

Tread Lightly

I can see a face in the sail of the ship. It shifts and morphs with the gale. There are eyebrows, eyes and a mouth. It taunts me. The wind blows the mouth open, and the words flow into my ears.

We think you are disgusting.

You are not like us.

Mr Parris fishes in his pocket for a handkerchief -- he wipes the run of snot caused by the chilled air. He looks over to me and I wrench my eyes to the floor. I will an affectless stare to wash my face. He sits on the stool, and I sit on the floorboards that are muddy and tread-on. I think of the sun and the trees in Barbados, and I am sad.

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It seems as if the world is drowning in sound. I walk down the gravel road to the market. The soft crunch of hooves on straw, my plain shoes squeaking, and a sustained silence fills the grounds. I look up, and the people are muted, staring. *Black*.

Should I hide myself? I clench the basket tighter when the whispers grow. I look down at my shoes, and they are white. I look at my dress, and it is white. I look down at my battered hands and see that they are dark. I know with their biting eyes they see this too. *Filthy*. I see Abigail and brighten at a familiar face, but she draws her bonnet up higher and busies herself with another stall.

When I walk to buy the bread and meat, they jeer, and raucous anger takes home in my ears. *Slave*.

The days are long because there is no one to talk to. I am alone.

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Mr Parris is angry. Mr Parris is always angry. He typhoons into the kitchen and bangs all the pans to the floor.

He tells me the work I am doing is useless, and when he sees his house, everything is always left in disarray. He tells me nothing is clean, and Betty is behaving worse than before.

The barbed face has reappeared and it takes form in the markings of the white floor and in Mr Parris's face. My legs are giving away to blend into the wood of the floor.

Elizabeth runs to me from the top stair, and screams out my anger. *She did nothing! Tituba takes care of me! You blame her for everything!*

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I clean the bedsheets of the makeshift beds on the floor. I sleep next to Betty, and I worry. She is sick again. Blood has suffused up her cheeks, and her eyebrows are wet with hot sweat.

I nurse her until she is sleeping soundly. The winter has wasted Betty away. The girls are interested in dancing, and I engage with them happily. They dance and dance, but I am weary now. They are asking for pain, and they are asking for murder.

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The girls are crying - they are saving themselves and sending me down to hell with the blame. They spit in anger. *Tituba has made us do it. Tituba has lead us to the Devil.* Their faces have morphed from their flushed innocence to the same angled eyebrows and barbed mouth. Parris nods in agreement that the girls have done no wrong, and I have. They have all tried to save themselves, and left me with the rope around my neck and a ledge below my feet.

But at my last stride, I will defeat them. Because while I have nothing, they have everything to lose.

Rationale:

The element of *The Crucible* that I chose to discuss is the characterization of Tituba through flash fiction. My research of nonfiction texts brought me towards multiple articles that discussed Tituba's motives — specifically on she confessed to working with the Devil. I am delving into her mind and writing a few crisp and important scenes (some are prior to the trials and take place in her daily life) to show my understanding of her character. I have inferred that she confessed because of her already low stance in society (clear by explicit themes of power and reputation in the script). Historical context suggests that she is the regarded as the lowest member of society because of her race and her occupation. She is characterized as a scared, oppressed colored slave who's value is akin to nothing.

I use a "face" in multiple scenes to give an actual face to all of the townspeople. Tituba knows that her race and position is why she is so isolated, and in the scenes she feels that she has no choice but to melt back into the colors that the public associates her with. Other than Betty, no one values Tituba, she feels as if she has nothing to lose. She uses her persecution to get Parris into trouble, and to keep herself alive. The title is of this piece is "Tread Lightly," this is because usually when faced with a bitter unknown or a beast, one has to tread lightly.