

Young Goodman Brown Summary

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Summary

The Stranger's Arrival on the Forest Path: At evening, Goodman Brown leaves Salem Village. After crossing the threshold, he steps back once more to bid farewell to his wife. Her name is Faith. She wore pink ribbons on her head, fluttering in the wind. Faith wished her husband would stay home that night. She feared being alone. But Goodman Brown told her he must leave on this journey that very night. They had been married only three months. At last, Faith, with sadness, bid her husband goodbye. Goodman Brown moved along the road. As he turned the corner, he looked back and saw Faith still gazing at him, sorrow written on her face.

Brown felt pain in his heart. He thought perhaps Faith had seen some dream that warned her of danger. Still, he continued his journey. He promised himself that after this one night he would live faithfully with her all his life. Then he entered the dark forest path. The trees were thick and frightening. A narrow path crept between them, closing again behind. Though it seemed empty, many unseen people could be hiding there. Though walking alone, he felt surrounded by an invisible crowd.

Goodman Brown grew fearful. He thought perhaps behind every tree lurked some devilish Indian. Or perhaps the devil himself was walking by his side. While he thought thus, he turned a bend in the road and saw ahead a man sitting under an old tree. The man's clothes were plain, yet his manner was dignified. When Brown approached, the man rose and began walking beside him. He told Brown he was late, saying he had already come from Boston and much time had passed. Trembling, Brown replied that Faith had delayed him.

The Devilish Traveler's True Form and the Dark History of Brown's Family: The forest grew darker. The man looked about fifty years old. His face bore a striking resemblance to Brown's, almost like father and son. Yet, his eyes and expression carried the wisdom of long experience, as though he could sit in the presence of a king or a governor without fear. The strangest thing about him was the staff he carried. It was shaped like a black serpent. In the shifting light and shadow, it seemed as if the staff was alive and writhing like a real snake. The man told Brown that his pace was too slow for the beginning of a journey. He wanted Brown to take hold of the staff. But Brown stopped and said that though he had come here out of promise, he now wished to turn back.

The man laughed and said, "Let us walk a little, and then we'll talk. If you still refuse, you may go back." Brown began walking again. He thought to himself that neither his father nor grandfather had walked such a wicked path. They were Christians and good men. Could it be that he was the first of the Browns to take this road? The older traveler, noticing his hesitation, said that he had long been acquainted with his family. He claimed he had once helped Brown's grandfather whip a Quaker woman, and had aided his father in setting fire to an Indian village during war. He said they were his good friends and that he had walked this path with them many times.

Goodman Brown was shocked. He thought his family had never spoken of such things, for rumors like these would have driven them out of New England. Brown protested, saying that his family were people of prayer and good deeds, never capable of such wicked acts. The serpent-staff-bearing traveler then said he had many acquaintances in New England. Many church deacons had drunk with him, many elected leaders had made him the head of their councils, and even the governor himself knew him well. Goodman Brown was astonished. He said he had no dealings with such leaders, that he was only a simple farmer. He wondered how he could ever stand before the old minister of Salem Village if he continued with this man. Even the sound of the minister's voice would make him tremble. At this, the older traveler laughed loudly. His laughter was so fierce that the serpent-like staff in his hand seemed to quiver. Then he became calm again and urged Brown to keep walking.

Goody Cloyse's Hypocrisy and the Minister-Deacon's Sinister Journey: Goodman Brown, annoyed, said that his wife Faith's heart would be broken. He did not want any harm to come to her. The older traveler pointed with his staff to a woman walking ahead on the path. Brown recognized her at once. She was Goody Cloyse, the woman who had taught him his catechism as a child. Along with the minister and Deacon Gookin, she had been one of his moral and spiritual guides. Brown was astonished to see such an old woman walking alone in the forest so late at night. He quickly stepped into the woods so Goody Cloyse would not see him.

Meanwhile, the traveler slowly approached the woman. She was walking fast, muttering indistinct words that sounded like a prayer. When the traveler extended his staff to touch her neck, she screamed out. Then she recognized him as her old partner in devilry. Delighted, Goody Cloyse told him her broomstick was gone, perhaps stolen by another witch. She also said she had prepared herself with an herbal ointment for the night's dark ceremony. Smiling, the traveler remarked that the mixture should also include the fat of a newborn child.

Goody Cloyse, delighted, said she would attend that night's gathering. There, a new young man was to be received into the devil's company. She wanted the old traveler to help her. The traveler replied that he could not take her hand, but she might use his staff. He threw the staff on the ground, and it seemed to come alive. But Goodman Brown did not see it. When he opened his eyes, Goody Cloyse was gone, and only the traveler stood there. Brown thought to himself how strange it was that this woman, who had once taught him religion, was now devoted to such wickedness. He was greatly astonished. Then they walked on again. The traveler kept reasoning with Brown as they went. Breaking off a twig, he touched it, and at once it withered in his hand.

On the dark path, Goodman Brown suddenly sat down. He said he would go no farther. He thought, if an aged woman like Goody Cloyse could take the devil's road, he would not follow that same path by leaving behind his wife Faith. The traveler calmly told him that later he would change his mind. Then he tossed away a branch and vanished. Goodman Brown felt relieved. He thought his conscience was now clear. In the morning, he could stand proudly before the minister and Deacon Gookin, and at night, he could sleep in peace beside Faith. While he was lost in these pleasant thoughts, he heard the sound of horses. Terrified, he hid in the forest. Soon two elderly men passed by, and Brown was shocked to recognize their voices. They seemed to be the minister of Salem village and Deacon Gookin, on their way to some kind of holy meeting.

The Sinister Gathering and the Revelation of Hidden Sin: Deacon Gookin said he would not miss that night's meeting. People were coming from Falmouth, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Even some Indian wizards would be there. A young woman was to be received into the devil's company. The minister urged him to hurry, and together they went deeper into the forest. Goodman Brown trembled with fear. He thought, why would such holy men attend a wicked gathering? His heart broke within him. Looking up to the sky, he wondered if God truly existed. Yet he resolved to stand firm against the devil.

Suddenly, black clouds gathered in the sky. From within came indistinct voices, like those of familiar people from Salem village. Some were the righteous, some the sinful, yet all seemed to call out. Then a woman's voice was heard, she was weeping, begging for something, while others urged her forward. Brown realized it was Faith's voice. In anguish, he cried aloud, calling her name again and again. The forest mocked him with echoes of his desperate call. Then came a loud scream, followed by the sound of laughter fading into the air. The clouds parted, and the sky grew clear again.

Then a pink ribbon floated down onto a tree branch. Brown picked it up. He thought his Faith was lost. To him, it seemed that there was no goodness left in the world, everything was sin. In despair, he burst into mad laughter. Gripping the staff tightly, he began to run again. The path grew darker and more terrifying. From the forest came the cries of wild beasts, the rustling of trees, and the shouts of Indians. Even the wind seemed to laugh at him. Yet, amid these dreadful sounds, Goodman Brown himself became the most frightening figure. He feared nothing anymore.

All at once, Goodman Brown turned stubborn. He thought that whether it be devils, witches, or Indians, none could frighten him now, rather, they would fear him. He ran like a madman, waving his staff in strange gestures, shouting loudly. Sometimes he uttered dreadful words, sometimes he gave out devilish laughter, filling the forest with echoes. It seemed that his inner self was the most terrifying of all. Suddenly, he saw a red light in the distance, as though trees were being burned to clear the forest. The night sky was filled with the glow of fire. Brown stopped. From afar, a sound like singing reached his ears. The tune was familiar, the same that was heard in the Salem village church. But the words were twisted into strange, dark, and devilish chants.

Slowly he moved forward. Before him lay an open space with a stone that looked like an altar or stage. Around it, four pine trees burned with flames. In the glow of the fire, faces of the crowd could be seen, then faded again into the darkness. In that crowd were high officials, elders of the church, the minister, Deacon Gookin, and the pious men and women of Salem village. Even women of noble birth, like the governor's wife, were present. Alongside them stood notorious men, sinful women, criminals, and Indian priests. What was strange was that good and evil stood side by side. None despised the other. All had gathered together in the worship of the devil.

Goodman Brown thought that perhaps his wife Faith was still among the good. This thought gave him a little hope. But fear also gripped him, for if Faith too had joined the devil's ranks, then all his beliefs would be shattered. His body trembled. The chanting continued, filling the forest with dreadful, devilish words. From the smoke and flame, terrifying shapes appeared. Then, out of the fire, a figure emerged, resembling some grave minister of New England. From the crowd arose a shout: let the new converts be brought forth!

Satanic Baptism and Goodman Brown's Fall: Goodman Brown stepped out from the shadows. He saw a vast assembly gathered in the fire-lit place. It seemed to him that his own dead father was calling him forward, while a woman, perhaps his mother, was beckoning him back. Yet he could not stop. The minister and Deacon Gookin seized his hands and led him

toward the rock. At the same time, a veiled female figure was brought forth, held by Goody Cloyse and Martha Carrier, the woman who, it was said, had made a pact with the devil and received the promise of being the Queen of Hell. Brown realized that this woman was his wife, Faith.

The dark leader welcomed everyone. He declared, "Tonight you shall learn the hidden sins of society. How elders of the church whispered lewd words to young girls, how wives poisoned their husbands in secret, how youths hastened for their fathers' wealth, and how maidens buried infants in hidden graves, everything. The world is filled with blood and crime. Evil is the true nature of mankind. Happiness exists only in evil. Therefore, welcome again to the communion of your race." The whole assembly shouted in unison. Goodman Brown and Faith stood before the crowd, trembling as they looked at each other in fear.

Goodman Brown and Faith were the only two who had not yet fully stepped into sin. The devil was about to give them the satanic baptism, that is, to mark their foreheads with a seal, binding them forever to the fellowship of sin. Brown looked at his wife and thought, if they accepted this mark, they could never face each other again. Suddenly, he raised his eyes to heaven and cried out to Faith, telling her to look to God and resist the devil. Immediately, everything vanished. The fire, the assembly, the devil, all disappeared. He found himself alone in the silent night forest.

The next morning, Goodman Brown returned slowly to Salem village. He saw familiar faces all around him. The minister walked by, offering blessings; Deacon Gookin was heard praying; Goody Cloyse was teaching a little girl the catechism. And Faith, with joy, ran forward to greet her husband. But Goodman Brown did not look kindly on anyone. He distrusted them all, even his own wife.

In the end, it is suggested that perhaps Goodman Brown had dreamed a dreadful dream in the forest. Yet that dream changed his life forever. He became a grave, sorrowful, and distrustful man. Even during prayer, sinful songs echoed in his ears. He grew distant from his wife. And when he died, no hopeful words were carved upon his tombstone, no mention of heaven, peace, or salvation. For even in his final hour, his heart was filled with darkness and despair.