched the woman going slowly away from him into the trees beyond the Training Ground, that her burden of garish knowledge was too great for her to bear. Of course she could be mad, as he had cunningly told her she was--but he doubted it. She was about as likely to be mad as was a clod her husband turned over when he plowed his flax field.

Of what happened in his kitchen o' nights, he was honestly ignorant. That Remember's story could be true, he did know. That winter he had ridden up to Thomas Putnam's nearly every night, where they were searching the church records for evidence he could use against his enemies in the congregation. Betty and Abigail did go into the kitchen to help Tituba clear away the night meal. Sometimes, he knew, neighbor girls and women joined them. Occasionally as he was putting on his greatcoat to be gone, he heard voices, laughter, a snatch of song; harmless sounds, surely. True, the girls had grown thin and nervous of late, Tituba so arrogant he had threatened last Lecture Day

to give her a beating. So much he knew in support of Remember's story. He knew nothing that would go to disprove it. And if it were true, what should he do about it? He could take Tituba to Boston, sell her, and buy a younger serving wench with a milder look and less lust for evil in her veins. He could see that his daughter and his niece spent their evenings under his own eye, knitting or struggling with the hornbook. Let it be noised abroad that evil had entered the very house of Samuel Parris. The tale would go abroad, too, that Samuel Parris strong in piety had worsted evil and cast its authors down. Yes, in the end his reputation should gain by the story.

The snow crunched pleasantly under his boots. A thin moon stared whitely down at him, making him think of the white face of Elizabeth turning on her pillow. He loved Elizabeth, but sometimes he longed for a ruddy wench with a touch of the fields about her, not clay-cold either, as he imagined Remember Winster would be. Someone you could sin with on Friday--Venus' day--and damn out of church for it come the Sabbath. The trouble was, such a wench would not hold her tongue--not ever--unless she were a stranger, shy and from far away, with no friends near her to talk to. Perhaps he would not bring home a *black* serving girl this time from Boston.

Samuel Parris was not an evil man--rather, he aspired to be a great one; but it seemed to him that someone was always thwarting him, denying his superiority over other men, violating his dignity. He had inherited a goodly estate in his father's Barbados trade--and he had lost it. He had set up to be a minister of the Gospel because the ministers were the aristocrats of the colony, and he longed passionately to be considered an aristocrat. Instead of a rich church in Boston, he found his lot to be a log meeting house in the Essex wilderness, with a congregation of niggardly farmers who bowed the knee to no man, not even the representative of Christ, unless they liked and trusted him. And they neither liked nor trusted Samuel Parris. He believed he was entitled to their homage; they stubbornly withheld it. He threatened them with Hell, but they liked him no better. He was nearly forty, face to face at last with the likelihood that he would never rise above the mediocrity that choked and sickened him. Lesser men, he meditated, had found comfort in a little secret wenching. Perhaps comfort lay there for him if he went to look for it.

Just ahead of him a stand of shagbark hickories cast long shadows over the cart track. Beyond it, when he rounded the near hill, he would see the Corey farm. In the shadow stood a little hut, dark and irregular in outline, leaping flame visible behind the windows as he looked into them. He came even with it on the road.

Years later, when the Reverend Samuel Parris lay dying in Sudbury, and the

whole horrid pageant of his life in Salem shifted through his closing mind, he remembered how, on this night and at this moment, his feet had turned from the course he had set for them and carried him straight to the cabin. He had not meant to walk through the snow and rap at the door under the swinging blue boot-sign. He had no wish to do it, no reason to do it. But that was what he did. If no one else in Salem was ever bewitched, as the courts said later they were not, he surely was, on that night.

"Come in!" shouted a gay voice, with more of welcome in it than Parris was used to receive from his congregation.

He pushed open the door that sagged from one rusty leather hinge, thrifty Giles having taken away the iron ones when his house was finished years ago. He stepped inside, his moist boots slipping a little on the beaten turf floor. The door swung shut behind him. He stood still and looked then, not knowing what to say. The wall opposite the door seemed to be nothing but fireplace, a crude field-stone one, and a fire roared in it such as the minister had never seen, not even in the rich men's houses in Boston, not even in rich England when he was a lad. Great logs burned there, blue and green like driftwood. No wonder their flame had shone through the panes, lighting the snow outside. Against the west window stood the shoemaker's bench, complete with awls and lasts, great shears and needles, and a box of whittled pegs. All the tools lay in perfect order. The awls gleamed sharp and shiny and unused. At a smaller trestle table near the fire stood the occupant of the cabin, whom Parris had known hitherto as a dark, mild-mannered young man sitting every Sabbath in his congregation, but tonight he looked like a court wastrel of the old regime or a roaring boy of London, as if Remember Winster's story about him could well be true. Behind him, an iron kettle swung at the hearthside. Before him, on the table, steamed two trenchers of savory stew. But most surprising was his speech.

"Sit down, Sam," he said. "I put a hare in the pot when I knew you were coming. And I've a good fire, too. You like a good fire, Sam."

Samuel Parris stared. He did not know whether to be more amazed at the young man's familiarity or at something else--an air of unutterable evil that seemed to breathe from him as naturally as the smoke breathed up the chimney. He felt as if he were suddenly thrust into the middle of a wicked stage play--God forbid--where the other actor knew his lines and he did not.

"I am," he said pompously, "the Reverend Samuel Parris, your minister and your better, Goodman."

"Ah, yes." The young man shook down the gray wool sleeves of his tunic which had been rolled to the shoulder of his leather waistcoat, kicked up a

bench, and sat down. "You are that in your church, but not in my house when we foregather to buy and sell."

"I am the representative of God."

"You took leave of God when you crossed my threshold. He will not bother us here. Sit down and eat before the stew skims over. You should have fasted for forty days and forty nights, but I'm not so hard now as I used to be."

Samuel Parris sat down at the table. An iron spoon lay by his trencher. As he picked it up he noticed that it had a very long handle and sharp edges. Behind his host's back the fire roared blue and green in the chimney. There was no other light. Some trick of reflection from the front window glass made the flames leap and burn in the young man's eyes as he started spooning down the stew. Parris recovered his dignity a little as the stew warmed his body.

"I have been hearing evil talk of you, Goodman Horne."

"And it was likely true. There is no bread to eat with the hare, unless you can make it out of a field-stone."

"Man does not live by bread alone," quoted the minister piously.

The dark eyes sparkled; John Horne's lips curved in a smile. "I see you follow me," he said, tilting his trencher.

But the poor minister did not follow him. He felt mazed as if far-gone in liquor.

"I could set you on the peak of Salem Village Church--but a little wind might cast you down, and I fear He has given His angels no word concerning you."

Both men ate silently for a time. The minister, lifting his eyes to the window, noticed that twilight had gone and black dark gathered outside. He finished the last gobbet of meat in his trencher. Then John Horne spoke again.

"So, if you have eaten, I will take you up into an exceeding high mountain and show you the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them."

Parris broke from his stupor. "You read that speech in the Word of God!" he gasped harshly, all his arrogance gone.

"Aye. It is well known I can quote it to serve my purpose."

"Who are you?"

"I am John Horne--shoemaker of Salem Village."

"And before that? Of what parish, and what pastor will stand for you?"

"Gideon Penman of Crichton in Scotland will stand for me--Mr. Gideon, my chaplain--"

John Horne smiled affably. Parris sat perfectly still. Gideon Penman? Penman of Crichton! Yes, he had heard Mr. Mather discourse with horror of the man. Penman had been a covenanting parson, but had resigned his godly charge to become a warlock at the great Lothian witch coven some fourteen years ago. Most righteously Mather's eyes had blazed, as he told how this foul villain had assisted Satan in his preaching at the Blasphemous Sabbath, serving wafers with blood and black moss-water to mock the Blessed Sacrament, scoffing at his lost brood that ever they should put their trust in God who had left them miserable in the world. Gideon Penman, priest of the Devil! "Mr. Gideon, my chaplain," the Devil was said to have called him.

Truly now, the minister realized, he must wield the sword of God as never before in his life. He must cast forth pious words like musket balls. He must--he must--The flame reflected in the cold eyes held him fast, silenced his words before he could utter them. His fingers gripped the handle of the long spoon. John Horne waited. The fire burned lower and the gleam of its light went from his face. Parris spoke harshly, the words that were going through his mind at the moment the spell lifted and he was able to use his lips.

"A witch coven under my roof! One of our goodwives tells me you were there. She says you brought the Book for her to sign."

"Hah! Remember Winster! Still serving me although she does not guess it. Is she not too pretty a serving girl for a reverend minister to have about him?"

Samuel Parris felt unpleasant shudders swim like eels along his backbone. Not so long ago he had been thinking unholy thoughts of pretty serving girls. This fiend knew it.

"Ah well," continued John Horne, "you may have another, if you like. It is I shall come on Mrs. Remember in the darkness. And there will not always be a moon."

Remember's tale of her Hallow's Eve experience must be true then, thought Parris fleetingly.

"But I have engaged," continued the other, "to show you the kingdoms of the world. Take a look in the pot there on the fire."

Parris shifted the unfeeling flesh of his body awkwardly forward and gazed into the small iron caldron swung on the crane. The mass inside it seethed merrily, though the fire had quite died out. His host lit a candle and handed it to him. Under its glow, pictures seemed to shape themselves out of the boiling

pot liquor, and the first face that the minister could distinguish was his own. In the picture he stood in his pulpit before a great throng, ministers themselves sitting under him in the front pews, a rabble of country-clad folk behind them. All eyes followed him. All their gestures acclaimed him. Samuel Parris was clearly the great man of a great hour. But the picture changed. He saw himself wasted and alone, ill and dying on a verminous pallet, with no one to pray for him or bring him a drink of water. The picture faded. The pot stopped boiling. Clear water with a slight scum lay at the bottom of it, nothing more.

"These are two worlds, Samuel Parris. The first is yours if you are tempted by it. Otherwise"--he shrugged his shoulders--"your God will leave you to the second."

"Whatever my God ordains for me, that will I accept," said Parris stoutly. Strength went pounding through his veins at the sound of the brave words coming from his own mouth. This was no devil, he decided. This was a soothsayer and a clever charlatan. Let him play out his game and pay his losings.

The other smiled. "Ah well. I shall discourse now of the kingdoms of the world. But I shall make a pithier sermon than you make of a Sabbath."

Parris looked him in the eye. "I am listening, Goodman Horne," he said with a sneer.

John Horne bowed. "Have you ever heard it said among the learned, 'The giving up of Witchcraft is the giving up of the Bible?'"

"No, I have not heard it said. But I believe it."

"Of course you believe it. And unborn men will say it when you cannot hear them."

"The Son of Man," went on Parris piously, "knows from his cradle that Witchcraft is a truth of Science, a truth under God--would it were not."

"Think! Do you really mean that? What would you do without witches and their king, the patron of all sin? What would you godly preachers do for your sermons if there were no Devil to warn folk away from? Pray, what would you frighten your congregations with to keep them in order? If there were no Devil, New England would not need you to wage war on him. She would not need Cotton Mather of Boston, nor Nicholas Noyes of Salem, nor Mr. Hale of Beverly--far less would she need Samuel Parris of Salem Village. You would have to till the fields, and sweat with your body to make a living, the way other men do. You preachers need the Devil as you have never needed God."

Samuel Parris said nothing.

"I have long held a grant to this country," continued John Horne more lightly. "I had it from my father that all the lands this side of the western ocean were to be for me and my people, but you colonists have built your farms and your ugly temples upon it without so much as by-your-leave. You had your charter from Charles Stuart! Pah! What is Charles Stuart in the courts of my country?"

Fact followed closely this outrageous statement. No man who ever wore a steeple hat but knew that the fiend had been given these far reaches of the new world for his own, and that all New England's woes--murrain and falling stars, Sabbath-breaking and sorcery--were due to his spectral efforts to dislodge the children of God who had settled there. The Devil would fight, the Church had taught them, and they must fight him back under the leadership of the ministers.

"But to be practical now, for I was always a practical man--" The young man flung himself lithely down on the settle. "I repeat: you need Witchcraft. You need the Devil. If you conquer him and drive him out forever, the people will not want your prayers and preaching any more. The plowman's life is a hard one to start to follow late in life. What you must do, if you want to hold your pulpit, is to make a truce with Satan: you, not to hound him too far, and to let him have his tuppenny soul now and then; he, to seem to flee before you, which will much raise you up in the eyes of the people. But all the time, you are to understand one another. If you could down the Devil right smartly before the whole colony, I should not be surprised if they gave you a church in Boston to reward you."

John Horne idly twisted the leather fringe edging his jerkin. "Or put it this way: is it true, or is it not true, that the people are losing their old fear of God, of the Church, of the ministers?"

"Yes," slow, hard-wrung, "it is true."

"Or come closer home. You have failed once in life. You lost your father's warehouse, and countinghouse, and ships to the rich Barbados. You are not loved in Salem Village, and like to fail again before the year is out. Can you afford that?"

"No."

Parris' voice came in a tormented whisper. He watched the boughs beyond the pane reaching up to God through the night sky. One branch drove into the round moon like a spear. He felt such a spear twist in his heart. Once yet, before he yielded to the Devil's logic, he knew that the Devil had him. He

made his last stand.

"Why did you come to Salem Village? Why to me?"

"Because Salem Village is ripe for evil, and you are a man to my purpose. Let me repeat now, as sermoners always use. Whereas: you and your fellow parsons need Witchcraft and evil that you may have a reason to exist. You must have a Great Adversary to protect your congregations from."

"Yes."

"Whereas: the people are growing upstart and rebellious. They should be taught a lesson. They should be shown that the Church can still put down evil as in the old days."

"They should."

"Whereas: you, Samuel Parris, are come down in the world and likely to come down further. If you could lead a winning fight on Satan, you would be no worse off--in pocket, or in the sight of God."

"And how am I to lead such a fight?"

"By swearing truce with him in secret and damning him right vigorously before the congregation. Suppose there is a witch coven in your kitchen, Parson, and your daughter sits there even now, sucking pins in poppets. She herself is as likely to be bewitched. Her mind is ripe for it. And if she is bewitched, someone must have bewitched her. Satan cannot work on man save through human instruments. If you find the witch and hang her, you will be a great man. If twenty girls are bewitched, and you are a spry man of parts, you can hang twenty witches. Then you will have twenty times saved the colony and will be twenty times honored."

"And how are the twenty girls to be bewitched? Have you--has the Devil--the human instruments?"

"Every spiteful, land-greedy man in Salem Village is such an instrument--though not in the way you think. Leave all that to me. You and I shall arrange a fine drama here in Salem that shall make men speak our names together for centuries to come."

"My name--for centuries!"

"Aye, man, but first, the truce. It must all be according to my usual terms."

He went to the hewn shelf by the cobbler's bench and lifted down a book with iron corners, turned around and stood facing the minister.

"You will have to heckle and harass and murder helpless women, Parson--men

and women with better souls than yours."

Parris did not hesitate now. The dark man's logic had spread its patterns like an evil mesh across his mind. He had utterly surrendered to it, given over. He saw himself suddenly as chosen to restore the failing power of God's ministry by this terrible crusade.

"If they die thus," he breathed, "the reproach of sin is upon them and the suffering of it. But I do them a great good! I make them to die for the Glory of God!"

"And I shall be beside you all the way," promised John Horne soothingly, stepping forward with the book. "Together we shall plot and plan in the darkness--to the Glory of God!"

Parris threw back his head. He clenched his fingers around the long handle of the spoon he held. The sharp edge of it left a small, slicing cut across the inside of the middle joints. Red seeped reluctantly out and over his pale flesh, but it did not spread. Half-frenzied now, he gripped the whole hand around the injured one and tried to force more blood out of himself.

"Easy, Sam," breathed John Horne pressing close to him with the open book and a quill pen. "It's poor stuff, but there's enough to the purpose."

CHAPTER 7
Peace, My Daughters

THE YEAR turned. Bitter January evened off the fields before Jonathan Winster's house, making holes and hummocks all one in level whiteness, drifting the hills behind it, that took the red sun into their fastnesses by the middle of the afternoon. Remember did not leave the house once during the month, not all because of the weather. She was afraid to. Some of her fears she could understand; her fear of looking into Samuel Parris' face, for instance, with the sharp knowledge that lay between them, kept her from going to the Meeting House on the Sabbath. She feared John Horne, too, with the elemental fear a woman can feel for a man whose manliness attracts her. Why she feared the girls who played at being witches in the parsonage kitchen, she did not know, but fear them she did. Such a living evil might spread all over the countryside, just as a corruption in the little finger can poison the whole body.

Jonathan, too, shook a gloomy head over Village affairs. He did not concern himself with the pranks of the Circle, though talk of their doings was passing back and forth now over the pipes and noggins in Ingersoll's tavern. Parish politics worried him, the growing hatred between the minister and a large group of the church members. The land quarrels with the Topsfield men had quieted down, but smouldered underneath, and it made him uncomfortable to have his neighbors snarl at each other whenever they met, like leashed and muzzled dogs. General Court, Jonathan thought, could be blamed for that. They had granted to Salem Village years ago a pleasant strip of land, northeast, and within the curving arm of the River-that-runs-to-Ipswich--and later they had granted the same strip of land to be a separate town called "Topsfield." Now both towns argued over who owned the green farms and what parish these men should pay taxes to. The Eastys and the Townes lived up there, Rebecca Nourse's kin; so did the Howes and the Wildes, decent enough folk, Jonathan always thought, but now disliked in Salem Village because they were of Topsfield, because the wise men in Boston had blundered and given the land away twice over. Parson's maids and the other wenches would get themselves husbands before they were much older, he thought, and that would put an end to their folly. But the parish rates or the run of a town-line--a man could get gray hair with worry over things like that, were he not already gray.

Jonathan went to the tavern at night, but he did not talk, and gradually the men he met there turned silent. They spoke less and drank more. Once when Nat Ingersoll tried with a jest to revive the old spirit, a harsh scream smote in upon it--a scream from the direction of the minister's. Everyone crowded to the north window and all eyes saw a pointed shaft of red flame leap up the night from the parsonage chimney. It left the chimney like a blast from a fowling-piece and soared up and up till no one could tell quite the moment it vanished against the body of the round moon. The deacon put out drinks for the house then, and Edward Putnam prayed.

On another night Remember saw a shooting star--a star that slipped from its place just over Giles Corey's and darted east to disappear somewhere in the sky over Francis Nourse's house. She cried out then and frightened Briony so that she had to tell the girl she had burned herself with the candle flame.

Briony was a comfort now to the couple, who felt the choking shadow of evil draw thick around them. In a year, perhaps, her white beauty would have point and direction. She might be using it to get herself properly settled in the world--and surely, that was why God had given it to her. But schemes had not yet furrowed her young brow, her gentle laugh bubbled up like a spring of water. Briony loved everybody; she had not learned yet that wisdom of the middle years that age relinquishes again--that some beings are not worthy of love. She could be quiet, too, her head bent all day over the many books Stephen brought her, or wild and eager, dancing through the woods whenever the crust was strong enough to hold her slim weight. Prudence and Tamar plodded behind her, their round cheeks red, their thin noses blue. Remember felt grateful for the solidness of their shapeless, little-girl bodies. Because of them the Circle had not dared approach Briony, for Tituba said her *obi* magic would not work with twins. Briony was as Eve must have been before the serpent crawled through the leaves in Eden. Sometimes Remember thought she would like to take Briony by the hand and lead her through the starlight straight to the Parris kitchen; to confront the Circle with pure good--good that was good not because of prayers or tedious endeavor, but because it had been born that way. If this did not cure them they would indeed be abandoned girls. And so they must be, she finally decided, for Briony had grown up with them, her skirts touching theirs all the way. She had learned to run a hem with Mercy Lewis, for Remember had taught them both when Mercy was maid to Parson Burroughs, and she had shared a hornbook with Mary Walcott in the dame school. But their ways were not hers any more. Perhaps every girl was an Eve in her own Eden, her doom implicit, soon or late to fall. When Remember's thoughts reached this point she decided that she was beyond her depth--at sea in a shallop where galleons might well founder. She would draw her mouth

then into a thin line. Come weal or woe, she meant to take care of Briony. The rest of Salem Village could take its chances. Sometimes she longed to go to Martha Corey's to tell her about her interview with Mr. Parris on Christmas Day, to share with Martha the fear and misery in her heart. But the cold weather and deep drifts kept her from traveling that far.

Toward the end of February the cold broke. Black rain beat down for a week, washing the snow into pools that spread over the low ground and brimmed the seaward-sloping watercourses. Gray mist hung over the fields and from beyond the mist came the sound of water seeping through the gray earth and dead grasses. Then a warm wind drove the clouds over Salem Harbor, and the sun shone steady and strong with a false warmth, a May warmth, drawing out too early the furred willow buds and tender shoots of alder that dipped wildly in the foaming brooks.

Wilder lights moved at night in the Parris windows. They seemed to break out fitfully all over the house. The men began to talk again in Ingersoll's tavern. The word passed among them that the minister could no longer ignore the strange actions of his niece and daughter, for the girls crept into holes and under benches and chairs, threw themselves into odd and antic postures and uttered strange, unintelligible sounds. Mr. Parris gave it out that they were ill. He sent for Doctor Griggs. On Thursday, the last Lecture Day in the month, Doctor Griggs rode over from his house by Leach's Hill on Ryall Side. He came in the morning, so Hannah Ingersoll's scullery maid said--she had seen him when she went out to fetch water--and he left his horse tethered by the side door. Toward noontime, Mr. Parris himself came out and led the beast into the shelter at the rear where his own animals lived. No one saw the doctor leave, so he must have stayed till dark. Next day he came back, and all day other men went in and out: a doctor from Lynn, a doctor from Ipswich, Reverend Mr. Noyes of the First Church in Salem, Reverend Mr. Hale of Beverly. The word passed in the tavern that the doctors said their medicine did not help the children whom they feared had been overlooked; that Doctor Griggs said his niece, Elizabeth Hubbard, was suffering in the same way. The word passed that the ministers said the girls were bewitched.

John Horne was of the group who heard this gossip and he shook his head.

"A terrible thing!" he muttered sagely. "I have seen it in the old country, and in Boston, too. But Mr. Cotton Mather took care of it there. He hanged Goody Glover and that ended it. Now that it happens here, no servant of Christ is safe until the witch is hanged."

"But we've yet to find the witch," objected Deacon Ingersoll, "and hanging's a serious business. Some said Goody Glover was only a poor washer-woman

whom Mr. Mather did not like."

"Goody Glover had signed the Book," stated John Horne. "I *know*. Ho, Deacon, another rum! And one for my friend, Goodman Winster."

"And don't ye fear they'll not find the witches," hinted Thomas Putnam darkly from his place by the fire. "They've afflicted my little Ann, too, and my goodwife. Ann says there be three of them that sit on her chest by night and stick pins in her."

John Proctor heaved himself off the bench in the corner and went to knock his pipe ashes into the fireplace.

"I've heard same story out at my house," he growled, "from the wench who helps in the kitchen. Pins stick in her, she says, and her breath stops in the night. Pity 'twouldn't stop for good, I tell her, for she's idle and dirty, and if she goes naming folk as witches I'll give her a beating. I say, beat the lot of 'em and they'll all be well from that minute. I say--"

His words died away as Francis Nourse the landowner, gray and kindly, tapped his shoulder.

"You better hold your tongue, John," he murmured. "Mr. Parris is for it, and all the parsons in the towns around, I hear. They say the girls are truly afflicted and the witches must be caught--so they will be. You'd not go against the parsons?"

"No," muttered John, "I'd not do that. No man in Salem would--and for reasons we know well."

"Hush!" said Francis, but he need not have worried that anyone might listen to them, for all eyes were turned to the parish clerk.

"Does Ann know them?"

"Who are they?"

Putnam looked down wisely into his ale. "Aye, she knows them. But Mr. Parris is strong in God and he'll bring them out when he's ready. Till then--but he means it soon."

"We can all trust Mr. Parris, surely," soothed John Horne. "Another drink, Goodman Winster?"

"No. Thank ye kindly." Jonathan finished his rum, heavy and sweet, with little tongues of fire licking at his throat as it went down. He liked the new shoemaker. A rare lad with an axe or a woman, he doubted not. "But I'd best be getting home."

"Ye've a good reason for going home," said the younger man, "as good a reason as any man in Salem." He slapped the flat of his hard hand between Jonathan's shoulders.

The old man winced. He felt the embedded musket ball settle in his flesh. Then, with a sly smile, he heaved himself off the bench and out of the tavern. He walked home heavily over the sodden land in the dark, a little drunk, sure that everybody in the world was a good fellow, even Mr. Parris, maybe. Remember was not in the fireroom, but he did not care. He climbed very carefully upstairs, stripped off his clothes and tumbled into bed. She was not there either, but he did not notice it. He slept.

Remember had gone out a little while before, into the warm night, so warm for February that men might have remembered the spring of '92 for that--if they had not had something else to remember it for. She had been restless since the going of the cold, not fearful any more, but unable to tend the loom or set a decent meal on the trestle table; always eager to start new tasks, but unable to finish them. Once Briony had pulled a sad loaf of hers scorching from the oven and cried, "Remember! Everything you do of late goes bad and wrong. I trow, you're overlooked." "Hush your talk!" Remember had snapped, so fiercely that the tears welled through Briony's soft lashes.

Tonight, after the girls were in bed and Neddy at his broken snoring on the trundle cot, she sat alone in the firelight and felt herself suddenly wish to go out. She asked herself where she wished to go, but found no answer to the question. Angry at her own folly, she got out her knitting and jabbed the needles savagely into a half-turned sock. She dropped stitches. Ugly holes interrupted the neat meshes. She wanted to go out! She put the sock down and gripped the arms of the gaunt chair. Her eyes watched the brass clock. If she could keep herself in just a little longer Jonathan would come home from the tavern, and then he would hold her. He would not let her go. She watched the clock. She held tight to the chair. Then she felt her muscles stir with the fluidity of pond water stirring when the wind crosses it. She got up and took her cloak from the hook behind the kitchen door. She flung it around her shoulders and tied it at the neck, but it streamed out behind her in the warm wind as she hurried down the slope toward the Village. "Where am I going?" she cried to herself. "What will I find there?"

A clumsy shape loomed before her on the path just as she reached the alders by Beaver Dam Brook. The shape moved unsteadily. It was Jonathan. She felt herself slipping down into the thicket close to the running stream. She wanted to call to him but she could not. She stood still. The rain-soaked turf sucked at her boot soles. Drops of water shaken from the wet trees by the wind fell on

her face and hair. The flooding brook poured seaward behind the alders. She looked up and saw John Horne.

She had always known that he could look like this, although she had never seen him so before. She had known, too, without knowing, that she would be lost when this moment came. The bright darkness in his eyes softened and yearning, the curved mouth uncertain, trembling with a plea rather than a jest. Oh he was not a fiend, she knew now! He was a man, made of earth as she was made, and as such, all the more dangerous. The Word of God, the thrown salt, and the rowan twig can drive away the Devil, but they will not keep a man from taking his desire, nor a woman from giving it to him. She felt herself to be terribly alive--alive for the first time in all the years since *The Plover's Wing* had dropped down Salem Harbor. And to know yourself alive was to want life and more life, to sink and lose yourself in living. She put her face up.

The curving mouth bent down on hers now. Hard muscled arms drew her in and pressed her body to the body under the rough cloak. The hilt of the sword hanging at his side bruised her flesh through her thick skirt. All her senses went out like a sky full of stars crashing down on the earth. There in the marsh grass under the wet alders he might have had his will of her--and Salem Village been spared much harm thereby--but he did not seize his moment. Instead, he lifted his mouth from hers and spoke, still holding her.

"For you I could almost forget what I have to do here. There is a good in you that other women have not. Not the good that fawns and yaps in the churches, but the good of fields under the sunlight. I have never seen it so before--walking the earth as a woman. It would be worth possessing."

In the long silence that fell after his words she heard the water lashing through the low branches, the sound of men's voices calling goodnight by Ingersoll's tavern. Little wisps of fog drifted between the trees. He stood away from her holding only to her hand, and went on.

"You believe that every soul has its destiny, Remember, for your church teaches you so."

"Yes," she said weakly, "yes."

"And I have mine. But there is a certain freedom in it. What I must do, I must do. But there will be sorrow for all men of the place where it is done--and that need not be here. If you will give me your love and the whole goodness of you, I will go away. There will be peace in Salem then. You will have saved a city."

His dark eyes lighted as she looked into them, but his words had broken the spell around her. Love does not answer to any sort of bargaining. Now, amply

armed against him, she answered firmly.

"But I would have lost my soul forever," she said.

"So you would save your own soul and let Salem Village take its chances?"

"I am not afraid for Salem Village. God will take care of it."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Do not trouble Him then with your prayers for a while. He will have much to do. And if you ever think more kindly of sin--I shall not be far off."

He dropped her hand, walked deliberately back to the path and turned down the path to the Village.

Remember stood still in the brook valley. Finally she raised her hand and flexed the fingers limply--the hand that he had taken and let go--surprised that she still had the power to move it. She could not think yet, but she knew, the way an animal knows that it is thirsty and drinks, that she must follow John Horne wherever he went; that she must offer what she had just denied him. She picked her way through the bog holes and crossed the log bridge, her eyes on the figure striding ahead of her, no other thought in her mind but to overtake it.

John Horne quickened his steps as he passed the Training Ground. Past Ingersoll's tavern she followed him, past the Meeting House. He cut through the orchard and into the parsonage yard. He vanished around the corner of the house. Remember crept carefully closer. Her wits came back into her head with a rush. She put her hands against the rough wall of the house and felt her way along it. A watery moon had been struggling with the clouds but gave up now, and darkness drew in like an invisible cloak pulled over her head, half smothering her. The wind stirred in the boughs of the leafless walnut tree; it blew into her nostrils the fresh scent of running water. She turned the corner, stretched upward, and peered into a kitchen window with light streaming out of it.

What she saw within might have been a painting in crude colors fixed forever on canvas, or a scene in a wicked stage play. Tituba knelt by a blazing fire, her head bent low on her scarlet shawl. Little Ann Putnam lay at her feet, her body rolled into a complete hoop, and Mrs. Ann Putnam stood over them, her lips drawn back over her teeth and drooling, a horrid stare in her eyes. The other girls writhed about on the floor, moaning and tumbling. From somewhere came the three notes of the invisible drum. Bodies froze stiff in whatever grotesque pose they happened to be in. Remember's fingers clutched at the window ledge as John Horne moved into the picture. He looked for a moment around at the distorted creatures on the sanded floor. Fire leaped from the

darkness of his eyes. He stretched out his right arm, the hand hanging limply downward as if in benediction.

The curving lips moved. He said twice over, "Peace, my Daughters."

CHAPTER 8
In The Congregation of the Righteous

JOHN HORNE had kissed her of a Friday night. Remember did not leave her house for three days thereafter. She baked and wove, read the scriptures with Briony, and slept every night beside Jonathan. The swift delight of that meeting and its climax in utter horror she put away in the back of her mind as in a locked room. To feel was to want more and more of the witch-master's lovemaking; to think was to be terribly afraid. So she did neither. She lingered over homely things: the texture of the web growing on the loom, the smell of dry herbs when she took them down from the rafters and crushed them to flavor a stew, the fluffy drift of down all over the house when Neddy ripped open a goosefeather pillow in his clumsy play.

Jonathan traveled to and from the Village as often as his old bones would take him there. He had it straight from Sergeant Putnam at the tavern that the witches were to be brought out on Tuesday, the first of March; that the magistrates would come from Salem Town to hear the evidence against them. Mr. Parris had arranged it so. On Saturday night he stayed so late in the Village that Remember had finished the milking before he came home, and he told her then that there had been prayer and fasting all day at the parsonage, where the assembled ministers urged the girls to tell who tormented them. He went to church the next day and came home with his eyes popping, the story of what had happened there tumbling over his lips.

Bathsheba Pope, a young wife from the Boston Road who was said to be a member of the Circle, had fallen in a fit in front of the pulpit. Mercy Lewis had screamed that a pin was thrust in her breast, and sure enough, an iron bodkin, bloodstained, fell out of her bodice. Mr. Parris stopped his sermon to ask who tormented her thus in God's house, but she fell down frothing at the mouth, and Mary Warren cried out that a yellow bird perched on the minister's hat. Abigail Williams began to howl like a dog who scents death, and Mary Walcott rushed to the nearest wall and beat her head against it. The congregation looked on in amazed horror, shifting uneasily in their seats, each man wondering if he would be the next one attacked, each woman fearful for her children. Witches were surely loose among them, for these young girls did not act so from madness or disease, but because they were suffering at the hands of invisible

tormentors. Everybody wanted to know who these tormentors were. Mr. Parris led in a prayer for the afflicted and they quieted down. The worshippers who sat nearest to them stroked their bruises with compassionate hands and wiped the spittle from their lips and kerchiefs. But Peter Cloyse muttered that he'd come to hear a sermon, not to see maids carry on, and if this was Mr. Parris' idea of Sabbath service, he'd get his preaching at Ipswich or Ryall Side hereafter. John Procter could hardly conceal his disgust and fury. He muttered back that if nobody paid any attention to the girls' tricks they'd soon be well enough. Parson should order their people to take them home and give them a good beating for carousing so in God's house. As for his own serving maid, Mary Warren, when he got her back home in the leanter he'd show her yellow birds, with a clout in the head to help her eyesight.

Jonathan got up early Monday morning and made for the Village without so much as a sup of cold porridge. He came back at noon to tell her that the warrants were out. The girls had accused Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne, and the slave Tituba.

How wise of them, thought Remember, to see that Tituba is really to blame for their trouble and to hand her over to the magistrates at last. But why should they think the beggar woman Sarah Good had anything to do with it? Or the unhappy invalid Sarah Osborne who had married her servant? Sarah Osborne was too ill to go to meeting. Sarah Good begged in the highway to feed herself and her last little child, Dorcas. Both were outcast, friendless women, these two Sarahs. Of course they could be witches, but she doubted it. She had never heard that they were of the Circle. She wondered if the girls would name John Horne.

Tuesday she thought to spend at her loom, but Jonathan insisted that she must go to the Meeting House with him for the hearing. They set out in the teeth of a sharp wind pouring out of a blue spring sky. Little patches of frost crumbled under their feet as they tramped along, and groups of their neighbors joined them at every wall gap and by-lane.

Many more were already gathered when they reached the village and a great number of horses nuzzled the dead grass on the Training Ground, unhitched from the farm carts they had drawn there. Men and women from all the Essex countryside straggled along the unpaved street, trying to get into the tavern. Drawing closer, Remember could see Giles Corey's grizzled head wagging from side to side as he talked excitedly with Nat Ingersoll. Martha was not with him. Bridget Bishop's swart face and scarlet bodice moved merrily here and there. Once her voice lifted in a taunting laugh at some crude jest of her own. The Topsfield men came trooping in from the northeast, and intermingled

with the plain people went many a gold-laced waistcoat and fashionable wig adorning the persons of substantial citizens from Salem Town. Once Remember thought she saw Philip English, but then he disappeared into a little knot of richly dressed strangers and she could not be sure. On her loom at home stretched the beginning of a fine bolt of plaid linen his wife, Mistress Mary, had ordered from her more than a month ago. Remember had drawn the design for it after a favorite pattern Jonet Thrale had brought in her head from Scotland. She did all Mary English's weaving, and she had often been in the English mansion under the trees close to the water of Salem Harbor, one of the finest houses in Essex. She knew Mistress English to be quiet surely, of presence and dignity, but godly, and a good housekeeper; not too haughty to give her weaver a cup of tea when the weaving pleased her.

Horns shrilled below the hill and along the crooked road to Salem. The crowd quieted down and watched, wide-eyed as a group of children, spilling half in, half out, of Deacon Ingersoll's wide front door. In the silence after the first blast, a horse neighed from the Training Ground. The wind went by sharply in the blue air overhead, and sunlight streamed through the bare trees without warming the men and women who stood in the half-frozen mud of the trampled street, on the sodden grass before the tavern. Up the road now came the magistrates: John Hathorne, black-browed and lowering like thunder weather in late July; Jonathan Corwin, hard and impassive as a flint waiting to be struck. They rode sleek horses and their scarlet robes of office showed whenever their black, gold-laced cloaks whipped backward in the wind. Before them rode the Marshal of Essex and a leather-clad deputy blowing from time to time on a wide-mouthed horn. Behind them rode constables, deputies, and aides. The procession stopped in front of the tavern, forcing the crowd to scatter or be caught under its hoofs, and more than one farmer moved so quickly that he slipped to his knees on the thawing turf. The opulent townsmen retreated more slowly, muttering a little.

Deacon Ingersoll stepped forward, wearing his good wool suit with the leather lining, his wig tipped awry and his face flushed with excitement. He was just going to speak to Judge Hathorne when a slight murmur stirred in the crowd. Everyone turned toward the parsonage. Mr. Parris was coming. Mr. Noyes of the First Church in Salem walked on his right, and Mr. Hale of Beverly on his left, their homespun cloaks flapping about their thin legs. Each of them carried a heavy leathern book that could only be a Bible.

Remember, watching them, thought of the book John Horne had carried under his cloak that night on the hillside. She looked around for John but saw him nowhere. She felt the cold of the ground biting through the soles of her shoes.

This was the cold that the body went into at death, this cold of the earth. She could feel it moving up all her veins through her living body. She would die, she thought, and all these men and women of Essex standing with her in the spring sunshine would die. They must die and go through the cold ground if they were to reach the singing city of God, the soul's home. There was no other way there--not even for Judge Hathorne and Mr. Parris. Voices beside her turned her thoughts back from eternity. Hannah Ingersoll was talking with Mary Easty of Topsfield, Rebecca Nourse's sister.

"Where is Parson's little Betty, you want to know? He's not bringing her with him so she can name her witch? No, he's not! And you'll not see Betty Parris in Salem Village till all the witches be out of it, they say in tavern. She's to stay at Stephen Sewall's in the Town."

Mary Easty turned her square-chinned face and sea-blue eyes full on the older woman.

"Other men's maids be in it. Why should his stay out?"

"You'll be wiser than I when you know," said Hannah, shifting heavily to lean a little against an elm tree.

Remember looked around now, to the tavern where the ministers stood talking with the magistrates. They seemed to agree on something, probably that the tavern could not hold all the people who had come for the hearing, for they turned away and started toward the Meeting House, first the brother parsons, then the trumpeter and the men of law. The marshal and his deputies had disappeared. After the magistrates, at a respectful distance, followed the farmers and townsmen. Mr. Parris bent down at the door of the Meeting House to unlock it; then he led the way inside. Hathorne and Corwin dismounted and bowed their heads to enter the low door. The crowd pushed after them, shoving and scrambling till they filled the benches. Remember clung tightly to Jonathan's arm and they succeeded in getting a place on the last bench at the rear, while others, not so lucky, stood behind them. A deputy closed the door on the spring sunshine which struck in through the square panes of the eastern casement setting the dusty air a-sparkle.

Mr. Parris began to pray from the pulpit. On his left sat Mr. Hale and Mr. Noyes; on his right, the judges. Awful stillness settled downward from the peaked roof. Devils from Hell were loose in Salem Village. Three Salem women had conspired with them to hurt their neighbors' daughters, and Salem Village had come to see these women blackened and put down, and their horned master along with them. Mr. Parris ended his prayer and announced that the examination of three prisoners charged with the loathly sin of

witchcraft would begin. He sat down in a carven chair.

The door opened again and people craned around, murmuring in fear and excitement. Constable George Locker led in Sarah Good the beggar woman. Burrs hung in her thick hair and mud and grease stains spattered the gray gown Dan Andrew's wife had given her. She walked sullenly and in fear. A few paces behind them came Marshal Herrick supporting the invalid Sarah Osborne on his arm. Sarah Osborne's face and hair and eyes were all one color--a terrible, sick gray. Black Tituba shuffled behind them, chains clanking on her wrists, her evil face half hidden in her scarlet shawl. Not a whisper broke from the crowd as the three accused witches passed through their midst to the front of the Meeting House.

There they paused. The constables conferred with Judge Hathorne; Mr. Parris leaned over to make a comment. Then Marshal Herrick led his charges out again and Sarah Good stood alone before the assembly.

Judge Hathorne rose, cleared his throat, and settled the scarlet billowing round him.

"Sarah Good, what evil spirit have you familiarity with?"

Sarah the beggar with chains on her wrists put back her head and spoke like a free woman.

"With none."

"Have you made no contracts with the Devil?"

"No."

"Why have you hurt these children?"

He pointed to a row of demurely bowed heads where the members of the Circle sat on the front bench.

"I do not hurt them. I scorn it."

"What creature do you employ then?"

"No creature. I am falsely accused."

"Why did you go away from Mr. Parris his house muttering?"

"I did not mutter. I thanked him for what he gave my child."

"Have you made no contracts with the Devil?"

"No."

Hathorne turned again to the Circle.

"Is this Sarah Good the witch that does torment you?"

Instantly the little group went into concerted action. They howled and frothed. Deputies held them. As their abandoned bodies thumped on the floor, Remember could almost hear the beat of Tituba's drum, she could feel the tightening agony in the muscles. "Hurt show when body loose again," Tituba had said. Why, they could show the bruises that were the natural result of their own antics and say some witch had laid those bruises on them through her magic!

"Sarah Good," cried Corwin breaking in, "why do you torment these poor children?"

"I do not torment them," said Sarah Good, her hands clenched in the folds of her dirty gown.

"Then whom do you employ to torment them?"

"I employ nobody. I scorn it."

"How came they thus tormented?"

"What do I know! You bring others here, but you charge me with it."

"Then who was it that tormented the children?"

She fingered her gown. How could she keep on saying no to the same questions over and over? She looked up and down for help in her terror. Finally she murmured, questioning, tremulous, "Osborne?"

The magistrates looked at each other triumphantly. Judge Hathorne put another question.

"What is it you say when you go away muttering from persons' houses?"

"If I must tell, I will."

Now that the shrieking girls had subsided, Sarah Good held her head up again. "It is the Commandments. I may say my Commandments, I hope."

"What Commandment?"

Sarah Good was silent for a long time. Finally she spoke.

"If I must tell, I will. It was a psalm."

"What psalm?"

For long minutes no one spoke in the Meeting House, no sound came through the windows from all the still outdoors. Only the dust motes moved along the sunbeams. A fly buzzed and swooped drunkenly. Remember wondered how it

could have lived out the winter in the icy church so far from the summer tide marshes that bred it. Finally the tight lips of the accused witch shaped themselves in hoarse words.

"Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners--nor sinners--"

But Hathorne had no patience to listen and interrupted her.

"Whom do you serve?"

"I serve God."

"What God?"

"The God who made Heaven and Earth."

Hathorne looked hard at her for a few moments. Then he bade her be silent and called her husband to testify before the assembly. Her husband, ill-favored and red-faced, gave his testimony eagerly through his broken snags of teeth. He said that he had never known her to use witchcraft, but that she was an enemy to all good. He did not say why he thought so, and Hathorne did not ask him. Then the girls of the Circle made pat little speeches in turn, swearing that she had visited them and tormented them for the past two months. They showed blue bruises on their flesh, and swore that Sarah Good at the behest of the Devil had caused these injuries. Finally Hathorne ordered her to be removed from the Meeting House.

The Salem people looked at one another. Before they dared to break the terrible silence in the air with any words, Marshal Herrick came back with the gray-faced Sarah Osborne. Judge Hathorne looked around with black, imperious eyes, seeking for an attitude of awe and respect along the benches. He found it, and his face softened in a moment's pleasure. Then he squared his shoulders and turned to the tottering old creature shoved before him. He asked her if she had familiarity with an evil spirit. She said no. He asked her why she hurt the children, and she said that she did not hurt them. She said she had stayed away from Meeting because she was too ill to go there. Then he told her that Sarah Good, her fellow witch, had accused her, and her teeth chattered so that she could talk no more. The Marshal took her out.

Remember leaned against Jonathan's shoulder. She could not understand what seemed to be happening; she felt sick and frightened. She watched them bring in Tituba. Tituba flaunted her scarlet as proudly as Judge Hathorne flaunted his. She answered boldly.

No, she had no familiarity with the Devil. No, she did not hurt the children.

Who did, then? The Devil, for aught she knew.

Judge Hathorne paused a terrible instant. Then he asked, almost coaxingly, "Did you ever see the Devil?"

Tituba's manner changed. She looked down demurely.

"The Devil came to me and bade me serve him."

A ripple of horror stirred through the tense bodies that filled the pews of the Meeting House. This was what they had come for.

"What have you seen?"

"I have seen four women hurt the children."

Four women! Remember choked on her own breath. Did that mean that two more of her neighbors must stand where Good and Osborne had stood? Who would they be? Would they really be guilty? She could not understand it. It was the Circle, the *girls*, not the older wives and mothers of the Village who had been practicing witchcraft. She knew, for she had seen them. Now these were accusing others, saying nothing about their own sins. Mr. Parris knew the truth. Why did he not bring out the Circle, the real witches? But there he sat, as aloof as God. She started to rise, but Jonathan held her down.

"Hush!" he whispered, "hear the black wench."

"Who were they?" asked Judge Hathorne.

"Goody Osborne and Goody Good. I do not know the others. Good and Osborne would have me hurt the children, but I would not."

"What else did you see?"

"A tall man from Boston."

"When?"

"Last night in Boston."

How could Tituba go to Boston after last night's pot-scouring and be back in Salem Village at daybreak unless she had gone on a broomstick through the night sky as witches went? Perhaps she was going to confess. Perhaps she would tell about the Circle.

"What did he say to you?"

"He said, 'Hurt the children.'"

"And did you?"

"No. There is four women and one man and they say hurt the children. They say if I do not hurt the children they will hurt me."

No. Tituba was not going to confess. She was going to try to put the blame on others. But a man? A tall man from Boston! Could that be John Horne? She could see him now. He sat just behind the Circle. The sight of his dark head made her forget everything except the kiss he had given her.

"And did you hurt the children?"

"Yes, but I will no more."

Two round tears of repentance rolled down over Tituba's black cheeks. "I will no more," she repeated meekly, but somehow the sunlight glinted evilly in her flowing eyes.

"Why did you do it?"

"They said if I do not they will do it to me."

"Who?"

"A man who came and said, 'Serve me.'"

"What service?"

"Hurt the children."

Tituba was lying, lying, thought Remember. She tried to struggle to her feet to cry out on her in the meeting, but Jonathan's arm stretched across her like an iron bar.

"He said, 'Kill the children or we will do worse to you.'"

"What did he look like?"

"Sometimes like a man, sometimes like a black dog. He keeps a yellow bird and he says he will give me pretty things if I will serve him."

Would John Horne go like a black dog and promise pretty things to such as Tituba? But perhaps Tituba was not talking about John. And yet--"Peace, my Daughters," he had told the Circle. He sat close behind them now. The judge went inexorably on.

"Did you not pinch Elizabeth Hubbard this morning?"

"The man brought her to me and made me pinch her."

"Why did you go to Thomas Putnam's house last night and hurt his child?"

"They pull me and haul me and make me go."

"And what would they have you do?"

"Kill her! With a knife!"

Both Ann Putnams shrieked. The Circle burst into a sound like a covey of wailing sea gulls.

"How did you go there?"

"We ride upon sticks, Good and Osborne behind me, and are there presently."

"Do you go through the trees or over them?"

A witch, proven out of her own mouth, now laid bare before all Salem Village the ways of witches, and these ways were just as the people had always understood them to be. The preacher in pulpit and the old women by their fathers' fireside when they were children had told them stories of hags like Good and Osborne and Tituba--hags who had been gathered home to Hell with a knotted rope or blazing on a heap of faggots. These three deserved the same. Not a soul in the Meeting House that morning doubted it except Remember Winster. Instinctively they shot looks now and then at the three ministers armed with Bibles. Reassured, they turned back to Tituba.

"We see nothing but are there presently."

"Why did you not confess to your master, Mr. Parris?"

"They said they would cut off my head if I told."

"What familiar hath Sarah Good?"

"A yellow bird, and she would give me one."

"What meat did she give it?"

"She suckles it of her blood between her fingers."

"What hath Sarah Osborne?"

"Yesterday she had a thing all over hair, with a long nose, two or three feet high, going upright like a man."

Abigail Williams bounced up, her freckled face red with importance, to say that this was the truth. She had seen the creature and it turned into Osborne herself.

The magistrates nodded wisely and continued.

"Did you not see Sarah Good upon Elizabeth Hubbard last Sunday?"

"I did see her set a wolf on her to afflict her."

Elizabeth Hubbard bayed like a wolf and Mercy Lewis fell writhing to the floor.

Hathorne's face darkened. He cried aloud, "Speak! Who torments these children now?"

"It is Goody Good."

"And who hurts them now?"

Tituba put her hands to her eyes gropingly. She staggered. "I am blind," she gibbered. "I cannot see!"

The Meeting House had grown very dark during Tituba's testimony. Now a gust of rain blew out of the changeable spring sky, rattling harshly at the windowpanes like a demon seeking to be let in. The meeting broke up in pandemonium. Hands reached out to quiet the squirming girls. Judge Hathorne decreed that Good, Osborne, and Tituba should be lodged in Ipswich gaol until they could be further examined. Then he shook hands with Mr. Parris.

Salem people streamed out of the Meeting House, excited, triumphant, the cloud that had lain on their spirits all winter dissolved away. It was their own eye that had offended them, but they had plucked it out--or rather, the ministers and the magistrates had plucked it out for them. They had no doubt that the three women were guilty, and they believed that these guilty ones would now be able to do no more harm. Of course, the Topsfield men went away muttering, but that was always the way with Topsfield men. John Horne, the new shoemaker from Giles Corey's, asked his friends to drink his ale in the tavern to celebrate the good work that had that day gone forward, and "Mr. Parris" was the toast he called for. Everybody went, whether they liked Mr. Parris or not. They believed that this time he had done the Village a true service, and anyway, drinking John's ale would not leave them out of pocket. It was a pity, some of them thought, that Jonathan Winster could not be there, but he'd gone off arguing with his wife. Something she wanted to do and Jonathan wouldn't let her. Women didn't have to have the Devil help them to cause trouble. They did it naturally. Well, the witches were in quod, the merchants could go back to their tills and leave Salem Village to get ready for spring plowing.

"Another drink did you say, John? Aye, gladly, gladly."

CHAPTER 9
By Ipswich Green

BUT THE spring plowing did not go forward at once, although the mild weather continued; indeed, some of the Salem fields were not plowed at all that spring and had only a crop of coarse grass and plantain to show against the autumn. The examination of the witches went on all that week, deputies bringing them down from Ipswich gaol every morning and harrying them back there every night before sundown. Stout chains bound their wrists and guards were always with them, but their evil powers were not diminished apparently, for the girls went on being tortured. And the whispers grew louder that Tituba had convened with *four*, that two more devil-ridden hags would be brought out in the Meeting House any day now. Wider and wider spread the excitement through the county of Essex. Wives left their butter half churned and the pots unscoured, put on their best caps and took the road for the Village. Their goodmen flung down hasty forkfuls of hay for the cattle and begrudged the time it took to empty the cows' udders. Then they hurried after the women, thronging the narrow paths through the forest and between the farmlands now beginning to green a little. Everybody was aware that the first siege guns of the great battle had been fired. The Devil had chosen Salem Village to make his last stand in. Here he would wage a ghastly war for the soul of man, giving no quarter. He must work through those whom he could bribe or tempt or terrify into joining him, so such traitors to the human brotherhood must be seized and put where they could not aid in the hellish design--even if it took a gallows to do it.

Every day the good people of Essex crowded into the Village Meeting House where the rafters echoed with the shrieks of the Circle, the accusations of the judges, and the prayers of the clergy. At night they streamed out, pop-eyed, mouths hanging open, their overstrained nerves a-tremble with mounting horror. They went home then, to toss wakeful on corn husks or goosefeathers and wait for their own bodies to be racked with ghostly torment. In the morning they arose, gulped their porridge, and hastened back to the Meeting House.

Remember stayed at home, but Jonathan went down every day and came back every evening, his mouth brimming over with the latest news. For Jonathan

believed that Judge Hathorne and Mr. Parris were fighting hand to hand to save the Son of Man forever more. He believed that every man and woman and child in Salem Village was in mortal danger of spectral assault; that others besides the three prisoners had joined Old Serpent's banner and must be duly brought out and committed. Most of the Salem merchants and Essex farmers agreed with him.

"But Jonathan," Remember tried to argue, as he finished the thrice-heated porridge and thriftily swabbed the trencher with a sop of bread, "poor old Sarah Osborne's not enough in health to be a witch. You ought to know better."

"An ill hag grows strong once the Devil's in her," said Jonathan, munching the bread noisily.

"But judges in the Meeting House should be fair and honest. They should hear both sides, but they only believe the girls. And they lied to Sarah Osborne, too. They told her Good accused her, and she did not."

"She said her name."

"But she was only asking."

He did not answer. Finally she said, "Jonathan, are you sticking pins in me?"

"Pins? What? No, lass. What point are ye making to?"

"But I can say you stick pins in me, and if I leap and shout, Judge Hathorne will believe me no matter what you say, and gaol you for a wizard."

"Ah, Remember!" He flung forward at her across the table. "Ye've felt no pin prick! Ye'd not bring out your husband?"

"No, of course not! I'm only telling you how easy it is to make Judge Hathorne think you are a wizard. And Jonathan, did you not think it was queer about Tituba? When she said she was not a witch the girls were afflicted, but when she said she was one the Devil afflicted her and made her blind. Just as if someone had planned it. The Judges seemed to know before her mouth was open what she would say. They talked at each other like saying catechism."

Jonathan stood up. "Ye better hold your tongue," he said, "or ye'll find yourself in Ipswich Gaol. I cannot think my own wife is a witch, but there's many who would think so if they heard such talk. Come out for the witches or tell what ye think ye saw in Parson's house, and ye'll be in trouble I cannot get ye out of."

Briony, crouched by the fire with roasting chestnuts in her lap, spoke up now. She had been so silent before that Jonathan and Remember had not noticed she was still out of bed.

"I do not think there be any witches," she said, rubbing a nut smooth against her apron.

"Oh, girl!" sighed Jonathan. "Your wits are green."

"Yes," said Remember firmly, "there must be witches. My mother knew of them in Ayrshire. Black Tituba is a witch, but Good and Osborne are not."

Jonathan slipped the bar across the door. He dropped a knotted hand on Remember's shoulder. "Come to bed," he growled.

Briony went up the stairs ahead of them holding the candle: its light stretched her shadow long on the wall.

The examinations ended on Saturday. Hathorne and Corwin decreed that the three prisoners should be taken on Monday and delivered to Their Majesties' Gaol Keeper in Boston. No sooner had Jonathan brought the word home than Remember tried to think of some way to keep the unjust imprisonment of Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne from going on any longer. Once they were locked up in Boston, God only knew what might happen to them. She had tried once to talk to Mr. Parris but she would spare her breath from doing it again. If John Horne were in truth, as she still desperately hoped, a godly man, his strength and daring might aid her purpose, but appeal to him and she would be apt to find herself in the twilight salt marshes committing another sin than witchcraft. The Circle would not give evidence against themselves, of course. But Tituba? Tituba had nothing to lose. She had confessed anyway. Perhaps she could be coaxed or frightened into clearing the other two. Tituba lay now in Ipswich Gaol and would until Monday morning. Remember decided to go and see her there.

Her chance came when the next day's sunset proclaimed the Sabbath over, and Jonathan looked out at the red sky, measured the weather, and clumped off for Ingersoll's tavern to see if any more witches had been flushed from cover. Then she called Briony from the herb garden where the children were trimming away the dead stalks so new shoots could come through.

"Briony," she said, not looking at the girl, "when Joseph Porter rode by to Meeting this morning he said my cousin Polly Wicom in Ipswich lay ill of the stone. He said she called for me, so I think I had better go there."

"Yes, Remember. Does Jonathan know?"

"No. I feared that if he knew he would say he must go with me, and it is not good for you girls to be alone too long with Neddy, lest one of his fits should come."

"Is Neddy bewitched when he has fits?"

"Of course not. 'Tis only the falling sickness. Jonathan will scold when he finds me gone, but you must try to quiet him."

Briony promised and went with her to the stall, helped her saddle Dapple.

Remember rode as fast as she could, but the way was rough and through the woods. Now and then a light from a lonely farm shone between the trees, the moon rose higher and whiter. Her eagerness to save the innocent old women kept her from fearing bobcats or Indians. Finally she came out into the open fields with the river flowing silver beyond them and rode down by Ipswich Green and across the water on a sounding wooden bridge. Polly's low gray house sprouted like a toadstool by the side of the water. Most of the houses in town had no lights in their windows, but Polly's had one. Remember climbed down from Dapple and looked up at the night sky just as a little wind passed like a broomstick whishing over. Moonlight through the bare elms made her think of another March night in the next town going east, and Tom Purchas standing with a young girl on a doorstone; a girl innocent like Briony, who had never known a man's love or gazed in horror at a witch pin thrust through a poppet.

"Who be it?" called Polly in a husky voice.

Polly Rogers she had been before she married Dan Wicom's brother's boy Matt, and she and Remember had played tip-cat together when they were children on Rowley Common. Matt followed the sea and was not often at home--not tonight, Remember hoped.

"It's I. Remember. Let me in."

As the door swung open she leaned against it, held it shut.

"Polly! Blow out the candle first."

Remember heard the hiss of her cousin's breath. Light no longer flickered in the window.

"Come in, Remember," whispered Polly noisily. "What have ye done? Steal somebody's goods?"

"No. Tell me, have you been in the Village lately? For the hearings?"

"If I had, I'd come by to see how you were. I guess I'm the only one in town who hasn't been there, though."

Her cousin's bulk loomed large in the dark kitchen that smelled of new milk. She led Remember to the settle, pushed her down on it.

"They are not guilty. At least, two of them are not." Her words came out in a rush. "But I have seen the black one working spells and I want to go and talk to her. I want to tell her she must save the others."

"Gaol house here is tight," said Polly doubtfully. "Couldn't ye bespeak her in the Meeting House?"

"In that place? Never! I'd be brought out myself, likely. I'm going over there now to try to make her confess that the others are not witches. Then may I come back here to sleep?"

"While I've a roof you have one. But Goodman Winster? Does he know?"

"No. I waited till he'd gone to the tavern. He's so upset over the hearings he drinks more than he ever did since I knew him. If he does as he's done all week, he'll be that mazed when he gets home he'll not know whether I'm in the bed or not."

"I hope ye're still an honest wench," said Polly sternly, "and that when ye go slipping out so easy 'tis always to old women in prisons. My man Matt'd never--"

"Oh, where are your wits, Polly? I'm not a girl."

"Ye're not a hag neither."

"I'm a Gospel woman and not common with men, if that's what you're coming to. I'll ride home, I think, in the morning dark before Jonathan's awake to miss me. Isn't that a good plan?"

"I'm glad it's yours and not mine. But if ye must do it, ye must. I've lived with Wicoms long enough to know. See here--" She drew Remember to the window and pointed to a low black building half hidden by straggling bushes that looked like lilacs. "There's the gaol. Go on, but don't get locked into it. I'll put on the kettle against ye come back."

Remember slipped out and led Dapple around to the barn, but Polly had come through the door in the leanter and was there to meet her.

"I'll put your beast away," she said. "Go 'fore it gets any later, if go ye must."

Remember picked her way across the door yard and into the road. The river, brimful of melting snow from back in the forest, crept along beside her as she walked. She could almost feel it tugging at the grass roots, moving silently down to where the white waves pounded in over Ipswich Bar. Moonlight struck silver on the diamond-shaped windowpanes of the clustered houses, and whitened the gable thatches. A breath of salt blew in from the great sea.

Nothing stirred in the town but the wind, the river, and herself. She walked near to the house Polly had pointed out to her, and pressed herself, full length, against its western wall. Men were talking just the other side of the wall; men--not the three witches conversing together. She could not hear the tones yet, much less the words, but they moved to a slower rhythm than women use. She let her fingers play over the rough wall till they found a joining, started then digging away the clay that had patched it. As the clay came loose a small hole filled with light took its place. She put her eye to the hole. Nothing moved where she could see it, but a confusion of flame and shadow against the limit of the opposite wall. She put her ear to the hole and she heard the words the men were speaking. How many of them there were she could not tell--surely three, perhaps more.

"Then it is to go like this," said one voice, smooth but commanding. "First, the whispers must grow louder, the girls be tormented more frequently where all can see."

"I will see to the whispers," said a voice with a sly laugh in it.

"The girls must cry names. Who had better name her witch next? Suppose we let Ann Putnam do it."

"And whom shall she name?"

All the voices lifted at once, at first unintelligibly, but out of their babel emerged one name that turned Remember sick and made her cling to the log wall, almost glad for the different pain of the splinters that drove into her flesh.

"Martha Corey has not been at the hearings."

"She does not believe."

"She says she believes there are no witches."

"When Giles would go to the examination she bade him have no part in such folly and pulled the saddle from his horse."

"Giles will tell a tale against her."

"So will her son Crosby."

"I like it not. She has always been godly."

"But folk hereabout believe that it is a true sign of the Devil's coming when the godly join his standard. It will bolster faith in our Work. Bring out Martha Corey!"

"She said the magistrates were blind and that she could open their eyes."

"She did?"

"Aye."

"She shall have her chance. Let Ann cry out against her. Then we shall send a commission to Goody Corey--in a few days--say Saturday, and they shall tell her she is being spoken of. Give her a little time to be afraid, and the whispers time to work."

"Aye. I'll be there with the whispers."

Remember put her eye to the crack. A huge black shadow moved across the room but she could not identify it. A sharp-nosed shadow etched on the opposite wall looked like Judge Hathorne, but it could not be, of course. She listened again.

"Then we will confront her with the child, bring them face to face. Ann works well in her fits now, does she not?"

"Aye. Now and then they come upon her when she would not."

"That is not to the purpose. She must learn control. When the time is ripe we shall house Goody Corey in Salem Gaol."

"Not here?"

"It will cause more stir if it be in the Town."

"We should be ready to examine her--let me see--about the twenty-first, after a roaring sermon on the twentieth. Many of the old stock here hold with Deodat Lawson and liked his style of preaching when he held the parish. Perhaps he will pay Salem Village a visit to aid his brother Parris in the great work."

"Perhaps."

"And close on Corey's arrest we will lay another by the heels."

"Who?"

"Who?"

A long pause. Then--"Let us all think on it."

A longer pause. Then the sternest voice spoke. "Now is all in readiness? The fits and the whispers?"

"Aye."

"Aye!"

"To the Glory of God, then!"

A door opened. A draft blew through the chink in the log wall, lifting a lock of Remember's hair, and the light went out. The men were leaving. Would they walk that way and find her? She crouched as close as she could to the wall. But no one came. Finally she crawled to the corner and looked around it. Down the road moved a jumbled, black mass and hoofs flung up sparks where the Boston Road crossed an outcrop of ledge. The men were riding away. Slowly, like a feeble old woman, Remember crept along the wall. The house must have another room where the witches lay. On the eastern side the boards did not fit so tightly. No light shone through, but she could hear the clank of a chain. She put her lips to the cranny and spoke.

"Tituba!"

There was a rustle inside as of hogs rooting in dead leaves. Then she heard a moan, Sarah Osborne's probably. Then came Sarah Good's voice, sharp and bitter.

"Go to the east wall, black one. It's your familiar."

Remember thought suddenly that the moon must show her clearly to anyone who might be heading up from the shore to Ipswich Green. She pulled off her white kerchief and hid it in the folds of her skirt.

"Tituba!" She called again.

"What you want of me?" asked the Negress, her voice squeaky with terror. "Who be you?"

"Goody Winster. I know you for a witch--you know I know you. You started this witchcraft in Salem. Now you stop it."

"Tituba cannot stop it. *Obi* cannot stop it."

She could hear Tituba rummaging about on the other side of the wall.

"But you can. You must tell them all, Judge Hathorne and Mr. Parris and all the ministers, that Good and Osborne are not witches. That you and the Circle--"

"Master beat me!" blubbered Tituba.

"Go away, Remember," said Sarah Good. "We're dead women, Sarah and me, and you cannot save us. When we're hanged by the neck, that black wench will be sitting here safe and protected. Will she say we're innocent when she's been promised a tiffany hood and a tufted petticoat to say different?"

"Sarah! What can I do?"

"Go home and do your own washing. We're lost, I tell you."

"But they're after more--Martha Corey, and God knows who else."

"Aye. We'll be more before we're fewer."

In the silence Sarah Osborne moaned and her chains scraped on the earth floor as she moved her sick body. Tituba wheezed and snuffled, fooling none of the three who heard her.

"Sarah," whispered Remember, "who promised Tituba the hood and the petticoat?"

"Now that I dare not tell," said Sarah Good. "If anybody asks you--as won't--tell them you do not know. And now go home before you land in here with us. It's near time for the watch to go by."

"But Martha Corey?"

"Tell her to pray. She was always good at it. To hold her tongue and to trust nobody."

Hoofs rang on the ledge. Remember let go of the wall and thrust herself into the deeper shadow at the rear of the prison. As she stood there shivering the rider went past. He turned east toward the shore and a group of crazy huts where the fishermen lived; he kept his head down and cast no glance of interest toward the gaol house. When he was out of sight Remember started back toward the light in Polly's kitchen window, following the river. This time Ipswich did not seem so quiet. A child cried fretfully behind a dormer window and a candle flared up as its mother rose to tend it. A dog barked across the green and caused Remember to turn her eyes that way. A tall figure came striding under the elm boughs, straight and easy-moving, not bent with toil over loom and plowshare like the men of Ipswich and Salem Village. She knew in her heart that it was John Horne and that he was coming to meet her, yet surprise quickened his voice as he spoke.

"Remember! Whenever I go abroad in the nighttime, I find you there. Are you one of those magicked women who whisk about on a broomstick?"

"Hush, John!" she pleaded. "Do not jest about broomsticks."

"Then I will not, if the jest does not please you." He took her arm. "Where are you going? Not to Salem Village, afoot and after midnight?"

"No. To my cousin's, by the river there."

"May I walk with you?"

"If you will."

Remember felt very young suddenly, a girl again, suspecting that life was very, very sweet, and eager to find out. The horrid knowledge she had gained that evening dissolved like darkness in the light of his presence. They walked sedately over the wooden bridge in the waning moonlight, and she could see her own shadow going beside them. She could not see John's. Twist her head this way and that, she could not see it.

"You do not like swaggerers, do you?" he said almost tenderly, his cheek pressing against her cap and the wind-ruffled hair around it. "I must remember never to swagger. New England women find it too outlandish behavior, though they are the first since Eve to feel that way, I swear it."

"I do not know what I like," she answered. "It has been so long since I thought about it."

"I will show you what you like," he said.

They had stopped in the road by Polly's house. He took her in his arms and gave her a long kiss.

"Ah!" he whispered. "You are sweet to kiss, Remember--sweeter every time I do it. This is what you like, and what you shall have more of."

She clung to him until he pushed her gently away.

"But not tonight. The Lieutenant Governor rests in Newburyport, and I am carrying him a message from certain men in Salem."

"From Judge Hathorne?"

"As well guess him as any. I shall not tell you."

"John, is it about the witches? Tell me. They're not witches--only Tituba. Can you help me save them? There's a plot against Martha Corey."

"You could have stopped it once, Remember, but you cannot any more. Not even the Devil could stop it now."

"But God can. He's stronger than the Devil."

"Then call on God."

"I will." Anger stiffened her body, loosened her tongue. "And I'll do more. I'll stand up in that Meeting House and tell Judge Hathorne and Mr. Parris what they're doing and what goes on in gaol houses behind people's backs! I'll tell them--"

He took both her hands and held them in a grip that hurt.

"Remember--" There was no mockery about him now, but deep solemnity, like

a man at prayer. "Can you swing the broadaxe and cut down a great oak in the forest, an oak that was created on the third day of the world and has never been cut since--fell it, and make it fall where you would have it?"

"You know I cannot."

"Remember, can you beget a child?"

She looked at him, speechless.

"Such things are for men to do," he went on. "They are the work of men--and the pleasure." Light sparkled in his eyes a moment, then died out. "They are for men and gods, perhaps for devils, but not for women folk--and so with the work in the Meeting House. All we want of you is a sure hand on the loom and a soft body a-bed. Why should you trouble us with more?"

She had to try three times before she could control her voice and make it carry the hot words out of her mind. "Aye, we are good to ease you one way or another! And when we are too old and ugly for that, you put us in gaol and talk of the gallows. Is that what it is to be a woman?"

"Let the Governor wait in Newburyport. I will show you what it is to be a woman."

He reached out for her but she turned and fled up the path.

"You will not talk in the Meeting House!" he called after her.

"Oh, but I will," she flung back at him. "I surely will!"

A white mist rolled up from the sea following the line of Ipswich River, hiding the lightless houses from each other, the prison under its lilac trees, and Remember tumbling through the door into Polly Wicom's kitchen. It did not enfold John Horne, for he had already passed beyond it, nor did it reach inland to the shadowy roots of Hathorne's Hill, where Jonathan's house stood out sharply in the chilly moonlight. Briony and the Winsters, left alone, had romped through a longer evening's playtime than Remember usually allowed them, hiding in the hay mows, seeking each other in the bushes, racing to Beaver Dam Brook and back in the half-dark, and calling, calling everywhere, with the thin, clear voices of happy children. Finally they trooped inside, too tired to wash their grubby hands, and tumbled upstairs to bed, munching on slices of dried pumpkin Remember had put out for tomorrow's baking. And ten minutes after, only Briony lay awake.

Snugly, drowsily, under the homespun blanket, she talked to herself a little, lying on her side, where she could look out at the starry night and the lights of Salem down the valley, so far--and far--away.

"Oh happy, happy Briony," she sang very low, like a lullaby. "For I can be two people, and even old witch Tituba can only be one. A house-to-live-in is a house-to-live-in, and it can never be a Meeting House, and Frost Fish Brook can never be Humphreys Pond. But I can be a woman like Remember, and sit sober and do my crewel work, or I can be a girl, and jump the stonewalls quicker than Prudence can, and climb in the apple tree higher than Tamar."

She twisted languidly about, enjoying the warmth of the great bed, the sweet heaviness of sleep coming across her. "But I had--rather be--a--girl--" she said, yielding utterly into her pillow.

She dreamed that a sharp stone finger tapped on the windowpane, a lonely finger with no hand behind it, but beckoning. It would tap and beckon, tap and beckon. And it would not stop.

"Go away. I want to sleep," said Briony, but the finger tapped on. She opened her eyes reluctantly. Again came the noise at the pane. Someone had thrown a stone against it. She climbed out of bed and padded across the floor, half awake, holding her nightgown around her, leaned through the open casement. Below, standing in the garden among the dead stalks of last fall's marigolds and asters, she could see a white figure with uplifted face. It looked like--it was--Mary Walcott.

"Briony!" She had never heard Mary's voice so treacle-sweet before. "Come down. I want to talk to you."

"But I've gone to bed. I'm sleepy," protested Briony.

"And where'll you be all the years after they bury you? You can sleep then. Now I know something better."

"But Remember's not here--nor Jonathan."

"I know. Jonathan's down drinking tavern dry, and Remember's gone to Ipswich."

"How did you know that?" Briony shivered in the cold spring night.

"Come down and I'll tell you."

Putting a cloak over her nightgown and lighting the candle, Briony tiptoed downstairs and unlatched the side door to let Mary in. Mary looked different from the way she had when she came out of the hearings, all pale and tense and tearful. Now her hair curled, and her mouth was redder than any mouth Briony had ever seen. She had a white cloak pulled tightly about her curving figure, and her big bright eyes shone in the candlelight. Why, Mary was pretty! Was *she* pretty? Briony's eyes flew to the looking glass behind the clock. No.

Her mouth hardly showed at all, her eyes were wide and sleepy, her hair pale and tousled. Mary moved lithely forward with a strange, new grace. She pushed Briony to a stool and perched herself on the kitchen table, swinging a buckled shoe and a silken ankle.

Briony looked resentfully at Jonathan's brass clock that ticked loudly in the silence. Its hands pointed to a quarter of twelve.

"How did you know where Remember went?"

"Oh, I know people who tell me things. Men! Do you know any men, Briony?"

What a silly question! "Of course I do. I know Jonathan, and my father, and Nat Ingersoll--"

Mary laughed. "No. I do not mean Jonathan and Nat Ingersoll. Any man young and handsome--like John Horne--who kisses you and holds you--and takes you into the thickets after dark?"

Briony thought before she answered. This Mary was not the girl who had borrowed her hornbook in the dame school. But Mary went about with witches. Perhaps that was the trouble.

"The new shoemaker? Does he do that with you?"

Mary had not expected this question. "Well--no. He hasn't--yet." She lifted her eyes to the clock. "Come on. We've just time."

"Time--for what?"

"Come and see. It's more fun then a quilting--much more fun. We sing and dance. Tituba always said not to bring you, but Tituba's in gaol. The Master said we needed more. He said he would give pretty things to any girl who brought him more."

"Who is the Master?"

Mary tapped her buckled shoe impatiently. It was clear that she had to be gone.

"You will see when you get there."

"I would if I went," said Briony turning stubborn, "but I am not going. I do not want to sing and dance, and I do not like Tituba. I think you want to make a witch of me, and I do not want to be one."

The kitchen door stood open. All the great black spaces of the night seemed to be trying to crowd through it, to want to come in and smother the feeble candle. Mary leaped down from the table and ran, pausing on the doorsill. One moment she looked straight at wondering Briony, and all her beauty dwindled

and sharpened into the slant-eyed, snouted look of the fox poised by the rabbit warren.

"I'll be back," she sneered, "when you're weaned."

Somewhere in the valley sounded a high, thin horn. The fox face and the silken ankles flashed off into the night to answer it.

CHAPTER 10
The Ways of Loving

THE NEXT two weeks brought to Salem Village the very happenings that the unknown men had promised each other that night in the gaol by Ipswich Green. Remember was back in Jonathan's bed before he missed her, and she rode over to Martha Corey's the next afternoon to warn her, but Martha, although horrified at the plot, laughed at her own danger.

"But I can open their eyes, Remember," she insisted. "I will pray in Judge Hathorne's face, I will, and then he cannot but see how foolish he is to accuse me, a Gospel woman. I can make a laughing-stock of the whole thing."

Remember, little comforted, passed through the Village on her way home, and there Hannah Ingersoll told her that Ann Putnam had suffered terribly all night and blamed Martha Corey for it.

"And Giles himself," added Hannah, "talks too much in the tavern, saying how Martha insists there are no witches. That's blasphemy, and if she said it, which I doubt, he should not bear the tale abroad just now when the Village is so troubled."

The whispers were ready, and Ann worked well in her fits all that week.

On Sunday the Meeting House overflowed with worshippers all agog with the talk about Giles Corey's wife and what had happened Saturday afternoon. Edward Putnam and Ezekiel Cheever, both trusted and godly men, had gone to Thomas Putnam's house and looked on little Ann, writhing and screaming. They had asked her who tormented her, and she had said Goody Corey. They asked her how Goody Corey was dressed, a favorite question used to identify the witch, and Ann shrieked that she was blinded and could not see. About the middle of the afternoon they saddled their horses and rode out to confront Martha herself. They found her alone in her kitchen where she gave them courteous welcome and asked them to sit in the fireroom. Uneasily they balanced close together on the edge of the settle, while she turned to them smiling and said, "I know what you are come for. You are come to talk with me about being a witch, but I am none. I cannot help people's talking of me."

Edward Putnam reddened and agreed that was why they had come.

"And if I tormented Ann Putnam today, could she tell what I was wearing?"

Martha pointed to a yellowed lace scarf at the neck of her gown. "This belonged to Giles' first wife, Margaret, and has been packed away longer than little Ann has been alive. But I have worn it all day, and if I appeared to her she must have seen it. Tell me--did she?"

"No," Edward and Ezekiel told her. "Ann was blinded."

"That was an easy thing for her to say," answered Martha. "Surely you know I am not a witch. Do you know, I doubt if there be any witches!"

After this amazing interview, the goodmen took their leave and posted back to Putnam's. Ann said Goody Corey had not troubled her while they were gone. She did not mention the lace collar. When this story went the rounds in the Meeting House, everyone agreed that Martha had shown too much foreknowledge. How had she known what they had come for? Why had she worn the lace collar to try to trip Ann? Poor, afflicted Ann, blinded by the wicked old hag!

On Monday the deacons summoned Martha to appear at Thomas Putnam's, and Edward Putnam escorted her there. The moment she entered the door Ann began thrashing in terrific fits, screaming that Corey afflicted her. Martha put out her hand to soothe the girl, and the convulsions stopped utterly. Ann dropped to the floor, flopping and gasping like a hooked fish. This meant that the electric fluid that emanated from the witch's body in the first place flowed back into it at the moment she touched the victim, causing the torments to cease. On Saturday, Deodat Lawson arrived in town to aid his brother minister, Mr. Parris, in bringing the witches to justice. He had served the church of Salem Village several years before, and his wife and daughter had died in the parsonage. The Circle whispered now that they had not died of disease but of witchcraft, and so Mr. Lawson came, hot and eager to root out those responsible for his old grief and destroy them. He lodged at Deacon Ingersoll's, and before he could lay the drouth of his journey with a glass of ale, Mary Walcott had sidled in, hinted that she had converse with his wife's ghost, and thrown a very impressive and nasty fit on Hannah's clean kitchen floor. After supper he walked over to the parsonage and chatted with Mr. Parris about the business in hand while Abigail Williams leaped and bounded through the somber rooms, flinging red-hot brands from the fireplace all about her. Both she and Mary accused Martha Corey of causing their unseemly behavior. They need not have bothered, for the warrant was out that afternoon: Martha Corey to be brought before Judge Hathorne to be examined for a witch, on Monday, March 21, 1692.

A roaring wind tore over the hills that morning and down the Boston Road. It drove the clouds like frightened sheep across a bright blue sky and rattled every pane in Jonathan Winster's house, filling the air with their chattering music while he bolted his breakfast. The sun streamed in, warming his grizzled head, on which he refused to wear a wig after the newer fashion. In spite of the pleasant warmth he grumbled into his trencher.

"Remember, are ye not done pottering about with the scouring sand? I'll not be late for the hearing, if I go without ye."

Now go without her was just what Remember wanted him to do. She meant to stand up in the Meeting House and tell what she knew to save Martha Corey, and she did not want Jonathan beside her, trying to interfere while she did it. She came out of the leanter, a dish clout in her hand.

"You take the children and go, Jonathan," she said. "I'll come along after. Only a slut would leave a kitchen looking like this one."

Briony, Neddy, and the twins had their cloaks on and stood waiting. Remember would not allow them to go to the hearings, so they stayed in a room at the tavern and helped to mind the tiny children whose parents left them there while they joined the throng in the Meeting House. Briony pulled at the brass hasp of her blue wool cloak. She had never told Remember how Mary Walcott had come to her that night, but strange thoughts flitted through her mind and caught there like alewives in the March weirs. Who was Mary Walcott's Master? Was she pretty, and did being pretty matter? What was it like to be kissed in the thickets after dark?

"I'll stay and help. Two can work more quickly--"

"No." Remember drew her straight brows together. "You go along to watch the others. Jonathan might take them all to the Meeting House, and that would be a fine place for Neddy to fall sick in. Ann Putnam could really see how to do it--"

"Little Ann's afflicted," growled Jonathan, "and don't ye jeer at her. Come, girls! If your mother will not, leave her here."

He stamped out and his children followed him. Briony hesitated, smiled at Remember, and ran after them.

The minute they were gone she started slipping the dishes deftly into the cupboard, running over in her mind the words she would speak when she found herself standing up alone in the Meeting House, everyone listening to her, her friend's life depending on how well she spoke. Then suddenly her swift fingers slowed, tangled clumsily, lost strength and power. A half-filled

cup of sour milk that she meant to put aside for cooking tipped in her hand and poured greasy curds down the front of her good gray skirt.

With a cry of disgust she threw the cup on the dresser, and ran into the little entry with the stairs at one side and a low door into the herb garden at the other. She tumbled upstairs, stripped off the stained skirt and spattered bodice. No time now for tidying the house. She would have to hurry, for there was no telling how fast the evidence might be given in and Martha loaded with chains and carted off to Salem Gaol. She would get on a clean dress and then be away.

Remember stood for a moment in front of her mirror, noticing the whiteness of her shoulders rising out of her shift, the curve of her ankles below her petticoat. Yes, she still had much that a man would want of a woman, but what did she have that a woman wanted? She thought of Tom Purchas, and reached for a sage-dyed homespun hanging on the wall hook. She thought of John Horne, and as she thought of him she turned swiftly around. There he stood, smiling at her from the doorway.

She drew her breath sharply. "What are you doing here?" she cried out, holding the dress between him and her body. "What do you want in my goodman's bedchamber?"

"I do not want your goodman, you may be sure of that," he said, his eyes flashing. "You threatened to talk too loudly in the Meeting House, so I have come to keep you from going there."

"You cannot keep me from going there," said Remember in anger, "not even with that sword clanking about you. I am going to save Martha and you cannot stop me."

"I will not need a sword to stop you," he answered easily. "I shall but stand here in the doorway. You will not go through it."

"I surely will," she said.

She took the green dress over her arm and stepped deliberately toward him. He stood still in the doorway, half smiling. When she drew close enough to touch him, she stopped. Perhaps she could throw him off balance and elude him. Putting her head down a little, she thrust forward suddenly. Then her body met his, the whole length of her, lip, and breast, and thigh. His arm went lightly around her. Weakness poured through her veins like a sweet poison. She had no strength any more, no will to save Martha Corey, or herself, or anyone. She hung limp on his arm, but her nerves began to tighten with a furious eagerness for him to draw her closer--closer. He picked her up and carried her across the

room and laid her down on the counterpane. She was fleetingly glad that she had been a good enough housekeeper to make her bed that morning and that they had not come to it all crumpled by Jonathan's heavy slumber. Then the delicious approaches to love filled her with a deeper gladness, and she gave herself up to them.

But old Jonathan was not cuckolded that windy morning. Remember felt John suddenly draw away from her, and she opened her eyes. He sat beside her, playing absently with a tendril of her hair. The sunlight shone on his dark head and wind rattled wildly at the windowpanes, tore at the thatch sloping above them.

"There is one great trouble with being a man day after day," he said thoughtfully. "You get to think like one and to feel like one. I should like to love you now--not after my way of loving, under the swinging boughs in the brook valley, or out in the open fields with much lust and laughter; love for its own sake, that is--but in Tom Purchas' way, soberly, in the good bed of marriage."

"You are in the bed of another marriage," she snapped at him in her body's disappointment. "What do you know of Tom Purchas' way of loving?"

"Shall I tell you Tom Purchas' way of loving? He would love you first with clumsy, respectful kisses. Then he would hew down logs for a house and set you to weaving linen for it. He would take you before a magistrate very soon, and swear to the courts of Massachusetts to love you as long as you both should live. Then he would take you home and love you heartily and often, and see that you bore sons--more sons than Salem has room for. There are still forests to clear and people, and men like Tom Purchas will take care of that with their way of loving."

"What other way of loving is there?"

"Now I may peril a few old women and have down a church here and there, but I would be doing more harm to men than I intend if I were to let their women know that there are other ways of loving. And Tom's way is the way I want you in. Could you love me as you loved him? Do not put me off with the tale that you are already a wife, for old Jonathan is past loving, and his time is not long."

"I do not know, John," said Remember thoughtfully. She had slipped the green dress over her head and now she fastened the bodice. "Not as I loved Tom, I think."

"Why? There is much that goes on between a man and a woman that I do not

understand."

"As a man, you should know." She looked up at him, half-accusing.

"Ah yes--as a man." He fell silent.

She went on to explain. "Because there is something about the man who first comes to court you in your father's house when you are a young girl that you never find in any man afterward. I cannot tell why it is or what it is, but it is so."

"I see," he said gravely. "And is it the same for a man? If it is, I cannot be all man yet, for I would not have my first sweetheart back again. She--"

"What was her name? Was she of the Bay? Did you marry her?" cried Remember in a rush of sudden jealousy.

"Her name was Lilith. She lived in a garden a good way off, and she had a husband already. He was very dull--a Tom Purchas sort of man. He could not understand why she bore nothing but devils--"

Remember clutched the bed post, stiff with terror. "Who are you? Oh, who are you?" she tried to cry out, hardly uttering a sound. But he heard her.

He stood up, stiff and straight and proud. "I am John Horne, shoemaker of Salem Village," he said doggedly.

"And sometimes," she whispered, "you are a yellow bird, or a black goat, or you come to Sarah Osborne as a thing all over hair."

He looked at the chamber floor. He did not answer her.

Her thoughts went back to Martha Corey. She eyed him covertly, wondered if she had the courage to bargain with the Dark Power. For the moment, at least, she was convinced that what stood before her was the everlasting Devil in the shape of a comely man, wanting badly from her that which could not be had unless she willingly gave it. If she had helped to bring the terror down on Salem, she must take this opportunity to defeat it and to rescue her neighbors. In any case, her own soul was sure of ultimate destruction. It was too late for her, but not, perhaps, for the others. Ignoble as it was to cozen in a bedchamber, she might stop the witchcraft quicker than as if she had spoken in Meeting.

"John," she said, her voice lowered, softened, "are they finding Martha guilty--down there?"

"That is the plan," he told her grimly.

"You told me once that if I came to you and loved you, you could stop it. I will

love you now, if you will see that all the witches are freed and that peace comes back to Salem Village. I will lie in bed with you and I will sign your Book."

Hatred and bitterness burned darkly in his eyes, shadowed his strong face.

"And I do not want that kind of love from you now. I could have that kind of love from any tavern maid in Boston--no, not Boston, even the tavern maids there are godly--in London, then. No, I want you in Tom Purchas' way, and no church member in Salem Village can buy me with the harlot's offer you are making. Martha Corey will hang--"

He broke off, straightened himself, and drew away. "I have talked too much to you. I have become a man indeed," he muttered, plunging through the doorway and down the stairs.

Remember sat down on the bed and put her head in her hands. Martha Corey would hang. She, Remember Winster, a Gospel woman, had offered herself to the Devil! Moreover, the Devil had rejected her for lack of virtue. She was still sitting there an hour later when Briony hastened in, her gold hair tossed in the wind, her bonnet awry.

"Oh Remember! I am so glad you did not go. I heard it was terrible! She asked to pray in the court and they would not let her. They said they did not come there to hear her pray. She tried and tried to show them she was innocent, but finally she said, 'You are all against me,' and gave over. Goody Pope threw her shoe and hit Martha square in the forehead. Her sons Parker and Crosby spoke against her. Giles said strange things were in his house, and that she was always on her knees praying, he knew not to whom. Some said she prayed to the Devil! Remember, I do not believe there is any Devil! I do not believe there are witches, either."

"Hush, Briony," gasped Remember. "Do not speak so loud. Jonathan might hear you."

"Oh, he's bringing wood and grumbling because you let the fire go out. He promised Hannah you'd go down and help her in the tavern tomorrow. Here, lie back and put your head on the pillow. I can tell you have a headache by the way you draw your brows together. Worrying over Martha must have brought it on. Judge Hathorne was so angry at her because she said she could open his eyes. They've sent her to Salem Gaol, anyhow, and now they're talking against Rebecca Nourse."

Rebecca Nourse! That good, sick, aged mother! And only a little while ago the man or fiend behind this cruel work had pressed her, Remember, close against

this counterpane, loving her! Her body had answered him, longed still for the warmth and decisiveness of his caresses. She touched the counterpane with her hand, she touched the warm flesh of her throat where his lips had been. Kisses for her throat, and the rope for Martha's--and John Horne to blame for both of them. John Horne, who stood in the cold dark, outside the warm, lighted house of man which he could never enter--who could never master Tom Purchas' way of loving.

CHAPTER 11
"One of You is a Devil"

DRESSED in a blue gown of her own weaving, the sleeves rolled back over her bare, brown arms, Remember stepped across the sanded floor of the tavern and eased two full tankards down on the table in front of Sam Sibley and William Way. It was just at the onset of dusk on the day after Martha Corey had gone to Salem Gaol, and Remember had come to the Village to help Hannah Ingersoll, as Jonathan had promised that she should. Hannah toiled now in the kitchen, basting the roast with thyme and marjoram. John Horne, restless as the night wind, tugged at one side of a cask of ale he was helping the deacon to bring up from the cellar. At a table placed near the fire, the Reverend Mr. Noyes sat with a goose quill and parchment, questioning the grizzled Giles Corey who stood half bent before him, shuffling his feet nervously to and fro. Mr. Noyes hoped to discover in Giles a surer proof of Martha's evil-doing than his records yet carried, but Giles, unhappy and muddled, refused to give it to him.

"Didn't say she was a witch," muttered Giles. "Said there were queer things going on in the house--kettles falling from shelves and nobody nigh them--things like that. Cat took sick and oxen went lame in the meadow. Marthy prayed all the time, whilst I couldn't speak God to save my soul. But didn't say she was a witch nor that Devil went there."

Mr. Noyes sighed and chewed the quill thoughtfully. Remember slid a tankard in front of him. He reached for it but he did not listen as she murmured the reckoning. The small, clean panes glared redly from the sunset. Voices sounded below the Meeting House and grew nearer, plainer. A horse snorted and hoofs clacked on the ledge that cropped out in the center of the road bed where the rains had washed away the topsoil. Then four persons came into the tavern, loosening the hasps of their greatcoats as the warmth from the logs burning on the hearth blazed out to meet them. Israel Porter and his comely wife Elizabeth, born John Hathorne's sister, stepped ahead of Peter Cloyse and Dan Andrew. Dan's nose shone red from the sharp air of the spring night, and the tips of Elizabeth's ears glinted white below her cap. She sped across the floor to the fireplace and sank on one knee before it, holding out both hands to the blue and tawny flames of the burning applewood, and paying small

attention to Mr. Noyes or the fact that she had almost upset his table in her hurried passing.

Dan hailed Remember genially. "I never thought to see Jonathan Winster's wife set up for a tavern maid! I hope you're not too green at it to bring us a drink, lass!"

Hannah bustled in, red and sweaty from peering into the oven, pushing back the tendrils of her brown hair with only a fine salting of gray in it.

"Green she's not at anything, and what I'd do without her kind help, I don't know. Every time there's a hearing I have to feed all Salem Village and half the town, and you can't hire a serving wench for pounds sterling; they'd rather throw fits in the Meeting House. How they make their keep at it, I don't know. Sit down and we'll serve you."

Nat Ingersoll shook his head at his wife, for he believed the Circle to be honestly afflicted, but she turned away from him and spoke again. "That's right, John. Lift the cask into its cradle, so. Remember, let us broach the new one for these folk. Goodman Horne will help you."

The newcomers had followed Elizabeth Porter to the fireplace, and as Hannah and the deacon joined them, they all began to whisper together. Mr. Noyes cocked his sharp face forward to listen, and Giles let his great head sink ungainly into his tankard. William Way and Sam Sibley paid their reckoning and went out. Remember stood in the shadows by the iron-bound cask that smelled of malt and cellar mould, and John stood beside her. His confusion of the day before did not trouble him now. He smiled down at her.

"The play goes on, Remember."

She should have withdrawn from him, have shuddered and turned away. But it would have been as easy to turn away from the full moon on an April night; as easy for an apple bough to turn from the spring wind. It could not be that she loved him, for to love a man was to feel him a part of her own flesh and spirit, so much a part that she could hardly tell where one left off and the other began. She could never feel that for John. He would always be the question she could not answer, the color she could not name, the strange, hot word whose meaning she did not know. She looked up at him, too shaken to make any reply.

"They have been to cry 'witch' at Rebecca Nourse," he went on, "but do not tremble at it. Do not let it blast your heart so. In time, it is nothing. Why, there will come a time when much that you believe in shall be less than the spring wind blowing."

Why had he mentioned the spring wind? She seemed to feel it swaying her body, corrupting her, while her mind reeled under the iron fall of his words.

"I do not want to be alive in such a time," she murmured brokenly.

"Do not worry, you will not be. But your generations will."

Peter Cloyse pushed between them. "You're a green pair of bar-keeps, you two," he jested. "Give us a drink, for we need it."

"And why do you need it, Peter lad?" asked John, suddenly the good fellow and comrade, taking the tankard from Remember's unsteady fingers and turning his back on her.

Peter spoke so loudly he could be heard all over the low-ceiled room. Mr. Noyes's face grew sharper. Giles stopped drinking.

"We've been to my wife's sister Nourse to warn her she's being talked of as a witch and to ask her if there's truth in it."

"What did she say?" asked Hannah, pausing as she was about to slap a mug of ale smartly in front of Dan Andrew.

Elizabeth Porter answered. "She said she was as innocent as the babe unborn--as any fool would know without asking her. She seemed fair mazed by it. Said she was sorry for Mr. Parris and his afflicted household. I have bespoken my brother Hathorne to leave her alone, but he will not hear me."

Mr. Noyes smiled secretly into his ale, then he spoke. "She will have a chance to clear her innocency. The warrant is out for her to be here by eight of tomorrow's clock."

The burning logs shifted and sputtered in the fireplace. Nobody spoke for a long time. The darkness grew outside and the blood-glow faded from the panes. Finally Peter Cloyse began talking in strange, tight tones.

"Aye," he said, "if she is a witch, we know the reasons: that her husband owns property many covet; that she was a Topsfield girl fifty years ago, and that Salem Village does not love us men of Topsfield; that she and Francis stood against Mr. Bayley whose friends are strong here; and that she and her family have not been to meeting since Mr. Parris has allowed those antics on the Sabbath. 'Tis easy to see she is a witch--!"

"Hush, man," said Dan Andrew soberly, his fingers on Peter's rough sleeve, "or they'll strike you closer home."

Peter's face turned this way and that apprehensively, his voice sank into silence, as he remembered his own outspoken Sarah, thought how easy it

would be for her, too, to fall under the shadow. Nicholas Noyes studied his drink. The silence grew and grew. The wind rattled a loose shutter. Remember looked through the window at the pale stars scattered across the night sky. God, she thought, was far away, his face shut and forbidding. It seemed a folly to pray.

Then heavy footsteps thudded on the worn ledge outside the door, and a child's prattle sounded, like shallow water running over stones. The door burst open, and a tiny girl, dirty and tousled and laughing, slipped into the room and ran straight to the hearth, where she crouched down, hugging herself and looking up impishly at the group in the wide room. No one followed her. The door flapped in the wind.

"Deacon," called a gruff, shamed-sounding voice from without, "can ye come--?"

Nat Ingersoll put down his pipe and mug and went to the door. He talked for some moments with the bulky shadow that stood there. The child's smile widened, she spoke.

"I am Dorcas Good," she said, lisping a little. "I am a witch."

Nobody said anything.

"I am a witch because my mother was a witch. I bite Ann Putnam and Mercy Lewis--see--on the wrist, like this."

She put her wrist in her mouth.

"Who says so, child?" asked Hannah Ingersoll.

"Mary Walcott says so. She says she sees me bite them."

The deacon closed the door and turned back to the fireplace. His hands shook as he bent to touch the child gently.

"Hannah'll give ye supper, little maid," he said in a choked voice. Then he looked into his wife's eyes. "I cannot believe in this, Hannah."

"Who brought her, Nat?"

"Sam Braybrook. The girls have accused her and she's going to be examined in the Meeting House tomorrow. They say she commands her mother's familiars, now old Sarah's in gaol. Sam will have no part of it. They told him to guard her for the night, and he asked if you would keep her."

Was the Devil now getting to Parson's wenches through a five-year-old girl? Or did this mean something even more wicked? Everyone looked in horror toward Nat Ingersoll. Peter Cloyse swore. Mr. Noyes drained his mug.

"Evil must go, root and twig," he uttered piously.

Remember looked at John Horne. His voice came so low she could not hear it, rather, she felt its vibrations trouble the air about her.

"I told you there would be sorrow for all men of that place wherein my work must be done. I promised you that for your favor I would go away. But you were too good to kiss a stranger under the midnight alders, so I am not sorry for you or any of your poor dusty kind, Remember."

Sickened, she looked away from him. He had been an enemy of Salem before she was born. Why should he try to make her believe she was to blame for his campaign of horror?

"Heat the child some porridge," Hannah Ingersoll told her grimly. "Witch or no witch, it's all we can do for her."

Little Dorcas Good lay that night in Remember's arms for warmth, and Remember, sleepless, could feel the silken hair and baby flesh pressed trustingly close to her. She thought of Briony, and of her own daughters who would never quicken in her womb, who would never be more than a stifled impulse on a spring night. Cold stars marched pitilessly across the sky and the wind shook the branches that would not bud for another fortnight, slapped them against the chamber window. Once the child stirred in her sleep and murmured, "--but I did not bite anyone. What is a witch? Where is my mother?"

In the thick gray morning the two crept down to the cold hearth, and Remember fed Dorcas and gave her a sugar-tit to take with her. She thought to tie her a cornhusk doll but stopped herself. If the child brought such a plaything to court, the mad girls might name it for a witchcraft poppet. At eight o'clock, Marshal Herrick led Rebecca Nourse into the tavern to wait while the Meeting House was prepared for her examination. Hannah and Remember did what they could to make the feeble old woman comfortable, putting cushions at her back and feet, and brewing strong, hot tea. Her stomach ailed, and the years had left her more than a little deaf. Generous love and birth had filled her house with eight fine sons and daughters but had done little good to her woman's body. She was struck with wonder at the charge against her, and sat patiently, neat and shrunken, in her black Sunday gown and gold brooch. She had none of Martha Corey's fire and spirit, but she had sweetness and a gentle, stubborn courage. Martha believed there were no witches. Rebecca believed that there were, but she knew that she herself was not one. Martha had thought to save herself; Rebecca believed that God would save her.

When they led Rebecca and Dorcas across the muddy road to the Meeting House, Remember went to the scullery and wept sharp tears into a dish clout. Then she and Hannah began to lay out meat and drink against the time when the loud-voiced, goggle-eyed mob would come spilling into the tavern, eager for refreshment. The Devil might be among them and their mothers at war with God, but Salem men still wanted their hot, spicy meat, bread to dip in its juices, and rum to float it down their gullets. The breath of God might have been blown into Adam, but it did not carry him far unless he renewed his strength with the substance of leaf, and root, and lesser flesh. Yet God had created, too, this very substance. No, thought Remember, no road could lead you from God for more than a little way without circling back to Him. What roads did John Horne tread in the darkness, and where did they lead?

The sun climbed higher. The bare apple boughs tapped on the tavern window as a little wind stirred them. A dog loped across the road, spied Hannah's puss-cat and drove it yowling to cover under Jonathan Walcott's barn. Not a soul walked in the Village, but now and then awful shrieks burst through the Meeting House door--the shrieks of the Circle in full cry. Then Deodat Lawson emerged, head down, his coat collar turned up to meet his burning eyes, and strode into the deacon's near field where he paced back and forth, conning over the sermon which he kept taking from his pocket, and halting jerkily whenever the shrieks reached a crescendo. Finally Hannah could bear it no longer.

"Come on, Remember," she urged, "we can go stand in the doorway. I'd like to see how God will work to save Goody Nourse--if indeed He does it."

Without stopping for their cloaks, the two women scurried across the road and slipped through the Meeting House door just in time to see Mrs. Ann Putnam tear at the bodice across her swelling breasts and fling her abandoned body toward the prisoner by the pulpit.

"Did you not bring the Black Man with you?" she shrieked. "Did you not bid me tempt God and die? How often have you eat and drunk your own damnation?"

Goodwife Nourse recoiled, her face distorted with horror. She lifted to heaven her knotted hands and her mild old eyes.

"God help me!" she cried, sharp as a sword thrust to the heart.

The Circle burst forth now, leaping and rocking, frothing and screaming. Hathorne permitted them to go on for a time while the men and women in the pews leaned forward breathlessly. When interest seemed to flag a little he spoke above the turmoil.

"See these afflicted persons. Hear them accuse you. They say now that they see familiar spirits throng to your bodily person, spirits that dart to and fro at your orders, harming them and making them to cry. They say that these spirits come from the Devil. Have you familiarity with him?"

"No. I have none but with God alone."

She looked so holy, the way a well-used field is holy after it has given its harvest up to feed a people, that suddenly Hathorne wavered. He caught a pleading look from his sister Porter on the women's side, and his next accusation died in his throat. Hannah gripped Remember's sleeve.

"He believes her!" she hissed. "God will save her after all. He's working in Judge Hathorne now!"

And it seemed as if she might be right, for Hathorne cried out suddenly like a man in pain. "Oh what a sad thing it is that another church member, another woman of Salem should be accused and charged!"

Remember felt her glance drawn suddenly away from the center of the drama to where John Horne sat, just behind the Circle. He did not look at her. He looked straight at Goody Pope, and his look shone with live fire. Perhaps it was only sun along a dust beam that moved between them. Perhaps it was not. Instantly the woman threw herself from her chair, her body tossing like a small boat in a rip tide. Everyone sat silent while her screeching, slobbering fit ran its course. She fell to the floor at last, one arm stiffened and pointing at Rebecca Nourse. Hathorne's face hardened like water when the frost moves over it. He began again to accuse the prisoner.

Finally the bewildered old creature cried out in agony, "I have no one to look to but God alone!" She let her head drop, limp and fainting, on one shoulder.

Instantly Elizabeth Hubbard screamed and her head dropped in the same way.

"Set up Goody Nourse's head," cried Abigail Williams pertly, "or the maid's neck will be broke."

Mary Walcott ran to Rebecca and struck the poor woman's head back with all her force. Elizabeth's head snapped upward like a jack-in-the-box. The meeting dissolved in an uproar.

Remember pulled away from Hannah Ingersoll's side and ran across the road and around to the rear of the tavern where she threw herself down on last year's yellowed grass and thought to be sick but was not. Bye and bye she lifted her eyes to the Meeting House. She saw the deputies put Nourse on horseback and head for Salem. Samuel Braybrook stood in the doorway with Dorcas perched

on his shoulder. Iron fetters now jarred cruelly on the baby wrists. But Dorcas looked up and laughed, sucked on the sugar-tit Remember had given her. This was a new game to her, more exciting than the dame school where the older girls went and left her a-playing. Ann Putnam, Mercy Lewis, and Mary Walcott were waiting to show on their bodies what they said were the marks of her little teeth. Braybrook stooped to keep from bumping her head as he carried her in. The door swung shut behind them.

After a while Remember crept inside and was able to help Hannah when the examinations ended in the late afternoon and the tavern filled with custom. They learned that Dorcas had been taken to Salem until she could join her mother in Boston Gaol. Remember did not go to hear Deodat Lawson preach his mighty sermon that night, in which he spread out the whole doctrine of witchcraft in its most horrible forms, but she heard much talk of it over the ale mugs afterwards. It justified and commended everything that had been done in Salem Village against the accused witches. Every step in the proceedings, every process in the examinations, every kind of accusation and evidence however monstrous, every trick of the afflicted children, every device that had been employed to fill him and others with horror, to inspire revenge and heighten the delirium--all these, his eloquence praised before the people of Salem. After Deodat Lawson preached that Lecture Night, Salem Village lost all pretense to justice and reason. They were the wicked who fled when no man pursued them. They were sinners whom an angry God had abandoned quite to the Devil. They were children running through a midnight forest, striking at friend and foe, hacking off their own members in their terror. Men who heard that discourse were marked by it, and Remember was glad all her life that she had stayed in the tavern drawing ale while he was a-preaching.

She did go to church the next Sabbath and watched Mr. Parris rear up like a black rock in the pulpit while he thundered over the heads of his hysterical flock.

"Christ knows how many devils there are in this church and who they are!"

He waited to see the effect of his words. A low murmur of horror breathed out like a fog on the chill air and each man drew away from his neighbor, looked covertly at the wife he had sworn to love and cherish. Remember watched Sarah Cloyse move uneasily and bite her lip. Sarah's sister Nourse had lain since Lecture Day in Salem Gaol, and for her to have to listen to such talk must be like having salt rubbed in the hurt of it. She looked over at Briony, sitting demurely with the twins. If Stephen's ship would only make port, she would ask him to take Briony away till the Devil had done his work in Salem and left it. But he could not tempt Briony Malbon to his linn; her own flesh

was not yet seasoned enough to destroy her.

Mr. Parris paused suddenly, drawing Remember's attention to the pulpit again. He looked up and smiled. He laid down the words as if they had a lovely taste on them.

"--and the text is *John vi, 70, 71*. 'Jesus answered them, have I not chosen you twelve--and one of you is a devil!'"

As he said it, Sarah Cloyse leaped to her feet. She turned a serpent look of hatred full on the minister and ran out of the church. The fresh east wind--or was it the wind--slammed the door behind her. The congregation craned their necks, aghast.

"One of you is a devil," repeated Mr. Parris smoothly, marking the interruption only by a lifted eyebrow.

Hathorne and Corwin sat in the front pew in scarlet and dignity. Mr. Hale and Mr. Noyes waited to assist at prayers. Mary Walcott and Ann Putnam let their hands, all bruised from thrashing on the floor boards, lie loosely in their silken laps. Thomas Putnam's glance darted insect-wise about the Meeting House. John Horne stood behind the Circle, grave and silent, his head piously bowed.

"One of you is a devil!" Samuel Parris said for the third time happily.

CHAPTER 12
The Black Sabbath

NO MORE hearings were called in the Meeting House for a time, and after she had helped Hannah give the tavern a thorough cleaning, Remember went back to her own house. Whispers wandered about Essex like bubbles over the surface of a boiling caldron. The ministers met daily. The magistrates had called on Lieutenant Governor Danforth of Boston. More witches tormented the afflicted children and would soon be brought out. Abigail Hobbs in a burst of mad giggling had boasted openly that the Devil was her master. Somewhere in the fields beyond the Village a coven met in the spring nights, met with Satan himself to further the ruin of man, God was losing the great battle of Salem Village, and its people swarmed into the Meeting House, as their fathers had swarmed into log garrisons when the Indians came whooping down.

And unheeding the trouble and chaos in the hearts of its people, Essex County stubbornly went on growing green with spring. Flocks of crows wheeled over the plowed land or dabbled their claws in the clear water trickling down the furrows. The willow buds passed from fur into feather. Whispers escaped from the thickets after twilight that did not deal with witchcraft. Children were gotten who would do their first crying under the Christmas stars, and banns were cried in the church afterward.

It was love rather than evil that Remember thought on as she sat at her loom, that first long afternoon of April, trying to tie off the last threads in Mary English's plaid linen and knowing that she could not do it because of the strange, clumsy weakness seeping through her fingers. Jonathan had gone fishing for alewives in Beaver Dam Brook and taken his children with him--for his children could still run free in the wind and sunshine though little Dorcas Good lay in a dank cellar, the light of reason fading from her elfin face. Briony roamed on the hillsides, looking hopefully for the mayflowers that would not be thrusting their pink and white petals through the dead leaves before the month's end.

All alone, and with no one watching her, Remember left the loom and pottered about the kitchen, sitting down, jumping up again, going from window to fireplace and back, fussing with her collar, smoothing her hair. Finally she leaned against the casement and closed her eyes. In the church, men faced the

truth of God. Here in her own kitchen she would face the truth of the sorry predicament she was in and try to decide what she should do about it. She had loved Tom, but Tom was dead. Now another man could make her body stir and throb and quicken just as it had quickened for Tom. A man who might not be a man at all, but the Devil! Ten times she had watched the chestnut trees grow white with April and heard pairs of lovers whispering out the warm nights in every patch of shadow. But there had been no man she wanted to go into the shadow with. Her marriage had not touched her. Lying with Jonathan had meant no more than putting his supper on the table. Now, whether he was man or Devil, she wanted to go with John.

But she was not sure she loved him. If she did, even though he chose to make their bed in Hell, she would go and lie in it there. But much as she wanted him, she knew this was not love as she had known it in Tom Purchas' arms. There was not the feeling of security and deep repose, the feeling that she had spent all her life wandering in far, strange countries and had now come home. If she did not love him, she could at least have traded with him when he gave her the chance, and by committing evil herself have shut away a greater evil from the world of her neighbors. She could do it yet, if she were only wise enough. Wise women, she knew, whether in whoredom or marriage, measured out love to a man as she measured out spices for a cake. So-much given for so-much in return. Stephen had told her about a girl who used to cry oranges in Drury Lane--a girl no fairer or better-born than she was--who had cozened the king till he gave her a carriage and set her up like a duchess. There was a kind of wisdom born in such women that she could never have, not even if she were to read all the books in Harvard College. Such wisdom did not come from books, anyway. It came from having a body as eagerly adventurous as Hannah Ingersoll's puss-cat. For her, love would come as incontinent as sunlight on the land, or withhold itself, like the softness of leaves that comes no more to the dead tree. More likely, it would withhold itself. If it came, she could not make use of it; she could only give over, and be grateful for the delight and the wonder.

If she loved John and went with him, she must take his essential evil as she took his body, to herself utterly and forever. If she did not--the chestnuts would go on whitening for fifty Aprils while other lovers sought the leafing thickets. She would be always alone till death wrenched her out of an old woman's body. Tom Purchas would not come back. She remembered how crisp his hair had felt under her fingers on their last night twelve years ago, how his lips had lain quiet on hers while his hand groped for the fastening of her gown, how she had said, "No, Tom. It would not be godly. There will be time when you come back." And he had not come back. She sank to her knees

and put her head on the window ledge.

Out in the wet fields sloping toward Salem, Briony Malbon ran, leaping from tuft to hummock. Her yellow hair streamed behind her in the warm wind. No thoughts of Mary Walcott or the Circle troubled her today any more than if she had left them hanging with her cloak on Widow Putnam's fence post. She put her head up and laughed at the sight of two tiny figures far away up Whipple's Hill. The figures bent toward each other, embraced, ducked awkwardly behind a fold of ledge. How foolish, foolish, thought Briony. No man had ever kissed her, but she doubted if any man could kiss like the sun and the wind. She was a child in experience but not in knowledge. She knew the inexorable law, that if in one spring you courted, in the next you rocked a cradle. Oh, I pray no man courts me for many, many years, she thought. Who wanted to move slowly and heavily with a great lump of a child thrashing around inside her? What man's love was worth bearing that burden for? It might be well enough, and no doubt she would come to it when she was old like Remember, but now she would rather run--run with the wind in her hair and the sun in her eyes, light, and swift, and free.

John Horne, tramping the road from Salem Village to Jonathan Winster's house, paused and looked back over his shoulder. He noticed that his boots had left no prints on the oozing turf and he frowned. There were so many things to remember about being a man. Looking to his left across a stonewall, he saw Briony skimming over the ground sure as a doe, her feet hardly touching the furrows under her. He stood still, watching. She was holding back her long skirts almost to the thigh so that they would not trip her. Her legs were slim. Her bodice did not curve invitingly like Remember's; it hung loosely from two delicate points. He meditated. Mary Walcott had tried to draw Briony into the Circle and had come back angry, saying the girl was not worth her trouble. But Briony might be worth *his* trouble in a year or two--if New England were still his. New England would always be his, a little. It would make a joyless noise unto the Lord with much ostentation, but there would always be backbiting after a sermon and much breaking of the seventh commandment in the thickets. Underneath all the stern oak trees and rotting granite was the sweet matter of original sin, the red, red clay that was man before God breathed on him. No, thought John Horne, I shall never lose New England. But I shall never have her wholly. She will yield herself so far and when she pleases--like the woman I am going to now, who turns into fire at kissing and into cold stone before she can be taken. But God cannot have her either. She belongs to herself, and she does not give away.

Briony leaped a far wall and disappeared. John walked ahead, putting more weight in his steps, leaving tracks behind him. When he could see the gable end of the Winster place between the trees, he turned off the road and picked his way over the winter-sodden grass before the herb garden. A lower casement swung open, and on the sill lay the bent chestnut head of the woman he was seeking, the white kerchief all rumpled around it. He reached in and touched her shoulder. The bright day had begun to darken over and a cloudbank behind Hathorne's Hill spread upward and took the sun from the sky. The too-warm wind swept out of the forest as if it had blown over acres of glowing coals. Remember looked up, knowing already who it was by the way her blood leaped at his touch, tried to compose herself and give him a casual greeting.

He laughed, almost tenderly. "Do not bother trying to decide whether you will let me kiss you or not. I shall not try to. There is not a kiss in me today. Take your cloak and come out with me. I want to show you the kingdoms of the world. I want to show you the fire you play with."

Without answering she obeyed him. As she came out of the doorway he took her arm and they paced soberly down the road like a married pair off for Meeting. How the hot wind blew, lashing the bare trees and driving a swirl of clouds over the darkening sky where a few frightened-looking stars shone, cracking open the astonished buds before their time! Except for the wind a silence settled on the land. Remember thought of Briony and hoped she had taken refuge in a neighbor's house from this too-sudden twilight. John was leading her straight for Salem Village, toward her own kind, not away from them. He did not speak, but he hummed a little, a lilting air that made Remember think of a picture she had seen in Mary English's house, a picture of men in red coats standing in a wainscotted taproom, some with tankards lifted, others thumping on the table. When they crossed Beaver Dam Brook she looked up and down water for Jonathan and the children but she did not see them. Not until they came out of the trees and were crossing the Training Ground did he speak to her. Then he said, "There are two gatherings in Salem Village tonight. There is worth and innocence abroad here--and there is evil. Do you think you can tell one from the other?"

"I could have once," she murmured. "Now--I do not know."

If only the wind would stop blowing! The black sky seemed to press closer, like a great coverlet about to smother her. Her fingers gripped John's arm but drew no comfort from it. It curved out from his body as unresponding as the branch of a tree.

"We will go and look in at the parsonage," he continued. "They are keeping

fast and prayers there that the witches be delivered up to justice and the afflictions cease."

In the road just outside Mr. Parris' house he pulled her to a stop. "Look through the window," he told her, "and tell me if God is there."

Remember looked where he pointed. The lower windows facing the road shone with a light so yellow that there must have been many candles burning in the room behind. At first she could see only the warm square of color, then she could make out the figures that moved against it, and what they were doing. Mr. Parris stood in the center. He seemed to be explaining something to a group of men gathered intently around him. Only the closing words of his speech carried to the outside. "In any case, it will show the people that we are powerful and that they need us," he said. The words meant nothing to Remember, but the company all bobbed their wigs in vigorous agreement. Mr. Hale of Beverly was there, and Mr. Noyes of the church in Salem Town. Judge Hathorne and Judge Corwin she recognized, Deodat Lawson and Thomas Putnam. But there were others whom she did not know--men in brocade coats finer than anything she had seen in the town, and they must surely have come from Boston. Mr. Parris paused and bowed his head. All his guests did the same.

Close beside her in the sultry mist she heard John speaking. "These," he said, "are the leading ministers and magistrates of Massachusetts Bay. Parris has the whole colony in it now. They are the Law, the Throne, and the Church. They have fasted and prayed and planned how to kill twenty witches, and now they are asking for God's blessing in the matter. I have no doubt He will give it to them. Have you seen enough?"

Remember thought how Parris had reviled her when she went to him for counsel, how he had tried to make her think that she was fit for Bedlam.

"Yes," she said, and then as they turned away, "but God was not sitting with them, John."

He laughed and led her aside into Sam Parris' orchard.

"The Word you set such store by says that only the pure in heart shall see God. Are you so pure in heart that you think when you do not see Him He is not there?"

Her face grew hot in the darkness and the hot wind blew all about them as they picked their way between the young trees Nat Ingersoll had given the minister to ease other claims he might make on the village.

"I am," she said, "for all you know of me."

He laughed. "The first night I ever came to Salem," he told her, "I met you standing beside a thorn tree. I wonder now how I could ever tell the two of you apart. You are the child of a cactus and a bramble bush, Remember."

"I do not know what a cactus is, but I doubt I was sired by one. And my mother was a Gospel woman."

"Oh, yes," he mused, "Jonet Wicom, born a Thrale in Ayrshire. I have heard speech of her."

They had passed through the orchard and were climbing now along a barren slope, half sand, half bog pits, that lay between the Village and Whipple's Hill. The black sky swirled above them, coppery around the horizon, and still the hot wind blew.

"She told you of the witch work in Scotland--a rare country for it, a country close to my heart always. And you told--others!"

Remember stopped, stood still.

"John," she said, "you know I told the Circle. It was a trick of theirs. I made a wicked error and I am sorry for it. But how did you know? One night I looked into Tituba's kitchen and I saw you there. I saw you stand in front of those evil, play-acting, lying wenches, and I heard you say to them, 'Peace, my Daughters.'"

"Turn around," he told her, "and you will see them again."

Remember turned and looked back toward the Village. The land they had just crossed sloped downward, and the parsonage orchard and the scattered lights of the Village lay at the foot of it. Over the slope moved a group of familiar figures sprung out of nowhere. Blue light flickered around the edges of the black clouds and revealed the scene as if a thousand torches played on it. Mrs. Ann Putnam stood in the center, her fine head thrown back, her great eyes rolling in their sockets. In her right hand she clasped the hand of her daughter, little Ann, who sobbed quietly, horribly, tears slipping down her set face like raindrops down a wall. At her left shoulder stood Abigail Williams, smirking, her pale eyes reflecting the wild light in the sky. Mercy Lewis and Mary Walcott sauntered about in a wide circle, their arms around each other's waists, eyes flashing, sly mouths a-whisper. Elizabeth Hubbard, Elizabeth Booth, and Susannah Sheldon set themselves down on the ground, crossed their legs under them, and waited. Goody Pope bustled to and fro, holding a black felt bag ostentatiously in front of her, and Sarah Churchill kept polishing a flat stone laid like a table-top across two upright stones. Now Abigail Hobbs bounded across the slope, weaving between the other figures, pursued by Mary Warren

who finally caught and held her.

Remember stood still. John's fingers bit into her arm like teeth. *He was not talking. She could swear that he was not talking.* But a deep, resonant voice suddenly seemed to sound from everywhere at once as the wind died away. Out of the ground, out of the dry juniper bushes on the hill, out of the orchard trees, out of the everlasting sky. It was everywhere.

The Circle paused, looked up, waited. The voice called to them.

"Even as they worship their God in the Parson's house, worship ye your God, on the open hillside in the night."

"We worship, Master!" chorused the Circle, falling to their knees.

"Where, wenches, would you kiss your Master?"

"Wherever he would of us."

"Even to the foulest part?"

"Even to the foulest part!" shouted the girls together.

The Black Sabbath, thought Remember, frightened past fear.

"I will not prove it of you tonight. Instead I have a rare vision for you. And we shall have but one dance, so let it be a lewd one. Ann Putnam, young Ann Putnam, dance with the stick as though it were a man you would have to lie with you."

A tall black stick suddenly appeared, stuck in the ground in front of little Ann. Blue flame leaped out from the clouds again and showed the evil mirth on the faces of the older girls who watched her. The child put out her hand willingly enough and drew the staff close to her side. She looked up questioningly at her mother. Then she took a few little prancing steps sideways and stopped, not knowing what else to do. Her companions burst into ribald laughter.

"Ha! He would never have you, Ann!"

Disgust mounted in the deep overtones of sound that flowed across the hillside.

"You should see the old fertility rites as we play them out under the dark moon of a Sabbath from Caithness down to the Lizard. But they are not for you. You are too meager. There is not enough of the breath of God in your narrow souls to make you good, and not enough of the rich ground in your puling bodies to make you worth a devil's while. You are lacking! You are lacking! You are fit for no service but making trouble. Oh, but we have fine orgies on the green graves of Christ's good people huddled close around the old stone churches, and my daughters dance naked in the arms of demons. You, Sarah Churchill,

with your face like an honest mare's, would cut a fine figure in the arms of a demon! And the woman loves the hairy goat at a true orgy! What would you do at an orgy, Susannah Sheldon? Kneel down and sing to us from the Bay Psalm Book, perhaps?"

Laughter boiled down the valley like a roaring torrent that sweeps its dam away. Susannah drew her head down turtlewise on her shoulders. Her eyes dilated. She drooled. The laughter flooded over them and swept on. The voice spoke again.

"But do not jest at Ann. She can mouth more froth and make rarer mischief in the Meeting House than any of you."

Silence returned to the hillside. The Circle waited, quiet, submissive after the scolding.

"Nor will we call the role of your ill-doing," continued the unseen Master after an interval. "I know well what you have done, who lies in gaol and who put them there. You are poor stuff, but your will to evil is sure and you do what you can."

"Master," said Mercy Lewis demurely, "when may we accuse more? We have been allowed to cry out on no one this week. After all, we began it only because the evenings were long and we must have some fun."

"Who is Master of Hell, Mercy Lewis? You or I?"

"You are, Master."

"Then watch what I shall show you tonight. Watch and remember. You shall have directions when to make it known. I promise you a rare summer of merrymaking. Back, now, to the grass edge, while I call you a vision! And it is a vision--a false one. Let none of you think that it is real, but it will give you the stuff to make your lies of."

The Circle moved back. Goody Pope had left her bag on the stone table. She looked at it smugly with the pleased air of one who has executed a secret commission.

Suddenly a thin trumpet blew. Remember turned around. Out of the forest paced a squat figure with powerful shoulders, a finely cut mouth, and deep, sad eyes. He wore the seemly clothing of a minister of God. Now and then he sounded a small horn trumpet hung by a leather thong from his shoulder.

"Why, it's old minister Burroughs!" cried Remember. "But it cannot be. He is preaching in the woods beyond York." Her voice died before it reached her own ears.

Parson George Burroughs, whom Salem Village had once cheated, reviled, and thrown in prison at the behest of the Putnam family, moved forward and stood beside the stone table. After him came the strangest procession Remember had ever seen. She recognized some of them and others she did not know, but all moved with great dignity and sadness, as if they followed a loved one to the grave. First came Bridget Bishop in her red paragon bodice, her face showing none of the mirth that the gamesters of Ryall Side loved her for. She walked alone. A little way behind her hobbled Sarah Good and Rebecca Nourse who were supposed to be shut up in Boston Gaol, a stout, neat woman in a white mantle, and two others whom Remember could not name. After them came big John Procter, a tall woman, haggard but lovely, an old, old man with flowing white hair and a cane in each hand, then another stranger. Martha Corey followed, arm in arm with Mary Easty, and with them were five women and a man whom Remember had never seen before. Giles Corey walked alone, bowed like a man bearing a great weight, and he came last.

Not looking aside nor speaking any word, they moved across to the stone table. Sarah Cloyse was suddenly standing by it. Sarah Good joined her. Silently they opened Goody Pope's felt bag. Sarah Cloyse took out of it a poplar tray heaped with gobbets of raw flesh, and Sarah Good lifted up a pitcher of living blood. As they passed this horrid sacrament among the standing company the wind began to blow again, nosing everywhere like a vile beast. Everyone partook, deliberately, sadly, without sound, almost without motion. Only Sarah Cloyse did not share. Sometimes they seemed to have the solidity of real men and women. At other times Remember thought she could see the lights in the parsonage windows straight through Martha Corey or the old man with flowing hair.

"See!" cried the invisible Master, his voice quick with cold excitement. "See them eat and drink their own damnation! Here are deaths enough to cause you a summer's merriment! There is nothing so merry as death--the Death of the Soul! This is the Black Sabbath! Those who partake of it are doomed!"

The Circle burst into dribbling laughter, leaped from the grassy bank toward the sober company. John put his hands across Remember's eyes. The air around her filled with a swooping, beating sound, as if all the bats in Putnam's pasture were suddenly taking wing. A sucking draft went over her as the wings swept upward. Slowly the sound faded in the upper air, but as it drew away it seemed to be less like the beat of wings than like the thrust of a spear hurled through the night. The obscene laughter of the Circle died away. The blackness dropped from her eyes, and she saw that she stood alone. The girls, and the ghostly figures, and the sacrament table--even John--all were gone from the

hillside. She heard the shallow rustling of the cornstalks Captain Walcott had left standing in his far field all winter. She felt empty of all quickness, all emotion, empty as the dead husks that had held last summer's corn. Where were the worth and the innocence? What was good and what was evil? The prayer masters in Parson's house, or the somber figures called out by the Devil to drink blood here in the starless dark? She did not know. Not terror, not despair, nothing moved in her but the meaningless animal knowledge that the swirling black clouds still bore down on her and still the hot wind blew.

CHAPTER 13
Another Judgment

WHEN John Horne took his hands from Remember's eyes, he stood away for a moment and looked at her. Tall and straight she stood, the wind pulling tendrils of her tidy hair from under her cap, her face closed and expressionless as if she were asleep, the lids hiding her sea-gray eyes. Once again he felt that strange, disturbing good in her, the promise that was like the promise of a plowed field; the strength that held her steadfast, and baffled him whenever he came against it--that made her so desirable to him. He knew that she would stand so, unseeing, for a little time, and he did not want to be with her when she wakened. He had other work to do, but doubt and trouble stirred in him as he walked down the field to the parsonage.

The Circle had fled before him in a gabbling rout and crowded into the fireroom from which the more righteous visitors had gone. Only Samuel Parris remained there, beaming complacently in his wainscot chair, his fingertips placed together, his narrow, brown eyes lighting as John came in. The girls crouched on the benches that had been dragged from the kitchen for the earlier meeting. John swaggered between them and took up his stand by the cold hearth.

"Still no wood, Sam?" he asked mockingly.

Mr. Parris smiled. "I keep warm in the work of the Lord," he answered.

John shivered. "Well--but I do not. I am used, after all, to a different climate. One of you girls--you, Betty Hubbard--run over to Nat Ingersoll's and fetch us a pitcher of rum."

Betty Hubbard stood up, her flat face grinning with pride that she should be set apart from the others. She put her hand in her apron pocket.

"But I have no money, Master."

"Tell the deacon that Sam Parris will pay."

Betty ran out. The minister looked down sourly. The Circle waited. John whistled, his glance roving idly around the bare room.

"Master," asked Mary Warren, "will we have gun powder and grave dust in it

as Tituba used?"

"No. You girls must get over her West Indian notions, her *obi* and her *voodoo*. Here's Betty with the rum. You can drink it straight or go dry."

He shrugged his shoulders. Abigail Williams brought little pewter cups from the kitchen and distributed them. Betty filled each cup from the pitcher. Mr. Parris and the Circle sipped. John tossed his down at one swallow and began to talk.

"Things are well in hand," he said, staring at Parris, "well in hand. There are witches in gaol, and there will be more. The whole colony is astir. Mr. Parris and his brother ministers are proving themselves the saviors of Massachusetts. There is much awe and gratitude in the faces of the congregation when you preach, and thrice the usual take in the collection papers. Is that not so, Sam?"

"Yes, yes," said the minister nervously, not sure what his wholly alarming partner would say next. He had gloried in their strange compact when he stood in the pulpit shouting down the witches, when high-placed colleagues deferred to him, and when he walked the streets of the Village, seeing a new respect and homage in the eyes of the people. But in his bed at night he had lain long awake, thinking of Nourse's piteous crying and Martha Corey's clever, baffled face, and he had clutched out wildly at his wife, clinging, clinging to her, bruising her body and never telling her why.

"My Daughters," went on John Horne, "certain things should take place between now and May Day, and tonight I shall tell you your part in them."

The girls sat before him, their faces alert and eager as they had never been in the dame school.

"All of you saw how Goody Cloyse behaved in the church last Sunday--stalking out of meeting and slamming the door. Furthermore, she is of Topsfield, and the Topsfield men grow rich on the farms that should belong to your fathers. It will be well received if you cry out on a good many more from Topsfield this month. Mr. Parris and I will make a list for you. In the meantime--accuse Cloyse as soon as you please."

"Master," interrupted Mary Warren, "may I speak?"

"Is it toward?"

"Yes. My Master, John Proctor and his wife Elizabeth speak shame of us all the time. They say Nourse and Corey and all the others are innocent, and that we of the Circle are worse than whores and should be beaten."

John smiled. "No doubt they say as well that you do not scour the plates clean.

Still, we cannot have that, can we? What do you suggest, Sam?"

Samuel Parris had been moving quietly about snuffing the candles to save them; now he stood by the cresset lamp that hung on an iron hook near the fireplace, the only light left burning in the room.

"We can bring them out," he mouthed, like a boy saying over *Priscian*, and then added hastily, eager to make his own comment, "there is no reason against it. They have no powerful friends to stand for them."

"All right. Cloyse and the Proctors shall be in gaol this week. A little later we must get around to Giles Corey because he would not speak against Martha. He has been at law before, so the town will be quick to think ill of him. You girls can manage the usual thing. You will be tormented, hear black men whispering, see yellow birds fluttering from the beams--where no one else can see them. You do not need special instruction."

"No, Master."

"I shall not be with you all the time, for I have decided we are ready to cry this business abroad in New England. It is too mighty for Essex County now. The great work you are doing deserves a larger audience. I shall go to Boston, I think, and try to interest Governor Danforth in the matter. If we can get him to preside at our next hearing and to have with him his pick of the wise men of the colony, it will much advance our business, will it not?"

"Master," asked Sarah Churchill humbly, "just what is our business? At first Tituba told us it was for sport--but some of the sport I have not liked."

"You lie in your mouth, Sarah Churchill," he sneered at her. "You have loved it all. All you girls have loved it. What did you do before I came to you? Read God's Word and stared at the wainscot! What do you do now? You stand up before the congregation and they all applaud you, follow your slightest wish and word. You were servant wenches who hewed wood and drew water. Now you are great women whom angels and demons contend for--who can bring life and death where you will by pointing a finger. There are queens in gold crowns who have less power than you have. Do not say to me that you do not love it! I can tell in your faces--even when you are all a-froth at the mouth--that you do!"

Sharply he turned to little Ann Putnam, his mood changing. "Ann," he asked gaily, coaxingly, "how would you like to throw a fit for the Governor?"

Ann went into a fit then and there, thrashing on the floor till her mother forced the edge of the rum pitcher between her set lips and poured a goodly potion down her throat. When she relaxed and lay quiet except for an occasional mild

twitching, John spoke again.

"We will have the next hearing in the Town," he said, "before the highest tribunal that can be summoned in the land, and for good measure we need another witch."

Mr. Parris spoke up. "For a long time," he said, "the clergy have had their eyes on Bridget Bishop. She runs a game of shovelboard in her tavern, and her clothes are scarlet like the whore of Babylon. She was accused of witchcraft years ago when men pulled down a house of hers and found poppets in the walls--poppets with long pins sticking in them. Pincushions, she said! Mr. Hale declared her innocent then--but he may be of another mind now. Goodman Shattuck knows some queer things of her and will stand to them in the Town House."

"I think the people will receive it well," mused John. "Girls, you shall be afflicted by Bridget Bishop."

"Bridget Bishop!" they chorused, and Mary Walcott added, "Must we have a fit here in order to be given a drink?"

The rum pitcher passed from hand to hand.

"Now there are two other matters of gravest importance," he went on. "For God's sake, Parson, give us another light! I'll fetch a brand out of Hell--if you're too niggardly. Of course, it might leap up through your ceiling--!"

Parris hastily lighted two of the smaller candles, and John continued.

"It will much strengthen our cause if we bring out a minister of God, and we have chosen Mr. Burroughs who preached here ten years back. You saw him at the Sabbath tonight--his people also saw him in Wells at the same time, but no matter. Mr. Parris hates him for a better preacher. The Putnams hate him because they have injured him, and it is easy to hate the man who has it in his power to shame us. I hate him because he is an enemy to me and to all my works. Be thinking of aught you can say that will bring George Burroughs down. You, Mercy, should know much of his ways and weaknesses, for you were his servant once. That he was always kind to you need not trouble you now. I shall think, too, and we can talk about it later. There is no need to bring him in before the first of May. And now--be gone!"

The Circle, with much whispering, crowded through the doorway and the noise of them slowly faded in the night. John started to follow and then stopped on the threshold. He looked back and saw fear and loathing in the minister's face.

"Sam," he said, "did you ever read the works of our good and gracious king,

James the First?"

"I have read them."

"Did you read that he who sups with the Devil has need of a long spoon?"

"Amen!" muttered Parris, looking at the floor. "I had in my hand a long spoon once--but it did not save me."

John Horne laughed and walked out into the night. He walked aimlessly toward the tavern first, and then his eye caught a blur of whiteness too solid to be mist. The whiteness moved among the barberry bushes behind Captain Walcott's house, seemed to be waiting for something--for him.

"Master!"

In a few strides he had crossed the rough turf and stood face to face with Mary Walcott under the thorny twigs. The smell of last year's sour, orange berries mingled strangely with the sweetness of her hair.

"What do you want, wench?" he asked, looking down insolently, knowing well enough what she wanted. Now she would put her hand upon his sleeve, he knew, and lift her eyes at him. If only women would vary among themselves, would differ each from each--but they were all the same--all but one.

Mary put her hand on his sleeve and lifted her eyes.

"I called you because I have something to give you," she whispered slyly.

"Something I have never had before?" he sneered.

"Something you cannot have too much of--"

He laughed grimly, bending toward her.

There seemed to be only one way to destroy a woman's immortal soul, he thought; the old, vile way, and tonight he felt sick to death of it. With a man there are many ways. You can trick him into cursing his God or killing his brother; you can tempt him with the jangle of coins or the scarlet trappings of pride. Put a weapon in his hand, and he will use it--on himself. But with a woman it is all a matter of body upon body: of stripping the finery from the livid flesh spread in ugly disarray on the ground, of playing upon it the old, lewd music, of driving home the final cold and obscene thrust before you rise indifferent and leave her, abandoned forever to the dark.

Once he turned to look at the girl who crouched against the barberry clump, her brashness gone, her head bowed, and her teeth chattering behind slack lips. He reached his hand toward her. Out of his loosening fingers spiraled the pied coils of a little snake as he dropped it into her disordered bosom.

"This is your soul, Mary Walcott," he told her harshly. "Do you find it a pretty thing? I have had it out of your body here on the grass tonight, but I do not want it--I have too many others like it at home--so I give it back to you. Mind what will happen when you let it go again."

Affairs in Salem Village that April went forward as John Horne had planned they should. Governor Danforth and a train of learned and powerful men in wigs and scarlet robes sat in Salem Town House on the cases of Cloyse, the Procters, and Bridget Bishop. The Circle carried everything before them by their shrieking testimony, horrid gyrations, and wild disorder, and their story of the Black Sabbath they had witnessed. They badgered and abused Sarah Cloyse until she fainted. John Procter cursed at them and tried to save his Elizabeth whose child was quickening. Bridget Bishop said the girls' suffering was none of her work and she refused to concern herself with it.

Elizabeth Procter stopped the hearing when she answered Abigail Williams' charges by crying out earnestly, "Dear child, it is not so! There is another judgment, dear child!"

Yes, some day the Circle would have to face another judgment, and fear stirred in their hearts to be thus reminded of it. They quieted, but only for a moment. After all, their Master had said he would take care of his own. They began to howl and writhe again.

"There is the Black Man going to Goody Procter!"

"Look at Cloyse! The yellow bird is sucking between her fingers!"

"Who chokes me? It is Bridget Bishop!"

In the end, the accused were committed to Salem Gaol. The wise men shook their wigs and rode righteously back to Boston.

Thus things stood in the Village on an evening late in April, when Remember, after a hard day's work at the loom, settled her household for the night. Briony and the children had been in their beds for an hour, Remember had banked the fire and wound Jonathan's brass clock, and was heading for the stairway with a candle in her hand, when the wind blew open the door she had just finished barring. There stood John Horne in the uneven door frame, the night sky behind him. Remember held up the candlestick and drew back a little, toward her own sprawling shadow on the hewn wall.

"What do you want this time?" she asked faintly. She had not seen him since he had abandoned her that night on the hillside.

"What do you think I want? We shall not do any Sabbath-keeping tonight. Look outside!"

He drew back, into the darkness beyond the fall of candlelight, and gestured at the fields stretched under the white moon, sloping, shadowy.

"Do you know what moonlight is for, or why the April evenings are so long? The one is to kindle love in a man, and the other is to give him time to quench it in the sweetest well in the world. Will you come into the forest with me, Remember, or let me come into your house and blow the candle out?"

"I cannot, John. I cannot ever--for I know what you are."

But as she said it she wondered if she really did know. There he stood, muddy boots, homespun clothing and peaked hat, hands, hair and eyes--no different from any other man in Salem or any boy she had grown up with by Rowley Common. Tell him she knew him for the Devil, and he was likely to know her for a fool. She played for time.

She faltered, "My husband--"

He frowned, drew his brows together impatiently. "Your husband is in the tavern getting drunk with Ben Scarlett and clacking about the rare lads they were fifty years back."

"I did not mean that!" she cried. "Wherever he is, at home or abroad, drunk or sober, I am his true wife."

Even as she spoke the words she drew a swift strength out of them: the old strength that aids whoever follows an old custom, just as whoever defies one can stand in no strength but his own. She felt sure of herself and of what she must do. Salem Village should not have cause to stone her for an adulteress, no matter how hard her body ached for the sweet delight.

John Horne paced angrily up and down the kitchen, sullen, baffled. As he turned once by the hearth, he kicked the trivet into the embers and spat after it.

"A noble speech, Goodwife Winster! It was the same with Eve and with every married woman after. 'Oh la, I cannot do that!' they say. 'And I cannot do this!' they say--'because of my husband.' It is the oldest excuse and the easiest to make. Well, there is one Salem man who knows the answer to it."

He pulled his peaked hat down over one eye and started out the door. Remember ran after him and caught his arm.

"John! Please--! It is not an excuse. I--!"

He turned. "Then you will?"

"No. But I think I should like to. Only I cannot. It is true, what you said--that Jonathan is past loving. I am afraid I have too much liking for you. But as long as he lives I am his wife and I shall not disgrace his bed."

He looked her up and down. "I have heard harlots say the same thing," he said, "but they did not mean it. Do you?"

"Yes."

He stood still for a moment, then he said, "You have a great will--too great for your own good. When you are as old as Rebecca Nourse you will think of all the things you said no to and be sorry. Granite is a poor soil for the breeding of women. They grow up hard and thorny, and their spirits gnarl early like the apple trees, but there is a perverse sweetness in them, too--tart, like the best fruit, the fruit you eat to the core. Women and apples! The mellow ones you taste and throw away. Very well, Remember. You have said you will not have me while your husband lives. I take you at your word. I shall not bother you again--in his time."

He gave her a long look, then walked off into the night. Before she had time to shut the door after him, time to do more than set the quivering candle down and step forward, a dim, rhythmical shouting burst out in the lower field. She went to the doorway and looked toward Salem Village. She could see John striding between the stonewalls that cut off the cart track from the plowed ground. Beyond him, just where the road curved down to the alders by the brook, a weaving, confused mass of shadow came swaying forward. Three voices, lusty and uncertain, bawled drunkenly:

"Back and sides, go bare, go bare,
Foot and hand, go cold!
But belly, God send thee good ale enow--"

John and the shadows came together, and the singing stopped. She heard him laugh. The four men stood talking for a few moments, then John walked off toward the Village, and the singers, racking their throats again, staggered up the hill toward her. Jonathan walked in the middle, his ankles buckling under him and his bootsoles scuffling. He had his right arm around young Joseph Putnam's neck and his left arm around old Ben Scarlett's. Jonathan was drunk, and no two ways about it.

"Do ye remember Orchard Farm, Ben?" he demanded loudly. "All that hemlock swamp to drain? I thought to God we would never get all them roots out. But we did it!"

"Aye, we did it!" grunted Ben, heaving his old comrade over the doorsill.

"And my Mary! Do ye remember my Mary? There was a lass! No other woman like her ever in Essex, by God! Like throwin' yourself in a bed o' blossoms--!"

"Hold your tongue, man, your goodwife's listening," warned Joseph Putnam.

Joseph was not drunk, but he was merry. Ben, a little, wizened man, muttered through worn-down teeth. Remember held the door open so they could bring in their collapsing burden and ease him down on the settle.

Joseph threw back his head, shook the brown hair out of his eyes, and laughed. He was twenty-two years old, a husband, a father, and a man of property; a sure shot, too, with a queen's arm or blunderbuss. He had violently refused to help his half-brothers persecute the witches. Since the first hearing he kept a loaded gun always by him, and let it be known in the tavern that if anyone came to accuse him or his of witchcraft, he would afflict them with the spell of powder and ball. No one so troubled him.

"Put his feet up, Ben, and stretch him out. Easy, Jon. What's that? No, you do not want another drink. If you've a hide or a coverlet, Goodwife, put it over him. We've all made a gay night down yonder, and worried the deacon into prayer for the house. He'll get over it, likely, when he reckons up what's in the till. Jon will be all right tomorrow. I shall come by here early for him, for he's promised to go with me and Dan Andrew to close up Giles Corey's place and drive the stock away."

"Have you news of Giles?"

Remember had not been to the great hearing in the Town, but she knew its outcome.

"Aye. He is all broken down and talks of killing himself. His sons-in-law, Crosby and Parker, have turned against him, and the other two are from home. I talked with him in the gaol and told him his friends in the Village would take care of his property. God grant he comes back alive to claim it!"

Joseph took the quilt Remember had brought from the linen chest and covered Jonathan who had already begun to snore. Ben groaned, and straightened up from hauling off his old friend's boots.

"Could ye spare us a noggin o' kill-devil, Goodwife? It's a cold night out an' a long ways home."

Joseph interrupted him. "You've had enough, Ben. If I have to carry you home, who's to carry me? Come along."

Remember thanked them and barred the door after they had gone. Once again

the praise of jolly good ale and old was lifted on the sea wind blowing in from Massachusetts Bay. Its echoes died away slowly, leaving a great quietness in the night. She walked over to the settle and stood looking at her husband. A guilty fear she could not put into words set her heart to beating faster, and she spoke to him although she knew he was too sunken in sleep to hear her.

"I am glad you had a good time tonight, Jonathan," she said.

CHAPTER 14
The Riven Tree

THE Winsters left their house early the next day, in a morning of lowering skies and sultry air. Black, curdled-looking clouds moved along the horizon, and hot, unseasonable gusts stirred the new leaves that were just uncurling from gold into green. Briony waved good-bye to them from the doorway, and Neddy gamboled along the edge of the herb garden, snapping the crisp shoots of tansy between his thumb and forefinger, and singing a witless tune of his own that his elders had never heard before.

Jonathan had soused his grizzled head in three buckets of well water and swallowed a hair of the dog that bit him. He seemed now no worse for his night at the tavern, and neither did Joseph Putnam when he and Dan Andrew shouted from the road that they were ready and waiting. Remember intended to go to Salem Town to deliver a bolt of linen to Mary English, and she had its unwieldy bulk tied securely to Dapple's back just behind the saddle. Jonathan gave her a hand up and led the mare as far as the stonewall by the cart track where his friends waited, impatient to be about their business. He looked at the sky. He looked at his wife--not seeing her, seeing only the neat skirts and tidy hair of the female creature who kept his house and was therefore a charge upon him.

"Looks like a shower, but there's houses all along the way and friends as will give ye shelter."

"Yes. I know," she murmured, seeing him so plainly that it hurt: a kind, old man who had loved a girl before she, Remember, was born, and found her sweet as the spring flowers; a kind, old man who stood in the way of a strong, young one. She knew the threat, but she did not know how or when it might fall, and so she could not save him--except in the one way she must not take. Suddenly she reached out from the saddle and caught his rough head against her side.

Jonathan wrenched away and looked up at her in horror. Did she take herself for a courting maid? And in front of his neighbors! What ailed the woman? Her behavior was usually seemly enough. Perhaps she had only lost her balance.

"Was ye like to fall then?" he asked, narrowing his eyes.

"No. Good-bye, Jonathan."

"Good-bye, lass. Ye better stay the night in town if Mistress English asks ye. The weather's none so fair-looking, and Briony can feed us does she have to. Did ye take money of mine from the chest? Ye could, ye know."

"No. I'll have money enough when Mistress Mary pays me. Can I bring you anything?"

"Well, ye could stop by Gunsmith Gray's in Prison Lane and ask him--no--a woman has no wit for arms and ye'd forget what he told ye. Aye there, Dan, I'm coming. We must get on!"

He slapped Dapple's flank and tossed the reins to his wife. She rode through the gap in the wall, greeted Dan and Joseph, and turned toward Salem Village and the Town beyond it. She did not look back. Thunder rumbled to the leftward across Whipple's Hill. She passed the Training Ground and still the rain held off. Hannah Ingersoll stood at the side door of the tavern, wearing a new blue gown and cleaning a birch broom. Behind the parsonage, Elizabeth Parris' frail figure, milk pail in hand, moved slowly toward the cowshed. Parson's wife must miss Tituba's service if not her company, and little Betty still slept at Margaret Sewall's in the Town. She kept on down the slope, past the houses of the Holten boys and through the swamp at the west edge of Francis Nourse's land. The Nourse men were plowing. She could see their figures, black against the red and brown of the new-furrowed hillside. She could hear them calling to each other above the hoarser calling of the crows. Their mother might lie in gaol, but the earth demanded all their days of them if their children were not to go hungry in the next December. She rode across the Governor's Plain, a white heaven of apple trees in blossom--blossoms as sweet as a girl called Mary Winster had been thirty years ago. Dapple's hoofs rapped smartly on the wooden bridge as they crossed the head of Cow House River, disturbing her thoughts, but only for a moment.

Jonathan only talked of Mary when he was drunk, and she never talked of her young lover, Tom, but she thought of him always. She thought of him now as she looked over the plank ends at the gray tidewater swelling in, lifting up the dank streamers of eel grass. How much of that gray water Tom had had to drink! She could feel the salt, flooding pain of it in her own throat and chest.

Dapple trotted down the gravel track through the common land in the North Fields all bright with the gold and green of new grass. Suddenly the track turned into a street with elm trees and stately, gabled houses on either side. They were in the Town. Black clouds hung mistily over the farms behind

them, but to the eastward, beyond Salem, sunlight sparkled on the gray sea.

Meanwhile, her husband and his two friends had followed her on foot as far as the Village and stopped by the tavern to argue. Dan and Jonathan were all for starting the good work with a mug of ale, Joseph was against it. Then John Horne, the shoemaker, looked out from the low, malty room and beckoned to them. They went inside.

"To my reckoning, Deacon," said John, as Nat Ingersoll set out frothing mugs. "And one for yourself, too."

The five men drank together.

"What? No shoes a-mending today?" asked Jonathan, leaning familiarly toward the shoemaker. "Salem Village could go barefoot for all ye--"

"Other business I have," John shot back, and twisted the corner of his mouth upward.

Joseph drank his ale as if it were a brew of bitter herbs that left him like to retch. He had no use for John Horne, and he did not care who knew it.

"Business a man best tend to for himself," he muttered low, but John heard him.

"Aye," he said coldly. "There's no other kind." He flung a handful of coins on the table and walked out. In the doorway he turned.

"I shall see you, Goodman Winster," he said.

Thunder burst from the cloudbank over Whipple's Hill. John Horne walked away in the dark morning. The deacon filled their mugs again, but Joseph called for cold water, rinsed his mouth, and spat on the sanded floor.

"Let's go on to Giles'," he urged, "before the rain sets in."

So they started off again, tramping through the lowlands southwest of the Village, leaping from tuft to hummock in the brimming alder swamp, silenced by the soft noise of green things growing, a noise that filled the air all about them. And always the sky thickened, the low thunder moved in from the east. When they reached Giles Corey's house they stopped on the doorstone deciding what to do. Giles had turned his cattle out to forage in the mild April weather, but finding them would not be the only chore. Joseph took command.

"Dan," he said, "why do you not go inside and set the house to rights for Martha? Put away in the cellar the food that will keep and throw out the rest. See that the windows are tight and nothing left loose or flying, and anything of

much value hidden away. I'm off to John Parker's and Henry Crosby's." He motioned first left, then right at two farmhouse chimneys rising through the trees. "They've spoken against Giles and Martha in the Meeting House and he hates them for it, but they're next of kin, and we cannot do aught here unless we notify them it is by the true owner's wish. Jon, I could see a fair number of cows down the brook as we crossed over. If you could go now and start to round them up--"

Dan unbarred the front door between the empty windows. Joseph strode off toward John Parker's, and Jonathan started down through the brook meadow. He could feel the wet earth clinging like thousands of small tentacles to his boot soles, trying to pull him down. The earth that fed men's hunger hungered, too, for men, he thought. Hungry as a woman was this earth, a bad woman--or a loving one. Remember was neither. He minded her suddenly with kindness and pity. A good lass, but only half alive. She had been a cold bargain, but he was fit for nothing better. Smooth hair and unruffled skirts, he thought--oh the things she'd never know! He smiled gently to himself. As good in bed as the bolster. Well, the bolster was company enough for an old man like him. In Mary's day--He had not been able to get Mary out of his head since last night. And where was the wit in that now? He'd had the best of her and she was dead and cold.

"Hell and Death!" he swore irritably, hacking at an alder frond that swayed in his face, slapping at the side of a black and white cow. "Get to the house, bos'!"

The thunder spoke from the left so loudly that he could not ignore it. He stood still and lifted his head against the sky. The clouds had come out now from behind Whipple's Hill and swept across the Village. They moved nearer to him like a flood of black water through a broken weir, and lightning played in their depths, a blue and sulphurous lightning. A bolt leaped forth like a sword of vengeance and blasted the red-bud maple that shaded Anthony Needham's house across the brook. The tree, cloven to the heart, went down in a welter of crashing branches. It was a terrible sight, death thrusting in fire from the sky, and Jonathan shifted his feet uneasily. Suppose he had stood in the path of the tree's fall, his flesh shattered, his soul flung naked into space--and his last thoughts being of bed and women, his last words a curse! He decided to be on the safe side and try to think of his Maker. He waited for the friendly patter of the rain on the young grass, but it did not come. The clouds bubbled overhead like boiling ink and a wind that seemed to come from an oven hurled grit in his mouth and eyes. He heard a faint hail from Giles Corey's house behind him but he did not know what it meant.

The lightning leaped again, this time into a dwarf oak on his own side of the brook. He could hear the scream of the rending wood, feel the tang of brimstone in his nostrils. He tried to turn and run, but liquid stone seemed to pour through all his veins, holding him immobile and upright. He did not think of Mary and he did not think of God. He did not think at all. He stood silent, head up, shoulders stiff, and waited. The lightning leaped again.

Salem Town was not Salem Village; not a web of cart tracks threading out from a meeting house and a tavern. Its finest street was a mile long, and it had shops, a church with a great bell, and a two-storied Town House. The South River unwound itself along the foot of a gentle slope covered with gabled houses and gardens, and at the river edge jutted the wharves where the ships tied up to unload sugar and molasses from the Barbados and fine, foreign trappings from England and France and Spain, to make the Salem men proud of their houses and their women; wine, too, to loosen their tongues when boasting of the same. Not that the Salem men did much boasting, for Mr. Noyes would not have borne with it, but Mr. Noyes was not always by, and the Salem men were human. Down John Pilgrim's lane, seaward, beyond the wharves and shipyards, Remember guided Dapple.

Looking back, she noticed a group of men drawn together in eager talk by the pillory near the Court House, but they did not seem to be punishing anybody, heading, rather, for Beadle's tavern. Few people stirred in the streets, but shadows darted behind diamond-paned windows like pickerel in a pool. Something was afoot in the Town, something that nobody wanted to be mixed up in. And yet the air itself was soft and warm with the innocence of the season, season of young lambs frisking on the common land and crocuses and daffodils in the goodwives' gardens.

As she rode past Captain Sam Ingersoll's she could look straight in through the open windows crowding the narrow street. Captain Sam, nephew to Nat Ingersoll, shipmaster for Philip English, sat by the window writing laboriously. She could see the quill moving in his hand, hear him spell out the words as he put them down.

"For ye bald head--take som fier flies and som red wormes and blak snayles and som hune bees and dri them and then pound them to powder and mix them with milk or water--"

Now his wife, Sarah, came and waved over his shoulder at Remember.

She passed on, catching glimpses now and then of the gray sea between the houses, of the fort and fisheries on Winter Island. At the end of its own lane

the English house loomed up, all great gables and chimneys behind a hedge of box. She thought how Mary had looked, standing just behind the hedge to bid her farewell after her last visit here. White ruffles hid the throat below the calm face of the merchant's lady, and she had worn a gown of orange and blue changeable taffety. Her little feet in soft leather shoes moved lightly, used to carved stair treads and India carpets, high-boned feet that had never spread and flattened themselves following the plow over Salem farmland. Her father Hollingsworth, who owned the shipyards and tavern, had always had money, her husband Philip, son of a lord in Jersey Island, had more. "My neighbors," Mary had said, laughing, her delicate throat tilted backward, her sleek hair untousled by the wind in the elm trees, "say that I hold my head too high, but for that, I have never seen any reason to hang it down."

Eager to see her friend again, Remember jumped from Dapple's back and went around him to untie her bundle of linen. As she tugged at Jonathan's stout knots, somebody hailed her. In turning, she chanced to notice that Mary's front door hung open and half awry, and one of the great hinges seemed to be torn away.

"I see ye go by," panted Sarah Ingersoll, coming up with her hair a-straggle, her bodice half-unhooked, "and I thought ye might be taking home work to Mis' English. She's gone, ye might not a-heard. They took her for a witch!"

"They took--Mary English?"

"Yes. Sheriff Corwin come here last night." Sarah's words poured forth like rushing water. "She wouldn't leave her bed--all his men fouling up the house with torches and dungy boots--and so he had to come and read his summons to the bed curtains. But this morning--after breakfast--she went. They've got her upstairs at the Cat and Wheel, and they're trying to make her say she signed the Book. She wouldn't have done it ever--she's too proud--good, too. Oh, she went her way and I went mine, and there's some as would have her in gaol for that, but I wouldn't."

Sarah's voice died away. The two women looked at each other.

The door of the great house behind them flapped open and shut in the salt wind. Remember had noticed that one of the russet window hangings she herself had made was quite torn away.

"Devil's reaching higher and higher," muttered Sarah after a long moment. "First it was the black wench and the beggar woman. Then the farm wives. Now it's milady. Come home and sit a while with me, Goodwife. Sam's off for the wharves, and it's fearsome to be alone now, even o' daytimes. There's some tea he brought home last voyage, and I'll set out a pasty for us."

"I think--I will," said Remember slowly, reaching for the reins to lead Dapple back toward Salem.

Late in the afternoon she was sitting in Sarah Ingersoll's kitchen trying to make up her mind to start for home when someone knocked on the door.

"See who 'tis, Remember," called Sarah from the garden where she had gone to draw water.

Remember lifted the latch and swung back the panels opening into the front yard sweet with budding lilac, and as she did so, a tear-wet face brushed her own and went down, crying, on her bosom. It was Briony, shaken with wild sobbing, far beyond speech. Behind her stood Joseph Putnam, looking ten years older since morning. He did not speak. Briony cried harder, wet and wild-eyed and unrestrained, as children cry.

"What ails her, Joseph?" asked Remember fearfully.

Joseph cleared his throat and looked as if he wished he were somewhere else.

"It's your goodman," he told her. "He is no more, Remember."

All her muscles tightened. "How--?"

"This morning. In Giles' meadow. A bolt of lightning struck too near him. Cold and blue, we picked him up. A half hour he breathed, and Dr. Griggs came by on his way from Putnam's. He had all his nine physic books with him, but there's nothing in them says what to do for death."

"Did he know--or speak?"

"Moved once and said, 'My time is out!'"

Briony's sobs shuddered into silence. Remember could hear the wind rustling in the elm leaves and men's voices shouting hoarsely from the waterside. She sat down on the sill and put her head in her hands. Dimly she knew that Joseph and Sarah wanted to lift her up and make her swallow kill-devil, but Briony would not have it.

"No," she heard the girl say clearly, "let her be. It is a sorrow every woman must bear alone, and kill-devil will not help it when it comes."

And suddenly Remember found herself weeping, less for Jonathan and her own guilt in the horror of his going, than for Briony--for every gay, young, eager thing that must learn such sorry truths so soon.

CHAPTER 15
The Wolves of Evening

REMEMBER spent the first week of her widowhood girding up her spirit for the battle with John which she knew must come. He had said that he would not trouble her again in Jonathan's time, but Jonathan's time was out, and she had seen him buried on Orchard Farm with his wives and children. Joseph Putnam and his wife Elizabeth stayed with her that week, choosing the mourning gloves and rings she wished to give to the old man's friends at the tavern, and fetching Mr. Wise down from Ipswich to pray over the coffin because she would not call on Samuel Parris. Joseph took Jonathan's last will to prove in court. It was brief, written in the last December when the pox was raging: "All is for my wife." But the listing of that all, fastened to the will and set forth carefully in crabbed script, surprised her. She had expected to receive the house and farmland and whatever moneys were in the chest, with the accepted knowledge that Prudence and Tamar would be a charge upon her until they married, Neddy always. She had not known that ever since Briony had come to live with them Jonathan had been investing cannily in Stephen Malbon's trading voyages. Now two of the Malbon ships and half interest in a third belonged to her. As Salem Village saw it, she was a rich woman.

On the first night she knew of this she lay long awake, planning to take her money and her family and go--go to Boston or to England--anywhere out of this fog of evil that hung so thickly over the sloping valley of her home. But with the morning she knew that she could not escape. John Horne could be on Boston Common or London Bridge quicker than she could, and with less tedious travel. Whatever her destiny was, she meant to face it out on the Essex hillsides from which she had drawn her substance all her life, under which she expected to lie when the Lord called her.

At the end of that week the Putnams went back to their own house, and before Joseph left he arranged for John Willard, a farmer from Will's Hill, to help Remember with the cattle and the flax-sowing. Willard was no stranger to her; an ordinary, brown-faced, rough-clad farmer with a wife and three children at home, but when he rode into the yard on the first day of his hire, she shuddered as she looked at him. Had she not seen his face among the doomed in Sam Parris' pasture? But no! It could not be! Who would ever think to accuse John

Willard of witchcraft?

But strangely enough, Willard himself spoke of the witches as she set out a trencher for him and asked him to join their breakfast.

"Heard last night in tavern they be takin' more witches." He slopped milk on his porridge and dug into it heartily with a wooden spoon. "Two good wives o' Beverly and one from Amesbury way. Folk in their own towns get fearful on 'em, and bring 'em here to Parson's wenches, and they cry aye to it."

"Do you think they are really witches, Goodman Willard?"

"Aww--ww, what do I know?" He spoke with his mouth full. "Witches--girls as cry out on 'em, all are bad. Slow up spring plowing and Sabbath sermons. Hang 'em all! Hang the lot of 'em!" He mopped his trencher with a hunk of bread. "What'll ye have me do first, Goodwife? If ye mean to sow flax, it's time ye was about it. Sun's been warm on the fields for nigh two weeks since goodman turned 'em over. Do ye want I should begin it?"

"Do what you will," Remember answered him, "I am not myself."

But later in the day they went out to help him, she and the twins and Briony, and they walked the brown fields, sowing and shaking the soil over until the sun went down. When they gathered around the trestle table for the night meal, the children swallowed their meat and bread hastily without seeming to chew.

"You know," said Briony, shoving back the bench she sat on, "this is May Eve--the night we were going over to Elizabeth Putnam's to help her put that new quilt in the frame. All of us."

She smiled. The twins looked triumphant.

"All of us," said Tamar decidedly.

May Eve! The turn of the year across from Hallowmas! The day when old-fashioned folk who had been young in the godless days abroad remembered the may-pole and jack-in-the-green, and spoke of them a little sadly. A night when the Devil and his creatures walked the world with special powers. John would seek her tonight, Remember knew, and it would be better for her to face him here in the house than crossing the fields with the children.

"Briony," she said, "I am too tired from the flax sowing. Take the girls and Neddy and go. It is not far, and it will not be black dark for a long time yet, for the moon is waxing. If Elizabeth asks you, you may stay the night, and if not, Joseph will bring you home."

"But you? Will you be all right--alone?"

Everyone looked at the wainscot chair where Jonathan used to sit, looked quickly away again.

"Of course. Go before it gets any darker."

When the girls had gone off eagerly, Remember moved slowly about clearing the table. She did not fear for them, for she did not think the Devil would be lurking along the road to Putnams'. John Willard finished the rum she had set out for him, fastened his jerkin and prepared to depart, for it was in their agreement that he should go home to his family every night.

"I be back early, Goodwife," he said, starting through the door into the fragrance of the night.

"All right, John," she answered, looking up from the table. He had stopped, she noticed, stepped back a little. And no wonder, for John Horne thrust into the room, black and angry as a thunderhead with lightning leaping from it. He looked from the startled Willard to Remember, and back again.

"So! You are not long in finding yourself another man! Out of decency I stayed away the week. Decency is a new custom for me, and I cannot see that I profit by it."

"No," said Remember coldly. "The flax must be sown, and I may hire a man to sow it, I hope, since I have the money to pay him."

With a muttered curse the farmer hurtled through the open door. John Horne turned around and looked after him as if he were memorizing every detail of his body. Then, as Willard disappeared in the dusk, he looked at Remember.

"Who is he?"

"John Willard of Will's Hill."

"Thank you. I shall not forget that I took him alone with you. And he shall not forget it either--in the short time he shall have to remember."

"You cannot blame him for being here. I offered him money to help with the farm work that was beyond my strength. That is no reason for him to be--struck by lightning."

They faced each other squarely. His glance turned aside first.

"He will not be. I have other talents. But lightning is not a hard death. Your Jonathan died surely and quickly and hardly knew of it. Can you ask for more when your time is out?"

She stood watching him as a mouse watches the cat. He went on.

"But we will talk no more of that. Your heart does not grieve for him, so do not give me that lie. You are a widow, and I have come to offer you honorable marriage."

She had thought nothing he could say would startle her, but she had been wrong. She faltered.

"You mean--you would have the banns cried--in *church*? And stand before the magistrate?"

"I want you so much that I am willing to pay your own price. That is it, is it not?"

"And after--?"

"As you like. I will live in your way, if you wish it. I will drive pegs in shoe leather and plow your Salem rock heaps for you for the twenty-odd years that you will be a woman. It is not too high a price. Much of it will be very dull. Much of it, of course, will not."

His glance moved down every inch of her. She felt her blood beating as if her whole body were one great pulse. But this was not the same man who had come to her a month ago and wanted her in Tom Purchas' way. Nor was she the same woman who had made him what he called a harlot's offer. They moved like figures in an ancient dance, now toward each other, now apart. Would they stand hand-in-hand at the end of it?

"I will live in your way, if you wish it, but I shall try to convince you that you had rather live in mine. Past the fire pits there are still pools under the holm oak trees, and a finer hall than Philip English gave his tavern-keeper's daughter--"

"No, John. Not in your way! Not in mine either."

"Why not? Your men are gone. You are a lone woman, and that is a miserable thing." And then, kindling to anger, "Perhaps you had rather be taken by that lout who just crawled out of here! Oh I will have his blood for this, I swear it! He shall choke in this world and fry in the next! He shall know what it is to stand in the way of--"

"John! Listen--please! You killed my husband and that is enough! Let it stop there."

"I suppose because your husband left you a few shillings you think you are a rich woman who can say yes or no whenever she wishes to. Well, I am a rich man--rich and powerful. You shall see much of my power within the next month. You have heard of Mr. Cotton Mather, perhaps?"

"The great Boston parson?"

"So men call him. He sits in his study now, and he is writing this: 'The wolves of evening will be much abroad when we are near the evening of the world.' Do you know what he means?"

"No."

"You will learn. It is the evening of the world for Salem Village, and I shall loose the wolves of evening unless you stop me."

"By marrying you? But I shall never do that. I have done enough marrying."

"Oh I know you and your reasons! You think you can be true now to that corpse laid under the green sea. Perhaps you think to leave the door open at All Soul's and have his spectre come back to claim you. But you shall never have eyes to see spectres! You are made out of clay, you are, clay that no god ever breathed on, and there is no ichor to leap up in those slow veins of yours. John Willard may come to you at daybreak, smelling of the cowshed--"

"Get out," she said, "you and your wolves of evening!"

He drew back and bowed. "A later generation may sneer at me unscathed--but not yours. You shall want me back before I come."

He turned and went out into the night.

Not again, so long as the May month lasted, did Remember see him, nor did she see Mr. Mather's wolves--if they were like the shaggy, baying creatures usually called by that name. But such a storm of evil burst in Salem Village that she could well believe the evening of the world had come, for no pack of wild animals ravening out of the forest could have laid waste the countryside in a surer way. Half of Essex fell down in fits and accused the other half of bringing those fits on them with the aid of the Devil, and who could tell the innocent from the guilty was a wise man, so wise that he did not show himself that spring in Massachusetts. All over the county, children fell down in fits, comets coursed through the night sky, cattle turned mad, rushed headlong into the rivers, and were drowned. Sticks of firewood flew through the air when no one hurled them and dishes leaped from the shelves in the goodwives' kitchens. Sleepers were oppressed at night by heavy weights sitting on their chests, and goodmen going home late saw troops of spectres in the lanes and vaulting over the stonewalls. The only cure for this state of affairs was to seek out the witches who must be causing it, those traitors to humankind who had sworn to aid the Devil in his war on the seed of Adam and the Church of Christ, seek them out and bind them in the gaol houses.

Dozens of prisoners were brought in, dazed and protesting, and in chains, from all over the Colony; from Lynn, Marblehead, Charlestown, Ipswich, Beverly. In Andover they cried out loudest against Martha Carrier, a broad-browed woman with shining eyes and the supple figure of a young girl. It took a good deal of skillful questioning to get her children to say that their mother was a witch and had made them sign the Book, but after the eldest boy had been strung up by the heels until blood flowed from his nose and mouth, he admitted that it might be so. Remember went to the hearing and was surprised to hear the girls say that the Devil had promised Martha Carrier she should be Queen of Hell. She had thought he had other intentions.

George Jacobs, an old man and toothless, walking with two canes, shook out his long white hair when his servant, Sarah Churchill, accused him; thumped his canes on the floor and shouted in the court.

"If you can prove me guilty, I will lie under it! You tax me for a wizard! You might as well tax me for a buzzard! Burn me or hang me, I stand in the truth of Christ!"

But all his vehemence did not free him.

Salem Village had treated Parson George Burroughs shabbily enough when he preached among them, withholding his salary and then prosecuting him because he could not pay for his wife's funeral, but now they haled him back in irons from his house in Wells to answer the charges Ann Putnam and Abigail Williams brought against him. He was a wizard, they said, of great strength, even a conjuror, which is above wizards. He had killed three wives, two for himself and one for Mr. Lawson. He changed himself at will into a gray cat, covered kitchen floors with blood, and drove coveys of witches willy-nilly over the hillsides. His wives had appeared to Ann in their winding sheets, white like a white wall, turning blood-red when they faced their slayer. He had, they confided, stabbed them under their left arms and filled the wounds with sealing wax. Because the Devil gave him great strength, he could lift a cask of molasses by sticking his little finger in the bung-hole. When he blew a trumpet the witches assembled from all Essex and the Merrimack Country. Mr. Burroughs denied these charges with the firmness of a man and the mildness of a Christian, but the stories terrified all who heard them, and everybody felt safer with Mr. Burroughs in gaol.

Remember moved through the gatherings in the Town, listened to the gossip in the Village, and then went home to sit dully by the fireside, not even thinking, letting burdock and thistle grow up in the flax field. Most of the men and women of Essex, who were not in gaol or bearing witness against their neighbors, met this evening of the world just as she did. Life seemed to come

to a standstill. Ships lay idle at the wharves and weeds swarmed into furrows where nobody bothered to scatter the good seed, thinking they might not be alive to reap it. No man studied to ply his craft, and the merchants unshuttered their shops only for an hour or two at noonday. Nobody went abroad any more, except to the hearings or the taverns. Word came from Boston that Sarah Osborne had died there, and that Sarah Good's child, now completely witless, must be considered a charge upon the town.

Mary Walcott went with a difference about her. If she was part of a great plan, she seemed at the same time to have a purpose of her own, a purpose that any goodwife could name but none of them would. Take the day when she cried out on Nehemiah Abbott, the weaver from Ipswich, a slow, handsome man with great shoulders. In the midst of her fits, Mary caught his troubled eye, and perceived that for all his trouble he had noticed her rounded beauty and shining hair. She stopped drooling and thrashing and looked him boldly up and down. He was a man who might do her more good out of gaol than in, and one sharp night on the dank grass had shown her what form that good might take.

"No," she said, "it is not the one. The man who afflicts me has a wen between his eyebrows." Nehemiah had no wen. He went free.

It did not surprise Remember when the marshal came to take John Willard away. She had expected it, and she had no doubt of his ending. He was on his way to choke in this world and fry in the next, and she could not stop him.

And into the ugliest chaos that the Bay had ever seen, stepped a new governor, Sir William Phipps. His ships anchored in Boston Harbor on the fourteenth of the month, just at candlelighting time, and he went ashore at once to treat with the men of the Colony about its affairs. Remember heard the news from Stephen Malbon, whose ship came in on the same fair wind that brought the governor's. She and Stephen and Briony talked late on the night of his homecoming, first about Jonathan's death and the moneys owing between them, then of the witchcraft.

"Take your money and go," Stephen advised her, his kind brown eyes still filmed with unhappiness, lines sharp in his face which was not yet that of an old man. "We have not fared well here at home, you and I, and if you stay you may suffer worse."

"How you still miss Rose, Stephen! Cannot the fair women in London make you forget her?"

"Have you forgotten her brother? We do not forget the folk of that family once we have known them."

Briony watched her father gravely. Perhaps, sometime before he sailed away again, she would tell him how Mary Walcott had come there in the night and of the strange thoughts that had been in her head ever since, that would not go away. But she would have to wait until his mood lightened.

"No," answered Remember, "Rose so lovely, and Tom so much a man--and both of them gone. I wonder why you and I are left, Stephen."

He stood up, walked to the window, and stared out into the May night and the stirring green leaves of the elms that grew close to the house. When he faced them once more his eyes smiled and his chin lifted.

"We were talking of witches a while back. I tell you, I do not know what to think of it. Witchcraft is not a new thing to me. I have seen it in the lands abroad. But I never knew such an outbreak in one tiny farm village before. One might think the Devil himself had come to Salem--"

"Hush! Do not speak of the Devil or a horn will thrust through the doorway!"

"Just what I said to you before. Come away with me in the *Sea Wind*. She's a tight bark and does not pitch--in a smooth sea. You and Briony and Jonathan's children. I can buy a house in London or a little cottage that looks on Plymouth Hoe. Devon's a fair county. My people came from there and so did Jonathan's. I have a good trade in Plymouth."

"No. I have thought of it before, but I must stay here."

"Remember--" He did not look at her. "It is not that you are afraid I would--for I would not."

She laughed very low. "I know that you would always be a true friend, Stephen, but I belong here. I am not afraid. I have been, but I am not now. Take your *Sea Wind* out on the next voyage, and when you come back Salem will no doubt be at peace again. God will not give the Devil a free field for always."

"Neither will Governor Phipps. He's setting up a court of Oyer and Terminer."

"Now whatever is that?"

"'To hear and to end!' It is a special court to try the witches. Sir William does not really take much interest in it himself. He'd rather be fighting the Indians in Castine or fishing up Spanish treasure. But Mr. Mather advises him in religious matters, and he's after the witchcraft and wants to stamp it out. Anyway, the court is stocked with as many stern and upright men as could be found in the Colony, so I was told in Boston. It will try the witches and likely put them to death. Salem will have to clear its gaol house in some way."

He yawned. Briony jumped up.

"I have put Remember's best linen on your bed, Father, and here's a light for you."

He took the candlestick, thanking her with his eyes. He did not caress her. She made him think of drifting petals or milkweed floss blown high in the air by laughing children. He had felt the same way about Rose and put aside his fear--and he did not have her now.

Stephen stayed with them for two nights, and when he went back to Boston, Remember and Briony went with him and lodged in town for a week, spending their money in the shops and hearing Mr. Mather preach on the Sabbath. The *Sea Wind* sailed on the first of June, putting them ashore at Salem on her way down the coast. Before they could step off the dock, Sarah Ingersoll, passing with a basket full of fresh codfish, stopped to tell them the latest news.

"They took Philip English himself," she babbled, breathless, as always, "and they have him in gaol by Mary now--poor souls! And yesterday they had Captain John Alden up at the Meeting House in the Village. Couldn't prove him a witch, but said he lay with the squaws and had papooses. My! For a godly man how he swore at them!"

Remember knew Captain Alden, a stout fellow near seventy years old, whose father had been a great man in Plymouth in the early days. His arrest did not surprise her. Plymouth men had always hated John Horne and all his works.

"And tomorrow," ran on Sarah, "there's coming here a great court with Boston men in it to try the lot of them. Bridget Bishop first, they say. I do not think it will be to the good of the town, I can tell you that."

She followed them up the street to the carter's, still talking, nor was her talk but idle gossip. When Oyer and Terminer met the next day, the evening of the world had passed from Salem and true night settled down.

CHAPTER 16
Oyer and Terminer

IT TOOK Oyer and Terminer nine days to kill Bridget Bishop, besides a meeting of the General Court of Massachusetts held soberly in Boston. At this meeting the Colony revived an old law that King James had thought up when their grandfathers were young men in England. That law made witchcraft punishable by death. The special court set up in Salem and went about its business through a hot, bright week of June weather that turned the North Fields into a gold-white mass of buttercups and daisies. Little wild strawberries grew red and luscious in the tall grass between George Jacobs' house and Cow House River, and Remember sent Briony to pick them. She herself went into town every day, a little late, for she did not want to sit in the Town House, only to stand with the group that watched, fearful, in the street, to hear the news as it was passed outside from lip to lip.

At first Briony rebelled at this.

"But Remember," she cried hotly, standing in the dust where the Jacobs lane turned off and swinging her birch basket, her gold hair ruffled in the sea wind, "this is something that other Salem maids will tell their grandchildren of! Do I have to tell mine that when the Son of Man beat the Devil home to Hell for the last time, I could not be there to see it because you had sent me a-picking strawberries?"

"You'll get into no trouble picking strawberries," argued Remember, and after a while Briony stopped protesting. She went dutifully forth with her basket every day, but it was never very full when she brought it home. For among the shallow coves where the elms and pasture-land ran out into eel grass, Briony had come under a spell more ancient than witchcraft, worked with more sweetness, leading more surely to trouble. She had looked into a pair of eyes that had the amber shadows of river-water in them. She had fallen in love. The first time she saw young George Burroughs, the wizard's son, a year or two older than she was, he lay flung out on a ledge, his face pressed into the turf. After the Piscataqua marshal had burst into their home at Wells as they sat at dinner, and dragged his father off in irons for a conjuror, the son had made his way down through the eastward forests to be in Salem as near the gaol house as possible. He hung about the streets of the town like a dog at his master's

grave, hoping for a sight of his father, hoping vainly for his escape or acquittal, and he lived on scraps thrown out of Beadle's tavern or the occasional charity of a goodwife who pitied the gangling, great-eyed youngster. On the first day of Bridget's trial he walked out of town, along the winding water edge to the north, and flung himself down, helpless, desperate, groping for the man's strength that had not yet risen in him, trying to draw comfort with his body from the sun-warmed earth. And comfort had come to him there, but not from that source. There was nothing earthy in Briony Malbon's bubbling questions when she first bent over to touch his shoulder, in her quick sympathy and spit-fire wrath that such a good man--*his* father must be a good man--could be treated so wickedly. The second day she brought him a meat pasty and a pair of Jonathan's shoes, for the walk from Wells had scuffed holes in his, and she took the old ones away with her. "I'll get Goodman Horne to mend them for you," she said.

Young George knew about kissing girls in the hay meadows, but he felt no wish to touch Briony beyond now and then fingering a tendril of her hair or enjoying the eager grip of her hand. Trouble lay too heavy upon him. But he took daily from her the food and comforting he needed, and came, almost from the first moment, to lean on her as utterly as his father leaned on the goodness of God. Briony did not know much about kissing, but she knew there was a pattern in grown-up life, just as there was a pattern for playing house with poppets when you were little. You had a house with a man in it to father the children there and plow the fields or the sea to feed them. She recognized in George the man she wanted in her house. But she could wait for that. Once when she had looked at John Horne, as he stood in the kitchen by candlelight ogling after Remember, she had felt a little of that sweet, sick, wicked feeling that had risen in her at times ever since the night Mary Walcott had talked about men and kissing and her Master. That feeling could not be love--it might be witchcraft. It had nothing to do with the feeling that made you steal a pair of shoes for a man, that made you know you would marry him.

So Briony went on meeting George, listening to his frantic, half-coherent schemes to save his father; and Remember, unaware of this, took her daily way into town. Many pious citizens spoke against Bridget who had not been pious, but John Louder's word carried most weight. He swore that she came and sat on his bed at night so that he could not so much as turn in the bed.

"If I go to any man's bed by night 'twould scarce be to yours," cried Bridget with an oath, but Mr. Noyes silenced her.

Louder went on to tell a wonderful story, how he had seen the body of a monkey, with cock's feet and a man's face, who bade him sign the Book. John,

of course, refused, and the creature leaped over the apple trees in the orchard and disappeared, just as Bridget Bishop came stepping under the boughs that hung heavy with ripe, red fruit. Susannah Sheldon said the accused had killed four wives, two for Foster and one for Trask--Susannah did forget the other--and that she used to walk the fields by night with a streaked snake looped over her shoulder feeding on her. After this deposition Oyer and Terminer did not need any further testimony. These wise men of Massachusetts, one and all, from cruel, craggy Judge Stoughton to honest Judge Sewall, pious and appalled, gave it as their honest opinion that for the good of Massachusetts and the Soul of Man, Bridget Bishop should be hanged, and Bridget, sullen and snarling, was unable to offer them any good reason against it.

So they hanged her.

They hanged her to a willow gibbet on a low hill west of Salem Town in mid-afternoon of a sultry day. The low hill was only the spur of a great, bare granite ledge that lifted high over Salem, looking to the sea before it and the farms behind. The spur was part creviced ledge, too, part pasture-land and juniper, but springs welled up at the edge of it, making boggy patches where a row of willows grew, and water seeped away in the grass, all down the uneven slope to the North River. A great assembly, gathered from all over the Colony, stood around on the rocks and under the trees, hushed, horrified, half-fearful that the Devil would appear in flame to catch up his creature at the last minute, half-exultant at this triumph of Light over Darkness. Thunderheads piled up, black and livid, behind the crags, and lightning shivered across them in waves, but no rain fell--indeed, Salem parched all that month, as if God had turned his back on it and dried up the very springs of water; or perhaps some source of destroying heat dwelt unsuspected in the town itself.

Just as the hangman slipped the noose over Bridget's taut neck, Remember, who watched from the shelter of a scrub oak well back in the crowd, realized that John Horne stood beside her. Both of them forgot Bridget.

"I told you that you would want me back," he said very low. "Have you?"

A gusty wind swept over the hillside, ruffling his hair, blowing dust in his eyes. Never had he seemed more like a man, more of the earth and its people.

"You know I have," she said.

They stood, the two of them, all alone, with the utter loneliness of chaos at their backs and the blindness of a mist before--but only for a moment. A sharp elbow dug into her ribs, and she turned, startled, to find Mary Walcott standing at her shoulder. Mary was dressed in scarlet, like Bridget Bishop, like the Whore of Babylon. Her bold eyes went from Remember to John and there was

a world of knowing in them. John drew his brows together and stared coldly back at the girl. Mary flicked her long lashes and turned away with one appraising glance that Remember could feel cutting through her to her bones.

Then the crowd around them began to shout and jeer and groan. She looked up and saw Bridget swing kicking in the air. She put her hand over her eyes and half turned toward John. He drew her close and she crouched against him, feeling the even rhythm that rose and fell in his chest. The noise all around her ebbed and faded, drew farther and farther away. She could feel only the throb of his heartbeat, feel nothing but the tightness of his arm through its rough woolen sleeve. Then she heard nothing, felt nothing.

Finally his voice sounded in her ears again, and her wits groped their way back from the strange void where she had lost them.

"You can look now. It is all over."

She lifted her head, pulled away from him, rubbed her blurred eyes. Lightning still flashed behind the ledges, but the men and women who had gathered to see Bridget hanged stood on the trampled hillside no longer, and the rope dangled free from the willow arm.

"Where is--Bridget? Where is everybody?"

"Everybody has gone about his business--except the witch, and she is lying in the crevice over there."

He pointed, and Remember could see a patch of red-striped silk caught in a cleft of the rock, a few lumps of sod thrown carelessly upon it. She stood alone with him upon the place of death.

"She was not a witch, John. You know she was not a witch," she quavered.

He drew her to him.

"No, she was not. She was only a gay old woman with a sharp tongue."

"And all those stories in the Town House were lies. Why did people tell them?"

"Partly because they hated her--for one reason or another. Partly because they are all a-twinge with terror that Satan is in town. All the old stories of witchcraft they ever heard come bubbling over their lips like water over the turf lip of the spring yonder. They are not to blame. I am--and you, a little."

"Will you go on with it? Will there be others?"

"There will be others. The Son of Man dies hard, but he shall die."

He looked at her soberly. A salt east wind poured through the willow hedge, tossing up the pale undersides of the long leaves. Down in Salem, First Church bell began to ring. Nicholas Noyes had announced that he would hold special prayers to praise God and Oyer and Terminer for the destruction of a witch.

She looked up at John's face bent above her, sharp against the soft blue of sky. He spoke again, very low.

"I still want you--Remember--in Tom Purchas' way."

She was a lost woman, she decided, and her feet took hold on Hell, but she would dig in her toes and try to hold back in the going down.

"If you want me in Tom's way," she said, "then you must court me like that. But the word is going around the taverns that you promised Martha Carrier she could be Queen of Hell."

He scowled.

"That is a lie. Cotton Mather made it up. He called her a 'rampant hag,' and a fit mate for me. I do not want a rampant hag. I want--"

"What is Cotton Mather to you?"

"Oh, men will be wanting the answer to that two hundred years from now. He will have more friends dead than he ever had living. But I tell you, Cotton Mather is nothing to me. He makes a loud noise and works the ink horn hard, but he is small fry I do not bother with. I am sure of Cotton Mather."

"You bother with Mr. Parris, and Mr. Mather is more famous."

"What do you know of me and Mr. Parris?"

"You stand together in the Town House, close as brothers. And I have seen you about his house by night."

"I will be about his house by night no longer. I will be about yours."

"That was not Tom's way of courting."

"It was not? Tell me his way. Perhaps I shall not like it as well as I thought to."

"He came to see me when I wished it. Not at other times."

"Perhaps that is why he never enjoyed you."

"How do you know he never--?"

"It is written in your face that no man ever has."

She had no answer for him. A shower of stones rattled in the crevice a few

yards off, as Bridget's body settled in the open grave where those who cut her down had righteously flung it.

"Do not tremble," he told her almost gently, "I would not choose to court you beside a corpse we have helped to kill between us, but love and death are not so far apart. Both demand the surrender of that essential core which you think is yourself."

"I shall not surrender anything," she answered stubbornly, close to tears, looking toward the hills which God's Word had said would give her strength, finding none there. John had greater help from the Word than she, for he quoted it piously, reaching for her arm.

"'He who keepeth his life shall lose it,'" he said, and his glance shone out suddenly, merry and clear. "Come down to Beadle's Tavern with me, for Sam Parris will be there after prayers, and I want a word with him."

Together they picked their way down the hillside. Remember, looking once at the rough turf, noticed the tracks of the cart that had carried Bridget up to death. John went on talking, and as she listened to him she stumbled, her muscles going out of control in her terror.

"I am a bachelor," he was saying, "and the customs of Salem do not favor bachelors about, as it makes for lewdness. I should have me a wife, lest I bring on your sinless community the stain of fornication--lest I endanger the pure maids of the Circle with my lustiness. And as for you--I am sure that the deacons will agree that a fair-faced widow of property must wed again and quickly, lest she be tempted to unseemly behavior. Yes, I am sure all Salem, Town and Village, will agree with me that it is for the best."

He held his arm tight about her to keep her from falling.

"Come along. I want to see Parris about crying our banns in the Meeting House on the Sabbath."

Neither of them saw Mary Walcott standing under a locust tree and watching. As they passed below her, she dropped the scarlet across her bosom, laying bare all the white roundness of it. A little snake, hidden in the folds of the bodice, fell down and writhed, hissing, away through the grass.

"Banns!" she sneered into the low boughs that drooped around her. "Well, I've a joy for each of those two!"

She turned her eyes from the pair who had reached the first straggling houses of Salem, looked down at her own body, then after the ripples in the grass that showed the way the snake had taken.

"He told me to mind what would happen when I let it go again," she whispered gloatingly, "and there it goes--to work *her* ruin." She flicked a serpent scale from the hollow between her breasts. "And to leave me the sweeter--for *him*!"

CHAPTER 17
The Dust Comes Home

REVEREND Samuel Parris duly read from his pulpit the banns of Remember Winster, widow, and John Horne, single man, for the three successive Sabbaths required by the law of Massachusetts. All was not well with Mr. Parris in these days. When he had signed the shoemaker's book back in the winter, he believed that the work ahead of him would be ultimately pleasing to the Lord and yield him a tidy profit in the meantime. Now he did not feel quite so sure. When he stood with his inexorable partner before the Circle to instruct them for their next performance, he could hardly keep himself from uttering a prayer. When he sat with the little cabal of justices and ministers planning their next moves to coincide with those the girls would make, his hand crept toward the mug of kill-devil, his soul cried out for strength, not having enough of its own. And no matter how much he complained of it, no matter how often Elizabeth strewed the dust of dead rose petals about the house, the harsh, smoky scent of brimstone tingled constantly in his nostrils.

Nobody in the church paid much attention to the notice except Mary Walcott, who dropped her long lashes demurely. Nobody paid much attention to anything except the relentless work of Oyer and Terminer, for the great court now heard, deliberated on, and condemned to death five more witches, including Rebecca Nourse. Gossip had it that Governor Phipps felt uneasy over her sentence and wished to reprieve her, saying he feared lest they should pollute with blood the land wherein they dwelt, but Cotton Mather talked him out of it, and the next Sabbath Nicholas Noyes had Rebecca marched in chains down the broad aisle of his church and excommunicated her before the congregation. As he formally handed over her soul to the Devil, John Horne stood by with his arms folded. He did not tell Remember about it when he sat at her feet that night, but he gave her a bloodstone brooch that he never could have bought in the shops of Salem.

It was his custom now to spend the hot yellow twilights sitting with her on the grassy strip by the herb garden. He did not speak of the witches and he did not make love, but he let her know in a hundred ways that he found her desirable, and he tried to amuse her with tales of far times and strange ports he knew about, for he seemed to have been everywhere. Sometimes he sang, a merry

hunting ballad or a plaintive love tune, and Prudence and Tamar, fascinated, crept up to listen, munching on the sweetmeats he brought them. And a little apart, where the fireflies dipped and circled under the chestnut trees, Briony sat with George Burroughs, still abetting him in his futile plans to aid his father.

The wizard's son was not the lover Remember would have chosen for the girl, but she could recognize that he had no harm in him, only innocence and trouble, so she let him come. She could not understand the way of Briony's growing-up, for it was not like hers at all. Her love for Tom had been as sweetly wicked as a stolen kiss under the junipers in the spring dusk, and at the same time as good and honest and everyday as a loaf of new bread or clean linen drying on the grass. But for Briony with George there was only the new bread and clean linen--the simple, straightforward liking of a child--and no stirrings of sinful delight. Yet, she had once said a frightening thing, all the more frightening because of the innocent way she said it.

Once in Salem when they had gone there to carry a sack of green peas to Sarah Ingersoll and gather what gossip they could, coming away from Sarah's house they had seen John Horne striding across Prison Lane as they passed the head of it. He walked with his head flung back and he did not see them, but Briony's eyes followed him till he turned out of sight behind a clump of lilacs. And she had cried out then, like a child who comes on an adder in a blueberry bush and thinks it is a pretty thing, "Oh Remember! When I see a man so good to look at--like John is--it makes me feel good inside!"

"And do you not feel good inside when you look at George?" Remember had asked, feeling her heart quicken with swift terror.

"Why, no," replied Briony, puzzled.

"But you say you love George and mean to marry him."

"But that is not the same. Loving and marrying is a thing that God approves of, but I am not so sure he approves of feeling good inside. Oh, I want God to approve of me--and I would not think of John, for I know he likes you--but when I see a man so good to look at, I think I understand Mary Walcott--"

Remember did not want Briony to understand Mary Walcott. But the tides would rise and the thin moons full, and the rosebuds blow wide open, and she could not stop them--or Briony. Let her see all she would of George. Perhaps in time she would find him good to look at, as well as worth stealing shoes for.

One sultry night just past the middle of July, John did not come to her, and Remember, too restless to sit still, left the children drinking cold milk in the kitchen and stepped down to speak with Hannah Ingersoll. In all the Village

she did not see one lighted window, and as she neared the darkened tavern she met the old couple just leaving it locked behind them, Hannah clinging to Nat's arm.

"Oh, Remember! We did speak of you, but we thought you would be with Goodman Horne. Will you go with us?"

"Where are you going?"

"Over to Nourse's. Francis and the boys have gone to bring the body home."

"The--body?"

Remember, groping down the road beside them, could hear Hannah sob in the twilight.

"Perhaps she does not know," said Nat. Then he cleared his throat. "They hanged Rebecca this afternoon."

"They--hanged--Rebecca?"

"Yes. Her and four others. Sarah Good, too. Take my other arm, Goodwife. The road is rocky here."

Remember thought how Bridget Bishop had looked, kicking in the air, battered between the rocks with clods of earth thrown on her striped skirt. Silently the three turned into a cart track that wound up the slope of Francis' west field. They crossed the brook half-choked in alders and came to a little knoll crested with hemlock trees. Lanthorns shone beneath the thick boughs and she could hear a scraping sound, low, gruff voices, and the sobbing of women.

Nat stopped. "Francis--!" he called uncertainly.

"Who wants Francis?" asked a rough voice as a bulky shape moved toward them through the hemlocks. The shape turned into John Tarbell.

"Oh--it's you, Nat. He's up at the house--with her. We're digging of a grave."

Will Russell, married to another Nourse girl, poked his blunt, honest face toward them, sighing heavily.

"Let it be, John. It's deep, and Mother Nourse is but a little woman," he said, taking his spade and John's and leaning them against a tree trunk.

Remember and the Ingersolls joined the group of neighbors who huddled under the shadowy boughs, wordless in their pity and terror, to wait the coming of the dead. A cricket sounded in the meadow grass and a wind heavy with unfallen rain stirred the swamp maples beyond it. The starless dark pressed down and shut them in, as if they, too, were already underground, safe

from the malice of Salem whose church bell rang now, thin and far away, safe forever from all the malice of man.

One small burning piece of candlewood was all the light the Nourses dared carry when they finally came, stumbling down the field, first Francis, his gray head bowed, his steady eyes hidden, his shoulders, which were broad enough to bear the troubles of the whole colony, hunched sadly forward. Behind him his four sons and a son-in-law, Tom Preston, gently bore a fresh-cut pine plank with a cloak thrown over it. The cloak heaved pitifully upward in the middle. Their women followed, supporting among them Sarah, the maiden daughter, who could hardly go by herself. For Sarah knew better than anyone else what lay under the cloak. It was she who had taken the naked body of her mother when her brothers brought it home, blue with bruises, stained with filth, the wrinkled neck raw where the rope had cut it, taken it and washed it and dressed it in seemly black.

Elizabeth Porter, standing beside Remember, whispered in her ear, tears running down her comely face.

"She was no more a witch than I am. At the trial there were those who saw Goody Bibber stick pins in herself and say the witch did it. Two of the girls they sent out for lying, and Mr. Willard of the South Church in Boston does not hold with it, nor does old Mr. Mather, for all his fine son, Cotton--I heard he said was there not a God in Boston that men should go to the Devil in Salem. Oh I cannot think what ails my brother Hathorne to carry it forward so!"

As her voice died, Remember could hear Joseph Putnam telling Nat what had gone on at the gibbet.

"Took Sarah Good first. Parson Noyes followed her to gallows' foot and kept nagging at her to say she was a witch. But Sarah put him down, she did. She said, 'You are a liar. I am no more a witch than you are a wizard, and if you take away my life God will give you blood to drink.' Then they hanged her and she went out hard. Goody How's blind husband was there, and he prayed--for the hangman. Goody Martin cursed. Then--this one--"

His voice broke. He had loved his old neighbor ever since their first meeting, when she, a gay, strong woman, had befriended him, a little boy lost three fields from home. In a moment he picked up the story again where he could bear to tell it.

"After 'twas over, we waited behind the high ledge until night came and we dared to go down amongst the rocks where they'd left her lying. And we brought her home along the woods where no one could see and stop us--no

court, no prying parson--"

"Hush," whispered Remember.

For Rebecca's sons were lowering her gently into the land she had loved, and worked on, and had her being from, and her husband stood beside them, silent, there being nothing more he could do for the pretty girl from Yarmouth he had married fifty years ago. Now Mr. Wise, the tall, kindly minister from Ipswich who declared openly there was never a witch in Salem and fought Oyer and Terminer fearlessly, as he would fight any evil thing, stood forth in his Sabbath coat and called for God's peace upon them, said that they had come there to bury a good woman. He prayed for those who had loved her, who could only stand by and see her cruelly destroyed. He said her excommunication was a wicked error and would not stand before Christ. He prayed for those who had slaughtered her, but he asked that God give them justice rather than mercy when their time was out. And finally he prayed for the dead.

"The dust comes home," he said, "into its own land where its children will lie, but the soul is at peace with God who made it."

Remember felt a touch on her arm, and she knew it was not Elizabeth Porter's. She turned. John Horne stood beside her under the dark trees, the lanthorn light showing an unutterable sadness on his face. She shrank from him as if he were a flame that burned her.

"I do not blame you," he muttered. "I am sorry for this. But it had to be. The Son of Man dies so very hard. If it is any comfort to you, I swear that Nicholas Noyes shall go out choking in his own blood, and the ways of the others shall not be easy."

They stood a little apart from the mourners.

"What matter how Nicholas Noyes die," she asked bitterly, "so long as you are left alive?"

He shrugged. "Yes. My death is often rumored but never proven. It is my doom to wander and work ruin. I am not privileged like the dust."

"The dust comes home," repeated Mr. Wise, flinging a handful of earth into the grave.

Words she could not account for, words wiser than she, rose to Remembers lips. "When trouble comes--then we all want to go home," she said.

The lanthorn threw the shadow of a swaying branch across his somber face.

"I know. But even the Devil must follow his doom, Remember."

With a sudden gust of wind the black sky let down the rain, and long boughs dripped on the new grave, on the bent heads of those who would, in their time, go home, and on the one among them who never could.

CHAPTER 18
The Cup Shall Pass

THE NIGHT before they hanged Parson Burroughs the weather turned cold and raw. Remember fastened the casements and built a little fire on the kitchen hearth to warm her three companions, John, smoking his pipe somberly in a corner; George, hunched over the table; and Briony, who tripped back and forth, shaking her finger and scolding the other two.

"I never did see two men with so little spirit!" she cried, flinging out her slim hands, her usually sweet voice edged with sharpness. "Why do you not go to town and break the gaol open and bring him away tonight--while you can? Joseph Putnam would help you. So would Israel Porter and the Nourse boys. I would take Jonathan's blunderbuss and go myself--save that it knocked me down the only time I ever fired it--"

"Wench," sighed John, with an air of fatherly reproof, "you talk not as maids should talk."

"I do not care how maids should talk. Tomorrow they are going to hang George's father--and you are going to let them!"

George stood up, his face turned so they could not see it, and stumbled through the door into the herb garden. With a quick cry of penitence and sympathy, Briony ran after him. Remember stepped away from the gay crackle of kindling wood and went to stand beside John.

"John! You will not stop it?"

"Not that, nor the tide in the South River. Not even for you, Remember. It would be against the very nature of me. You have come near to blasting me forever, but I shall still hold out against you."

"*I*? To blasting *you*?"

"I have never been honest with a woman before. And because of this honesty my hand shakes when it should be steady. I must drive myself in evil courses when I should leap and rejoice in them. Your goodness is a corruption in me. My Great Work does not go well in Salem, and I fear that you are the cause of it. You have destroyed me forever with the utter New Englandness of you."

"New Englandness? You mean our prayers and our piety?"

"No. I mean the wild rose leading on to the granite ledge it grows from, and when you bruise yourself on the rock you are comforted by the sweetness of the rose and drawn on again--so the ledge can give you a crueler bruise. There was a sea-woman once who turned men into hogs rooting acorns, but there is more pride and dignity in hogs than in what you have left of me."

He got up to pace the floor, and in the pause after his words a wind talking of fall stirred in the eaves and chimney.

"I shall fail in Salem," he went on more thoughtfully, "and not all because of this foolish love of mine. I shall be worsted in the end, because of the native strength and goodness of its people. I could frighten them, unnerve them, drive them almost to madness, make them hang one another from the willow trees--for a season. I could not corrupt them utterly. When Bridget Bishop died no one protested, for she had not a good name among you. But when they murdered Goodwife Nourse whom they knew to be godly, their own excesses confounded them. Now, slowly rising, I can feel their good return, the good of the open fields and the sunlight--that I love in you--the honest wish to do no harm unto his neighbor that the Son of Man has had in his heart ever since God created him. This it is that will have the better of me--in course."

"In time to save George Burroughs?"

"Not George Burroughs, Remember."

That afternoon at the gallows burned in Remember's mind for years afterward, a nightmare set between scorched pasture-land and brassy sky. She stood on a ledge at the left of the crowd, John Horne tall above her, Briony hardly reaching to her shoulder on the other side. Beyond Briony waited George, every muscle tense as if he were stretched on the rack, his eyes fixed unchanging on the awful scenes before them. Mr. Wise of the church in Ipswich kept his arm around the boy's shoulders. He had overtaken them on their way to town through the North Fields, and got down from his horse to walk beside Remember, speaking now and then of Rebecca Nourse's going and the wickedness of it. As he stood with them now, she felt suddenly closer to him than she could ever be to John. He and she stood for the Son of Man. John was *her* lover, but *their* enemy. Mr. Wise had fought especially hard to save the Procters, and Elizabeth had a month's reprieve until her child could be born, but John would hang today. Remember's eyes met the minister's for a long moment, but she could not read the deep look in his, and she did not know what her own look might be saying to him. Then the gabbling crowd around them quieted down, and the death cart lumbered up the slope, carrying

the five accused.

One by one, then, they stepped up the ladder, to swing out, struggling, on the rope's end; discolored, writhing, gasping masses of flesh that had once gone upright with all the awful grandeur of a man. John Willard passed in silence, but it seemed to Remember that even when they cut him down, his dead eyeballs turned reproach upon her. "If I ever live again," they seemed to say, "I shall know better than to sow flax for a pretty widow-woman--lest the Devil love her."

John Procter pleaded manfully for his life and asked Mr. Noyes to pray with him. Mr. Noyes refused, and even as he did it, the salt taste of blood that had bothered him ever since Sarah Good's execution came on his mouth. He had been to see Dr. Griggs about it, and Dr. Griggs had examined him carefully and said it was only due to a small vein breaking in the throat. He did not give his whole opinion--that when a small vein rotted and split itself, it boded no good for greater veins within the doomed body. But if Mr. Noyes would not pray with John Procter, he went out with prayer nevertheless, for Mr. Wise pronounced it, and there were many scattered through the crowd who cheered him.

Martha Carrier, the rampant hag, died with much of God's favor in her going, for her neck snapped at the drop, and she never thrashed and tore at the rope with frantic hands as old George Jacobs did, yanking out handfuls of his own white hair before the noose could strangle him. While they were cutting down the old man's distorted body and stripping the clothes from it, Remember looked into the faces of the men and women around her. She could see weariness and revulsion there--and the uneasy stirrings of doubt. John stood sober, bare-headed, unmarked in their midst, accepted on all sides as a man of Salem. As he turned to her, pressing her shoulder, looking into her face, she noticed that Mary Walcott had edged near to them. Mary stared long at John, and her eyes said, "Come to me." She stared at Remember, and her eyes said, "What can he see in you?" She looked back at John again and hummed an old air under her breath.

"My Johnny was a shoemaker,
Oh how he did love me--"

"Make way," shrilled the marshal, "make way for Mr. Mather!"

The great Boston parson rode up the hill on a white horse, a pack of books bound to his saddle, a horn writing flask hung at his waist, slapping against his breeches. He rode so close to Remember that she could see his sharp, shallow eyes and bits of lint caught in his curling wig.

"Get to the side, knave, and give me passage," rumbled the pompous young minister, trying to guide his horse.

"Have ye come for the hangings, Mr. Mather?" asked John, who had stepped forward, barring his way.

"And what business is it of yours, I ask?"

"Many here say that it is the Devil's business."

"Who says this, and what do you know of the Devil?" The lobes of the minister's ears twitched at the lower edge of his wig.

"I know that he can blast the babe in the womb, Mr. Mather."

Cotton Mather rode on to the gallows and forgot the encounter, but he remembered it the next March when his son was born half-formed.

Reverend George Burroughs pulled his stocky body up the ladder. The noose lay loosely on his homespun collar. He turned untroubled eyes on the crowd and saw his son's face lifted up in the midst of it. He prayed earnestly, without a tremor of fear.

"Almighty God, have mercy on the souls of all of us here in Salem. Upon those who perish, and upon those who take their lives away. Forgive them, for they do it in Thy Name. Give of Thy Glory always to this City and this Colony. And raise the golden candlesticks that are Thy Churches abroad in the wilderness. For men will go abroad there, and wherever they go, they will need Thy Hand in their labors, and the Light of Thy Face upon them. Nor have I need to speak of the innocence of those who die here. It is already known in Heaven--"

A gray mist of cloud moved across the brassy sun and a little wind rustled in the willow leaves. A shower of them, already yellowed for fall, loosened and drifted down like a rain of gold around Mr. Burroughs. Somewhere in the crowd a gruff, tense voice burst, bull-like, into the prayer.

"No wizard'd pray like that! Parson's innocent! Cut him down!"

Assembled Essex began to seethe like troubled waters, everybody talking at once. Some shouted for a new trial. Others cried for the hangman to be on with his labors. The gray cloud darkened the whole day and the wind died. Hope lighted young George's face. But Mr. Mather urged his great white horse to the gallows foot, and heaved himself passionately upward in the stirrups.

"Brethren," he shrieked, "I say unto you that George Burroughs is no true minister of God! I say unto you that the Devil has the power to appear among

you as an Angel of Light, and thereby confound your reason on its throne and endanger your immortal souls!"

Reluctantly the murmuring died away. Mr. Mather preached furiously on. Mr. Burroughs stood silent on the ladder above him, a yellow leaf sticking to the crest of his black hair.

"We are settled in the Devil's Territories," went on the young minister, "and we must therefore expect him to rise up on every side. He has made us like a troubled sea, and the mire and mud now begin to heave up apace!"

Oh, Mr. Mather, thought Remember, you talk so truly. If only you knew the Devil when you saw him!

Mr. Mather pointed dramatically upward. "That man there is a Dog of Hell, and I charge ye that ye strike him here and now with death, lest he reach out from the very gallows with unseen talons to tear the souls from your bodies!"

The white horse careened a little, and the minister, panting, reined him to one side. The hangman drew slowly on the noose and no one cried out to stop him.

Mr. Wise tightened his arm like a brace of iron around the boy sagging against him, his eyes fixed on the horror in the air.

"The cup shall pass," he said, his voice deep and slow with emotion. "Believe me, my son, and believe God--the cup shall pass."

CHAPTER 19
In Salem Gaol

WHEN young George Burroughs turned away from his father's body lying in the crevice, he spoke no word; moved slowly and jerkily like a jointed doll of wood. Mr. Wise helped him into the saddle of his own horse and turned to lead it down the lane after the scattering crowd.

"I will take care of the lad," he told Remember and anxious-eyed Briony. "I will take him back with me to Ipswich and pray with him until his heart is whole again. I have land there that my own sons do not need, and his manhood shall be provided for. I shall bring him to see you again--when he has the wish for it."

Remember watched them go, the boy unseeing, hunched over the saddle, the good parson leading the animal patiently between the bog holes, his gray hair blowing in the wind. Then she looked up at John who had spoken no word since he jeered at Mr. Mather.

"And I suppose you are still following your doom?" she asked him, blank, aghast, drained of grief and anger.

"I am."

"But who doomed you? God would not design such a wicked fate even for--"

"Perhaps God, too, has His doom. Perhaps He is part of a pattern."

Her imagination stopped at that, like a horse at a hedge too high for it to leap. She groped for words.

"But if God is part of a pattern *He* did not make--a pattern for Himself, and for you, and all--who did make it?"

"Perhaps the Son of Man."

"You mean--*that Man created God*?"

"Perhaps."

She turned away from him, speechless, caught Briony's arm and walked down the hill with her. He did not follow them. She looked back once and saw him standing under the willow trees, his head bent, looking down into the shallow

ravine where the bodies of the five witches lay. Behind him the rope that had choked them hung limply down.

"All Salem is mad," sighed Briony, "even Goodman Horne. Poor George!"

"Do you still think to marry him, Briony?" asked Remember helplessly, feeling no wisdom in her anywhere with which to counsel the girl.

"Not yet," said Briony calmly. "Not till he is a man and plows his fields or sails his ships, or does something to feed his children and make men honor him. But I shall speak to my father about it when the *Sea Wind* comes back. Perhaps he can put him in the way of it."

They reached home in the early evening, and John did not come to see them that night, nor for more than a week after Parson Burroughs' execution. Then he rode by to tell them he was on his way to Boston where he had business with Mr. Cotton Mather, and he expected to bide there for some two weeks.

"People are not harrying out the witches with the same sharpness that they used in the spring," he said, shaking his head piously, "and we must strengthen ourselves to pursue and avenge infamy."

Remember looked him straight in the eye. "John," she said, "how can you talk so?"

He returned her look without speaking, and for a moment she longed to be in his arms again, to feel his mouth hard on hers. Briony, seeing so much, missing so much more, laughed at them, turned, and ran into the house. But instead of leaning toward her he lifted the reins.

"We shall have time when I come back," he told her. "All of time--if you want it."

He rode away without looking back.

Hot August burned itself out, crisping the grass to rust color in the Salem fields and ripening the Indian corn. Only the corn could stand the heat and neglect of that summer, and Remember's flax plants stuck up like bare sticks, dead and shriveled. Goldenrod thrust up, torchlike, along the lanes, and pond lilies died as the swamp water dried away from them. And every day the sky seemed to draw closer and glare with a deeper blue. The men who sat in the tavern began to speak with much worry of the winter ahead, since no one of them had paid enough attention to his crops so that he could expect much of a harvest. They had been too busy hanging witches. And they were beginning to tire of hanging witches. Nobody was sorry to see Bridget Bishop go, with her gaudy clothes and loud ways, but the killing of Rebecca Nourse had been another

thing. So had the death of Mr. Burroughs. Many believed they were both innocent, and now came forward to say so. Certain of the Boston ministers, too, were beginning to lose faith in the project so glibly begun for them by their Essex brethren, Parris, Noyes, and Hale. Justice Saltonstall of Oyer and Terminer had resigned from that body and gone home to Haverhill. And if some of the witches were innocent, it could be that all of them were, and if they were innocent--the girls must have lied and deluded the whole colony. All through the week people wondered and doubted and changed their minds half a dozen times. Perhaps they were in no danger at all--save the danger of being thrown in gaol by their own ministers. Perhaps the Devil had never come to Salem. Perhaps there was no--no, they would not go that far. But on Sunday they gathered in the churches--in the Town, in the Village, at Ryall Side, under Mr. Mather in Boston--and whipped on by furious, desperate sermons, believed again that the arch-enemy threatened them and they must hunt out and destroy his creatures if they were to save their immortal souls.

One hot night, too hot for sleeping, Briony and Remember lay in their shifts on the grass just behind the house and watched the great, bright stars burning low in the sky. The smell of sun-warmed grass and stagnant water weighted the thick air. Crickets chirped all about them and a whippoorwill called somewhere in John Putnam's pasture. Suddenly Briony sat up.

"I hear voices! There is someone in the lane!"

They scrambled into the kitchen and hastily put on their clothes. Just as Remember finished buttoning her bodice, Sheriff George Corwin stepped through the wide-open door. She stood and looked at him.

"What do you want here?" she faltered.

She could see that Edward Putnam stood in the dooryard just outside, his head hanging down. Thomas Putnam pushed forward now, his eyes glittering, and stood beside the sheriff.

"We want your person, Goodwife, and I have a warrant for you. For practicing witchcraft upon the body of Mary Walcott, afflicting her with sleeplessness, and causing her grievous pains within."

"Oh, go tell Mary Walcott to take treacle for her pains within!" cried Briony, struggling to pull Jonathan's blunderbuss from its hook behind the door. Thomas Putnam stopped her, not gently.

The sheriff reached forward, drew Remember's wrists together, and secured a chain around them. She could not believe it. She looked at him in wonder. Thomas cleared his throat and spoke squeakily.

"We be taking you to the tavern," he announced. "The child is there and she will charge you."

He took her by the arm to force her forward, but she stood still, turned to Briony, and spoke.

"Put my cloak over my shoulders. It may be cold in the gaol house before morning. Set the children on Dapple and go with them to Joseph Putnam's. He and Elizabeth will take care of you--till I come back."

Briony began to cry. Neddy wailed from upstairs. Remember walked out of her house beside the sheriff.

The great stars made the sky very bright and Thomas Putnam swung a lanthorn from his saddle. The men mounted their horses and rode, Remember walked in front of them. She walked down the cart track to the Village between the fields that she had helped to clear and sow and reap for a very few brief seasons. The long leaves of the corn rustled, and white mist moving up from Beaver Dam Brook poured over all the low places. With her eyes she said good-bye to all of it. She thought of her father and mother and how it had been with them when they were called to die. But they had died unconscious of the body's fight for breath, in their own bed, while snow heaped against the windowpanes. She saw herself going out a different way, her feet reaching desperately downward, as George Burroughs' had reached, on the air of a summer afternoon--finding nothing beneath them. She would go, fighting, too, for breath, as all men must fight for it someday--and lose. This was the end; the last great loneliness.

Then her escorts marched her into the tavern ablaze with light. All the Village seemed to be there. The word that Remember Winster had been taken as a witch must have gone swiftly from farm to farm through the hot twilight. Hannah Ingersoll ran hither and thither like an angry hen. Nat made a great business of serving kill-devil; he would not meet Remember's eye. On a pallet in the center of the room lay Mary Walcott, stiff as a corpse, her eyes rolling in her head. Just then Mrs. Ann Putnam screeched from a settle near the fireplace.

"There is the Black Man going to Goody Winster!"

"Aye! There she is!" shrieked little Ann. "And her yellow bird is sucking between her fingers. Hold her! Hold her! She is going to Mary Walcott!"

A dozen rough hands caught at Remember's gown. She stood still and shut her eyes.

Mary Walcott sat up and held out a stiff right arm, pointing at Remember.

"Goody Winster, I wonder you come here when you know what I know of you.

I shall tell it, I shall. You are--"

She stopped speaking, gnashed her jaws noisily, and waved her arms as if vainly trying to communicate something.

Then Mercy Lewis cried out, "Goody Winster went to her and sealed her mouth. She is stricken dumb."

All eyes turned from Mary to Remember. Fear and hate were in them. They looked as if they meant to fall on her and rend her body. The chains dragged downward on her helpless hands, but her mind cleared and she cried out.

"If I sealed your mouth, I unseal it! Speak, Mary Walcott, and say what you will of me! It is probably a lie!"

The eyes of the crowd turned back to Mary, waited for her. She hesitated, lost her poise, muttered a little, then recovered herself.

"Goody Winster is a witch. She has long bewitched her goodman's son, Neddy. It is well known that he often falls in fits and has no head to govern him. She did it to him because he was not her own son."

Again Salem Village looked accusingly at Remember.

"And she killed her goodman," went on Mary, her voice rising to a high squeal. "She killed him so that she could lie with Goodman Horne! She swore to serve the Black Man and he loaned her a bolt of lightning."

She sank back on the pallet, foam running out of her mouth.

The goodwives who had been Remember's friends and neighbors scurried in close to Mary to aid her. Somebody held her head up. Somebody else offered her a glass of wine. The men kept their hostile eyes on Remember. She turned to Sheriff Corwin.

"Take me to gaol," she said. "It will be the sooner over."

Down the Salem Road, over the wooden bridge and through the North Fields they marched her, a little group of earnest citizens riding their plow horses, Remember walking in their midst, her feet blistered, the chains scraping her wrists raw. Her mind was empty now of all thought save her body's discomfort, and she finally fainted in front of Jonathan Corwin's house, as they passed through the sleeping town. Joseph Herrick held her head and gave her a sip of rum. Edward Putnam argued with the sheriff and insisted that she should ride the rest of the way before him on his own horse. Being a deacon, he had his way, and it was he who carried her into a small chamber in the ramshackle gaol house, a chamber without a window, and set her on a heap of filthy straw.

The lanthorn and the men's voices slipped away from her and the door slammed shut. There she lay, choking in the foul air, touching slime whenever she put out a hand in the darkness. She waited, perfectly still. Then, on the other side of the wall they had propped her against, she heard a weak moan.

A dim voice quavered, "Who be it?"

"Martha!" she breathed. "Martha Corey!"

"Oh! Oh God, no! 'Tis never you, Remember?"

Then from Martha's side of the wall came a deep, insistent groaning, like an animal's alone in pain.

"Martha! Is that you?"

"No, child. 'Tis Elizabeth Procter. She's in labor, and has been since sundown."

Remember forgot her own plight and laid her face close to the wall.

"Who's to tend her?"

"None. We have not even a light. But her pains are not too near. 'Twill not be before morning, I think, and I remember enough of my own time to help her. 'Tis a knowledge once a woman has she does not lose. But how came you here?"

"Mary Walcott says I am a witch."

"Ah, that one! Have you been tried?"

"No. They only took me tonight. In my own house."

"What did Mary have against you?"

"I think she wants the man who was cried in church with me."

"I did hear Jonathan was gone. Whom have you given your word to, Remember?"

"To the shoemaker, John Horne."

No answer came from the other side of the wall. Elizabeth Procter moaned and thrashed on the flooring. Finally Martha spoke again.

"I like him not. Best let Mary Walcott have him."

"What ill do you know of him?"

"No more than you, I think."

"Did you know that he says to the Circle, 'Peace, my Daughters'?"

"I know he counsels them. I have looked out the window here and watched him pass against the bright sun. He does not cast a shadow."

Both women fell silent, each pressing to her own side of the wall.

"But if he asked you to marry him," went on Martha, "he cannot be what we fear. The Devil does not propose marriage that ever I heard of. And man or devil, he has the ear of those who carry on this business. He should have been able to keep his betrothed out of gaol."

"But he has gone to Boston to wait on Mr. Mather and Mary saw her chance. She will make all speed to have me hanged before he comes back--so that she can have him."

"We shall likely all be hanged," sighed Martha. "Is there no one who'll think to fetch him for you?"

"No--unless Briony--"

Elizabeth's wails grew so loud that speech could not be heard above them. Outside in the street the bellman passed.

"Three of the clock! Stars, heat, and all's well! Shut ye noise, ye witch, and let God's people sleep!"

Then Martha lifted her voice at him.

"Oh goodman, as you love God, give us a candle to light a child's way into the world!"

Remember threw off her cloak and tried with her chained hands to tear at the thin pine slats between her and the others. Martha, panting, joined her in the work. Finally the wood split, ripping her palms open. She crawled into the other room through the small, splintery opening. It was larger and had a window. Lanthorn light shone in, blinding her, for the watch had come over to still the noisy prisoners. Martha bent above Elizabeth who lay in her dirty straw, her feet thrashing. The watchman cursed.

"Here," he growled, "here's a light for ye--to get ye another to sign the Book." He flipped a bit of candle through the barred opening.

Remember scooped it up, using her broken hands as well as she could, and held it while he lit it from his lanthorn. Elizabeth's moaning died away as an east wind dies between the forest trees. Martha came forward with a scrap of iron she had loosened from the window frame by winding the pegs out of it, and pried at the chains, trying to free Remember. Martha's skin had grown yellow, her body shriveled during her months in gaol, but defiance and

courage still burned hot in her old eyes as she ministered to the younger women.

"We be godlier folk inside Salem Gaol than they be out of it," she crooned, wiping Elizabeth's brow and washing Remember's wrists with water from a wooden bowl on the floor beside her. "Mary Easty be upstairs just over us. We know she loved God all her days. And next her chamber lies Goodman Wardwell of Andover. He never did no more harm than telling a maid's fortune. Mistress Pudeator's here for no other reason than that her neighbors covet her good possessions. And there be others--others, and my own Giles. All the poor man does now is mutter of how he wronged me at my hearing back in March. But he only said our ways were not always each other's. He did not name me as a witch! I am sorry for him and I would go to him if I could. Remember, what is the gossip in the Town? They have hanged many, have they not?"

"Yes--they have hanged many."

"Whom?"

"Do not ask me, Martha."

Elizabeth staggered to her feet, her face blotched, her hair matted, and dragged her swollen body back and forth from wall to wall.

"They hanged my John," she mourned, "they hanged him and drove my children crying out of the house. Sheriff even took away the broth a-boiling at the fire. They would have hanged me, too, save for the life in me--oh! Oh!"

Martha eased her to the straw again. She had given up trying to free Remember.

The night passed slowly. The candle the watch had thrown them burned itself into a puddle of tallow, sputtered, went out.

"Oh, God," cried Martha Corey, "have pity on us women of Salem!"

"Remember!" said a voice, low, clear as a steeple bell.

No one spoke for a minute. The ceiling creaked and buckled overhead, as a prisoner, likely the heavy Giles, moved restlessly about. The heat pushed inward like walls crushing together.

"Remember. Are you in there?"

"Briony!" breathed Remember, struggling to the window. She drew herself even with the sill, looked out. Two indistinct figures huddled to the wall. She uttered a stiffled sound, unable to make any other response.

Then a man's voice answered her, calm, low. "Have courage, Goodwife Winster. Briony is here and I am with her--John Wise of Ipswich Meeting House."

But Briony's swift speech leaped ahead of the parson's.

"Oh, Remember! When you were gone I took the children to Joseph's. He was from home, but Mr. Wise and George were there. They'd come to see about getting leave to bury Mr. Burroughs. George is down the lane now, watching, to see that no one catches us here. Can we get you through the window?"

"No. The bars are set too close," murmured Remember, ready to weep with the heavy, dragging pain that ran up her arms and through her shoulders.

"Are you all right? Did they hurt you?"

"I am all right. Martha Corey is here, and Goodwife Procter."

Elizabeth cried out again.

"She is ill!" interrupted Mr. Wise. He had prayed beside too many beds of pain not to realize the urgency behind her cry.

"Yes. Her time is upon her."

"Then I shall go and have up Nicholas Noyes, and demand in the name of Christ that the midwife attend her."

Remember, no longer able to hold up her head, dropped it on the window ledge, but she heard his footsteps going away in the night. She felt Briony's fingers smoothing her hair. Then the girl's head was laid against hers, the bars between them.

"I did not like to say it before Mr. Wise," she whispered very low, "for they are brother ministers, but I heard Mary Walcott speak with Mr. Parris in the tavern after you were taken out."

"Did you--go there?"

"Of course I did. I heard it all. Mr. Parris was not pleased with Mary. He said a strange thing to her that I cannot understand."

"What did he say?"

"He said, 'Now you ha' done it, wench! When the Master comes back he will fry us all.'"

"And did Mary--answer him?"

"She laughed and tossed her head at him, and she said, 'He will raise no

tempest for a dead girl when he can have a quick one. This witch is too hot to hold for Oyer and Terminer. Why not swim her tomorrow off English's wharf? If she floats 'tis proof she's a witch, and the town can hang her on it. If she sinks--the bottom of Salem Harbor is a long way down. She knows too much of us.'"

"And what did Mr. Parris say?"

"He said, 'Aye. I fear the Master talks between his kissing. Still, I do not like it, wench. I must think on it.'"

Her mind was tired, tired. How she wanted to sink down on the rotting floor and lie there senseless, resigned to death, with no concern for the manner of its coming. But then she thought of the wild strawberries in George Jacobs' meadow, and of the autumn maples that would flame up on Hathorne's Hill later in the year. She thought of John Horne, his power and his wickedness, and the passion that had been between them. She thought of her father's dead face and Tom Purchas' living one; of the slate stone on Orchard Farm where Jonathan lay, and the dusty cradle in the attic of her house. How could she go to the one when she had not fulfilled the other? She thought of the purity of a white winter sky over Salem Harbor, and the blackness of the swamp meadow when the plow cleft it open. Perhaps some day she would be willing to leave it all for the Bible talk about jasper walls, but she was not ready yet.

She flung her arms out with such strength that the chains cut her to the bone before a worn link snapped and she was able to shake herself free.

"Briony," she said, her voice deep and strong, held tight in her throat, "when they say 'swim me,' that means they will throw me into the harbor. Clean water will not receive a witch, so if I float they will say I am guilty and hang me at once. If I sink, it will prove my innocence--and I mean to sink."

"How?"

"Go quickly, before it gets light. Go to Sarah Ingersoll's, and wake up the maids at Mary English's house. Borrow every sad iron they have and bring them to me. I will tie them under my skirt to weigh me down."

"But you will drown."

"No. Once the witch sinks it is the custom to pull her up before the breath is quite soaked out of her. And if I drown, I go as--others--have gone."

Briony hesitated.

"I will get you the irons," she said finally, "but I do not like it. I think it would be better for me to ride to Boston and try to find Goodman Horne."

"Is there not a God in Salem that you should seek for the Devil in Boston?" muttered Remember, pain thrusting through her wounded arms.

"Who said anything about the Devil? I spoke of Goodman Horne."

"Remember," called Martha hoarsely from the darkness behind her, "are ye able to help?"

Remember groped along the wall and knelt down, her blood mingling with Elizabeth Procter's in the mouldy straw as she spread her cloak to receive the newborn.

CHAPTER 20
The Devil's Business

BRIONY pushed the sad irons across the window ledge just as the stars began to fade out in a graying sky and the wind before dawn stirred across the land.

"I do not like it," she said. "I sent George after--"

"Hush! Run away, child. Someone is at the door on t'other side," whispered Martha, as she took the sad irons Remember's swelling fingers could not grasp.

Mr. Noyes thrust his lank figure into the narrow room and with him came two men carrying a litter. He looked at the women angrily, running his tongue over his thin lips.

"How do you like the taste of your own blood, Mr. Noyes?" asked Remember from the corner where she crouched, suffering.

His face turned white, he muttered, and drew himself backward out of the foul air of the prison chamber. The men put Elizabeth Procter on the litter and carried her away, her child sucking contentedly at the shriveled breast that had been so fair and plump. They heard Mr. Noyes lock the door, then shake it viciously to test it. Martha and Remember looked at each other.

"Our time is not long, lass," sighed Martha, shaking the straw out of her tattered skirts and turning her eyes to follow the wide beam of light now streaked through the barred window. "I feel there is much we should say to each other, but I do not know what it is."

"I know something of what it is, Martha. Let me speak it over, and perhaps, together, we shall be able to see what it means."

A fat, silver-gray rat scuttled out of a hole in the wall, seized a broken crust from the wooden dish by Martha's side, and vanished into the filth heaped in the opposite corner. A spider let itself slowly down from a huge beam overhead.

"Speak it out, child," said Martha Corey.

"Last Hallowmas I met a strange young man in the pasture after dark. I feared him, and I was drawn to him, and I did not understand what he was talking

about. He set himself up in the Village as a shoemaker and joined Mr. Parris' church. And about that time strange things began to happen. The Village girls began to meet in the parsonage and to study witchcraft."

"Aye. That, I heard, was the way of it. I remember how you came to me on the popish Christmas, all frightened by what you had seen."

"And that night I sat with them I tried to scold them for it, but something twisted my tongue and made me tell them all my mother's old witch tales of Scotland, and they thanked me for showing them thus more evil that they could do. They studied evil so long and so hard that they fell ill of it, that good was quite gone from them."

"Then the ministers all gathered and said they were bewitched."

"They did, and they bade them name the persons who did it. So they named three friendless women whom none would defend, Good, Osborne, and Tituba."

"And then they named me and Rebecca Nourse."

"Yes. You because you said you did not believe in them, and Rebecca because she and Francis had bested the Putnams and Mr. Parris who were their friends. They named the Topsfield people, and people the Putnams hated, and people who had no love for Mr. Parris. No one was accused but had an enemy to bring it on. Do you think the ministers brought it all about to make their power greater?"

"I think they knew--too much about it."

"And John--the shoemaker. He went about, smiling, in the midst of it. Everyone liked him and drank his ale. Mr. Parris listened to what he said, and I let him come too near me. And all the time the mad girls went on crying witch here and witch there. Oh, Martha--I am not telling it to you as I meant--!"

"What did you mean to tell me?"

"I meant to tell you what he wanted to be to me. He said he had a great work to do, but that if I would be his he would spare Salem. And I would not."

"You were right there," said Martha firmly. "If you save the whole world and lose your own soul, ye'll not gain by it."

"You can say that--when you are like to die because of what I did--you and Giles?"

"Is it not better to lose a few years of Salem than to lose the eternity of God?"

"I am not so sure that it is, Martha," said Remember wistfully, looking out into

the sunshine, across Prison Lane at the crimson dahlias nodding in a goodwife's garden.

"If you feel that way," answered Martha, "it will be hard for you. In any case it will be hard for you, for your banns are cried to him and I believe he is the Devil. Perhaps this trick of yours with the sad irons will only save you for a worse ending."

She fastened the irons under Remember's skirts where the loops and shirrings of the fabric would hide them. Then they sat in the straw and waited.

"And he showed me a vision one night on the hill above the parsonage," Remember went on, "a vision of the Black Sabbath that the girls told about later in the Meeting House--but I know that all those who took part in it were godly, so it was a false vision. He said it was a false vision. He said they would all be hanged, and many have been."

"Tell me! Did you see Giles there?"

Remember faltered. She could not answer. Martha peered into her eyes, then turned away and spoke no word for a long time.

Finally she said, "I have heard that there were other women in far countries tormented like you--by the Devil, that they should yield to him, not their service in witchcraft, but their bodies' love."

"And did they?"

"If they did they were sorry."

The day climbed up to noon and started downward. Long shadows lay across the chamber floor when a shouting sounded outside in Prison Lane, and Martha, looking, saw a crowd of townspeople flocking to the gaol house, Noyes and Parris in the lead with Mary Walcott between them. The crowd stopped just around the door.

"I shall pray for you," said Martha, looking deeply into Remember's face, picking up her hand and letting it fall again.

"And I for you," said Remember.

"We shall all come home at the end of it."

Sheriff Corwin flung the door open and beckoned to Remember. She rose heavily and walked through the open door. Salem people stood in two rows, leaving a path for the sheriff and the witch; Mary Walcott posed in the foreground. As Remember passed, Mary looked her in the eye, smiled, hummed the old tune:

"My Johnny was a shoemaker--"

Remember gave her look back to her. She walked carefully so the sad irons would not jangle. Corwin ordered her gruffly where to turn, and the crowd followed them. Once she looked back and noticed Mr. Wise's troubled face and Elizabeth Porter's expression of rage and despair. But Mrs. Ann Putnam's eyes were fixed and gloating, and John Louder fairly gamboled with delight. They marched her down Philip English's wharf where it jutted into the green waters of Salem Harbor. None of the English ships swung at the empty moorings. Remember looked up at their great house with its windowpanes broken and one of the chimneys knocked awry. She thought of Philip and Mary, who had broken from gaol and fled safely away to New York. The hot sun was going down behind the chimneys and gables.

Right to the end of the wharf they made her go, where she could look down into the water flowing and swelling around the slimy piers with seaweed caught between them. Under the clear green surface the depths wandered, purple and brown. She stood there straight and still, moving her body a little as a sad iron shifted at her waist.

Nicholas Noyes began his speech.

"This woman, being taken in the foul sin of witchcraft," he droned without moving his lips, "and our great court of Oyer and Terminer not meeting this week, its members being scattered to their homes about their private business--we have determined to try her by the old ordeal of swimming that Dr. Hopkins, the great witchfinder of Essex, proved to be infallible."

"Aye," muttered Nat Ingersoll, "till they swum the old witchfinder himself and he died of it!"

"Therefore, we shall cast this woman into God's great, pure sea. If she is evil, the water will not receive her, and she will float or swim. Only if she sinks like a stone in the clear element will we know her to be of like innocence."

He paused. He looked at Remember. Her wounded wrists, unbound now, hung limply down. Her lifted face shone in the light of the falling sun. The men and women on the wharf behind the parson held their breath. Remember, facing them, looked for Briony, and saw her, white-faced, biting her fingers, looking back toward Salem every moment, as if she expected help to come from there. Why was George missing from her side at such a time?

"Dear God," prayed Remember silently, "take care of Briony and give her better than the wizard's son." Then shame struck her, for she knew Mr. Burroughs had been an honest man and no wizard. But Briony--

Judge Hathorne stepped forward. He seemed to think that the Law must lend its sanction too. He cleared his throat.

"Whom do you serve, Goodwife Winster?"

Well, let her last words be honest ones. "I serve God's pleasure--and my own."

"What God?"

"The God that was made by the Son of Man," she said.

The ministers looked at each other.

"Goodwife Winster, we are about to cast you into the sea to know if it will receive your body."

"It will receive it," she said. Under her gown a sad iron shifted. The chimneys of Salem were casting long, wine-colored shadows and a wind stirred in the elm trees sending a chill through the hot air.

This may be my last moment, she thought, as the sheriff and his marshals stepped purposefully toward her. She thought of John's dark face, somber and mocking; of his hands stretching out toward her, not finding her. She thought of Tom, his blue eyes burning her like flame, his sunburnt hands fumbling tenderly about her, reaching home. She had meant, next, to think of God, but as she shut her eyes for it, she felt herself flung backward through the air.

First the cold of the water stopped her breath, then the salt of it tingled in her head and bit in where her flesh was raw. Not moving a muscle, she felt herself sink down and down in it. Tom had not gone this way; he must have struggled with the water. But he had struggled in vain, and if she rose to the surface, she would be hauled ashore to a death on Gallows Hill. She let the sad irons do their work.

And then, before the water had quite washed the consciousness out of her, while the whole sea seemed to be swelling up inside her chest, she felt her body gripped and snatched upward into the air, into the light. She felt the boards of the wharf under her back, and rolled her head weakly sideways, coughing up water. Somewhere above her, where she lay prone, a man's voice was speaking, low, loud, vibrant with a terrible, controlled rage. She tried to listen to it.

"So! You try to carry on the Devil's business without the Devil! If any could do it, 'twould sure be a strutting parson and a lying woman. But none can."

John Horne stood over her, not looking at her, talking to the huddled mob. He must have plunged into the sea to pull her out, for water dripped from his

clothing, bubbled in his shoes when he moved his weight a little, but there was no wetness on his tanned skin or black hair. He could never quite remember all the ways of a man.

"You knew better than to touch this woman. Who accused her?"

Nobody answered. Lightning played in the slate-colored sky behind First Church belfry.

"Sam Parris, who accused her? Tell me, before I tell all Salem where you wrote your name."

"Mary Walcott--and Ann Putnam."

"Hah! Mary Walcott! I should have known her lust lay behind this.

'My Johnny was a shoemaker,
Oh how he did love me--'

Indeed, I love you well, Mary. I love you so well that though you may have a husband, you shall never have any pleasure of him. And Ann, you shall never have a husband at all. What worse can I give a Salem girl?"

Ann went into a fit which nobody noticed, and Mary began to cry.

"Oh, I am a rare lad for curses when you cross me, and I have one for each and every one of you for this day's work. God will forgive you when you trespass against Him, but I grant no second chances and no pardons." He turned to Noyes and Parris.

"Your doom is already upon you, Nicholas Noyes, but you must live with it day and night for twenty years before it claims you. I shall not gather you home yet awhile."

Mr. Noyes writhed. Blood flecked his lips.

"And as for you"--John Horne wheeled on Sam Parris--"first you would serve God and then you would serve Satan, and you have failed at both. How in the name of Hell and Death can I put a curse on a soul no bigger or better than a sucking body louse! Well, your wife shall soon go where you cannot follow her, and your son shall go mad and be a charge upon the town. And you shall see nothing but hate in all men's eyes whenever they turn to you.

"Who else? Oh, yes, you, Sheriff, who threw her in--who would destroy a good woman to pleasure an evil one. You shall die before you are thirty, and Philip English whom you hounded shall hold back your corpse from burial for the debt you owe him, so that you shall rot above ground and be a stench in the nostrils of all Salem.

"And you Salem people--" He turned. "You would not help her in her trouble, but hunted her to the water's edge. I have coin to pay you in, as well. Your children's children shall sneer at you for fools and bigots; shall say that you were the most narrow, cruel, deluded city of men that ever was, and that your doings here are a shame on their blood forever. And as for Salem Village--bitten by the dogs of Hell, it went mad for a season, and to commemorate it, future ages shall raise a mad house there. There shall be a specific in the air tending to addle the wits of all who breathe it."

"Master," quavered Samuel Parris, "until today we have worked your will."

"Aye. You have. The Devil came among you and you took him to your bosoms and tortured the saints of God to make a holiday. You are wise, as well as virtuous, you men of Salem! I have lost my great battle here," he went on, "because in the midst of the selfishness and savageness, and the false pride and lust for glory in some of you, there are many people who are made out of the fields and ledges as Goodwife Winster is made; honest, slow-decided people, who did not recognize my banner at once but when they did have cast it down. More of them turn against the witch hunt every day. Yes, I have lost my battle here--and yet--I have not lost all. You are too sane and sound for me. Your churches still stand"--he looked at First Church belfry rising tall against the clear west--"stand and shall multiply. I have not had them down. You shall lift up your strong hymns to God, and God shall smile upon you. And on the surface of your green land and thriving city, all shall seem well, and right, and godly. But you have let me into your hearts--a little--and I shall not go from there.

"Now, two things I tell you. First, that no record of this day must ever go into your parish book or your court register. You must never speak of it--not even to the neighbor who suffered it by your side. You shall not have the excuse that the Devil came among you and cast his evil about as the squid in the eastern waters casts his ink. The guilt of this year's doings you must bear alone, though only I am to blame for it. And secondly, take up this woman now and lead her home. Of all your town, only she utterly withstood me. Though I used powers on her I would not waste on others"--he turned to sneer at Mary Walcott--"she has never yielded. I go, but not so far from you that I cannot return for vengeance--if I choose. And whosoever of you disobeys me, shall be gone out of God's sight--so!"

Remember felt a rush of air drawn upward past her face. She looked for John but he no longer stood there. She could hear a deep moan from the crowd. Then feet pounded close by and Briony flung herself down beside her.

"Oh, Remember! You are safe! He came and saved you. I made George ride to

Boston to fetch him. Just as I looked into the water and feared you would never rise again, Goodman Horne--there he stood. How he came I do not know, for George is not back yet. He leaped in and pulled you out. But then he talked so strangely. You heard him. Do you think he had gone mad? And then, suddenly, he just was not there! Everyone is so frightened! Oh, Remember--"

Then Sam Parris lifted her to her feet.

"Goodwife," he muttered, his face paler than a pan of skimmed milk, "we have made a grievous error."

"Aye," she answered, "that you have." She steadied herself against Briony.

Aided by the marshal who had cast her into the water earlier, she moved painfully from the wharf. Very few of the frightened crowd remained, but Jonathan Walcott stood at the foot of the lane, his arm around his shivering daughter, trying to lead her away. As Remember passed them a mocking tune rose in her throat but she shut her lips upon it. The Devil's love was nothing to boast of with the Devil gone.

CHAPTER 21
The Son of Man

JOHN HORNE never appeared again in the streets of Salem. When Parris and Noyes went, armed and trembling, to his hut the next afternoon to look for him, they found only a square of charred earth in its place, the timbers crumbled to powdery ash and the wild grape vines that had spread across the narrow acres burned away to their turfy roots. The townspeople sought desperately for strength in prayer and kill-devil, knowing no other place to look for it. They were not ready to unshutter their shops or go into the fields and try to save the weedy and rotting harvest, and silence fell heavily among them whenever a tongue, loosened by liquor, hinted that it meant to speak of the afternoon they had swum Remember Winster. But the rhythm of night and day reassured them. They went to sleep in darkness and woke up soon after sunrise, hungry for porridge in the usual way. The tides rose and fell in the South River; the apples reddened as the corn went by; frost came on still, clear nights, and love warmed and comforted a man as it had since the days of their eternal fathers. Each man believed in his heart that they had entertained the Devil amongst them. Of the mortals who had really joined his banner, they were not so certain. More and more of them inclined to follow the opinion that John Willard had expressed early in the spring, and to look with suspicion on both accusers and accused. "All, all are bad," John Willard had said, and that badness had killed him. Let the witches out and send the judges about their business, people thought, let us have an end of the whole thing. Slowly they grew more confident that fire and brimstone from the nether world would not really overtake them before they had left this one. The tenseness eased out of them and they turned their eyes toward authority--the ministers and the court--to see what steps the highly placed would take for the common good.

The members of Oyer and Terminer rode into town about a week after John Horne's departure and congregated in an upper room at Beadle's tavern, where Sam Parris, Nicholas Noyes, and Mr. Hale addressed themselves to the judges at a secret session that lasted from mid-afternoon till well past candlelighting. Lesser folk collected in the street and the taproom, expecting to hear at any moment that the prisoners in Salem Gaol were going to be released. If hanging their neighbors had been a trick of the Devil, an end should be put to it now

that the Devil had struck his colors and gone.

But when the great court came down to a belated supper of eels from the river and lobster from the bay, they announced determinedly that they had come to Salem to free it of witchcraft, and in the name of God they meant to do so. The trials would go on. And go on they did, in spite of a grim undercurrent of protest that moved from bench to bench in the Town House.

Giles Corey refused to plead guilty or not guilty, since in his understanding of common law, if he did not do so, his property could not be confiscated by the province. Chuckling, he willed his land to his sons Cleeves and Moulton who had stood by him, disinheriting Parker and Crosby who had spoken against him, against Martha. He knew well the old penalty he must suffer for the privilege, the *peine forte et dure*, that had crossed two seas out of Normandy on its way to Salem, but it made no difference to him. On a sharp September day when the yellow and brown and amber colors of early fall lay on the fields, and blue mist softened the sharp hill line to the north, they took the gruff old man into an open field near Burial Point and spreadeagled his body on the earth, laying two great planks across it. On the planks they heaped up boulder after boulder till the slowly mounting weight crushed his rib cage and the white bones protruded in redness from the blue-gray skin.

"More weight!" mumbled old Giles, feeble but defiant.

An ill-favored handyman thrust forward with a stave then and rammed the tongue between the slackening jaws, but most of those who had come to watch stood silent, stricken, ready to rush forward to the victim's aid if any one of them should suggest it. But nobody dared to, and it took Giles three days to die.

And three days afterward, the farm cart trundled up the gallows hill carrying eight more witches to their death. Martha Corey, not knowing how her husband had died, made a noble prayer on the ladder and asked Christ to forgive her enemies. So did Mary Easty, turning her eyes toward the dim hills that hid the home in Topsfield she would never see again. And after her went Mary and Alice Parker, Ann Pudeator, Margaret Scott, Wilmot Read, and Samuel Wardwell. Once they were all strung up, Nicholas Noyes rubbed his hands together, self-confidence strong in him again, and droned piously, high in his nose.

"Ah, what a sad thing it is to see eight firebrands of Hell hanging there!"

But as he turned away from the gallows, a sharp stone flung from the midst of the crowd struck him behind the ear, and across the willow hedge three of the judges retreated with more speed than dignity from a band of farmers who

carried staves and muttered about hanging the wrong people.

Sam Parris stood alone at the end of it, on the seamy hillside, watching the distraught and rebellious townspeople straggle away from the great hanging. He had advised his colleagues that they should pursue this business diligently--to the glory of God. He had argued that the Church could certainly go on destroying witches without the aid of the Devil. He had given it out as his opinion that John Horne could not be the Devil at all, but a man, mad and wicked, who had befooled them. But witchcraft still afflicted Salem, he said. The girls of the Circle were still tormented in the sight of all, and those who tormented them must be searched out and slain. Everyone had obeyed him, but their hearts did not seem to be in it any more. And there were always louder murmurs against him in the Town. The Devil's business did not go well with the Devil away. Thick clouds from the hills moved out to meet the thick mist creeping in from the great sea. A gray autumn rain dripped down on the willow gibbet, turning the roofs of Salem into wet silver and the uncobbled lanes into brooks pouring downward to the bay. Mr. Parris shook his head, turned up his coat collar, and rode away in the rain.

Remember Winster moved about her kitchen, banking the fire for the night and winding Jonathan's brass clock. Her torn hands had healed miraculously in a single day after her return home, but they gleamed white and soft now, like Mary English's hands, not yet brown and a little gnarled, the way they had been. They did not look as if they belonged to her. The steady drip of the rain went past the windows, and upstairs Briony called laughing across to Prudence, then grew quiet. How much Briony would mean to her in the years to come, she thought. Her own life had gone over like the spring wind over a lilac tree, dying away before the petals were quite shaken to the grass. The wonder of her young love and the steady bread-and-earth of her marriage, the awful times just past when her body had burned with the fires of temptation and she had learned the ways of the soul's destruction without having her own soul destroyed--these had gone from her and left her a little, after all. A comfortable house and good acres that would feed her if she tended them. White fields turning to brown every spring, and a clear sweep of sky over Hathorne's Hill to lift her eyes to--and Briony growing up. Let Briony marry George Burroughs if she would, for Stephen would set the young people forward in the world. Stephen believed in following your heart when you married. George would not take her far away, and in time she would mother good, honest people such as those who had worsted the Devil just now in Salem and would go on worsting him to the end of time. And she, Remember, would rock the cradle for her. There would be children to look up out of Tom

Purchas' blue eyes. And all would be well.

Would it? Martha Corey had died that afternoon on the gallows and seven others with her. Giles lay crushed under a heap of field stones by Burial Point. The gaols of Essex still overflowed and the Circle pitched about in fits and cried new names every day. True, the Devil, as she knew him, had gone, but his work went forward. She sighed, thinking of Martha's strength and wisdom gone forever from her and the world of her knowing. What would be the end of it?

A rising wind drove a shower of wet leaves against the windowpane. Remember felt every drop of her blood slow and chill in her veins. She sank down on the settle by the dying fire, her eyes fixed on the iron latch as it slowly lifted. John Horne stepped into the room. He swaggered forward, merry, eager, sure of himself again, all his bold charm shining out like the stars in clearing weather. He came quickly to the settle and flung himself down beside her. The coldness went from her blood and in her moved the old wickedness, the old desire, stronger than it had ever been in her life. She could not speak.

"You did not think to see me back," he said, a tenseness in his voice speaking under his words to the tenseness in her body. "But I have come. Not as a man, this time. I stand upon my own merits now."

She gripped the edge of the settle, looked wide-eyed at him.

"Do not stare at me. Stare at this tidy kitchen of yours, for you will not see it again. Cast your eyes for a last look at Salem if you will, for when I take you from it you shall not return."

Twice she tried to speak and could not.

"I am going from Essex," he went on, "I have lost the great battle, but I am a good loser. That is more than you can say of God."

"God does not need to be a good loser for He never loses. But how can you say you have lost? You killed Martha Corey this afternoon."

"No. I did not kill her. Her own kind did that. But Salem is winnowed now and the wicked set apart forever from the good. The wicked have triumphed--for a season--and they shall strive valiantly for a season more, but there is no virtue in them and the people know it. They shall never hang another witch, Remember."

She believed him. He moved closer to her on the settle and his eyes shone with a light that did not come from the dying fire. She felt her own flesh and spirit

gathering themselves to betray her.

"I have come to take you--on my own terms this time, even if I must study a drowned sailor to do it. On one side is Salem Village, its people, and the earth it grows from. You can have it, if you wish. The toil in the stony fields set with briars and swamp grass; the long sermons in the cold Meeting House on Sabbath; the shameful loneliness of a woman no man favors; your neighbors wondering all your life behind their shut faces whether or not you are really a witch and what you were to the Devil when he came among them. Finally, the last white winter roaring in over Hathorne's Hill, and then nothingness under a slate gravestone. Can you be content with so little?"

He looked into her eyes. He went on steadily.

"And on the other side is only this--what you see before you--six feet of man in the best shape I could devise for it. This, and the whirling powers of the dark air. I have never taken any woman against her will and I shall not do it now. But can you look at me and say you will not go?"

She did not look at him: at the bright darkness of his eyes, the square shoulders, the sweet, stubborn curve of mouth. He was all man, all knowledge, all mystery. He was the unknown promise beyond the edge of a windswept sky where the blue-green mallards disappeared in November. He was that pulse of life that makes itself felt only to a man and woman together in the night. What matter the stark land and pallid people of Salem Village compared to him?

And yet--?

"But you are not--Tom Purchas," she quavered, drawing her body away from him.

He looked so steadily at her that she had to close her eyes.

"Tom Purchas," she heard him say as if from a long way off, "is drowned in the salt sea."

"Who says so?"

Remember lifted her eyelids quickly. Rain and dead leaves blew in through the open door. A man stood just inside it, sunburnt, his shock of fair hair sprinkled with raindrops, his square jaw thrust ahead of him. He wore a tattered homespun shirt and seaman's breeches. She looked at him hard. Was this the Judgment Day when the graves would yawn on Burial Point and the sea give up its dead? But the man who stood before her seemed to have nothing of death about him. He smelled of salt water and dripped wet rain on her clean kitchen floor, but his eyes met hers, and she was sure that she had Tom

Purchas again and that he had her, and that everything else mattered less than a spray of dust from a last year's oak apple when you crushed it under foot in the spring time. Then she turned to look at John.

Somehow the life in him seemed to have drained away. Strange lights played across his features leaving patches of shadow like plague spots wherever they fell. The bones sharpened, and his very flesh seemed to be dissolving mistily in air. The young, masculine arrogance left his face as she watched and gave place to the look of a corpse a long time dead, and in it glared a pair of incredibly old and evil eyes, the eyes of a scaly creature stranded when the Great Flood went down. And as he waned and ebbed, Tom stood out ever stronger and clearer in the glow of the sinking fire.

"You are the Son of Man," he hissed at Tom, feebly now, as if with a dying breath, "and the Son of Man dies and rots."

"No, you are wrong," said Tom evenly. "The Son of Man never dies. You may kill me and drag my body bleeding out a-doors, but down the lane John Hutchinson is likely in bed getting a son--'tis a good night for it--and you will have to kill that lad as well as me, kill him before his sons are gotten. We are fools often and knaves sometimes, but we are numbered like the blades of grass, and you are all alone. I think we can beget faster than you can kill."

"Are you not afraid of me then--of what I can do to your immortal soul?"

The fiend's face grew weaker and his features dimmer, and all the time the man seemed to stand more tall, his words to come forth more clear and sure.

"No. Give the worst happens--and it may--I'll not spend my good days fearing it. Much good may it do you pricking me over the coals, for you'll have to think along with it that it was I, not you, had Remember Wicom."

He moved across to the door and held it open. The candle flickered in the wind.

"Go back where you belong," he said.

It was less a man than a formless gray shape that crept out into the night.

"Take, then, the Son of Man," he croaked over his shoulder at Remember. "I give you my blessing."

At that moment Tom crossed the floor and took her in his arms, and she felt herself rising up like a wave to meet him. He put his mouth down on hers, and she knew nothing but the hard, warm grip of him; that the far wandering was over, and at last they had both come home. The same Tom who had kissed her good-bye in Rowley years ago--but it might have been last night. They had

never been strangers to each other, and no strangeness stood between them now. Year in, year out, a man would always know his own house when he walked into it, know it and be glad.

After a while he let her go.

"Do not fear that queer lad's talk, lass. I seen many like him in Bedlam House where I been shut up ten years. Thinks he's the Devil! I've seen them that thought they was the Devil and old Queen Bess both at once--and that could be, I s'pose. They talk high and harm nobody."

"In Bedlam House?" she breathed.

"Aye. Got cracked on the pate when the *Plover's Wing* went down, and a ship out of London picked me up and took me there. They did not know who I was, and no more did I. So they put me in Bedlam. I've no mind to talk on it."

"But how did you get out?"

"Oh--keeper knocked me in the head one day for not eating my porridge fast enough--then, sudden, I knew who I was and what I had to get home to."

He kissed her again hungrily.

"Down at Wapping Stairs I found a leaky catch shipping for Salem, and baled half the way across. We made in this afternoon just before the rain started."

"Oh, Tom! It's been so long! And I thought you were dead!" sighed Remember, and began to cry. It was all right to be weak, and a woman, and to cry now. Tom would not expect strength of her. He had enough of his own.

"I know." He held her to him. "But you waited for me till I could come. I talked with Sam Ingersoll at the Blue Anchor, or I'd have gone back to Rowley to hunt you where I left you. He says you married a good man and lost him--but you were never his as you will be mine."

"Oh--never, Tom!"

"Are you going to tell me that there will be time enough tomorrow?"

"--No--"

"Or that it would not be godly?"

"What do you think?"

"I think you were a woman before you were a church member. Come."

All night the rain dripped down on the thatch that sloped above them, the wind rattled the loosening panes. Tom Purchas' love had been worth waiting for.

Once Remember stirred and whispered timidly, "Likely I'll have a child, Tom."

"Likely you will," he said, doubling the pillow to bring his head higher. "That's the way of the world for any woman worth lying with. Tomorrow I'll see about getting the banns cried, and find out what's left of my father's farm on Cape Ann."

At the mention of banns her happiness dimmed over suddenly, like the lights of Salem when a sea turn brought the wet mist in. Tom could not know that her banns had already been cried. Had he heard in town about the witches? What did he think when he found her with John Horne?

"Tom," she said reluctantly, "did Sam tell you anything about--the trouble here?"

"He did. And all along the way I heard more talk about it. They been hanging witches. But people do not like it well, and I doubt they will hang any more. Sam whispered to me that Devil has been abroad here."

"He was. He was here tonight. And he tempted me, and I was drawn to him!"

Her words came out in a rush, and her body lay stiff with shame between the homespun sheets. He stroked her arm gently.

"I know. I been weaned a long time--long enough to know the Devil when I see him."

"But you said you had seen many like him--that he was a mad man."

"Aw--he could have been either. Leave it alone! And as for being drawn to him, why so are all men and women one time or another, and I doubt you're better than most, save to me. Shall we make sure of that lad we were speaking of a while back, Remember?"

Just before the rainy dawn she woke again. The storm had lost its somber quality, and now howled and tore at the thatch like a horde of demons pouring down from the forest.

"Tom," she said, fingering his bare shoulder, "would you go latch the casement at the stair head? I can hear it banging."

Tom heaved himself out of bed, put on his breeches, and groped for the flints and candle. As he strode across the room, Remember's eyes followed him where he went, encircled in the light cast back from beams and wainscot. And watching, she felt a cold tide drive downward through her veins, colder than the water of Salem Harbor.

Where was the shadow that should have moved behind him across the chamber

wall?

Where was it?

Was this some trick of the shifting flame?

Swiftly, without any sound, she leaped from the nest of tumbled quilts and took a halting step or two after him--and at her shoulder her own shadow quivered and halted too. But still he moved ahead of her, uncompanionied in the bare light. He trod on the wet leaves that had sifted across the floor, and the falling candlelight showed no honest print upon them. He put his hand to the iron hasp of the casement. And then Remember, naked except for her flowing hair, cried out at him--a wordless cry. What words were there to tell that for the second time she had lost Tom Purchas, that she had lost her living soul? That John Horne had had his way with her after all?

When he turned, she knew that his eyes would be old and dark and evil--and they were. No trace of Tom remained. Before her stood the man she had met beside the thorn tree.

"There's no ladle hung on your kitchen wall that's long enough for supping with me, Remember. But I did not do this to you till I could come there by no other way. If you would have only Tom, then I could be he--an idle trick of the eyes and hair, an easy story about Bedlam House, the oaf's words and the oaf's gestures--and you loved me for it. I would have been Tom Purchas to you all your life if your sharp eyes had not gone after me too quickly. I will be Tom to you again--if you will have it. Not a paltry Son of Man either, who cannot swallow salt water without putting an end to himself. Every night of your life you shall lie in his arms as you have lain tonight--and all I ask is to have you there. Can you say no to that?"

Could she? The man beside her an hour ago had been Tom, had comforted her, had fulfilled her life and promised her the broader fulfillment of roof and farmland and rocking cradles, that comes with the love and labor of two who go hand in hand, that is not for one alone. And that man would come back to her and never go, if she gave him leave for it.

But no! All the sweet temptation of the flesh fell away from her, leaving her cold and stiff as the slabs of pine that made the floor. The man who came would not be Tom--and this time she would know. There came to her a knowledge sudden as the lightning flash, that as we have but one father and one mother, so we have one love, and when that love is gone we are but beaten stalks swaying in the wind and rain; there is no substitute, no alien shelter for the soul stripped to awful honesty with itself.

"Go away from here," she said dully, emptied of all passion, all fear. "I do not want you by me, no matter what shape you take."

She looked straight into his eyes to show him that she was not afraid to, and the light in them woke like pitch pools under a kindling torch. He saw the truth in her, the truth that all his forces could not corrupt. He had had his way, destroyed her soul, possessed her body, and left his demon seed therein. But what had it got him? She could still lift up her head and tell him to be gone. For she came of Man, the race that can defeat itself but can never be taken from without. He was the baffled serpent, doomed to writhe forever through the grass. He could not slay her--but he could sting her heel.

"I bow to you, Daughter of Man," he jeered at her, "but never quite to the earth *you* come from. It has always been my portion to have the second choice, and I shall have it now. I can make you sorry all your days for this."

Wordless, she bowed her head and sank to the floor, hiding her face in the skirts of the counterpane. She heard the chamber door latch softly behind him. The wind blew over her, swirling its wet mist and broken twigs through the desolate room, but she lay unheeding. Only when a pallid dawn began to gray around the earth's edges did she lift herself and creep brokenly into Briony's room, there to take the last blow.

For Briony was not there. The bed was rumpled and the casements swinging, but the girl had gone, together with the night's black rain and the too-handsome shoemaker, and none of the three ever returned to Salem. Later, when Remember had recovered her wits enough to seek help of them, Nat Ingersoll and Joseph Putnam, George Burroughs and the Nourse boys searched the house and fields thrice over, and the marshals of Essex beat the circling thickets and swampland, but they could find no trace of the way she went. In the desperate hours of their search, Remember could see in her mind Briony's blowing hair and hear her say, "I am not afraid of witches and the Devil! I do not believe in them! Whenever I see a man good to look at--like John Horne--I feel good inside." She remembered all the charm he had had for her, and she heard his challenge--"I have never taken any woman against her will. . . . My portion is always the second choice, and I shall have it now. . . . I can make you sorry all your days for this." In any case, Briony was gone, like a puff of milkweed down lost in the whirling powers of the dark air, and with her going the Old Serpent had struck his last blow at Salem Village.

CHAPTER 22
Up the Bright Hill

REMEMBER sat on the stonewall halfway up Hathorne's hill, between her north field and the thinning oaks on the upland above it. Wild grape vines, now bare of leaves, spread their brown scrollwork across the rocks that Jonathan had piled there in his hearty manhood. All down the valley in the blue twilight she could see the little towers of smoke winding upward from the farmhouse chimneys in the still November air. Only a year ago she had paused on her way home across the fields down there to talk with a laughing stranger. She looked at the basket of nuts in her lap, nuts from the shagbark hickory just across the wall in John Putnam's pasture. She had coveted nuts from that tree for three days; her mouth had ached for the taste of them. She could have gathered nuts from her own trees, but that was not the same. She cracked a polished shell between two slivers of stone from the wall and put a bit of the ivory meat on her tongue. It was as sweet as love. For a few moments she cracked and ate, avid as a squirrel.

A shadow fell across her and she looked up. John Wise stood there, lean and kindly, smiling a little, but underneath his smile she could see that he knew her shame--at least, a part of it. They greeted each other warily. Then he went to his purpose.

"There will be talk in the Village very soon, Goodwife Winster. I left my horse at Nat Ingersoll's just now, for it had lamed itself at Lynn ferry as I came from Boston, and Mrs. Hannah tells me she thinks you are ailing. You will have to face your sin--or take yourself out of here."

A sharp wind rattled the branches, and the shadows drew out long on the yellow grass. The minister started to remove the soil from under his thumbnail with a barberry thorn.

"How did you know--before the others?"

"Because I have watched you as a man watches a woman."

"I never meant you to."

"That I know, and we will speak no more of it. I have a house in Ipswich and a goodwife and children there. But you will need help--first of all, for your

spirit. How did you come to this? Do you want to tell me?"

And so, splitting a dead twig in her restless fingers, she told him of the night Briony had gone. He did not interrupt her, did not even speak when she had finished, but lowered himself silently to the wall beside her, gazing through the twisted oak boughs into the clear, pale sky. What was he thinking of, she wondered. Her sin? There could be no forgiveness for that. Or the wages of that sin that could not lie forever hidden in her body? She was not afraid to bear a child in shame, but she did fear to go on and commit the greater sin that had destroyed Lilith long ago, to bring forth a demon into whatever Eden Salem Village would be able to reconstruct for itself.

That fear suddenly stung in her like thistles.

"I could kill it now!" she cried out to the quiet man beside her, "kill it before it lives, for it has not quickened yet! Tansy or juniper--"

"No," he said slowly, understanding that she did not plot this violence to protect herself. "You must not do that. For still we do not know--"

"Do not know what?"

"The father's name."

"He has answered to many," she quoted bitterly.

"I think perhaps he has answered to only one."

"And that?"

"Tom Purchas."

Night, the color of wild grapes, poured swiftly now down the yellow sky. She could not see the outline of the face beside her, but the gentle voice went on with its message of healing wisdom.

"First, we must recognize that good is greater than evil, and that Tom was a good man."

"Was he? He was young and hot and easily tempted when I knew him."

"That is the naughtiness of children--it does not condemn the man. He would have helped himself to forbidden sweets if he could, but he would not have harmed his neighbor. Do you think his shape would lend itself to an evil power for your destruction? Do you think an evil power could command it?"

"Then--how?"

"I do not know. God's will is a glass wherein all things are made plain, but in this life we see through it but darkly--a gleam here and there. I know that none

of my brethren in the churches of the Bay would side with me. They might even counsel that you should be put to death for the threat to mankind that may lie within you. But I shall tell you what I think. When you saw, in your house that night, two men stand before you, the one grew dimmer and weaker at the same moment that the other waxed more strong?"

"Yes."

"I give it to you that what went out from the one went into the other, and that it was not the evil spirit, but the spirit of life--the power to feel and move and be--the spirit that comes from God and is in itself neither good nor evil, being greater than all. That spirit had the color of evil while it lived in the evil shape, and the power of virtue when it raised your goodman up and gave him to you."

The minister's voice quickened with excitement in the growing dusk, his eyes shone, not seeing the stubble field they looked upon.

"Satan would give up being Satan if he could be Tom Purchas, because while he was Tom he learned what it was to be a goodman made out of earth who lay with a woman who loved him. That is better than to be King of Hell, surely. And God puts it in my head to ask you now, who Satan was before he became the King of Hell?"

"Why--why--the Prince of Light who fell from Heaven."

"So at the worst, your child will have a fallen angel for a father. He was not conceived wholly without celestial grace. I say to you that there was more good than evil about at his getting. A man and a woman who had always loved, brought together in spite of Death and Hell, by a divinity, even though it be a fallen one--you need not fear for the child of such a mating."

Remember leaned weakly against the oak tree.

"You must believe in your child, my dear, just as you believed in its father when you took him to you. And you must plan how to bear it and rear it in peace. You do not want to be scourged again through the streets of Salem."

"No."

"Go away from here. Go to Boston and set up for a new-made widow. It has been done so before, and will be again. No--Boston is too close by. There are other towns in the colonies--there is England--"

Remember was not listening to him. Instead, she caught a movement in the shadows sloping below them. A man, tall, slightly bent, very familiar, toiled up the plowed land. John Wise, hearing the footsteps, stopped speaking and looked too.

"It's Stephen!" she gasped. "Stephen Malbon! I cannot face him! He must know about Briony--how we let the Devil get her!"

"Do not be afraid," said the minister, putting his arm across her shoulders. "Briony was tempted, even as you were tempted. She fell, where you were strong. She yielded to the sweet weakness of the flesh, and you could not have saved her from it. Go back to your house after a little, and leave us here. I will tell him of your strange circumstances, and he is known everywhere for his kind heart. He has ships at his command, too. Perhaps he will help you to go away."

Together they stood up to greet Stephen. But when he came even with them he stumbled and kept his head down as if he were the one who had done wrong. At first he could hardly speak, but John Wise talked to him cheerfully of last week's high tides and the price of corn at market, till the tenseness eased out of all of them and they came to sit together on the wall.

"I do not know how Briony left you," Stephen finally began. "She is in Boston now."

"In Boston--?" quavered Remember.

"I shall tell you what I know of it--as I heard it when my ship made port last week. My good friends told me. Briony did not. She does not talk. She sits with her head bent and weaves her fingers all day long in her lap."

John Wise did not touch Remember's hand, but she could feel his supporting strength, firm as the tree beside her. Stephen went on, while the evening thickened around them and the first stars glinted in the pale sky.

"Toward the end of September, one fair morning after a night of rain, a coach finer than Governor Andros used in his time drove past the Common, and in it rode Briony and a young man. A handsome young man, dark they said, with a moneyed air. Everywhere he went he smiled, and bought wine, and made friends, but she spoke to no one and never raised her eyes, so people thought her either sick or shy. He took lodgings for them in the house of rich Widow Thornton in the Cornhill, and he said she behaved as she did because she was a young wife, delicately raised, and unaccustomed to move freely abroad."

Remember thought of Briony running across the fields, her hair streaming, laughing with the farm girls in Ingersoll's tavern.

"And he dwelt there with her for some ten days. Then one night, just as Widow Thornton had taken her candle for bed, he came rushing down the stairs in a great rage. I fear the good widow had been sipping overly of the cup, for it was in her story that flames played all about him. He muttered something strange

about 'women and apples.' He said the mellow ones were fit only to taste and throw away, and he fled into the street toward the harbor. That night three ships anchored there burned down to the water's edge. He has not been seen since. I have taken a house for Briony with servants to care for her. The goodwives say that she will bear a child."

"Shall I go to her, Stephen?" asked Remember uncertainly. "It may be I could comfort her."

"Now that is the strangest part. When I said I would fetch Remember to her she cried out, 'No, no! If you do, I will drown myself!' Why did she say that?"

Remember moaned a little. The minister spoke.

"Stephen," he said, "will you walk up Hathorne's Hill with me? It is high there, and clear. We can look out over the treetops to Salem and the sea, or westward after the sunlight. What knowledge I have of this thing I will share with you, and God may yet speak in our hearts and tell us how to put straight that which is crooked. And you"--he touched Remember's sleeve with fingers light and strong--"go home out of the chill. Rake up the fire and put on the pot for supper. We shall not be long behind you."

Down the old, dim fields she went, eastward to the old, dark house, while behind her the men climbed up into the evening land which seemed to burn red though the sun had quite gone. My child, she thought, will not be a demon. He, too, in his time, will go up the bright hills to seek the word of God. She shifted her basket and the nuts in it rattled cheerily together. She smiled to herself in the night. Her child would not be all spirit either. He would be made as fast out of clay as ever his mother was. He would find it good to gather brown shagbarks on an autumn afternoon.

CHAPTER 23
The New Earth

JANUARY, 1697, burned blue in the sky and blinding white on the snowy roofs and slopes of Boston. Remember stood between the narrow pews and bowed her head, glad to shut out the bitter brightness of the frozen streets around the South Meeting House. All churches were alike, too cold, too high in the beam, too shadowy in the corners, she thought, but God must like them that way, and it was not her part to gainsay God. She looked down at the flaxen head of her eldest son and hoped that his jacket fitted snugly enough to keep out the cold. She smoothed her fur-lined mantle, and decided that she looked no worse than the city women around her. She glanced at Stephen Malbon on the men's side. It had been Stephen's idea that she might like to be in Boston today when Mr. Willard preached his great sermon asking God's forgiveness for the sins the colony had committed five years ago in the witchcraft time, and Judge Sewall stood up to do public penance for his part in the work of Oyer and Terminer. Stephen always did what he thought would please her, had done so ever since he had married her in time to claim her eldest son for his, and the younger ones were his indeed. He kept a house and garden for her, close to his wharves by Salem Harbor, and both of them had made it a good and pleasant place for children to grow up in. And she could lie beside him in the night and be as faithful to Tom as he was to Rose. Their companionship was for this lifetime, to soften the hard and thorny ways of it, and it was good, but the great loves were forever. Stephen could reassure her if she grew unduly troubled at her son's childish mischief, and she could comfort him when he came home sorrowful, as he always did after he had been to see his daughter.

Yes, Stephen was right. She was glad to be in Boston today, in spite of the rough trip over the winter bay in the small catch they had boarded yesterday in Ipswich River, after leaving the younger children with Polly Wicom. That night they lay in a tavern in Sentry Street, in a chamber looking over the drifted Common where her father had met her mother years ago. Never once had Remember stepped foot in the fine house where Briony still dwelt with her serving women, her face empty, her heart unrevealed by any words.

Skirts rustled and boots scraped at the rear of the church.

"Mr. Willard comes!" hissed a plump woman in a beaver cloak who stood

beside her.

And Mr. Willard did come, his coat collar turned up to meet his hat brim in the rear, snow on his boots, his mild features blue and congested from the frosty air in the street. He stepped down the aisles of the crowded church, passing Remember. When he neared the pulpit, a portly man with a flowing wig, round cheeks, and a sharp nose, cleared his throat, stood away from his pew, and solemnly handed a scroll to the minister.

"That's Judge Sewall--his penance!" shrilled Remember's neighbor, craning her neck, goose-like.

Mr. Willard took the scroll and bowed, then strode to the end of the church and turned about, facing them from the pulpit. He prayed briefly for a blessing on this day of fast for those innocents whom the Court had mistakenly put to death. Then he began to read from the Word. All over the great, cold room, little puffs of white rose gently from the faces under bonnet and periwig; the visible breath God had breathed into Adam, going back again, during worship, to Him who was the Source and the Life. As the good minister read, his own people, and the visitors from Essex who were scattered among them, forgot the misery of frost-bitten flesh and empty bellies, contemplating the beauty and terror that had come upon Patmos Island long ago.

He read how the waters turned into blood and wormwood, and Remember tasted again the brackish tides of the South River the day they had swum her for a witch off English's wharf. She looked at Philip English where he stood, close to Stephen, swarthy, ruffled, always a little foreign, not quite of Salem the way the Ingersolls and the Putnams were of it. Mary did not complement him on the women's side, being more than two years buried, for the weeks of her imprisonment had broken her frail health past mending and caused her early death. Philip was courting Sarah Ingersoll now, Sam having died a year after Mary. Poor Sam, and his cure for ye bald head which he had never needed! Sarah would bustle through the high-ceilinged rooms where Mary had moved graciously, but Salem would like her the better for it. And there had been other deaths than Mary's. Marshal Herrick had gone, and young Sheriff Corwin, and true to the prophecy John Horne had shouted over Remember's sea-drenched body, Philip English had kept back the corpse from burial because of its crime against his wife. Francis Nourse, too, had given over his land to his sons and daughters and gone to mix his dust with Rebecca's under the hemlock trees. Samuel Parris put up a gravestone over his wife Elizabeth, and Neddy Winster had gone down to his father under Orchard Farm.

There had been marriages, too. Elizabeth Proctor and John Willard's Margaret took new fathers for their children, and rightly. The ways of Noah when he

stocked the Ark were old-fashioned even then, but they were still wise. Sarah Nourse had married away into Marblehead and begged that Remember come to be with her at her first lying-in, and Prudence and Tamar were sharing Jonathan's acres with two steady lads, brothers from Newbury. Bishop, the sawyer, took him a new wife, a gentle girl not like Bridget, and Sarah Osborne's Irish Alex could hardly lament the gray invalid now that he had pretty Ruth Sibley. Mary Walcott, married to a stranger, was seen no more in the Village, and Remember never knew whether John Horne's curse had followed her or not, but of course she held her own opinion. If Mary hummed a song now to speed a winter afternoon's dull spinning, she probably did not sing of Johnny who was a shoemaker.

Remember watched the purple and orange lights glimmer and break in the heart of a great icicle hanging against the diamond-shaped panes of the middle window. She looked across the church at George Burroughs, older, more like his father, the hurt quite gone from the flecked amber of his eyes. She watched George for a while to see if he would glance even once toward Briony, but he did not. And why should he? He had a ruddy, laughing wife at home in Ipswich, a girl who laughed now as Briony used to do and would not again. A man needed laughter in his house as well as a good cook and bedfellow, and when George Burroughs thought of his father swinging in the hot air of an August afternoon, he must need laughter more than others. She looked back at the iridescence of the icicle. Mr. Willard read about the riders whose breasts were covered with plates of jacinth.

"I am a grown woman with three sons," said Remember to herself, "as wise as I shall ever be--but what am I to tell them if they ask me what jacinth is? I have never known, and I do not know where to find out." Jacinth! They would ask her harder things. They would ask her about good and evil, sin and God, and Satan's power. What should she say to them? Perhaps John Wise would know.

She looked where the Ipswich minister stood towering above the forward pews, and caught him lifting a weathered hand to put back a lock of his graying hair. Half turning, his eyes met hers, and between them flashed something stronger than the fire that had gone out from John Horne to his creatures in the meeting house years ago. Devil might prick them over the coals in time, but they had done as much for him when he had walked on earth among them, and Devil could never change that. The bond between them was not the sweet bond of lovers, but they had shared an experience as deep as love. Together they had stood side by side in the great battle for man's soul, for the universe. They had taken the one tower and held the one hill God had given them to take and hold. But there was no complacence in their

knowledge, for beyond this time of truce who knew what might befall. They had stood up to their time and had their part in it, and that was a thing so sad and glorious, a thing so soon over, a thing everlasting. He smiled reassuringly at the fair head just below her elbow. Together across the little space of church, across the great space that separates each soul from the other, they turned again to the pulpit.

Mr. Willard read of the woman who was about to be delivered of a child, when lo, a dragon stood before her. That was too common a thing to write down. Did not a dragon--nay, a whole herd of dragons--stand before every woman about to be delivered of a child? Not only the dragons of pain, but the dragons of fear for what might befall the unborn in this thorny life that yawned with snares for all men's sons.

"For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and God has given them blood to drink," read Mr. Willard. Remember looked for Mr. Noyes, but she could not see him there.

Yes, Massachusetts had shed the blood of saints. Slowly, through the painful winter after the executions, when many people would have starved had not Philip English shipped them wheat from Boston in his free gift, the country realized what it had done. Men and women, publicly, and on bare chamber floors, went down on their knees to pray forgiveness for their part in destroying the innocent. A few, like Judge Stoughton, grumbled that the Court was like to rid the land of witches if its great work had not been stayed, but more, with Judge Sewall, repented in bitterness and shame. In the following May, by Governor Phipps's order, the gaols were emptied and the accused inmates allowed to go limping back to their rifled homes and scattered families. But no act of Governor Phipps, no prayer of a recanting judge, could set right the addled wits in little Dorcas Good's head, nor ease for Sarah Nourse the memory of her mother's body, stained and mangled.

Ann Putnam, an invalid, moved rarely abroad now, almost as stricken as Dorcas, and lustier members of the Circle fell into vicious ways and continued to bring disgrace upon the town. Dan Andrew had returned from hiding, and had joined with most of the Village--and they had John Wise's help at it--to drive Samuel Parris from his ministry. And they had succeeded. Deacon Ingersoll bought back the young orchard, and the hated parson was packing to be gone. Tituba never returned, being sold to pay her gaol fees, and no one practiced the black arts even in jest in Salem Village any more. The farmers did not talk of that terrible year, but each one knew in his heart that the Devil had come among them as a man and held them in his power for a season. Already, members in General Court were demanding that the heirs of the

slaughtered witches should be recompensed in pounds sterling, and most of the Colony considered it a just debt. Now the Church proclaimed this fast day everywhere, and services of repentance for the wrongs inflicted during the great delusion would be read out in every pulpit around Massachusetts Bay.

Remember looked ahead of her and watched Briony Malbon. Briony stood wrapped in the rich cloak that she herself had made for Stephen to take to his daughter, her eyes vague, her face uncolored with any emotion; a young tree blasted by lightning, that had not fallen but would never put forth leaves again. By her side stood her son, born on the same hot June night as Remember's. Remember had never seen his face and could not now--only the back of his head.

Mr. Willard finished reading and cleared his throat. As the warmth of the vision died out of them, people began to shiver. Shadows moved out from the corners and the light slipped away beyond the windows, orange in the sky, purple on the snow. The minister announced that he would now read a communication from Brother Sewall. All eyes turned to the Judge where he stood with bowed head. He did not look like the same proud man who had voted to hang Bridget Bishop. Trouble had come again and again to Brother Sewall since that day, and always found him at home. Mr. Willard unwound the scroll and delivered its message solemnly.

"Samuel Sewall, sensible of the reiterated strokes of God upon himself and his family, and being sensible as to the guilt contracted upon the opening of the late commission of Oyer and Terminer at Salem (to which the order for this Day relates) he is, upon many accounts, more concerned than he knows of, desires to take the Blame and the Shame of it, asking pardon of men, and especially desiring prayers that God, who has unlimited authority, would pardon that sin and all his other sins, personal and relative; and according to his infinite Benignity, and Sovereignty, not visit the sin of him or of any other upon himself or any of his kin, nor upon the Land. But that he would powerfully defend him against all temptation to sin for the future and vouchsafe him the efficacious saving Conduct of his Word and Spirit."

As Mr. Willard made an end, Judge Sewall sat down, and others, following his example, settled back approvingly in their pews. Only a great man could make himself so humble in the sight of God and the South Meeting House! They felt noble in his nobility, cleansed and pardoned, as they were sure the Judge must be.

The Sermon began. In measured tones, Samuel Willard, who with John Wise had always pleaded that mercy should prevail over justice, reviewed the history of that awful half year in Salem. He did not speak, as most of his

brothers would have done, of Hell and Death. He told how the witches had been accused, tried, hanged. He said that a great delusion had settled upon men's minds; that it was not unlikely Satan himself had sent the delusion. He said that wrong had been done and must be atoned for. He spoke words of sympathy to the kindred of the dead, and if any man or woman was guilty of bearing false witness against his neighbor, he would pray, he promised, for that sinner's soul. He spoke particularly to the women of Salem Village, for with them it had had its beginning and its end. Some of them had practiced wicked arts and some had died--not always the same ones. But in the end it would all be well with them, for the innocent would be resurrected with golden crowns, and the guilty, through the blood of God's mercy, might be washed as white as snow--if they would walk all their remaining days with the Lord.

"And to the Women of Salem Village," cried the Reverend Samuel Willard, "I say Wrong and the Spirit of Wrong has been among you, but it has gone away!" He held out both his arms. "I say to you, in God's name, Peace, my Daughters!"

Remember closed her eyes and felt a sudden flood of black waters pouring through her mind. Now she had heard the two great opposing powers of the universe use the same words to counsel peace--but she had not found it yet. Love she had known, but love is no more like peace than loving is like sleep. She clutched the pew ahead of her.

The minister preached on--of the New Heaven and the New Earth. Man had seen his error revealed in blood, he said, and would never persecute his Brother more.

"Fear and Distrust and Hatred are gone from among men," insisted Mr. Willard happily. "No more shall we sin, one against the other. No more shall the innocent be falsely accused, robbed of their possessions, haled from their houses by night and flung into gaol; no more shall their temples of flesh be desecrated and their souls denied free intercourse with God. The spirit of persecution has gone from among us, and our land lies green and open, a kingdom of sweet brotherhood and love. We are entering that New Earth promised us for long, for Satan has gone forever from our midst, and our children shall know him not!"

Remember gazed into the clear eyes of her son as he lifted his face to her. She could see guilelessness and strength in the small, blunt features, the strength that goes with a heart and hand open to the world; sometimes she could almost see that diviner light which John Wise had told her might be there. Her son and Tom Purchas' son, however strangely begotten, she thought. And she believed the minister.

But then she looked over at the sleek head of Briony's boy. Even as she watched him he turned and stared at her. In the small face flashed a pair of bright dark eyes, but when their look met hers the brightness fell away. Something incredibly old and evil glared out for a moment and was gone. And he, too, would be there, to share with her child and Tom's the wide green kingdom, the New Jerusalem!

The leaves of the Bay Psalm book rustled around her, and the words of *Old Hundred* poured out into the dusk from the throats of a grateful people, God's people delivered forever from the whirling powers of the dark air.

Remember looked irresolutely from one child to the other. She was not sure.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected.

Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Peace, My Daughters* by Shirley Barker]