NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S

THE SCARLET LETTER

Adapted by GARY W. ABBOTT

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In Order of Speaking)

TOWNSMAN #1...............................local Bostonian who serves as a narrator
TOWNSMAN #2...............................another
GOSSIP #1.................................a local woman
GOSSIP #2.................................another; wife of Townsman #2
GOSSIP #3.................................another
BEADLE BRACKETT ......................church official
CHILINGWORTH .........................old physician and long-lost husband of Hester Prynne
REVEREND JOHN WILSON.............eldest clergyman of Boston and great scholar
GOVERNOR BELLINGHAM .............governor of Boston
ARTHUR DIMMESDALE..................well-loved minister
HESTER PRYNNE.........................woman sentenced to public humiliation for her sins
LITTLE PEARL.............................Hester’s mischievous child
SERVANT ..................................to Governor Bellingham
MISTRESS HIBBINS .....................Governor Bellingham’s bitter-tempered, cackling sister
MRS. WILSON..............................gossipy wife of Reverend Wilson
SEXTON .....................................a churchman
THREE SAILORS .........................coarse, rowdy and drunk
PEARL ......................................sassy and headstrong teen
SEA CAPTAIN.............................flirtatious and argumentative seaman in his early twenties
EXTRAS.....................................townspeople
SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

There are five acts; an intermission should follow Act Three.

ACT ONE: The marketplace and prison of colonial Boston in 1650.

ACT TWO: Three years later. Along the road to Governor Bellingham’s and the entrance hall of his estate.

ACT THREE: A few months later. The dining room of the governor’s estate; Chillingworth’s potting shed; the marketplace.

ACT FOUR: About 12 years later. By a brook next to the forest.

ACT FIVE: Three days later. The marketplace.
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ACT ONE

SETTING: The marketplace of Colonial Boston on a summer morning. There is a raised platform with stairs leading up both ends. A raised “box” on the platform indicates the balcony of the meeting house. There are two chairs on the raised box.

AT RISE: ROGER CHILLINGWORTH, an old man, walks ON LEFT. He looks around and then takes up as unobtrusive a spot as possible far down Right. A CHURCH BELL begins to peal. Slowly, the marketplace fills up with TOWNSPEOPLE, who ENTER RIGHT and LEFT. In particular, there are two TOWNSMEN and three GOSSIPS. The TOWNSMEN function primarily as narrators, speaking directly to the audience.

TOWNSMAN #1: (Stands with TOWNSMAN #2 DOWN CENTER, near CHILLINGWORTH. To audience.) The grass plot before the jail in Prison Lane, on a certain summer morning in 1650, was occupied by a number of the inhabitants of Boston, all with their eyes intently fastened on the iron clamped oaken door. (Motions LEFT.)

TOWNSMAN #2: (To audience.) It was a circumstance to be noted that the women, of whom there were several in the crowd, took particular interest in whatever penal infliction might be expected to ensue.

GOSSIP #1: (Stands DOWN CENTER with other GOSSIPS, LEFT of TOWNSMEN. To other GOSSIPS.) It would be much to the public behoof if we women should have the handling of such as this Hester Prynne. What say you, Goodwives? If the hussy stood up before the three of us here now, would she come off with such a sentence as the worshipful magistrates have awarded? Marry, I think not!

GOSSIP #2: People say that the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale takes it grievously to heart that such a scandal should have come upon his congregation.

GOSSIP #1: The magistrates are God-fearing gentlemen, but merciful overmuch. At the very least they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne’s forehead. She would have winced at that, I warrant! But, the naughty baggage, little will she care what they put upon the bodice of her gown. Why, look you, she may cover it with a brooch or other such heathenish adornment, and so will walk the street as bold as ever.
GOSSIP #2: Ah, but let her cover the mark as she will, the pang of it will always be in her heart.

GOSSIP #3: What do we talk of marks and brands, whether on the bodice of her gown or the flesh of her forehead? This woman has brought shame upon us all and ought to die. Is there not law for it? Truly there is, both in the Scripture and in the statute book. The magistrates who have made it of no effect may then thank themselves if their own wives or daughters go likewise astray!

TOWNSMAN #2: Mercy on us, Goodwife, is there no virtue in women but that which springs from a fear of the gallows? Yours are the harshest words yet!

TOWNSMAN #1: Hush, now, for the lock is turning in the prison door and here comes Mistress Prynne, herself.

ALL: (Voices in mob-like fashion.) Mistress Prynne! Hester Prynne! (HESTER PRYNNE is ushered INTO the marketplace from LEFT, baby [doll] in arms, by grim BEADLE BRACKETT.)

BEADLE: (They break through the crowd.) Make way, good people. Make way in the King’s name!

GOSSIP #1: She has good skill with a needle, that's certain, but did ever a woman before her contrive such a way of showing it?

GOSSIP #3: It were well if we stripped Mistress Hester’s rich gown off her dainty shoulders, and for the red letter which she hath stitched so curiously, I’ll bestow a rag of my own rheumatic flannel, to make a fitter one! (She spits noisily on the ground.)

GOSSIP #2: Peace, neighbors, do not let her hear you. There’s not a stitch in that embroidered letter but that she has felt in her heart.

BEADLE: Open up a passage and I promise you Mistress Prynne shall be set where man, woman and child may have a fair sight of her till an hour past the meridian. A blessing on the Colony of Massachusetts where iniquity is dragged out into the sunlight!

GOSSIP #1: Aye, a blessing!

BEADLE: Come along, Mistress Hester, and show your scarlet letter in the marketplace. (He helps her onto the stairs to the scaffold.)

CHILLINGWORTH: (Steps forward. To TOWNSMAN #1.) I pray you, good sir, who is this woman? And wherefore is she set up here to public shame?

TOWNSMAN #1: You must be a stranger in this region, friend, else
you would surely have heard of Mistress Prynne. She hath raised a great scandal in Mr. Dimmesdale’s church.

CHILLINGWORTH: Indeed, I am a stranger and have been a wanderer, solely against my will. Please you, therefore, to tell me of Hester Prynne’s—I have her name rightly?—of this woman’s offenses.

TOWNSMAN #1: It must gladden your heart after your troubles to find yourself in a land where iniquity is searched out and punished in the sight of the people. Yonder woman, sir, was the wife of a learned man, English by birth, who had long dwelt in Amsterdam, whence some time ago, he was minded to cross over and cast his lot with us of Massachusetts. To this purpose he sent his wife before him, remaining behind himself to look after some necessary affairs.

TOWNSMAN #2: Marry, good sir, in some two years or less that the woman has been a dweller here in Boston, no tidings have come of the learned Master Prynne. And his young wife, look you, being left to her own misguidance…

CHILLINGWORTH: I conceive you. And who may be the father of yonder babe—it is some three or four months old, I should judge—which Mistress Prynne is holding in her arms? (DIMMESDALE, WILSON and BELLINGHAM ENTER RIGHT. They ascend platform and proceed to raised portion. DIMMESDALE and BELLINGHAM sit on chairs, with DIMMESDALE closest to HESTER, and BELLINGHAM to his RIGHT. WILSON stands between HESTER and DIMMESDALE. The three MEN mouth conversation during next scene. BEADLE withdraws.)

TOWNSMAN #1: That matter remains a riddle. Mistress Hester refuses to speak, and the magistrates have laid their heads together in vain.

CHILLINGWORTH: That learned man should come himself to look into the mystery.

TOWNSMAN #2: It behooves him well, if he be still in life.

TOWNSMAN #1: Now, good sir, our Massachusetts magistracy, bethinking themselves that this woman was doubtlessly strongly tempted to her fall—and that, moreover, as her husband may be at the bottom of the sea—they have not been bold to put in force the extremity of our righteous law against her.

TOWNSMAN #2: Which be death!
TOWNSMAN #1: But in their great mercy and tenderness of heart, they have doomed Mistress Prynne to stand only a space of three hours on the platform, and then thereafter, and for the remainder of her life, to wear the mark of shame upon her bosom.

CHILLINGWORTH: A wise sentence! Thus she will be a living sermon against sin until the ignominious letter be engraved upon her tombstone. It irks me, nevertheless, that the partner of her iniquity should not be discovered.

TOWNSMAN #1: There on the balcony be our good minister Mr. Dimmesdale and seated next to him to his right is no less a personage than Governor Bellingham, himself!

CHILLINGWORTH: And the kindly faced old gentleman standing, as if he be about to speak...?

TOWNSMAN #1: Ah, that be the Reverend John Wilson, the eldest clergyman of Boston, a great scholar like most of his contemporaries in the profession, and indeed a man of kind and genial spirit.

TOWNSMAN #2: That last attribute, however, has been less carefully developed than his intellectual gifts, and in truth, is seen by him as rather a matter of shame than self-congratulation.

TOWNSMAN #1: Would you, neighbor, speak ill of the venerable Mr. Wilson?

TOWNSMAN #2: Ill, never! (With a wink to CHILLINGWORTH.) True, nonetheless.

WILSON: (From the upper level.) Hearken unto me, Hester Prynne... (But the CROWD continues to chatter and mill about.)

TOWNSMAN #1: My oldest friend I must excuse sometimes for his speech—it is often off the point and worse, of a cynical turn which be unwise (Emphatically to TOWNSMAN #2.) particularly within the auditory perimeters of certain female personages of our community.

TOWNSMAN #2: (Indicating with a nod the three GOSSIPs.) He means the three old biddies yonder!

WILSON: Mistress Prynne, hearken!

TOWNSMAN #1: Hush!

TOWNSMAN #2: (In a whisper.) But, mark you, only two are such as I have named them. The comely one be my wife!
WILSON: And hearken all! (Now CROWD becomes quiet.) Hester Prynne, I have striven with my young brother here, under whose preaching of the word you have been privileged to sit. Knowing your natural temper better than I, he could the better judge what arguments to use, such as might prevail over your hardness and obstinacy; insomuch that you should no longer hide the name of him who tempted you to this grievous fall. (CHILLINGWORTH moves unnoticed through CROWD, closer to platform.) But he opposes to me that it were wronging the very nature of woman to force her to lay open her heart’s secrets in the presence of so great a multitude. Truly, as I sought to convince him, the shame lay in the commission of the sin, and not in the showing of it forth. Once again, Brother Dimmesdale, what say you? Must it be thou or I that shall deal with this poor sinner’s soul?

BELLINGHAM: (Stands.) Good Master Dimmesdale, the responsibility of this woman’s soul lies greatly with you. It behooves you, therefore, to exhort her to repentance.

WILSON: Speak to the woman, my brother. Exhort her to confess the truth.

CROWD: Confess! Name the man!

DIMMESDALE: Hester Prynne, I charge thee to speak out the name of thy fellow sinner and fellow sufferer. Be not silent from any mistaken pity and tenderness for him; for believe me, Hester, though he were to step down from a high place and stand there beside thee on thy pedestal of shame, yet better were it so than to hide a guilty heart through life. (HESTEN, unable to look her minister in the eyes, has turned away. She now sees CHILLINGWORTH and tries to suppress a reaction.)

BELLINGHAM: Woman, transgress not beyond the limits of Heaven’s mercy! Speak out the name! That and thy repentance may avail to take the scarlet letter off thy breast.

HESTEN: Never! It is too deeply branded. You cannot take it off.

WILSON: Speak, woman. Speak and give your child a father!

HESTEN: My child must seek a Heavenly Father. She shall never know an earthly one.

DIMMESDALE: Wonderous strength and generosity of a woman’s heart. She will not speak. (LIGHTS SHIFT to indicate passage of time. CHILLINGWORTH and GOSSIPs EXIT LEFT, TOWNSPEOPLE
EXIT RIGHT. HESTER moves DOWN STAGE, where a small wooden table with two chairs now stands. The scene is now the interior of the prison a few hours later.)

BEADLE: (ENTERS LEFT.) Still not speaking, Mistress Prynne? Since neither rebuke nor threats have served to quell thy insubordination, I have thought best to bring in a physician, newly arrived hence. (HESTEN looks up with apprehension, but BEADLE does not notice.) He is skilled in all decent modes of physical science, and likewise familiar with whatever the savage people could teach him in respect to medicinal herbs and roots which grow in the forest. Roger Chillingworth be his name, says he.

CHILLINGWORTH: (ENTERS LEFT, carrying a doctor’s bag, which he places on the small table. They stand on opposite ends of table. SOUND of baby fussing.) Prithee, friend, leave me alone with my patient. I promise you, good Beadle, Mistress Prynne shall hereafter be more amenable to just authority than you may have found her heretofore.

BEADLE: Nay, if your worship can accomplish that, I shall own you for a man of skill indeed! The woman has been like one possessed. It lacks little that I should take it in hand to drive the Devil out of her with stripes. (EXITS RIGHT.)

CHILLINGWORTH: My old studies in alchemy and my sojourn, for above a year past, among a people well-versed in the kindly properties of simples, have made a better physician of me than many that claim the medical degree. (SOUND of baby still fussing. CHILLINGWORTH thrusts vile toward her.) Here, woman! The child is yours. She’s none of mine. Administer this draught, therefore, with thine own hand.

HESTEN: Would you avenge yourself on an innocent babe?

CHILLINGWORTH: Foolish woman! What should ail me to harm this misbegotten babe? The medicine is potent for good. Were it my own as well as thine I could do no better for it.

HESTEN: You are the physician. It is you who must administer the potion to the child.

CHILLINGWORTH: Very well, give it me. (Takes fussy child and administers medicine, then returns the baby, now quiet, to HESTER,) Now, see the child gives off fussing and is calmed. Soon it will sink
into healthful slumber. So must I now turn my attention to the mother. *(He takes her hands and looks deep into her eyes. She shudders.)*

**HESTER:** Your gaze is so familiar yet so strange and cold.

**CHILLINGWORTH:** Can you wonder at it? *(He begins mixing another potion and places it in cup.)* I learned many new secrets in the wilderness. This is one of them. It is a recipe taught me by an Indian in return for some lessons of my own. *(Hands her cup.)* Drink it. It may be less soothing than a sinless conscience, that I cannot give thee, but it will calm the swell of thy passions.

**HESTER:** *(Sits.)* I have thought of death... have wished for it. Yet if death be in this cup, I bid thee think again before you behold me quaff it. See, it is even now at my lips.

**CHILLINGWORTH:** Dost thou know me so little? Even if I scheme of vengeance, what better could I do than to let thee live so that this shame may still blaze upon thy bosom? *(HESTER pauses a moment, then quickly drinks the potion.)* Hester, I ask not wherefore or how thou hast fallen into infamy. The reason is not far to seek. It was my folly as much as thy weakness. I—a man of thought, the bookworm of great libraries—a man already in decay, having given my best years to the hungry dream of knowledge—what had I to do with youth and beauty like thine own! From the moment we came down the old church steps together, a married pair, I might have beheld the bale-fire of that scarlet letter blazing at the end of our path.

**HESTER:** I was ever frank with thee. I felt no love, nor feigned any.

**CHILLINGWORTH:** I have said it was my folly. But up to that epoch of my life, the world had been so cheerless! My heart was a habitation large enough for many guests, but lonely and chill without a household fire. I longed to kindle one. It seemed not so wild a dream that the simple bliss which is scattered far and wide to all mankind might still be mine.

**HESTER:** *(Deeply moved.)* I have greatly wronged thee!

**CHILLINGWORTH:** We have wronged each other. Between thee and me the scale hangs fairly balanced. But the man lives who has wronged us both. Who is he?

**HESTER:** That you shall never know.

**CHILLINGWORTH:** Never, sayest thou? Never know him! There are
few things hidden from the man who devotes himself earnestly to the solution of a mystery. Let him hide himself in outward honor if he may! Nonetheless, sooner or later, he will be mine!

HESTER: Your words are cold and hard; there is a deep darkness in them. *(She averts her eyes.)*

CHILLINGWORTH: One thing, thou that wast my wife. Keep thou my secret, as thou hast kept his whose babe this is beneath my hand. *(This gets her attention back immediately.)* There are none in this land who do know me. Breathe not to any human soul that thou didst ever call me husband.

HESTER: Think what you ask!

CHILLINGWORTH: Nonetheless, I do ask it. *(His tone changes.)* Here on this wild outskirt of the earth shall I pitch my tent.

HESTER: *(Stands.)* Monstrous! What you do is terrible, terrible!

CHILLINGWORTH: Monstrous am I? Terrible what I do?

HESTER: However thou hast been wronged, whatever hurt I have done thee, surely it cannot be right...

CHILLINGWORTH: No matter right or wrong, thou and thine, Hester Prynne, belong to me. My home is wherever thou art. And where he is. You cannot deny me!

HESTER: No. I cannot. I will keep thy secret, as I have his.

CHILLINGWORTH: Look you do so.

HESTER: Why do you stare thus at me! What are you? Are you like the Dark Man that haunts the forest 'round about us?

CHILLINGWORTH: There is no such a one, Hester. He is but a phantom of the local fever.

HESTER: Have you enticed me into a bond that will prove the ruin of my soul?

CHILLINGWORTH: *(As he prepares his belongings to leave.*) Not thy soul… no, not thine. *(BLACKOUT. CURTAIN.)*

End of ACT ONE
ACT TWO

LIGHTS UP: It is a fine, bright morning three years later. Played in front of the curtain, we are along the road to the Bellingham estate. The three GOSSIPS are gathered close in conference at LEFT, mouthing gossip, as the two TOWNSMEN ENTER from RIGHT and speak to the audience. Behind the curtain, the stage is set up as the entrance hallway in Bellingham’s mansion with an indication of a door.

TOWNSMAN #1: Three years had passed, and with what strange rapidity did Hester’s child come to an age capable of speech and thought far greater than others of her years. So much so that her peers fled her in terror, and not a few of the town elders found in her eyes something that made them avoid her glance.

TOWNSMAN #2: The poor child was a born outcast!

TOWNSMAN #1: On one particular day, Hester went to the mansion of Governor Bellingham with a pair of gloves she had fashioned for him, and which were to be worn on some great occasion of state.

TOWNSMAN #2: But there was another more important reason than the delivery of a pair of embroidered gloves impelling Hester to seek an interview with a personage of so much power in the affairs of the settlement.

TOWNSMAN #1: For it had reached her ears that there existed a deep design on the part of some leading inhabitants to deprive her of her child.

TOWNSMAN #2: On the supposition that the child was of demon origin, these good people argued that a Christian interest in the mother’s soul required them to remove such a stumbling block from her path.

TOWNSMAN #1: If, on the other hand, the child was capable of moral growth, then surely it would enjoy all the fairer prospect of such advantage being transferred to better and wiser guardianship than Hester Prynne’s.

TOWNSMAN #2: Among those promoting this design, Governor Bellingham was said to be one of the busiest. (The TOWNSMEN EXIT RIGHT. HESTER ENTERS RIGHT with LITTLE PEARL. The child tugs eagerly at her mother’s hand, and they come near enough to overhear some of the GOSSIPS’ conversation.)
GOSSIP #1: We have hardly as yet spoken of the infant, that little creature whose innocent life sprung from a guilty passion.

GOSSIP #2: Her Pearl—for so has Hester called her.

GOSSIP #1: Not as a name expressive of her aspect, which has nothing of that calm, white, unimpassioned luster that would be indicated by the comparison.

GOSSIP #2: But she named the infant “Pearl” as being of great price.

GOSSIP #3: (With a mean little laugh.) Purchased with all she had! (LITTLE PEARL frowns, stamps her foot and shakes her little hand with a variety of threatening gestures, then breaks away from her mother and rushes menacingly at the knot of her enemies, putting them to flight.)

LITTLE PEARL: Ya! Ya! Ya! Ya!

GOSSIP #2: Heaven help us!

GOSSIP #3: Imp of evil! Product of sin!

GOSSIP #1: She has no rights among christened infants! (The GOSSIPS hurry away OFF LEFT.)

HESTER: Child, child! Can you be my child in truth?

LITTLE PEARL: Yes, I am your little Pearl.

HESTER: (Jokes.) No, no, you are no pearl of mine!

LITTLE PEARL: If not thine, Mother, then whose am I? Who sent me hither?

HESTER: Sent you? Why, your Heavenly Father sent you. As, indeed, he did send us all into the world.

LITTLE PEARL: Nay, Mother, I think not. I’m sure I have no Heavenly Father.

HESTER: (Aghast, she looks around to be sure no one has heard this.) Hush, hush, child, you must not talk so! (CURTAIN OPENS to reveal a DARK STAGE, obscuring the large entrance hall of the estate. SPOTLIGHT indicates location of doorstep and door with knocker.) Look now, we have reached the abode of Governor Bellingham.

LITTLE PEARL: Why do you hold back, Mother? Go to the door and lift the iron hammer which hangs there so that you may give a summons to those within. (HESTER does so with some trepidation.)
SERVANT:  *(ENTERS UP CENTER, emerging from darkness.  He is an elderly, plodding gentleman. To audience.)* The summons was answered—in time! In time!—by one of the Governor’s bond servants. A free-born Englishman, but now a seven years slave. During which time he is to be the property of his master and as much a commodity of bargain and sale as an ox or a joint stool! Ah, but what is there for it but to endure, endure? *(TO HESTER.)* Good morrow, madam, what be your business, pray?

HESTER:  Is the worshipful Governor Bellingham in?

SERVANT:  Yea, his honorable worshipfulness is within. But he has a godly minister with him and likewise a leech. Ye may not see him now. Come back anon. *(EXITS LEFT.)*

HESTER:  Nevertheless, I will enter. *(She does so and the LIGHTS COME UP FULL on the entrance hall of GOVERNOR BELLINGHAM’S mansion.)*

BELLINGHAM:  *(ENTERS RIGHT with WILSON, DIMMESDALE and CHILLINGWORTH.)* What have we here?! How gat such a guest into my hall?

WILSON:  *(TO LITTLE PEARL.)* Indeed, who art thou, child? Dost know thy catechism?

LITTLE PEARL:  I am my Mother’s child, and my name is Pearl.

WILSON:  This is the same child of whom we have held speech together. And this is the unhappy woman, her mother, Hester Prynne.

BELLINGHAM:  We might have judged that such a child’s mother must needs be a scarlet woman. But she comes at a goodly time, and we will forthwith look into this matter.

WILSON:  Pearl, thou must take heed to instruction. Canst thou tell me, child, who made thee?

LITTLE PEARL:  No one made me. My mother plucked me from the wild rosebush that grew by the prison door.

BELLINGHAM:  This is awful! Here is a child of three years old, and she cannot tell who made her! Methinks, gentlemen, we need inquire no further. *(To HESTER.)* Hester Prynne, there has been much question concerning thee of late. The point has been weightily discussed whether we do well to discharge our conscience by entrusting the immortal soul of yonder child to the
guidance of one who has stumbled and fallen amid the pitfalls of this world.

HESTER: God gave me this child in requital of all things else, which you have taken from me. She is my happiness. You shall not take her! I will die first!

WILSON: The child shall be well cared for, woman! Far better than thou canst do it.

HESTER: (To DIMMESDALE.) Speak you for me! You know well—for you have sympathies which these men lack—you know what is in my heart. I will not lose the child!

DIMMESDALE: (To MEN.) This child of its father’s guilt and its mother’s shame has, indeed, come from the hand of God, to work in many ways upon her heart who so earnestly pleads the right to keep her. It was meant for a blessing, perhaps the one blessing of her life, reminding her at every moment of her fall, but yet teaching her that if she bring the child to Heaven, the child will also bring her thither. For Hester Prynne’s sake then, and for the poor child’s, let us leave them as Providence has seen fit to place them.

CHILLINGWORTH: (Steps forward.) You speak, my friend, with a strange earnestness.

WILSON: What say you, Master Bellingham? Has he not pleaded well for the woman?

BELLINGHAM: Indeed, he has. We will leave the matter as it now stands, so long as there be no further scandal in the woman. Care must be had, nevertheless, to put the child to due examination in the catechism, at the good hands of Mr. Dimmesdale.

CHILLINGWORTH: A strange child. It is easy to see her mother’s part in her. Would it be possible, think you, to analyze that child’s nature, and from it, to give a shrewd guess as to the father?

WILSON: Nay, it would be sinful in such a question to follow the clue of profane philosophy. Better to leave the mystery as we find it. Thereby, every good Christian man has a title to show a father’s kindness toward the poor, deserted babe.

BELLINGHAM: Well said. Mistress Prynne, go forth, you and your child, and think on what has passed here this afternoon. (The MEN EXIT RIGHT. The SERVANT ENTERS LEFT and conducts HESTER and PEARL to the door. The LIGHTS BLACKOUT on the hallway behind her once she is standing on the doorstep, and the
SERVANT EXITS RIGHT in the dark. The three GOSSIPS ENTER FAR LEFT and observe HESTER’S departure with LITTLE PEARL, as well as the brief exchange between HESTER and MISTRESS HIBBINS, whose voice is heard OFFSTAGE RIGHT, as if she is sticking her head out of an upstairs window calling to HESTER.)

GOSSIP #1: Look, you, it is Hester Prynne and her little imp!

MISTRESS HIBBINS’ VOICE: (From OFFSTAGE RIGHT.) Hist! Hist! Hester Prynne! Hester Prynne!

GOSSIP #2: And see up there (Points her finger up in the direction of OFFSTAGE VOICE.), the lattice of a chamber window is thrown open and forth into the sunny day thrusts the face of Mistress Hibbins, Governor Bellingham’s bitter-tempered sister.

GOSSIP #3: She that is reported by many a witch!

MISTRESS HIBBINS’ VOICE: Wilt thou go with us tonight? There will be a merry company in the forest, and I well-nigh promised the Dark Man that the comely Hester Prynne should make one.

HESTER: Make my excuses to him, so please you. I must tarry at home and keep watch over my little Pearl. Had they taken her from me, I would have gone with you into the forest and signed my name in the Black Book, too! Yes, and that with my own blood!

MISTRESS HIBBINS’ VOICE: We shall have you there anon. (HESTER and LITTLE PEARL EXIT DOWN RIGHT. They are watched closely by the GOSSIPS, who follow the two OFF RIGHT. BLACKOUT. CURTAIN.)

End of ACT TWO

ACT THREE

AT RISE: Dining table set for three with glasses, plates and silverware DOWN RIGHT. STAGE LEFT is an indication of CHILLINGWORTH’S potting shed, with a long table covered with potted plants of various kinds. LIGHTS UP STAGE RIGHT. BELLINGHAM, WILSON and MRS. WILSON are seated at the dining table in BELLINGHAM’S home. They are served by MISTRESS HIBBINS, who carries a serving tray with food or wine. She makes faces behind the backs of the WILSONS and occasionally cackles to herself.

End of Script Sample
PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES

ONSTAGE, ACT ONE: Raised platform with stairs leading up both ends. Raised “box” on platform indicating balcony of meeting house. Two chairs on raised box. Small wooden table.

BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE: Baby [doll] (HESTER); doctor’s bag with viles of medicine and a cup (CHILLINGWORTH).

ONSTAGE, ACT TWO: Doorway indicating Governor’s estate.

ONSTAGE, ACT THREE: Dining table set for three with three chairs; table with plants; platfrom with raised “box” as in ACT ONE.

BROUGHT ON, ACT THREE: Serving tray with food/wine (MISTRESS HIBBINS); lit candle (TOWNSMAN #2).

ONSTAGE, ACT FOUR: Suggestion of a brook.

ONSTAGE, ACT FIVE: Same as ACT ONE.

BROUGHT ON, ACT FIVE: Gold chain (CAPTAIN).

SOUND EFFECTS

Church bell, baby fussing, nature sounds, mournful wind.
We hope you’ve enjoyed this script sample.

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