

Chapter II (pg. 59, 60, 64)

The Unavoidable Truth

The isolation and courage that Hester Prynne felt when she walked to the scaffold to face reality brought out my deepest sympathy and respect for her. Hester, followed by a crowd of "stern-browed men," "unkindly visaged women," and "curious school boys," begins the walk from the jail to the scaffold. She seems to be proud and dignified. However, internally, she feels great agony, for she was scorned and mocked by the accusing Puritans. She finally arrives at the scaffold, displaying the two results of her adultery; the scarlet letter and her child, Pearl. In order to escape her isolation, Hester goes into her inner soul and into the past. In Hester's "dusky mirror" of imagination, she remembers her old home in England, her mother, her father, and most of all, her own youthful face. Then, she thinks of the marital life with her husband, a "tuft of green moss on a crumbling wall". The "green moss" symbolizes Hester's youth, which was clinging onto the "crumbling wall", which represents her aged husband. She tries to lose herself in past memories, but reality rears its ugly head. A few moments later, her mind jumps back to reality. In astonishment, she clutches the child and places her finger on the scarlet letter. This shows that reality is unavoidable, even though we try to escape from it sometimes.

This courageous journey to reality won my admiration and understanding. When I was eight years old, I distinctly remember the time when our family celebrated the Chinese New Year. Since I was still young and didn't have much manners, I had to sit alone on a separate table. The more I saw the adults enjoying themselves, the more furious I got. However, I felt helpless for I couldn't do anything about it. Then, I saw my aunt rising from her chair to get a bowl of soup from the other end of the table. I quickly took this opportunity and pulled the chair away from her. Unaware that the chair was missing, she sat down and fell backwards, dropping the bowl and making a mess. My enraged parents, grabbing me by the ears, made me kneel down in front of everybody and apologize. Being the stubborn person I am, I refused. Thus, I kept on kneeling on the ground. Looking at my own reflection off the polished floor, I wondered why I got in such a mess. Memories of the past swept into my mind. I started pondering about my leggo collection and how awesome it was. Also, I recollected how kind and gentle my parents were just a few days before this dinner. What I was actually doing was trying to evade reality. However, the more I thought, the more depressed I got. The guilt inside me began to surface. Finally, throwing myself into the arms of reality, I apologized. Unable to control my emotions, I broke into uncontrollable sobs and started crying loudly. This won sympathy from all the relatives and I was allowed to sit with them and enjoy the dinner together.

We often try to evade reality, but reality is unavoidable. When Hester was on the scaffold, facing shame and humiliation, she thought of her past in order to forget her present situation on the scaffold. Similarly, when I was eight years old, kneeling down in front of everybody, I too tried to lose myself in past memories. However, both Hester and I are still faced with reality, no matter where our minds are.

