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THE SCARLET LETTER adapted by Carrie McCrossen

(HESTER looks around the marketplace to see if anyone is watching. Alone, she kneels down by the church steps and prays.)

HESTER PRYNEE: They say I succumbed to sin because I was weak. I don't feel weak. (Beat.) I am still tempted every day. And I try with all my power to reject sin. But it's there. It seems to come from within me. I am to blame. I have sinful thoughts when I walk through town, when I brush my hair, when I stitch needlepoint. I must do my sewing—the work of needlepoint feeds my child. I sell the pieces and I buy bread. But even as I stitch, sin works its way through me. I begin to feel pride in my work. I take pleasure in each stitch. The sinfulness inside me wants my work to be great. Wants these garments to attract the eye. To inspire praise. Grandeur should be reserved for Heaven. Once again I have followed my passion and it has led me to sin. I once used golden thread to embroider a collar. I encircled the neck making stitch after stitch, loops of golden filigree, delicate as floss. Tiny circles and stars like the celestial roof. And then I used my blade to cut the stitches loose again. The floss fell to the floor and the collar remained earthly, practical, good. It was a battle for my soul. But my soul is already lost.

(Beat.)

Often I ask myself why I stay. I could leave and go somewhere where no one knows. But if I allow my sinful nature to run wild, where does it stop? And then sometimes I fear I stay for him. His soul is not my concern, nor mine his. The act is done, and now we both must pay the price in different currencies. But still, my heart burns under the weight of this letter at every moment except when he is near. Would I could remove it. I've imagined it many times. But I never would dare. I know within me that, were I worthy to be quit of it, it would fall away of its own nature, or be transformed into something...new.

ALL THE GIRLS HATE ME AT WEST HADDOCK HIGH

by A.M. Dittman

(Allison is approached by a fellow student who is desperately trying to find a date to the prom.)

ALLISON: You know, I think maybe I will go to the dance with you.

(Beat.)

Not of course as your date. It won't be a date date. As you know, I'm interested in the human condition. I am prepared to go to the dance with you as a social experiment. I will take notes and then write a paper based on my findings. You will be judged on a scale of one to ten in a variety of different categories. Your score will be tabulated at the end and that's for you to keep. It'll be your number. A number between one and ten. I will judge you on appearance, smell, likability, conversation skills, social graces, dancing ability. Things like that. Everything you say or do will go into my report. Whether or not you try to kiss me, what you wear, how you smell, how sweaty your hands are. Etcetera.

(Beat.)

I don't know if it will be in a scientific journal or just online for everyone to peruse. But it will be made widely available. In the end, it's all about helping humanity.

(Beat.)

You are saying no to me? You are not brave.

#VIRAL

by Maria McConville

ANNA

I'm scared.

I don't know where I'll be in five years.

In ten.

In twenty.

In forty.

I don't want to grow up to be

the kind of woman who will

Shave a girl's head.

Strip her down to her underwear.

Take a picture.

And then post it on the internet.

For the world to see.

I don't want to be

That kind of person.

And I don't think I am.

Deep down.

Deep down, I know I'm a good person.

I believe we all are.

Maybe everyone is just scared like me.

Well not everyone.

(She looks off to where her friend exited. She is silent for a moment.)

I admire.

People.

I admire people who aren't afraid.

To stick their necks out.

I've never been like that. I've never be willing to speak out.

Or stand up.

Or jump in.

It's not my personality.

But maybe.

Maybe that's the problem.

When a bunch of people pass the buck.

When everyone is too scared

Or too busy

Or too tired

Or too embarrassed

Or too...

Whatever.

When everyone has an excuse. For sitting idly by.

Suddenly.

There's no one left.

(She looks around. There is, in fact, no one left.)

But now.

Every time I look at her empty desk

The empty seat at the lunch table

Her empty locker

I wonder where she is.

And I wonder...

If it's too late.

For me not to be that person.

Who always has an excuse.

To do nothing.

So much nothing that it leads to something awful.

And I have to believe.

Somewhere.

Deep down.

That it isn't too late.

That I can...

That we *can*
Change.
Before this disease
This disease of doing nothing
Saying nothing
Standing for nothing
Goes...
Viral.

#VIRAL **by Maria McConville**

MEGAN

In five years I'll be home for Thanksgiving Break.
I'll be in the check out line at the grocery store.
My mom will be complaining that they didn't have the seasoning she wanted.
Or that it was too expensive.
The line will be long.
It's always long the day before a big holiday.
When we finally get there.
I'll look up in the cashier's face.
Through her long blonde hair.
Her bangs that cover her eyes.
And I'll see.
I'll see her.
And we will both look away.
We will both pretend we don't know.
That we used to
Have slumber parties
Study sessions
Family vacations
Clothing swaps.
We will both pretend the other doesn't exist.
It will be easier that way.
My mom won't notice either.
We'll pay for our groceries and head out into the frosty night.
But through the giant storefront windows,

I'll see her.
Fingers on the cash register keys.
And I'll spend a lot of time
In the next five years after that
And the next five years after that
And after that
Trying to forget.
The blonde girl in the store that night.
Who was almost as much of a stranger to me
As my sixteen year old self.
The girl who would do something so terrible.
And never look back.



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