THE CRUCIBLE

# ACT III NOTES

* Giles’ wife, Martha, has been accused (mostly because he told on her for reading ‘strange’ books
* Francis Nurse suddenly interjects to say that “we” are desperate—they’ve been coming for three days and can’t be heard. We learn that Rebecca was accused and arrested earlier that morning.
* Danforth again says that the men should write their plea and “in due time” he will attend to it, but Francis interrupts to claim that the girls are frauds and are deceiving everyone. Danforth is shocked, and perhaps a little offended. Seventy-two people have been condemned to hang and four hundred are in the jails—by his signature, he says.
* Proctor brings in Mary Warren, who tells Danforth it was all pretense (lies).
* Parris claims that they’ve come to overthrow the court.
* Cheever says that Proctor has missed church, so he’s surely overthrowing the court.
* Proctor answers that he loves God, but he does not love Parris. Then, since Cheever says he sometimes plows on Sunday, Proctor has to admit that he does sometimes plow on Sunday. Giles says other Christians sometimes plow on Sundays, and Hale again sticks up for Proctor.
* Then we learn that Elizabeth Proctor is pregnant, though they can find no sign of it. Proctor says his wife never lies, so if she says she is pregnant then indeed she is. So Danforth says he will keep her another month and if she begins to show signs, they will keep her another year until she delivers the baby. Will Proctor now drop the charge? No.
* Proctor hands him a testament first—signed by people who give their good opinion of Rebecca, Elizabeth, and Martha.There are ninety-one names on the list.
* Parris says they should be summoned for questioning, but Francis, angry, says he gave his word that no harm would come to them for signing the paper. Parris says it’s an attack on the court.
* Hathorne says they should be examined and Danforth reluctantly gives in. Francis is horrified.
* Unfortunately, when Danforth asks for proof that Putnam has accused Jacobs to get his property, Giles cannot give the name of the honest man who heard Putnam say it. There is too much fear of the court to come forward openly.
* Hale tells Danforth that he doesn’t want this to go further. It’s out of hand.
* Hale repeats what he said, that accusation does not equal guilt. Danforth continues to insist that an “uncorrupted man” should not fear the court. He tells Giles that he is under arrest for contempt.
* Giles lunges toward Putnam, but Proctor holds him back.
* Then Proctor confesses. He says Abigail is no child. He says she has twice laughed during church. Parris defends her, saying she was under Tituba’s power at the time. Proctor instructs Mary to tell them how they used to dance in the woods. Mary glances from Danforth to Abigail and is clearly intimidated.
* Hathorne begins to question Mary, and Mary admits that when she appeared to choke and faint, claiming that the spirits had come to harm her, it was all pretense.
* Hathorne says if this is true, she can pretend now. And it turns out that Mary can’t faint on command right now—not because she’s lying, but because she lacks the hysteria and group psychology that allowed her to do it. As she tries to find out why, she explains how she thought she saw spirits but did not.
* Danforth is getting worried. He turns to Abigail, asking her to search her heart and see if she, too, has been deceived.
* Abigail is offended. Then, suddenly, she looks up at the air, frightened, and begins to shiver with the cold. She looks at Mary Warren. Then Mercy Lewis and Susanna Walcott also begin to say they’re freezing, and it’s clear they are suggesting that Mary Warren is the one making them feel this.
* Proctor catches Abigail, throws her to the ground/ When the men tell him to stop, Proctor says he knows she’s a whore because he has “known” her—that is, he’s had an affair with her. And he says they must believe him because a man will not throw away his own reputation for no reason.
* When directly asked, “Is your husband a lecher!” Elizabeth says faintly, “No, sir.”
* Danforth tells them to remove her, and Proctor calls out, saying that he had already confessed the truth.When she is gone, he tells the court that she only meant to save his name.
* Reverend Hale stands up for him, saying it is a natural lie to tell, but Danforth says her statement proves that Proctor is a liar. Hale points to Abigail and says she has always seemed like a liar to him.
* At this point, Abigail begins screaming at a “bird” that she claims is Mary. The girls follow her lead. Finally, Mary begins to join them, screaming at Proctor not to touch her, and claiming he’s the Devil’s man. Now the girls begin to praise God and welcome her back into their circle.
* Mary begins to accuse Proctor, saying he came at her day and night to sign the Devil’s book. She says Proctor threatened to murder her if she didn’t go to clear Elizabeth’s name. She yells that she loves God and tells Abigail that she’ll never hurt her any more.
* But Proctor confesses that he thinks God is dead. Then he says a fire is burning and yes, he sees the Devil’s face—it is his face, and Danforth’s face, it is the face of everybody who is afraid to “bring men out of ignorance.”
* Danforth calls for the Marshal to take him and Corey to the jail. Hale denounces the proceedings and storms out of court, stating that he can’t take it anymore.