

The Devil and Daniel Webster

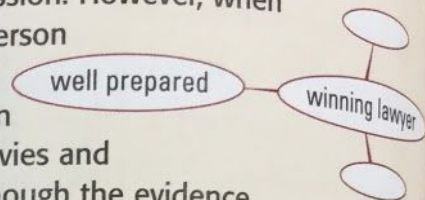
Drama by STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT



"I never deserted a neighbor in trouble yet."

Connect to Your Life

Counsel for the Defense Have you ever heard any lawyer jokes? Our society enjoys making fun of the legal profession. However, when someone is on trial for his or her life, that person stops making jokes and hires a lawyer right away. Think about the lawyers you have seen interviewed on the news or portrayed in movies and TV shows. Which of them won cases even though the evidence seemed stacked against their clients? Using a cluster diagram like the one shown, list the qualities of a winning lawyer.



Build Background

A Silver-Tongued Lawyer In *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, a New England man asks a famous American statesman for help. Although the play is fictional, Daniel Webster was not. Webster was one of the greatest lawyers and best public speakers of the early and middle 1800s. He argued many important cases before the Supreme Court. As a congressman and a senator, Webster strongly defended the Constitution and the Union. His famous words "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!" inspired Northern soldiers during the Civil War.

WORDS TO KNOW Vocabulary Preview

bias	homage
contemptuously	insinuatingly
discordant	intimidation
fanaticism	oppressor
feigned	placidly

Focus Your Reading

LITERARY ANALYSIS HISTORICAL DRAMA A **historical drama** is a play that is set in the past. In all dramas, the **plot** and **characters** are developed through **dialogue** and through action, which is described in the **stage directions**. In this example from the play you are about to read, the dialogue and stage directions work together to reveal that Jabez Stone is nervous about a secret he has kept from his wife:

*Jabez. I wasn't thinking about Mr. Webster. (He takes both her hands.)
Mary, I've got something to tell you. I should have told you before, but I couldn't seem to bear it.*

As you read this play, use both stage directions and lines of dialogue to help you learn about Jabez Stone and Daniel Webster.

ACTIVE READING VISUALIZING WITH STAGE DIRECTIONS **Visualizing** is an attempt to imagine what something looks like based on written or spoken information. To visualize while you are reading a play, look for the following in the **stage directions**:

- details about the sets, furniture, props, and lighting
- descriptions of the **characters'** appearance and actions

READER'S NOTEBOOK As you read the stage directions in this play, pause to visualize the scenes that are being described. Draw or sketch the scenes. Then jot down a few words that describe how you might feel if you were in such a scene.

The Devil and Daniel Webster



STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

CAST

Jabez Stone

Mary Stone

Daniel Webster

Mr. Scratch

Men and Women of Cross Corners, New Hampshire

Justice Hathorne's Clerk

Justice Hathorne

The Fiddler

King Philip

Walter Butler

Simon Girty

Teach

Scene—Jabez Stone's farmhouse.

Time—1841.



A

The scene is the main room of a New Hampshire farmhouse in 1841, a big comfortable room that hasn't yet developed the stuffiness of a front parlor. A door, right, leads to the kitchen—a door, left, to the outside. There is a fireplace, right. Windows, in center, show a glimpse of summer landscape. Most of the furniture has been cleared away for the dance which follows the wedding of Jabez and Mary Stone, but there is a settee or bench by the fireplace, a table, left, with some wedding presents upon it, at least three chairs by the table, and a cider barrel on which the Fiddler sits, in front of the table. Near the table, against the sidewall, there is a cupboard where there are glasses and a jug. There is a clock.

A country wedding has been in progress—the wedding of Jabez and Mary Stone. He is a husky young farmer, around twenty-eight or thirty. The bride is in her early twenties. He is dressed in stiff, store clothes but not ridiculously—they are of good quality and he looks important. The bride is in a simple white or cream wedding dress and may carry a small, stiff bouquet of country flowers.

Now the wedding is over and the guests are dancing. The Fiddler is perched on the cider barrel. He plays and calls square-dance figures. The guests include the recognizable types of a small New England town, doctor, lawyer, storekeeper, old maid, schoolteacher, farmer, etc. There is an air of prosperity and hearty country mirth about the whole affair.

At rise, Jabez and Mary are up left center, receiving the congratulations of a few last guests who talk to them and pass on to the dance. The others are dancing. There is a buzz of conversation that follows the tune of the dance music.

First Woman. Right nice wedding.
First Man. Handsome couple.

Second Woman (passing through crowd with dish of oyster stew). Oysters for supper!

Second Man (passing cake). And layer cake—layer cake—

An Old Man (hobbling toward cider barrel). Makes me feel young again! Oh, by jingo!

An Old Woman (pursuing him). Henry, Henry, you've been drinking cider!

Fiddler. Set to your partners! Do-si-do!¹

Women. Mary and Jabez.

Men. Jabez and Mary.

A Woman. Where's the State Senator?

A Man. Where's the lucky bride?

(With cries of "Mary—Jabez—strike it up, fiddler—make room for the bride and groom," the Crowd drags Mary and Jabez, pleased but embarrassed, into the center of the room and Mary and Jabez do a little solo dance, while the Crowd claps, applauds and makes various remarks.)

ACTIVE READING

VISUALIZE Close your eyes and picture the wedding. What do you see?

B pigeon-wing, Jabez!

The Old Man. Young again, young again, that's the way I feel! (He tries to cut a pigeon-wing himself.)

The Old Woman. Henry, Henry, careful of your rheumatiz!

A Third Woman. Makes me feel all teary—seeing them so happy.

1. **Do-si-do** (dō'sē-dō'): a signal to perform the square-dance movement of the same name. Other square-dancing terms follow, such as "cut your pigeon-wing," "scratch for corn," and "left and right—grand chain."

(The solo dance ends, the music stops for a moment.)

The Old Man (*gossiping to a neighbor*). Wonder where he got it all—Stones was always poor.

His Neighbor. Ain't poor now—makes you wonder just a mite.

A Third Man. Don't begrudge it to him—but I wonder where he got it.

The Old Man (*starting to whisper*). Let me tell you something—

The Old Woman (*quickly*). Henry, Henry, don't you start to gossip. (*She drags him away.*)

Fiddler (*cutting in*). Set to your partners! Scratch for corn!

(The dance resumes, but as it does so, the Crowd chants back and forth.)

Women. Gossip's got a sharp tooth.

Men. Gossip's got a mean tooth.

Women. She's a lucky woman. They're a lucky pair.

Men. That's true as gospel. But I wonder where he got it.

Women. Money, land and riches.

Men. Just came out of nowhere.

Women and Men (*together*). Wonder where he got it all.—But that's his business.

Fiddler. Left and right—grand chain!

(The dance rises to a pitch of ecstasy with the final figure—the fiddle squeaks and stops. The dancers mop their brows.)

First Man. Whew! Ain't danced like that since I was knee-high to a grasshopper!

Second Man. Play us "The Portland Fancy," fiddler!

Third Man. No, wait a minute, neighbor. Let's hear from the happy pair! Hey, Jabez!

Fourth Man. Let's hear from the State Senator!

(They crowd around Jabez and push him up on the settee.)

Old Man. Might as well. It's the last time he'll have the last word!

Old Woman. Now, Henry Banks, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!

Old Man. Told you so, Jabez!

The Crowd. Speech!

Jabez (*embarrassed*). Neighbors—friends—I'm not much of a speaker—spite of your 'lecting me to State Senate—

The Crowd. That's the ticket, Jabez. Smart man, Jabez. I voted for ye. Go ahead, Senator, you're doing fine.

Jabez. But we're certainly glad to have you here—me and Mary. And we want to thank you for coming and—

A Voice. Vote the Whig² ticket!

Another Voice. Hooray for Daniel Webster!

Jabez. And I'm glad Hi Foster said that, for those are my sentiments, too. Mr. Webster has promised to honor us with his presence here tonight.

The Crowd. Hurray for Dan'l! Hurray for the greatest man in the U.S.!

Jabez. And when he comes, I know we'll give him a real New Hampshire welcome.

The Crowd. Sure we will—Webster forever—and to hell with Henry Clay!³

Jabez. And meanwhile—well, there's Mary and me (*takes her hand*)—and, if you folks don't have a good time, well, we won't feel right about getting married at all. Because I know I've been lucky—and I hope she feels that way, too. And, well, we're going to be happy or bust a trace!

2. **Whig**: a political party founded in the 1830s. Daniel Webster was one of its leaders.

3. **Henry Clay**: a famous American congressman of the time and a rival of Daniel Webster.

(He wipes his brow to terrific applause. He and Mary look at each other.)

A Woman (in kitchen doorway). Come and get the cider, folks!

(The Crowd begins to drift away—a few to the kitchen—a few toward the door that leads to the outside. They furnish a shifting background to the next little scene, where Mary and Jabez are left alone by the fireplace.)

Jabez. Mary.

Mary. Mr. Stone.

Jabez. Mary.

Mary. My husband.

Jabez. That's a big word, husband.

Mary. It's a good word.

Jabez. Are you happy, Mary?

Mary. Yes. So happy, I'm afraid.

Jabez. Afraid?

Mary. I suppose it happens to every girl—just for a minute. It's like spring turning into summer. You want it to be summer. But the spring was sweet. (Dismissing the mood) I'm sorry. Forgive me. It just came and went, like something cold. As if we'd been too lucky.

Jabez. We can't be too lucky, Mary. Not you and me.

Mary (rather mischievously). If you say so, Mr. Stone. But you don't even know what sort of housekeeper I am. And Aunt Hepsy says—

Jabez. Bother your Aunt Hepsy! There's just you and me and that's all that matters in the world.

Mary. And you don't know something else—

Jabez. What's that?

Mary. How proud I am of you. Ever since I was a little girl. Ever since you carried my books. Oh, I'm sorry for women who can't be proud of their men. It must be a lonely feeling.

Jabez (uncomfortably). A man can't always be proud of everything, Mary. There's some things a man does, or might do—when he has to make his way.

Mary (laughing). I know—terrible things—like being the best farmer in the county and the best State Senator—

Jabez (quietly). And a few things, besides. But you remember one thing, Mary, whatever happens. It was all for you. And nothing's going to happen. Because he hasn't come yet—and he would have come if it was wrong.

Mary. But it's wonderful to have Mr. Webster come to us.

Jabez. I wasn't thinking about Mr. Webster. (He takes both her hands.) Mary, I've got something to tell you. I should have told you before, but I couldn't seem to bear it. Only, now that it's all right, I can. Ten years ago—

A Voice (from off stage). Dan'! Dan'l Webster! (Jabez drops Mary's hands and looks around. The Crowd begins to mill and gather toward the door. Others rush in from the kitchen.)

Another Voice. Black Dan'! He's come!

Another Voice. Three cheers for the greatest man in the U.S.!

Another Voice. Three cheers for Daniel Webster! (And, to the cheering and applause of the crowd, Daniel Webster enters and stands for a moment upstage, in the familiar pose, his head thrown back, his attitude leonine.⁵ He stops the cheering of the crowd with a gesture.)

Webster. Neighbors—old friends—it does me good to hear you. But don't cheer me—I'm not running for President this summer. (a laugh)

4. Black Dan'l: a nickname Webster received as a child because of his dark complexion.

5. leonine (lē'ə-nin'): like a lion.

from the Crowd) I'm here on a better errand—to pay my humble respects to a most charming lady and her very fortunate spouse.

1 (There is the twang of a fiddlestring breaking.)

Fiddler. 'Tarnation! Busted a string!

A Voice. He's always bustin' strings.

(Webster blinks at the interruption but goes on.)

Webster. We're proud of State Senator Stone in these parts—we know what he's done. Ten years ago he started out with a patch of land that was mostly rocks and mortgages and now—well, you've only to look around you. I don't know that I've ever seen a likelier farm, not even at Marshfield⁶—and I hope, before I die, I'll have the privilege of shaking his hand as Governor of this State. I don't know how he's done it—I couldn't have done it myself. But I know this—Jabez Stone wears no man's collar. (At this statement there is a discordant squeak from the fiddle, and Jabez looks embarrassed. Webster knits his brows.) And what's more, if I know Jabez, he never will. But I didn't come here to talk politics—I came to kiss the bride. (He does so among great applause. He shakes hands with Jabez.) Congratulations, Stone—you're a lucky man. And now, if our friend in the corner will give us a tune on his fiddle—

(The Crowd presses forward to meet the great man. He shakes hands with several.)

A Man. Remember me, Mr. Webster? Saw ye up at the State House at Concord.

Another Man. Glad to see ye, Mr. Webster. I voted for ye ten times.

(Webster receives their homage politely, but his mind is still on music.)

Webster (a trifle irritated). I said, if our friend in the corner would give us a tune on his fiddle—

Fiddler (passionately, flinging the fiddle down). Hell's delight—excuse me, Mr. Webster. But the very devil's got into that fiddle of mine. She was doing all right up to just a minute ago. But now I've tuned her and tuned her and she won't play a note I want.

(And, at this point, Mr. Scratch makes his appearance. He has entered, unobserved, and mixed with the crowd while all eyes were upon Daniel Webster. He is, of course, the devil—a New England devil, dressed like a rather shabby attorney but with something just a little wrong in clothes and appearance. For one thing, he wears black gloves on his hands. He carries a large black tin box, like a botanist's collecting box, under one arm. Now he slips through the crowd and taps the Fiddler on the shoulder.)

Scratch (insinuatingly). Maybe you need some rosin on your bow, fiddler?

Fiddler. Maybe I do and maybe I don't. (Turns and confronts the stranger) But who are you? I don't remember seeing you before.

6. **Marshfield:** a small town southeast of Boston, where Daniel Webster had a farm.



Scratch. Oh, I'm just a friend—a humble friend of the bridegroom's. (*He walks toward Jabez. Apologetically.*) I'm afraid I came in the wrong way, Mr. Stone. You've improved the place so much since I last saw it that I hardly knew the front door. But, I assure you, I came as fast as I could.

Jabez (*obviously shocked*). It—it doesn't matter. (*With a great effort*) Mary—Mr. Webster—this is a—a friend of mine from Boston—a legal friend. I didn't expect him today but—

Scratch. Oh, my dear Mr. Stone—an occasion like this—I wouldn't miss it for the world. (*He bows.*) Charmed, Mrs. Stone. Delighted, Mr. Webster. But—don't let me break up the merriment of the meeting. (*He turns back toward the table and the Fiddler.*)

1 **Fiddler** (*with a grudge, to Scratch*). Boston lawyer, eh?

Scratch. You might call me that.

B **Fiddler** (*tapping the tin box with his bow*). And what have you got in that big tin box of yours? Law papers?

Scratch. Oh—curiosities for the most part. I'm a collector, too.

Fiddler. Don't hold much with Boston curiosities, myself. And you know about fiddling, too, do you? Know all about it?

Scratch. Oh—(*a deprecatory shrug*)

Fiddler. Don't shrug your shoulders at me—I ain't no Frenchman. Telling me I needed more rosin!

Mary (*trying to stop the quarrel*). Isaac—please—

Fiddler. Sorry, Mary—Mrs. Stone. But I been playing the fiddle at Cross Corners weddings for twenty-five years. And now here comes a stranger from Boston and tells me I need more rosin!

Scratch. But, my good friend—

Fiddler. Rosin indeed! Here—play it yourself then and see what you can make of it! (*He thrusts the fiddle at Scratch. The latter stiffens, slowly lays his black collecting box on the table, and takes the fiddle.*)

Scratch (*with feigned embarrassment*). But really, I— (*He bows toward Jabez.*) Shall I—Mr. Senator? (*Jabez makes a helpless gesture of assent.*)

Mary (*to Jabez*). Mr. Stone—Mr. Stone—are you ill?

Jabez. No—no—but I feel—it's hot—

Webster (*chuckling*). Don't you fret, Mrs. Stone. I've got the right medicine for him. (*He pulls a flask from his pocket.*) Ten-year-old Medford, Stone—I buy it by the keg down at Marshfield. Here—(*He tries to give some of the rum to Jabez.*)

Jabez. No—(*he turns*)—Mary—Mr. Webster—(*But he cannot explain. With a burst.*) Oh, let him play—let him play! Don't you see he's bound to? Don't you see there's nothing we can do?

(*A rustle of discomfort among the guests. Scratch draws the bow across the fiddle in a horrible discord.*)

Fiddler (*triumphantly*). I told you so, stranger. The devil's in that fiddle!

Scratch. I'm afraid it needs special tuning. (*Draws the bow in a second discord*) There—that's better (*grinning*). And now for this happy—this very happy occasion—in tribute to the bride and groom—I'll play something appropriate—a song of young love—

Mary. Oh, Jabez—Mr. Webster—stop him! Do you see his hands? He's playing with gloves on his hands.

(Webster starts forward, but, even as he does so, Scratch begins to play, and all freeze as Scratch goes on with the extremely inappropriate song that follows. At first his manner is oily and mocking—it is not till he reaches the line “The devil took the words away” that he really becomes terrifying and the crowd starts to be afraid.)

Scratch (accompanying himself fantastically).

Young William was a thriving boy.

(Listen to my doleful tale.)

Young Mary Clark was all his joy.

(Listen to my doleful tale.)

He swore he'd love her all his life.

She swore she'd be his loving wife.

But William found a gambler's den

And drank with livery-stable men.

He played the cards, he played the dice

He would not listen to advice.

And when in church he tried to pray,

The devil took the words away.

(Scratch, still playing, starts to march across the stage.)

The devil got him by the toe
And so, alas, he had to go.

“Young Mary Clark, young Mary Clark,
I now must go into the dark.”

(These last two verses have been directed at Jabez. Scratch continues, now turning on Mary.)

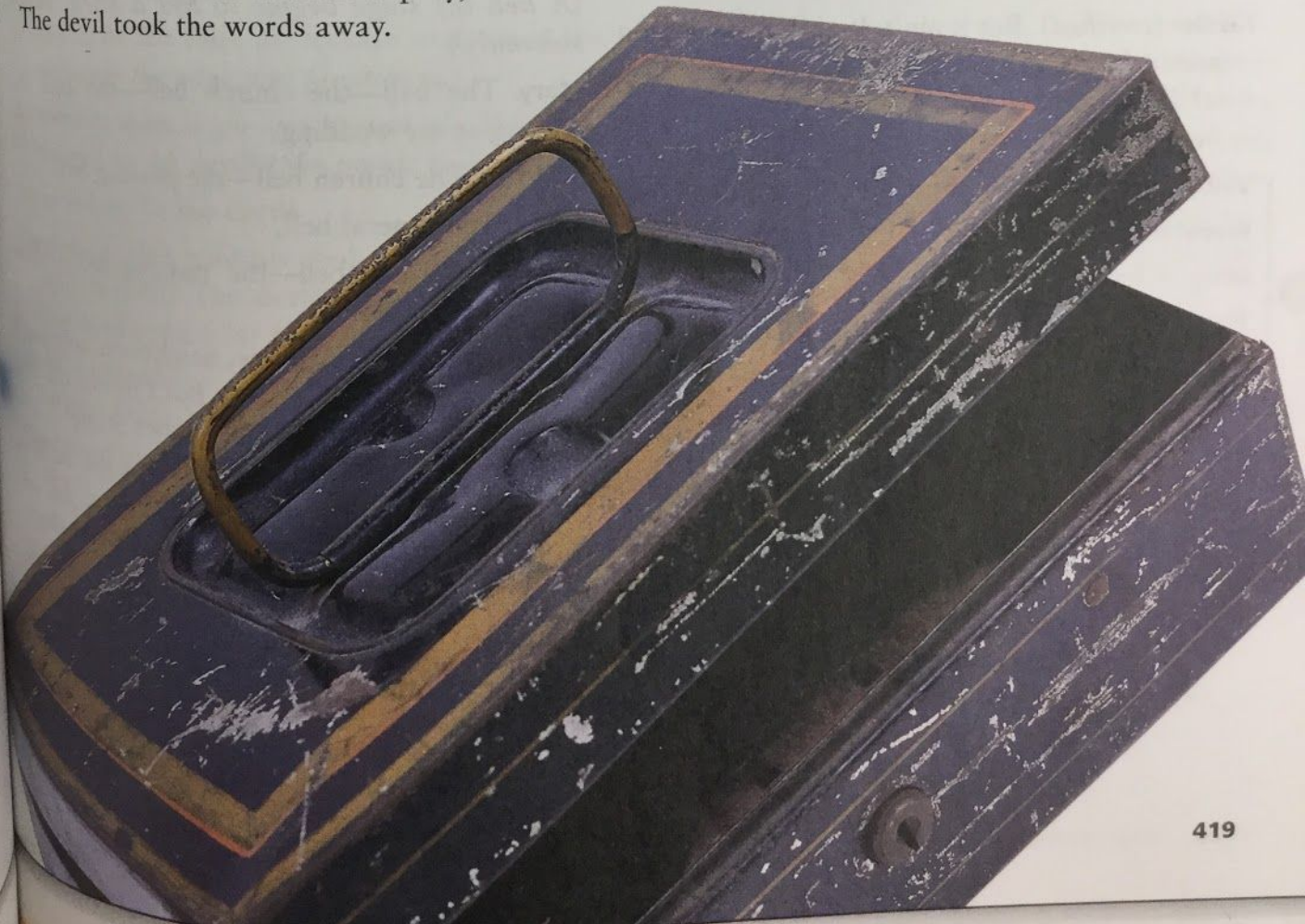
Young Mary lay upon her bed.

“Alas my Will-i-am is dead.”

He came to her a bleeding ghost—

(He rushes at Mary but Webster stands between them.)

Webster. Stop! Stop! You miserable wretch—
can't you see that you're frightening Mrs. Stone? (He wrenches the fiddle out of Scratch's hands and tosses it aside.) And now, sir—out of this house!





Scratch (*facing him*). You're a bold man, Mr. Webster. Too bold for your own good, perhaps. And anyhow, it wasn't my fiddle. It belonged to—(*He wheels and sees the Fiddler tampering with the collecting box that has been left on the table.*) Idiot! What are you doing with my collecting box? (*He rushes for the Fiddler and chases him round the table, but the Fiddler is just one jump ahead.*)

Fiddler. Boston lawyer, eh? Well, I don't think so. I think you've got something in that box of yours you're afraid to show. And, by jingo—(*He throws open the lid of the box. The lights wink and there is a clap of thunder. All eyes stare upward. Something has flown out of the box. But what? Fiddler, with relief.*) Why, 'tain't nothing but a moth.

Mary. A white moth—a flying thing.

Webster. A common moth—*telea polyphemus*—

The Crowd. A moth—just a moth—a moth—

Fiddler (*terrified*). But it ain't. It ain't no common moth! I seen it! And it's got a death's-head on it! (*He strikes at the invisible object with his bow to drive it away.*)

Voice of the Moth. Help me, neighbors! Help me!

Webster. What's that? It wails like a lost soul.

Mary. A lost soul.

The Crowd. A lost soul—lost—in darkness—in the darkness.

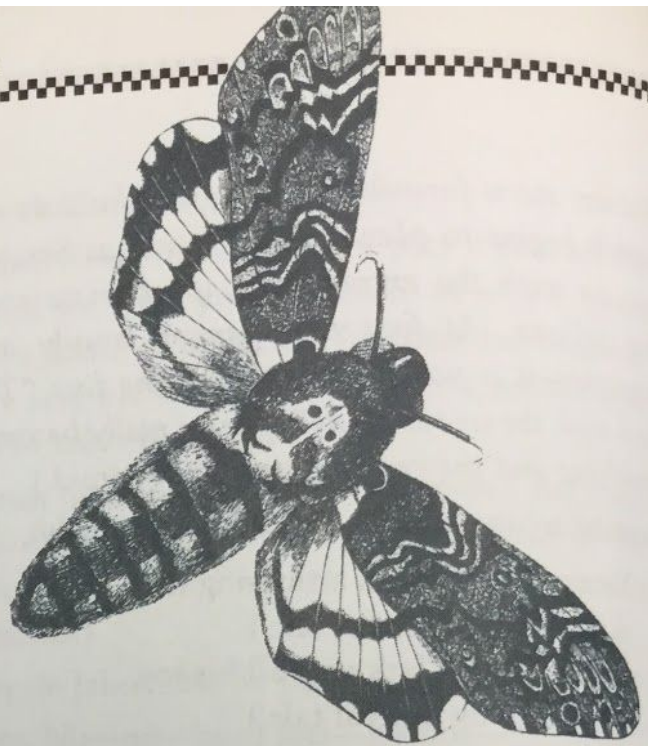
Voice of the Moth. Help me, neighbors!

Fiddler. It sounds like Miser Stevens.

Jabez. Miser Stevens!

The Crowd. The Miser—Miser Stevens—a lost soul—lost.

Fiddler (*frantically*). It sounds like Miser Stevens—and you had him in your box. But it can't be. He ain't dead.



Jabez. He ain't dead—I tell you he ain't dead! He was just as spry and mean as a woodchuck Tuesday.

The Crowd. Miser Stevens—soul of Miser Stevens—but he ain't dead.

Scratch (*dominating them*). Listen!

(*A bell off stage begins to toll a knell, slowly, solemnly.*)

Mary. The bell—the church bell—the bell that rang at my wedding.

Webster. The church bell—the passing bell.

Jabez. The funeral bell.

The Crowd. The bell—the passing bell—Miser Stevens—dead.

Voice of the Moth. Help me, neighbors, help me! I sold my soul to the devil. But I'm not the first or the last. Help me. Help Jabez Stone!

Scratch. Ah, would you! (*He catches the moth in his red bandanna, stuffs it back into his collecting box, and shuts the lid with a snap.*)

Voice of the Moth (*fading*). Lost—lost forever, forever. Lost, like Jabez Stone.

(*The Crowd turns on Jabez. They read his secret in his face.*)

A

B

The Crowd. Jabez Stone—Jabez Stone—answer us—answer us.

Mary. Tell them, dear—answer them—you are good—you are brave—you are innocent.

(But the Crowd is all pointing hands and horrified eyes.)

The Crowd. Jabez Stone—Jabez Stone. Who's your friend in black, Jabez Stone? *(They point to Scratch.)*

Webster. Answer them, Mr. State Senator.

The Crowd. Jabez Stone—Jabez Stone. Where did you get your money, Jabez Stone?

(Scratch grins and taps his collecting box, Jabez cannot speak.)

Jabez. I—I—*(He stops.)*

The Crowd. Jabez Stone—Jabez Stone. What was the price you paid for it, Jabez Stone?

Jabez *(looking around wildly)*. Help me, neighbors! Help me!

(This cracks the built-up tension and sends the Crowd over the edge into fanaticism.)

A Woman's Voice *(high and hysterical)*. He's sold his soul to the devil! *(She points to Jabez.)*

Other Voices. To the devil!

The Crowd. He's sold his soul to the devil! The devil himself! The devil's playing the fiddle! The devil's come for his own!

Jabez *(appealing)*. But, neighbors—I didn't know—I didn't mean—oh, help me!

The Crowd *(inexorably)*. He's sold his soul to the devil!

Scratch *(grinning)*. To the devil!

The Crowd. He's sold his soul to the devil! There's no help left for him, neighbors! Run, hide, hurry, before we're caught! He's a lost soul—

Jabez Stone—he's the devil's own. Run, hide, hasten! *(They stream across the stage like a flurry of bats, the cannier picking up the wedding presents they have given to take along with them.)*

(Mr. Scratch drives them out into the night, fiddle in hand, and follows them. Jabez and Mary are left with Webster. Jabez has sunk into a chair, beaten, with his head in his hands. Mary is trying to comfort him. Webster looks at them for a moment and shakes his head, sadly. As he

ACTIVE READING

CLARIFY What is the reason that Scratch has come to the wedding?

crosses to exit to the porch, his hand drops for a moment on Jabez's shoulder, but Jabez makes no sign. Webster exits. Jabez lifts his head.)

Mary *(comforting him)*. My dear—my dear—

Jabez. I—it's all true, Mary. All true. You must hurry.

Mary. Hurry?

Jabez. Hurry after them—back to the village—back to your folks. Mr. Webster will take you—you'll be safe with Mr. Webster. You see, it's all true and he'll be back in a minute. *(With a shudder)* The other one. *(He groans.)* I've got until twelve o'clock. That's the contract. But there isn't much time.

Mary. Are you telling me to run away from you, Mr. Stone?

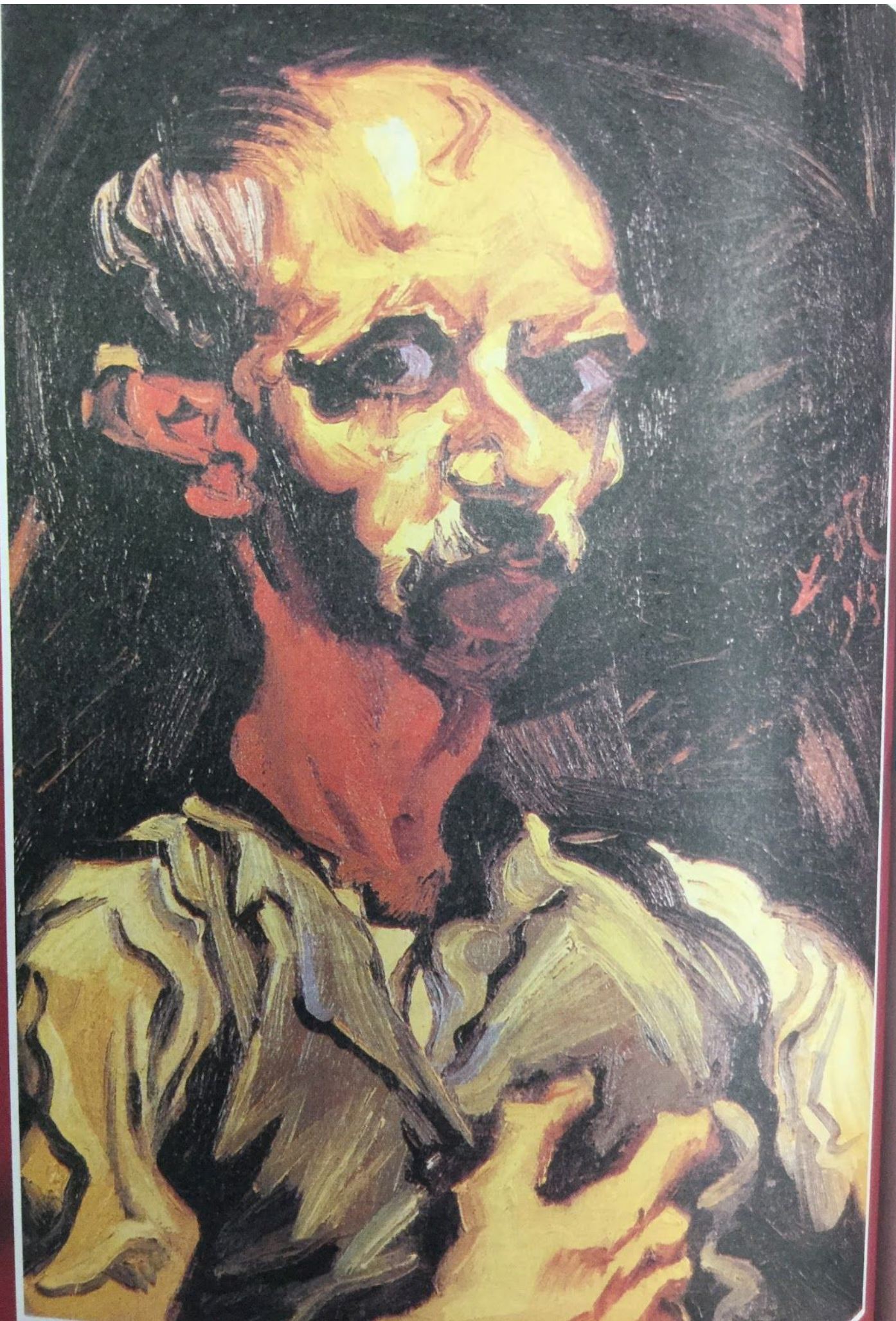
Jabez. You don't understand, Mary. It's true.

Mary. We made some promises to each other. Maybe you've forgotten them. But I haven't. I said, it's for better or worse. It's for better or worse. I said, in sickness or in health. Well, that covers the ground, Mr. Stone.

Jabez. But, Mary, you must—I command you.

WORDS
TO
KNOW

fanaticism (fə-năt'ĭ-sĭz'əm) *n.* excessive, unreasonable zeal or enthusiasm



Mary. "For thy people shall be my people and thy God my God." (*Quietly*) That was Ruth, in the Book.⁷ I always liked the name of Ruth—always liked the thought of her. I always thought—I'll call a child Ruth, some time. I guess that was just a girl's notion. (*She breaks.*) But, oh, Jabez—why?

Jabez. It started years ago, Mary. I guess I was a youngster then—guess I must have been. A youngster with a lot of ambitions and no way in the world to get there. I wanted city clothes and a big white house—I wanted to be State Senator and have people look up to me. But all I got on the farm was a crop of stones. You could work all day and all night, but that was all you got.

Mary (*softly*). It was pretty—that hill farm, Jabez. You could look all the way across the valley.

Jabez. Pretty? It was fever and ague⁸—it was stones and blight. If I had a horse, he got colic—if I planted garden truck, the woodchucks ate it. I'd lie awake nights and try to figure out a way to get somewhere—but there wasn't any way. And all the time you were growing up, in the town. I couldn't ask you to marry me and take you to a place like that.

Mary. Do you think it's the place makes the difference to a woman? I'd—I'd have kept your house. I'd have stroked the cat and fed the chickens and seen you wiped your shoes on the mat. I wouldn't have asked for more. Oh, Jabez—why didn't you tell me?

Jabez. It happened before I could. Just an average day—you know—just an average day. But there was a mean east wind and a mean small rain. Well, I was plowing, and the share broke clean off on a rock where there hadn't been any rock the day before. I didn't have money for a new one—I didn't have money to get it mended. So I said it and I said loud, "I'll sell

my soul for about two cents," I said. (*He stops. Mary stares at him.*) Well, that's all there is to it, I guess. He came along that afternoon—that fellow from Boston—and the dog looked at him and ran away. Well, I had to make it more than two cents, but he was agreeable to that. So I pricked my thumb with a pin and signed the paper. It felt hot when you touched it, that paper. I keep remembering that. (*He pauses.*) And it's all come true and he's kept his part of the bargain. I got the riches and I've married you. And, oh, God Almighty, what shall I do?

ACTIVE READING

EVALUATE How do you think the author wants you to feel toward Stone?

Mary. Let us run away! Let us creep and hide!

Jabez. You can't run away from the devil—I've seen his horses. Miser Stevens tried to run away.

Mary. Let us pray—let us pray to the God of Mercy that He redeem us.

Jabez. I can't pray, Mary. The words just burn in my heart.

Mary. I won't let you go! I won't! There must be someone who could help us. I'll get the judge and the squire—

Jabez. Who'll take a case against old Scratch? Who'll face the devil himself and do him brown? There isn't a lawyer in the world who'd dare do that.

(Webster *appears in the doorway.*)

Webster. Good evening, neighbors. Did you say something about lawyers—

Mary. Mr. Webster!

7. **Ruth, in the Book:** The preceding quote is from the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament of the Bible. When Ruth becomes widowed, she decides to leave her home and go with her mother-in-law, Naomi, to Bethlehem. Her famous words are spoken to Naomi.

8. **ague** (ā'gyōō): a feverish condition.

Jabez. Dan'l Webster! But I thought—

Webster. You'll excuse me for leaving you for a moment. I was just taking a stroll on the porch, in the cool of the evening. Fine summer evening, too.

Jabez. Well, it might be, I guess, but that kind of depends on the circumstances.

Webster. H'm. Yes I happened to overhear a little of your conversation. I gather you're in trouble, Neighbor Stone.

Jabez. Sore trouble.

Webster (*delicately*). Sort of law case, I understand.

Jabez. You might call it that, Mr. Webster. Kind of a mortgage case, in a way.

Mary. Oh, Jabez!

Webster. Mortgage case. Well, I don't generally plead now, except before the Supreme Court, but this case of yours presents some very unusual features, and I never deserted a neighbor in trouble yet. So, if I can be of any assistance—

Mary. Oh, Mr. Webster, will you help him?

Jabez. It's a terrible lot to ask you. But—well, you see, there's Mary. And, if you could see your way to it—

Webster. I will.

Mary (*weeping with relief*). Oh, Mr. Webster!

Webster. There, there, Mrs. Stone. After all, if two New Hampshire men aren't a match for the devil, we might as well give the country back to the Indians. When is he coming, Jabez?

Jabez. Twelve o'clock. The time's getting late.

Webster. Then I'd better refresh my memory. The—er—mortgage was for a definite term of years?

Jabez. Ten years.

Webster. And it falls due—?

Jabez. Tonight. Oh, I can't see how I came to be such a fool!

Webster. No use crying over spilt milk, Stone. We've got to get you out of it, now. But tell me one thing. Did you sign this precious document of your own free will?

Jabez. Yes, it was my own free will. I can't deny that.

Webster. H'm, that's a trifle unfortunate. But we'll see.

Mary. Oh, Mr. Webster, can you save him? Can you?

Webster. I shall do my best, madam. That's all you can ever say till you see what the jury looks like.

Mary. But even you, Mr. Webster—oh, I know you're Secretary of State—I know you're a great man—I know you've done wonderful things. But it's different—fighting the devil!

Webster (*towering*). I've fought John C. Calhoun, madam. And I've fought Henry Clay. And, by the great shade of Andrew Jackson,⁹ I'd fight ten thousand devils to save a New Hampshire man!

Jabez. You hear, Mary?

Mary. Yes. And I trust Mr. Webster. But—oh, there must be some way that I can help!

Webster. There is one, madam, and a hard one. As Mr. Stone's counsel, I must formally request your withdrawal.

Mary. No.

9. John C. Calhoun . . . Andrew Jackson: Calhoun served as vice president from 1825 to 1832. He maintained that states could nullify federal laws, a position that Webster opposed. Andrew Jackson was president from 1829 to 1837. Jackson opposed the Bank of the United States, and Webster supported it.

Webster. Madam, think for a moment. You cannot help Mr. Stone—since you are his wife, your testimony would be prejudiced. And frankly, madam, in a very few minutes this is going to be no place for a lady.

Mary. But I can't—I can't leave him—I can't bear it!

Jabez. You must go, Mary. You must.

Webster. Pray, madam—you can help us with your prayers. Are the prayers of the innocent unavailing?¹⁰

Mary. Oh, I'll pray—I'll pray. But a woman's more than a praying machine, whatever men think. And how do I know?

Webster. Trust me, Mrs. Stone.

(Mary turns to go, and, with one hand on Jabez' shoulder, as she moves to the door, says the following prayer:)

Mary.

Now may there be a blessing and a light betwixt thee and me, forever.

For, as Ruth unto Naomi, so do I cleave unto thee.

Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm, for love is strong as death.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.

As Ruth unto Naomi, so do I cleave unto thee.

The Lord watch between thee and me when we are absent, one from the other.

Amen. Amen. (She goes out.)

Webster. Amen.

Jabez. Thank you, Mr. Webster. She ought to go. But I couldn't have made her do it.

Webster. Well, Stone—I know ladies—and I wouldn't be surprised if she's still got her ear to the keyhole. But she's best out of this night's business. How long have we got to wait?

Jabez (*beginning to be terrified again*). Not long—not long.

Webster. Then I'll just get out the jug, with your permission, Stone. Somehow or other, waiting's wonderfully shorter with a jug. (He crosses to the cupboard, gets out jug and glasses, pours himself a drink.) Ten-year-old Medford. There's nothing like it. I saw an inchworm take a drop of it once, and he stood right up on his hind legs and bit a bee. Come—try a nip.

Jabez. There's no joy in it for me.

Webster. Oh, come, man, come! Just because you've sold your soul to the devil, that needn't make you a teetotaller.¹¹ (He laughs and passes the jug to Jabez, who tries to pour from it. But at that moment the clock whirs and begins to strike the three-quarters, and Jabez spills the liquor.)

Jabez. Oh, God!

Webster. Never mind—it's a nervous feeling, waiting for a trial to begin. I remember my first case—

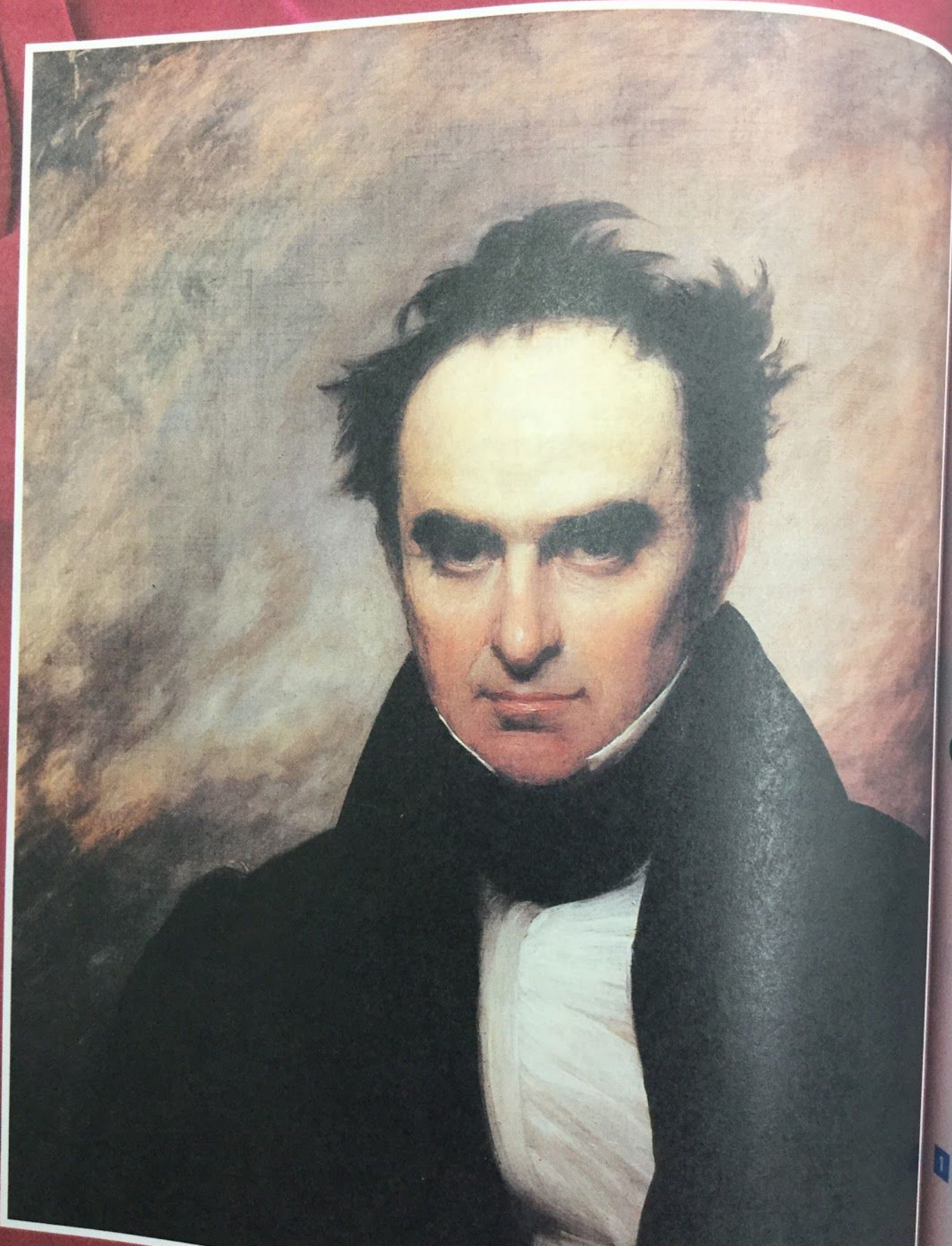
Jabez. 'Tain't that. (He turns to Webster.) Mr. Webster—Mr. Webster—for God's sake harness your horses and get away from this place as fast as you can!

Webster (*placidly*). You've brought me a long way, neighbor, to tell me you don't like my company.

Jabez. I've brought you the devil's own way. I can see it all, now. He's after both of us—him and his damn collecting box! Well, he can have me, if he likes—I don't say I relish it, but I made

10. **unavailing**: not useful or helpful.

11. **teetotaller** (tē'tōt'ŭ-ər): a person who never drinks alcoholic beverages.



Daniel Webster (*Black Dan*) (1835), Francis Alexander. Oil on canvas, New Hampshire, gift of Dr. George C. Shaw.

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the bargain. But you're the whole United States! He can't get you, Mr. Webster—he mustn't get you!

Webster. I'm obliged to you, neighbor Stone. It's kindly thought of. But there's a jug on the table and a case in hand. And I never left a jug or a case half-finished in my life. (*There is a knock at the door. Jabez gives a cry.*) Ah, I thought your clock was a trifle slow, neighbor Stone. Come in!
(Scratch enters from the night.)

Scratch. Mr. Webster! This is a pleasure!

Webster. Attorney of record for Jabez Stone. Might I ask your name?

Scratch. I've gone by a good many. Perhaps Scratch will do for the evening. I'm often called that in these regions. May I? (*He sits at the table and pours a drink from the jug. The liquor steams as it pours into the glass while Jabez watches, terrified. Scratch grins, toasting Webster and Jabez silently in the liquor. Then he becomes businesslike.* To Webster.) And now I call upon you, as a law-abiding citizen, to assist me in taking possession of my property.

Webster. Not so fast, Mr. Scratch. Produce your evidence, if you have it.

(Scratch takes out a black pocketbook and examines papers.)

Scratch. Slattery—Stanley—Stone. (*takes out a deed*) There, Mr. Webster. All open and above-board and in due and legal form. Our firm has its reputation to consider—we deal only in the one way.

Webster (*taking deed and looking it over*). H'm. This appears—I say, it appears—to be properly drawn. But, of course, we contest the signature (*tosses it back, contemptuously*).

Scratch (*suddenly turning on Jabez and shooting a finger at him*). Is that your signature?

Jabez (*wearily*). You know damn well it is.

Webster (*angrily*). Keep quiet, Stone. (*To Scratch*) But that is a minor matter. This precious document isn't worth the paper it's written on. The law permits no traffic in human flesh.

Scratch. Oh, my dear Mr. Webster! Courts in every State in the Union have held that human flesh is property and recoverable. Read your Fugitive Slave Act.¹² Or, shall I cite *Brander versus McRae*?

Webster. But, in the case of the State of Maryland versus Four Barrels of Bourbon—

Scratch. That was overruled, as you know, sir. North Carolina versus Jenkins and Co.

Webster (*unwillingly*). You seem to have an excellent acquaintance with the law, sir.

Scratch. Sir, that is no fault of mine. Where I come from, we have always gotten the pick of the Bar.¹³

Webster (*changing his note, heartily*). Well, come now, sir. There's no need to make hay and oats of a trifling matter when we're both sensible men. Surely we can settle this little difficulty out of court. My client is quite prepared to offer a compromise. (*Scratch smiles.*) A very substantial compromise. (*Scratch smiles more broadly, slowly shaking his head.*) Hang it, man, we offer ten thousand dollars! (*Scratch signs "No."*) Twenty thousand—thirty—name your figure! I'll raise it if I have to mortgage Marshfield!

12. Fugitive Slave Act: law governing the capture and return of runaway slaves.

13. pick of the Bar: The best lawyers available. Bar means "lawyers considered as a group."

Scratch. Quite useless, Mr. Webster. There is only one thing I want from you—the execution of my contract.

Webster. But this is absurd. Mr. Stone is now a State Senator. The property has greatly increased in value!

Scratch. The principle of caveat emptor¹⁴ still holds, Mr. Webster. *(He yawns and looks at the clock.)* And now, if you have no further arguments to adduce—I'm rather pressed for time—*(He rises briskly as if to take Jabez into custody.)*

Webster *(thundering).* Pressed or not, you shall not have this man. Mr. Stone is an American citizen, and no American citizen may be forced into the service of a foreign prince. We fought England for that, in '12,¹⁵ and we'll fight all hell for it again!

Scratch. Foreign? And who calls me a foreigner?

Webster. Well, I never yet heard of the dev—of your claiming American citizenship?



Scratch. And who with better right? When the first wrong was done to the Indian, I was there. When the first slaver put out for the Congo, I stood on her deck. Am I not in your books and stories and beliefs, from the first settlements on? Am I not spoken of, still, in every church in New England? 'Tis true, the North claims me for a Southerner and the South for a Northerner, but I am neither. I am merely an honest American like yourself—and of the best descent—for, to tell the truth, Mr. Webster, though I don't like to boast of it, my name is older in the country than yours.

Webster. Aha! Then I stand on the Constitution! I demand a trial for my client!

Scratch. The case is hardly one for an ordinary jury—and indeed, the lateness of the hour—

Webster. Let it be any court you choose, so it is an American judge and an American jury. Let it be the quick¹⁶ or the dead, I'll abide the issue.

ACTIVE READING

CONNECT How is Daniel Webster like or unlike lawyers of today?

Scratch. The quick or the dead! You have said it! *(He points his finger at the place where the jury is to appear. There is a clap of thunder and a flash of light. The stage blacks out completely. All that can be seen is the face of Scratch, lit with a ghastly green light as he recites the invocation that summons the Jury. As, one by one, the important Jurymen are mentioned, they appear.)*

14. caveat emptor (kā'vĕ-ăt' ěmp'tôr'): the principle in commerce that the buyer is responsible for assessing the quality of a purchase before buying. *Caveat emptor* is a Latin phrase that literally means "Let the buyer beware."
15. in '12: a reference to the War of 1812, which was caused in part by the British forcing American sailors to serve in the British navy.
16. quick: the living.

I summon the
From churchy
Brimstone pit
I summon the
Dastard, liar,
I summon the
There's Simor
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Of massacre a
King Philip's¹⁸
They slew him
But still, with
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Morton,¹⁹ of th
I summon them
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I summon the jury Mr. Webster demands,
From churchyard mold and gallows grave,
Brimstone pit and burning gulf,
I summon them!

Dastard, liar, scoundrel, knave,
I summon them! Appear!
There's Simon Girty, the renegade,
The haunter of the forest glade
Who joined with Indian and wolf
To hunt the pioneer.

The stains upon his hunting shirt
Are not the blood of the deer.
There's Walter Butler,¹⁷ the loyalist,
Who carried a firebrand in his fist
Of massacre and shame.

King Philip's¹⁸ eye is wild and bright.
They slew him in the great Swamp Fight,
But still, with terror and affright,
The land recalls his name.

Blackbeard Teach, the pirate fell,
Smeets the strangler, hot from hell,
Dale, who broke men on the wheel,
Morton,¹⁹ of the tarnished steel,
I summon them, I summon them
From their tormented flame!

Quick or dead, quick or dead,
Broken heart and bitter head,
True Americans, each one,
Traitor and disloyal son,
Cankered earth and twisted tree,
Outcasts of eternity,
Twelve great sinners, tried and true,
For the work they are to do!
I summon them, I summon them!
Appear, appear, appear!

(The Jury has now taken its place in the jury box—Walter Butler in the place of foreman. They are eerily lit and so made-up as to suggest the

17. **Simon Girty . . . Walter Butler:** Both were white men who fought with Native Americans against white settlers in the late 1700s.

18. **King Philip:** a Wampanoag chief who started an uprising against white settlers in 1675. He was killed in 1676.

19. **Blackbeard Teach . . . Dale . . . Morton:** Edward Teach, known as Blackbeard, was an English pirate who preyed on American ships in the early 1700s. Sir Thomas Dale, governor of the Virginia colony in the early 1600s, was despised for his harsh rule. Thomas Morton of Massachusetts was a free-living Anglican who ridiculed his Puritan neighbors and sold firearms to Native Americans in the 1600s.



unearthly. They sit stiffly in their box. At first, when one moves, all move, in stylized gestures. It is not till the end of Webster's speech that they begin to show any trace of humanity. They speak rhythmically, and, at first, in low, eerie voices.)

Jabez (seeing them, horrified). A jury of the dead!

Jury. Of the dead!

Jabez. A jury of the damned!

Jury. Of the damned!

Scratch. Are you content with the jury, Mr. Webster?

ACTIVE READING

VISUALIZE Close your eyes and picture the jury. How does their appearance make you feel?

(He points his finger and Justice Hathorne, a tall, lean, terrifying Puritan, appears, followed by his Clerk.) Justice Hathorne is a jurist of experience. He presided at the Salem witch trials. There were others who repented of the business later. But not he, not he!

Hathorne. Repent of such notable wonders and undertakings? Nay, hang them, hang them all! (He takes his place on the bench.)

(The Clerk, an ominous little man with clawlike hands, takes his place. The room has now been transformed into a courtroom.²¹)

Clerk (in a gabble of ritual). Oyes, oyes, oyes. All ye who have business with this honorable court of special session this night, step forward!

Hathorne (with gavel). Call the first case.

Clerk. The World, the Flesh and the Devil versus Jabez Stone.

Hathorne. Who appears for the plaintiff?

Scratch. I, Your Honor.

Hathorne. And for the defendant?

Webster. I.

Jury. The case—the case—he'll have little luck with this case.

Hathorne. The case will proceed.

Webster. Your Honor, I move to dismiss this case on the grounds of improper jurisdiction.

Hathorne. Motion denied.

Webster. On the grounds of insufficient evidence.

Hathorne. Motion denied.

Jury. Motion denied—denied. Motion denied.

Webster. I will take an exception.

Hathorne. There are no exceptions in this court.

Jury. No exceptions—no exceptions in this court.

It's a bad case, Daniel Webster—a losing case.

Webster. Your Honor—

Hathorne. The prosecution will proceed—

Scratch. Your Honor—gentlemen of the jury. This is a plain, straightforward case. It need not detain us long.

Jury. Detain us long—it will not detain us long.

Scratch. It concerns one thing alone—the transference, barter and sale of a certain piece of property, to wit, his soul, by Jabez Stone, farmer, of Cross Corners, New Hampshire. That transference, barter or sale is attested by a deed.²² I offer that deed in evidence and mark it Exhibit A.

20. **Benedict Arnold**: an American Revolutionary War general who became a traitor.

21. **courtroom**: In a simple production of this play, a pair of long benches, one higher than the other, are placed at the back of the stage to serve as a jury box. The members of the jury quietly come onstage during the blackout, while Scratch recites his invocation. As he finishes, the light gradually comes up on the jury. The judge now enters and takes his seat on a high bench by the fireplace, with his Clerk sitting on a stool below him. The table, left, becomes the lawyer's table, where Scratch and Webster sit.

22. **attested by a deed**: certified by a signed contract.



Webster. I object.

Hathorne. Objection denied. Mark it Exhibit A.

(Scratch *hands the deed—an ominous and impressive document—to the Clerk, who hands it to Hathorne. Hathorne hands it back to the Clerk, who stamps it. All very fast and with mechanical gestures.*)

Jury. Exhibit A—mark it Exhibit A. (Scratch *takes the deed from the Clerk and offers it to the Jury, who pass it rapidly among them, hardly looking at it, and hand it back to Scratch.*) We know the deed—the deed—it burns in our fingers—we do not have to see the deed. It's a losing case.



Scratch. It offers incontestable evidence of the truth of the prosecution's claim. I shall now call Jabez Stone to the witness stand.

Jury (*hungrily*). Jabez Stone to the witness stand, Jabez Stone. He's a fine, fat fellow, Jabez Stone. He'll fry like a battercake, once we get him where we want him.

Webster. Your Honor, I move that this jury be discharged for flagrant and open bias!

Hathorne. Motion denied.

Webster. Exception.

Hathorne. Exception denied.

Jury. His motion's always denied. He thinks himself smart and clever—lawyer Webster. But his motion's always denied.

Webster. Your Honor! (*He chokes with anger.*)

Clerk (*advancing*). Jabez Stone to the witness stand!

Jury. Jabez Stone—Jabez Stone.

(*Webster gives Jabez an encouraging pat on the back, and Jabez takes his place in the witness stand, very scared.*)

Clerk (*offering a black book*). Do you solemnly swear—testify—so help you—and it's no good, for we don't care what you testify?

Jabez. I do.

Scratch. What's your name?

Jabez. Jabez Stone.

Scratch. Occupation?

Jabez. Farmer.

Scratch. Residence?

Jabez. Cross Corners, New Hampshire.

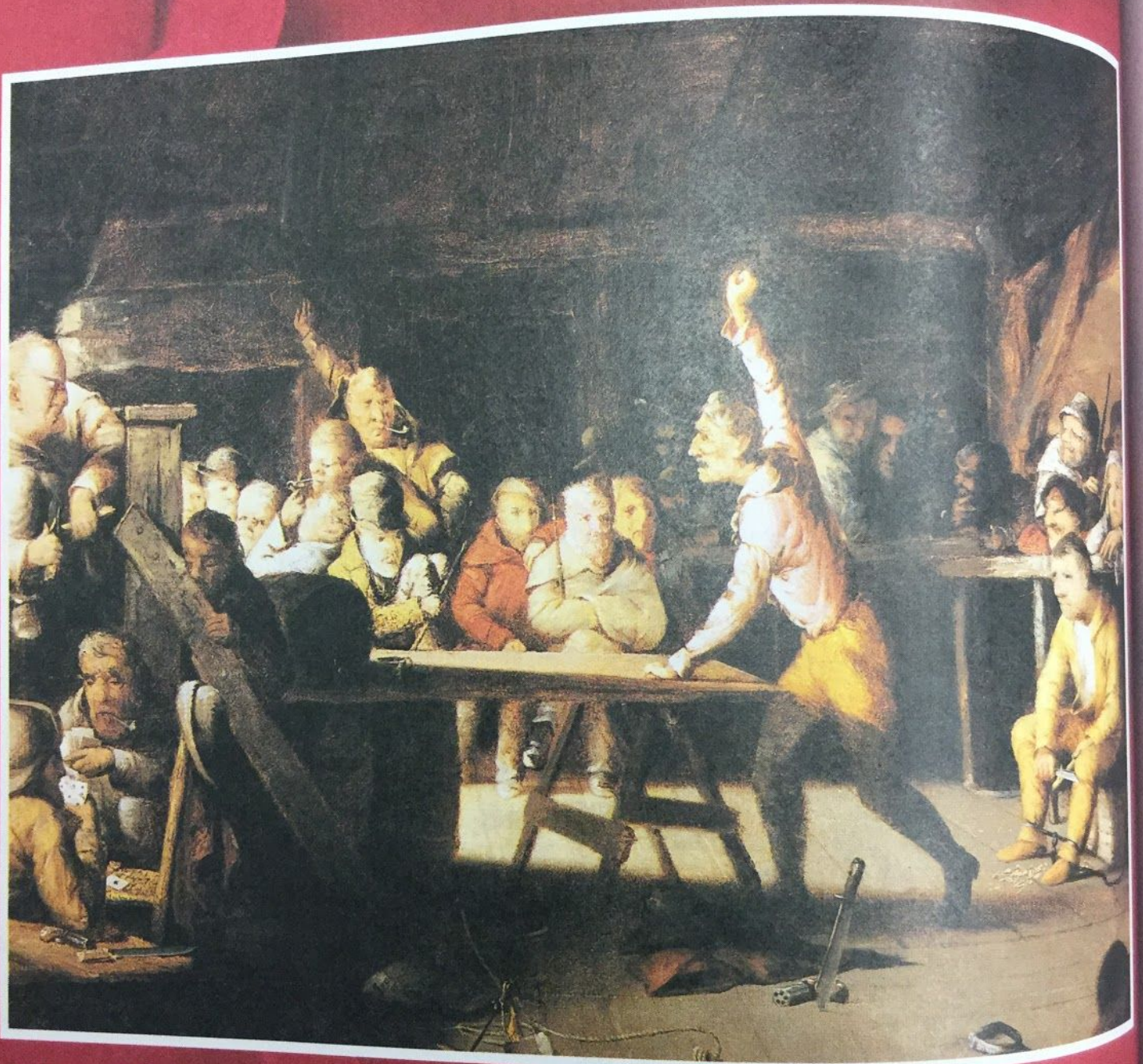
(*These three questions are very fast and mechanical on the part of Scratch. He is absolutely sure of victory and just going through a form.*)

Jury. A farmer—he'll farm in hell—we'll see that he farms in hell.

Scratch. Now, Jabez Stone, answer me. You'd better, you know. You haven't got a chance, and there'll be a cooler place by the fire for you.

WORDS
TO
KNOW

bias (bi'əs) *n.* an attitude in which a person is in favor of someone or something without having a good reason for this preference



Trial Scene (1860–1863), David Gilmour Blythe. Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester (New York), Marion Stratton Gould Fund.

Webster. I protest! This is intimidation! This mocks all justice!

Hathorne. The process is irrelevant, incompetent and immaterial. We have our own justice. The protest is denied.

Jury. Irrelevant, incompetent and immaterial—we have our own justice—oh, ho, Daniel Webster! (*The Jury's eyes fix upon Webster for an instant, hungrily.*)

Scratch. Did you or did you not sign this document?

Jabez. Oh, I signed it! You know I signed it. And, if I have to go to hell for it, I'll go!

(*A sigh sweeps over the Jury.*)

Jury. One of us—one of us now—we'll save a place by the fire for you, Jabez Stone.

Scratch. The prosecution rests.

Hathorne. Remove the prisoner.

Webster. But I wish to cross-examine—I wish to prove—

Hathorne. There will be no cross-examination. We have our own justice. You may speak, if you like. But be brief.

Jury. Brief—be very brief—we're weary of earth—incompetent, irrelevant and immaterial—they say he's a smart man, Webster, but he's lost his case tonight—be very brief—we have our own justice here.

(*Webster stares around him like a baited bull. Can't find words.*)

Mary's Voice (*from off stage*). Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm, for love is strong as death—

Jury (*loudly*). A seal!—ha, ha—a burning seal!

Mary's Voice. Love is strong—

Jury (*drowning her out*). Death is stronger than love. Set the seal upon Daniel Webster—the burning seal of the lost. Make him one of us—one of the damned—one with Jabez Stone!

(*The Jury's eyes all fix upon Webster. The Clerk advances as if to take him into custody. But Webster silences them all with a great gesture.*)

Webster.

Be still!

I was going to thunder and roar. I shall not do that.

I was going to denounce and defy. I shall not do that.

You have judged this man already with your abominable justice. See that you defend it. For I shall not speak of this man.

You are demons now, but once you were men. I shall speak to every one of you.

Of common things I speak, of small things and common.

The freshness of morning to the young, the taste of food to the hungry, the day's toil, the rest by the fire, the quiet sleep.

These are good things.

But without freedom they sicken, without freedom they are nothing.

Freedom is the bread and the morning and the risen sun.

It was for freedom we came in the boats and the ships. It was for freedom we came.

It has been a long journey, a hard one, a bitter one.

But, out of the wrong and the right, the sufferings and the starvations, there is a new thing, a free thing.

The traitors in their treachery, the wise in their wisdom, the valiant in their courage—all, all have played a part.

WORDS
TO
KNOW

intimidation (ĩn-tĩm'Y-dā'shən) *n.* the use of threats to frighten or inhibit another

433

Standard R1.0



It may not be denied in hell nor shall hell prevail against it.

Have you forgotten this? (*He turns to the Jury.*) Have you forgotten the forest?

Girty (*as in a dream*). The forest, the rustle of the forest, the free forest.

Webster (*to King Philip*). Have you forgotten your lost nation?

King Philip. My lost nation—my fires in the wood—my warriors.

Webster (*to Teach*). Have you forgotten the sea and the way of ships?

Teach. The sea—and the swift ships sailing—the blue sea.

Jury. Forgotten—remembered—forgotten yet remembered.

Webster. You were men once. Have you forgotten?

Jury. We were men once. We have not thought of it nor remembered. But we were men.

Webster.

Now here is this man with good and evil in his heart.

Do you know him? He is your brother. Will you take the law of the oppressor and bind him down?

It is not for him that I speak. It is for all of you. There is sadness in being a man, but it is a proud thing, too.

There is failure and despair on the journey—the endless journey of mankind.

We are tricked and trapped—we stumble into the pit—but, out of the pit, we rise again.

No demon that was ever foaled²³ can know the inwardness of that—only men—bewildered men.

They have broken freedom with their hands and cast her out from the nations—yet shall she live while man lives.

She shall live in the blood and the heart—she shall live in the earth of this country—she shall not be broken.

When the whips of the oppressors are broken and their names forgotten and destroyed, I see you, mighty, shining, liberty, liberty! I see free men walking and talking under a free star.

God save the United States and the men who have made her free.

The defense rests.

ACTIVE READING

CLARIFY What emotions does Webster appeal to in his speech to the jury?

Jury (*exultantly*). We were men—we were free—we were men—we have not forgotten—our children—our children shall follow and be free.

Hathorne (*rapping with gavel*). The jury will retire to consider its verdict.

Butler (*rising*). There is no need. The jury has heard Mr. Webster. We find for the defendant, Jabez Stone!

Jury. Not guilty!

Scratch (*in a screech, rushing forward*). But, Your Honor—

(*But, even as he does so, there is a flash and a thunderclap, the stage blacks out again, and when the lights come on, Judge and Jury are gone. The yellow light of dawn lights the windows.*)

23. foaled: given birth to.

Jabez. They're gone and it's morning—Mary, Mary!

Mary (*in doorway*). My love—my dear. (*She rushes to him.*)

(*Meanwhile Scratch has been collecting his papers and trying to sneak out. But Webster catches him.*)

Webster. Just a minute, Mr. Scratch. I'll have that paper first, if you please. (*He takes the deed and tears it.*) And, now, sir, I'll have you!

Scratch. Come, come, Mr. Webster. This sort of thing is ridic—ouch—is ridiculous. If you're worried about the costs of the case, naturally, I'd be glad to pay.

Webster. And so you shall! First of all, you'll promise and covenant²⁴ never to bother Jabez Stone or any other New Hampshire man from now till doomsday. For any hell we want to raise in this State, we can raise ourselves, without any help from you.

Scratch. Ouch! Well, they never did run very big to the barrel but—ouch—I agree!

Webster. See you keep to the bargain! And then—well, I've got a ram named Goliath. He can butt through an iron door. I'd like to turn you loose in his field and see what he could do to you. (*Scratch trembles.*) But that would be hard on the ram. So we'll just call in the neighbors and give you a shivaree.²⁵

Scratch. Mr. Webster—please—oh—

Webster. Neighbors! Neighbors! Come in and see what a long-barreled, slab-sided, lantern-jawed, fortune-telling note-shaver I've got by the scruff of the neck! Bring on your kettles and your pans! (*a noise and murmur outside*) Bring on your muskets and your flails!

Jabez. We'll drive him out of New Hampshire!

Mary. We'll drive old Scratch away!

(*The Crowd rushes in, with muskets, flails, brooms, etc. They pursue Scratch around the stage, chanting.*)

The Crowd.

We'll drive him out of New Hampshire!

We'll drive old Scratch away!

Forever and a day, boys,

Forever and a day!

(*They finally catch Scratch between two of them and fling him out of the door, bodily.*)

A Man. Three cheers for Dan'l Webster!

Another Man. Three cheers for Daniel Webster!
He's licked the devil!

Webster (*moving to center stage, and joining Jabez' hands and Mary's*). And whom God hath joined let no man put asunder. (*He kisses Mary and turns, dusting his hands.*) Well, that job's done. I hope there's pie for breakfast, neighbor Stone.

(*And, as some of the women, dancing, bring in pies from the kitchen*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS



24. covenant: to promise by signing a formal contract.
25. shivaree (shĭv'ə-rē'): a noisy mock serenade or celebration for a newly married couple.