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American Literature 11A Ms. Ciuperca

***THE CRUCIBLE***  PASSAGES CLOSE READING

**ACT IV**

1. **Hathorne:** I met him yesterday coming out of his house, and I bid him good

morning - and he wept and went his way. I think it is not well the village sees

him so unsteady.

**Danforth:** Perhaps he have some sorrow.

**Cheever,** *stamping his feet against the cold:* I think it be the cows, sir.

**Danforth:** Cows?

**Cheever:** There be so many cows wanderin’ the highroads, now their masters are in the jails, and much disagreement who they will belong to now. I know Mr. Parris be arguin’ with farmers all yesterday - there is great contention, sir, about the cows. Contention make him weep, sir; it were always a man that weep for contention. *He turns, as do Hathorne and Danforth, hearing someone coming up the corridor.* *Danforth raises his head as Parris enters. He is gaunt, frightened, and sweating in his greatcoat.*

1. **Parris:** There is news, sir, that the court - the court must reckon with. My niece, sir, my niece - I believe she has vanished.

**Danforth:** Vanished!

**Parris:** I had thought to advise you of it earlier in the week, but -

**Danforth:** Why? How long is she gone?

**Parris:** This be the third night. You see, sir, she told me she would stay a night with Mercy Lewis. And next day, when she does not return, I send to Mr. Lewis to inquire. Mercy told him she would sleep in *my* house for a night.

**Danforth:** They are both gone?!

**Parris,** *in fear of him:* They are, sir.

**Danforth,** *alarmed:* I will send a party for them. Where may they be?

**Parris:** Excellency, I think they be aboard a ship. *Danforth stands agape.* My

daughter tells me how she heard them speaking of ships last week, and tonight I discover my - my strongbox is broke into. *He presses his fingers against his* *eyes to keep back tears.*

**Hathorne**, *astonished:* She have robbed you?

**Parris**: Thirty-one pound is gone. I am penniless. *He covers his face and sobs.*

1. **Hale:** Excellency, if you postpone a week and publish to the town that you are striving for their confessions, that speak mercy on your part, not faltering.

**Danforth:** Mr. Hale, as God have not empowered me like Joshua to stop this sun from rising, so I cannot withhold from them the perfection of their punishment.

**Hale**, *harder now:* If you think God wills you to raise rebellion, Mr. Danforth, you are mistaken!

**Danforth**, *instantly:* You have heard rebellion spoken in the town?

**Hale**: Excellency, there are orphans wandering from house to house; abandoned cattle bellow on the highroads, the stink of rotting crops hangs everywhere, and no man knows when the harlots.’ cry will end his life - and you wonder yet if rebellion’s spoke? Better you should marvel how they do not burn your province!

1. **Hale,** *continuing to Elizabeth:* Let you not mistake your duty as I mistook my own. I came into this village like a bridegroom to his beloved, bearing gifts of high religion; the very crowns of holy law I brought, and what I touched with my bright confidence, it died; and where I turned the eye of my great faith, blood flowed up. Beware, Goody Proctor - cleave to no faith when faith brings blood. It is mistaken law that leads you to sacrifice. Life, woman, life is God’s most precious gift; no principle, however glorious, may justify the taking of it. I beg you, woman, prevail upon your husband to confess. Let him give his lie. Quail not before God’s judgment in this, for it may well be God damns a liar less than he that throws his life away for pride. Will you plead with him? I cannot think he will listen to another.

**Elizabeth,** *quietly:* I think that be the Devil’s argument.

1. **Elizabeth**, *quietly, factually:* He were not hanged. He would not answer aye or nay to his indictment; for if he denied the charge they’d hang him surely, and auction out his property. So he stand mute, and died Christian under the law. And so his sons will have his farm. It is the law, for he could not be condemned a wizard without he answer the indictment, aye or nay.

**Proctor:** Then how does he die?

**Elizabeth**, *gently:* They press him, John.

**Proctor**: Press?

**Elizabeth:** Great stones they lay upon his chest until he plead aye or nay. *With a tender smile for the old man:* They say he give them but two words. “Moreweight,.” he says. And died.

**Proctor,** *numbed - a thread to weave into his agony:* .“More weight,.”

**Elizabeth**: Aye. It were fearsome man, Giles Corey.

1. **Proctor**: It is a pretense, Elizabeth.

**Elizabeth**: What is?

**Proctor**: I cannot mount the gibbet like a saint. It is a fraud. .' am not that man.

*She is silent.* My honesty is broke, Elizabeth; I am no good man. Nothing’s

spoiled by giving them this lie that were not rotten long before.

**Elizabeth**: And yet you’ve not confessed till now. That speak goodness in you.

**Proctor**: Spite only keeps me silent. It is hard to give a lie to dogs. *Pause, for the first time he turns directly to her.* I would have your forgiveness, Elizabeth,

**Elizabeth**: It is not for me to give, John, I am -

**Proctor**: I’d have you see some honesty in it. Let them, that never lied die now to keep their souls. It is pretense for me, a vanity that will not blind God nor keep my children out of the wind. *Pause.* What say you?

**Elizabeth**, *upon a heaving sob that always threatens:* John, it come to naught

that I should forgive you, if you’ll not forgive yourself. *Now he turns away a little, in great agony.* It is not my soul, John, it is yours.

1. **Elizabeth**, *in terror, weeping:* I cannot judge you, John, I cannot!

**Proctor**: Then who will judge me? *Suddenly clasping his hands:* God in Heaven, what is John Proctor, what is John Proctor? *He moves as an animal, and a fury is riding in him,* *a tantalized search.* I think it is honest, I think so; I am no saint. *As though she had* *denied this he calls angrily at her:* Let Rebecca go like a saint; for me it is fraud!

*Voices are heard in the hall, speaking together in suppressed excitement.*

**Elizabeth**: I am not your judge, I cannot be. *As though giving him release:* Do as you will, do as you will!

**Proctor**: Would you give them such a lie? Say it. Would you ever give them this? *She cannot answer.* You would not; if tongs of fire were singeing you you would not! It is evil. Good, then - it is evil, and I do it!

1. **Proctor**: No, no. I have signed it. You have seen me. It is done! You have no

need for this.

**Parris:** Proctor, the village must have proof that -

**Proctor**: Damn the village! I confess to God, and God has seen my name on

this! It is enough!

**Danforth**: No, sir, it is -

**Proctor:** You came to save my soul, did you not? Here! I have confessed

myself; it is enough!

**Danforth:** You have not con -

**Proctor**: I have confessed myself! Is there no good penitence but it be public?

God does not need my name nailed upon the church! God sees my name; God knows how black my sins are! It is enough!

**Danforth:** Mr. Proctor -

**Proctor:** You will not use me! I am no Sarah Good or Tituba,

I am John Proctor! You will not use me! It is no part of salvation that you should use me!

**Danforth**: I do not wish to -

**Proctor**: I have three children - how may I teach them to walk like men in the world, and I sold my friends?

**Danforth:** You have not sold your friends -

**Proctor:** Beguile me not! I blacken all of them when this is nailed to the church the very day they hang for silence!

1. *His breast heaving, his eyes staring, Proctor tears the paper and crumples it,*

*and he is weeping in fury, but erect.*

**Danforth**: Marshal!

**Parris**, *hysterically, as though the tearing paper were his life:* Proctor,Proctor!

**Hale:** Man, you will hang! You cannot!

**Proctor,** *his eyes fully of tears:* I can. And there’s your first marvel, that I can.

You have made your magic now, for now I do think I see some shred of

goodness in John Proctor. Not enough to weave a banner with, but white

enough to keep it from such dogs. *Elizabeth, in a burst of terror, rushes to him*

*and weeps against his hand.* Give them no tear! Tears pleasure them! Show

honor now, show a stony heart and sink them with it! *He has lifted her, and*

kisses her now with great passion.

1. **Hale:** Woman, plead with him! *He starts to rush out the door, and then goes back to her.* Woman! It is pride, it is vanity. *She avoids his eyes, and moves to the window. He drops to his knees.* Be his helper! - What profit him to bleed? Shall the dust praise him? Shall the worms declare his truth? Go to him, take his shame away!

**Elizabeth**, *supporting herself against collapse, grips the bars of the window, and with a cry:* He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!