

INT. PROCTOR & ELIZABETH

**ELIZABETH**

(Quietly)

Oh, the noose, the noose is up!

**PROCTOR**

There'll be no noose.

**ELIZABETH**

She wants me dead. I knew all week it would come to this.

**PROCTOR**

(Without conviction.)

They dismissed it. You heard her say--

**ELIZABETH**

And what of tomorrow? She will cry me out until they take me!

**PROCTOR**

Sit you down.

**ELIZABETH**

She wants me dead, John, you know it!

**PROCTOR**

I say sit down!

*She sits, trembling. He speaks quietly, trying to keep his wits.*

Now we must be wise, Elizabeth

**ELIZABETH**

(Sarcasm and a sense of being lost.)

Oh, indeed, indeed!

**PROCTOR**

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

**ELIZABETH**

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

**PROCTOR**

(His soul hardening as he senses...)

What have I to say to Abigail?

**ELIZABETH**

(Delicately)

John- grant me this. you have a faulty understanding of young girls. There is a promise made in any bed--

**PROCTOR**

(Striving against his anger.)

What promise!

**ELIZABETH**

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

*PROCTOR's anger is rising; he cannot speak.*

It is her dearest hope, John, I know it. There be a thousand names; why does she call mine? There be a certain danger in calling such a name- I am no Goody Good that sleeps in ditches, nor Osburn, drunk and half-witted. She'd dare not call out such a farmer's wife but there be monstrous profit in it. She thinks to take my place, John.

**PROCTOR**

She cannot think it!

(He knows it's true.)

**ELIZABETH**

("Reasonably")

John, have you ever shown her somewhat of contempt? She cannot pass you in the church but you will blush-

**PROCTOR**

I may blush for my sin.

**ELIZABETH**

I think she sees another meaning in that blush.

**PROCTOR**

And what see you? What see you, Elizabeth?

**ELIZABETH**

(Conceding.)

I think you be somewhat ashamed, for I am there, and she so close.

**PROCTOR**

When will you know me, woman? Were I stone I would have cracked for shame this seven month!

**ELIZABETH**

Then go and tell her she's a whore. Whatever promise she may sense- break it, John, break it.

**PROCTOR**

(Between his teeth.)

Good, then. I'll go. He starts for his rifle.

**ELIZABETH**

(Trembling, fearfully.)

Oh, how unwillingly!

**PROCTOR**

(Turning on her.)

I will curse her hotter than the oldest cinder in hell. But pray, begrudge me not my anger!

**ELIZABETH**

Your anger! I only ask you--

**PROCTOR**

Woman, am I so base? Do you truly think me base?

**ELIZABETH**

I never called you base.

**PROCTOR**

then how do you charge me with such a promise? The promise that a stallion gives a mare I gave that girl!

**ELIZABETH**

Then why do you anger with me when I bid you break it?

**PROCTOR**

Because it speaks deceit, and I am honest! But I'll plead no more! I see now your spirit twists around the single error of my life, and I will never tear it free!

**ELIZABETH**

(Crying out)

You'll tear it free- when you come to know that I will be your only wife, or no wife at all! She has an arrow in you yet, John Proctor, and you know it well!