

The last chapter of the novel 'the crucible'

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'Here. Now. It's all clear,' whispered Abigail coarsely, choking back a cough. Mercy squeezed through the small gap in the fence to join Abigail the other side. Together, grasping each other's hands for comfort, they darted through the trees, into the forest that served as a barrier between the sea and Salem. They ran along a faint path of trampled grass, till they arrived at a clearing, the same clearing where they and the others had danced six months ago. They stopped at the edge, panting for breath, with the moonlight streaming in through the gap in the trees illuminating the way ahead.

They gazed around in silence, till Mercy sniggered. 'I was just rememb'rin' the time we danced, and Parris,' she paused, smiling in amusement, 'and Parris, he saw me dancin' naked!'

'Aye, and dear Betty,' said Abby, 'she were too young, we should never have let her come.'

'That were wierdish, though. She lay on her bed, frozen, whimp'ring for her Mama. Aye, that were wierdish.'

'Mary meant to tell-I know it. I remember her words even now, 'Witchery's a hangin' error', 'it's a sin to conjure', 'Abby imitated, with a likeness that caused Mercy to shiver with remembrance as it all came back to her head.

'Did you hear what happened to Tituba? She left the courtroom with Sarah Good, shoutin' to a cow 'Take me home, Devil; Devil take me home.' She told them all that the Devil, 'him be pleasure-man in Barbados!''

Mercy laughed, as Abby ran through the trees shouting charms in Tituba's Barbados accent. 'You beg me conjure, come, make charm with me!' Abby

shrieked, violently swaying over an imaginary fire, as Tituba had done, calling out the names of the ingredients as she plucked them from the air. She beckoned to Mercy in a low whisper, 'Come try Tituba's charm, come drink to kill Goody Proctor.'

'Abby, you'll make me dream corruptions soon, and yourself,' said Mercy, with a serious tone to her voice. 'You make me think I did see spirits, that I did see that yellow bird, on the beam, behind the rafter in the court room.'

'Come on Mercy, you're harder than that,' teased Abby, 'if I hadn't seen your face, I would have thought you were Mary Warren.'

Mercy playfully punched Abby in the arm.

Abby lay there shivering as the cold night breeze passed through the forest, whistling through the trees. The events of the last six months ran through her head, it was only the spring when they had danced. The bluebells had gone now, but the memories hadn't. The trial had taken its toll on Abby, her face was pale and the bags under her eyes grew each day. The days that went on forever in the courtroom, tirelessly questioned, till they got the answer they wanted, truth or not. She still had the guilt feeling in her, that Proctor's death was not meant to happen, and that she could have stopped it. But she forced this to the back of her mind, but it haunted her when her mind was still, each night, and slowly, it was wearing her down. She looked over at Mercy, whose large figure was stretched out on the grass beside her, her mouth wide open, loudly inhaling the cold air. Mercy was a tough girl,

she had to be to work at the Putnams', yet had a conscience but Abby knew that it could easily be convinced by some persuasive talking.

She slowly drifted into doze but was easily awoken by the first light of dawn. She leapt up, knowing they had to be out of the region fast, or else they would be caught, made to return and punished. Within minutes, Mercy and Abby were running through the trees till they were out in the open fields at least three miles from Salem.

'We'll have to stop for some food at a farm, else we'll never make it to Andover,' Mercy said.

'When the sun rises over those hills,' said Abby pointing to the East where the red, early morning light was focused. 'Then we'll find the nearest farm, and get somethin' till last us till tonight.'

They walked for an hour, hardly talking. Their shoes pounded on the dirt track road, with an urgency that urged them to walk faster. They reached a turning to a farm, and turned down.

'I'm goin' to talk to the farmer,' said Abby, taking control. 'Stay a few metres back, but still in view.' Abby strided on up to the door and beat her fist on it, before Mercy could argue.

'Good Sir, we have been travellin' for over a week now, and our bodies are weak. We had to leave our small village as Mercy, this girl here, she was found guilty of traffickin' with spirits.' Abby's voice deliberately started to crackle, as if attempting to hold in her tears but not very successfully. 'She

was so weak; I felt I couldn't leave her to run away by herself, if she didn't, she would have had to face the rope, and I care for her, I do.'

'Aye,' the farmer said, nodding. 'And so you gave all up for this sinner here.'

'Aye, 'tis right good Sir. My name will be soiled in these parts, but Mercy would never have made it to Boston by herself. I felt it my duty as a friend.' A tear dropped from Abby's eye, and she made no attempt to wipe it away.

'I'm sure my wife will have some spares for you,' said the farmer, smiling kindly down at her. 'But she won't like you sharing it with your friend, she will never help the devil in any way. Goody Jones, do you have any left of yesterday's pie?'

'Aye, of course, I'll bring it to you right away,' called a voice from within the small old building. Within moments, a small plump lady had appeared, with a kind smile, and welcoming eyes, like her husband's. 'Oh, how long have you been travelling, child?' she asked, looking at Abby, 'you'll need to get some of this down you soon. Here let me wrap it up in a cloth.' She disappeared again, for a moment, ferreted around in some drawers, and appeared with a patterned cloth to wrap up the pie. 'Here you go. And safe journey.'

'Safe journey,' called the two of them, as Abby turned round and started to walk towards Mercy. She stopped at the sight of Mercy's face. It was tense with anger, and as red as the fresh berries on the bush nearby.

'Abigail Williams, how dare you? You lied, you lied, I never-' she broke off in anger. Her eyes could have shot like arrows. Her body was stiff and started to shake.

'We had to get food, I had to,' Abby replied defiantly.

'You lied,' repeated Mercy, spitting the words out as if they were poisonous. 'You had to leave too, Abigail Williams, we left as you could not walk through the village without hearing your soiled name mentioned, and people running from your face. It were not my fault we had to leave, Abby, 'twas yours as well. Tell them that, Abby, tell them that you caused the death of John Proctor, and mark it Abby, mark it, Elizabeth is sure to hang once her baby is born.' Mercy was almost shouting by now.

Abby kicked a stone in the road. 'Look we had to get food,' she explained, knowing she shouldn't have, but never prepared to admit. 'I'm goin' to Andover, and then to Boston. I don't care about you, I saved you Mercy from the judges, I saved you, and this is how you repay me? Well Mercy Lewis, you go by yourself and I'll go by myself and we'll see who gets there in the end.'

'Fine, I can manage myself, I'm eighteen now, older than you, and you never helped, just caused problems. 'twas your fault we danced, you begged Tituba to conjure, because of you, Abigail Williams, the whole country's talkin' witchcraft.'

At this, Abby turned her back on Mercy and strode down the dirt track, her eyes focused on the skyline ahead, not turning to look back, at Mercy's

aghast face. She smiled a tight, forced smile, but she was happy, Mercy was shocked.

Mercy's face was frozen in horror, the words had just come out of her mouth, she knew, although she was older than Abby, she couldn't look after herself, and Abby could. It was Abby's imagination that had lied them through, it was Abby's determination that would get her to Boston, it was Abby who could look after herself, not Mercy.

She could never give in to Abby, so she turned dejectedly back down the long straight road and started to walk the long way back to Salem. She dragged her feet on the ground, wishing she hadn't said anything. She was tempted to run after her, but it was too far, and that was exactly what Abby wanted.

Abby, meanwhile, was far in the distance. She sat down on a boulder by the side of the road to rest her aching feet. She closed her eyes and thought of Boston. She imagined the skyline view, the way it had always been described. A big town, busy with people, no one would know her name, or what she had done. She was about to start a new life. She could smell all the market fish, and could hear the buzz of noise from the inhabitants. The place was alive with colour, she had left Salem, and its old wooden buildings, her mud covered clothes, faded in time. Her life seemed awash of brown and grey, but now as she thought ahead, she dreamt of the exciting new start, about to begin.