***Woman in White***

***Part 1***

***Section 3***

***Chapter 1***

***Summary:***

* The gist of Marian's diary entries go something like this: "Dear Diary, my sister Laura can't make a decision to save her life and is marrying this punk Sir Percival for no apparent reason, even though she's in love with Walter. This is causing me way too much emotional trauma. P.S. Victorian society sucks for women. Hugs, Marian."
* Right. So we jump back in time a bit and get some of the events Mr. Gilmore detailed from Marian's point of view.
* Marian is concerned for Laura, who acts like she's helpless.
* Laura's solution is to confess her love for Walter to Sir Percival and let him end the engagement if he wants, since Laura herself can't say no because she promised her dying daddy.
* Marian thinks this is the worst idea of all time, but Laura insists.
* So Laura confesses to Sir Percival that she has the hots for another man (leaving out Walter's name).
* Sir Percival acts like he's cool with everything and says he'll marry her anyway.
* Whoa. Laura is totally bewildered, and Marian realizes (even more) that PercyPants is up to no good.
* Marian is all sorts of upset but can't do anything.
* Uncle Fairlie is cool with things. Sir Percival keeps behaving reasonably, which makes it hard for Marian to blame him or hate him.
* He even agrees to let Laura set the wedding date.
* Marian then gets a letter from Walter saying he's heading to South America for over a year.
* Marian is upset and doesn't mention any of it to Laura.
* The two sisters go out of town to visit some friends…

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

The story is continued through excerpts from the diary of [Marian Halcombe](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe). These excerpts begin on the 8th of November, just after [Mr. Gilmore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-gilmore)’s first visit to Limmeridge House when he came to discuss the marriage settlement with [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie). Marian, who feels unusually anxious and uncertain about how to proceed, approaches Laura in her room after Mr. Gilmore has had his discussion with her. Laura is pacing distractedly and tells Marian that she is going to confess “all” to [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) so that he may break off his engagement to her if he wishes. Laura feels that she cannot break off the engagement herself because of the promise she made to her father, but she is resolved to speak to Sir Percival the next morning.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Laura feels too guilty to end the engagement herself and go against her father’s wishes. She plans to tell Sir Percival that she is in love with Walter Hartright—she believes that this will force Sir Percival to end the engagement, as he will not wish to marry a woman who is in love with another man. However, this assumes that Sir Percival actually loves her and wants to marry her for something other than money.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) seems more relaxed that evening and joins [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde), [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe), and [Mrs. Vesey](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mrs-vesey) for dinner. After they have eaten, she tells Sir Percival that she wishes to speak to him the next day, after breakfast, and that she will wait for him in the study. Sir Percival turns pale when he hears this and Marian notices that his hands shake slightly. When Marian pops into Laura’s room that night to check on her, she finds Laura preparing to sleep with the book of [Walter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright)’s sketches under her pillow for what she thinks may be the last time.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Laura feels confident that the engagement will end when she tells Sir Percival about her love for Walter, and this eases the anxiety and stress she has been feeling about her wedding. Despite this, Laura sleeps with Walter’s sketchbook (which is a keepsake that she uses to feel close to him) as, if Sir Percival does not break off the engagement, she will have to give up her affection for Walter and try to forget him.

***Summary Part 3:***

The next day [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) receives a worrying letter from [Walter Hartright](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright). He writes in reply to a letter that Marian sent him detailing the explanation that [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) provided for the letter sent by [Anne Catherick](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/anne-catherick-the-woman) to [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie). Walter bitterly replies that it is not his place to question the actions of noble men like Sir Percival. Marian is concerned that Walter’s mental health is deteriorating; he writes that he cannot pursue his normal work and that he feels he is being followed around London. He asks for Marian’s help to secure a passage abroad and she readily agrees, feeling that a change will be good for him.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Walter clearly does not believe Sir Percival’s explanation and suspects him of treating Anne unjustly. Walter is resentful that he cannot marry Laura and writes bitterly about the class system that prevents him from questioning the behavior of upper-class people like Sir Percival, who are publicly believed to be “better” than lower-class people. It was common in the nineteenth century to associate material wealth and social status with inherent virtue. Marian believes that Walter is paranoid and ill and is not really being followed.

***Summary Part 4:***

That morning, after breakfast, [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) and [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) wait for [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) in the study. Marian is surprised to find Laura in such a state of calm resolve; she has never seen this side of her sister and feels that they have switched roles. Sir Percival, who did not join them for breakfast, appears and seems very anxious to hear what Laura has to say.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Marian feels that she is usually a confident and determined person, but the uncertainty over Laura’s future has shaken her and she now questions her own judgement. The crisis also allows her to see a new side of Laura, who has apparently never been in a position of real responsibility before.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) explains to [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) that, although she agreed to the engagement—on her father’s wish—with the best intentions, her circumstances have changed since then. She understands that Sir Percival may wish to end the engagement with her, since she is in love with another, but that she does not intend to marry this other man and will remain single for the rest of her life even if Sir Percival will not marry her. She feels the need to tell him and to be honest, as she believes that women should honor and respect their husbands above all, and she does not wish to marry him with a lie on her conscience.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Laura demonstrates that she holds conventional views about gender. Rather than marrying Walter, she will live her whole life unmarried as punishment for breaking off her engagement and acting improperly by falling in love while she is engaged to another man. She also demonstrates to Sir Percival that she is a very honest, open person and will not lie to him.

***Summary Part 6:***

Rather than rejecting [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie), however, [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) leaps up and announces that she has done nothing but increase his desire to marry her because she has proved herself so honest and good. [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) sees that Laura’s honesty, which she hoped would free her from the engagement, has really sealed her fate. Laura insists that although she will marry Sir Percival, she will never love him, but Sir Percival suggests that she may learn to love him in time, and seems delighted to continue the engagement.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Although Laura tries to dissuade Sir Percival from the marriage by insisting that she will never love him, her confession makes him more determined—supposedly because it proves she will be a virtuous and honest wife. Marian, however, feels that Laura has accidentally played right into Sir Percival’s hands, as she now has no excuse not to marry him and cannot go against her father’s wishes. Her honesty may also look like naivety to Sir Percival and let him think that he can easily manipulate her.

***Summary Part 7:***

[Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) leaves the women alone and [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) watches anxiously as [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) dejectedly resigns herself to what has passed. She cuts out a lock of her hair and places it in [Walter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright)’s sketchbook. Aware that Marian sometimes corresponds with Walter, Laura begs her to write and tell him that she is happy. If she dies young, however, Laura wants Marian to tell Walter that she loved him. With that she breaks down sobbing and, saddened by the day’s events, Marian leaves her to cry herself to sleep and puts Walter’s sketchbook out of sight.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Hair was commonly used as a keepsake in Victorian England. It was common for people to have jewelry and ornaments decorated with the hair of their loved ones who were either dead or lived a long way off. Laura clearly loves Walter very much, as she does not wish to upset him by letting him know how unhappy she is. However, if she dies, she does not want him to believe that she had forgotten him. Marian puts Walter’s sketchbook away, symbolizing Laura’s final separation from him.

***Summary Part 8:***

The next day, [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) takes [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) aside and assures her of his good intentions towards [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie); he will never mention her confession again and will do his utmost to win her regard as a husband. Marian is deeply aware of how biased she is against Sir Percival and tries to resist speaking her mind. She does tell him, however, that she wishes he had ended the engagement. Again, she feels “disarmed” when Sir Percival responds kindly and begs her to understand that Laura’s confession has only strengthened the attachment that he feels towards her.

***Analysis Part 8:***

Although Marian has no evidence to support her dislike of Sir Percival, she instinctively mistrusts him, even when he is being kind to her and seems to have Laura’s best interests in mind.

***Summary Part 9:***

When [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) is still cold towards him, [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) asks if she thinks [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie)’s future would be better as single woman or as the wife of a noble and devoted man. Marian answers him civilly but, writing in her dairy later that day, feels certain that he has taken advantage of Laura’s vulnerability and has used it to further his own ends. She can only hope that his motives are not as monstrous as she suspects and that he truly loves her sister. She also briefly notes that she has reached out to some contacts to get [Walter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright) a position abroad, as she is terribly worried about him and what will happen to him if he remains in London.

***Analysis Part 9:***

Sir Percival tries to manipulate Marian. He suggests that Marian does not really want her sister to be happy, as her life as an unmarried woman could not possibly be happier than her life married to him. This demonstrates typical attitudes towards gender and marriage and confirms Marian’s suspicions that Sir Percival is behaving kindly but is not really kind under the surface. Although she hopes she is wrong, she believes Sir Percival is marrying Laura for her money.

***Summary Part 10:***

The next morning, [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) and [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) are called to [Mr. Fairlie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-fairlie)’s room to discuss the date of the wedding. Marian feels that [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) should get to decide when the marriage will take place, but Mr. Fairlie says that Laura has caused enough trouble and that it should be up to Sir Percival. Sir Percival good humoredly refuses this responsibility and Marian says that she will not press Laura on the matter. When she sees Laura, however, and describes the interview, Laura despondently says that she has indeed caused everyone enough trouble and gives Sir Percival final say over the timing of the wedding.

***Analysis Part 10:***

Mr. Fairlie again shows his disregard for Laura’s wellbeing and views her feelings about the wedding as a huge inconvenience to himself. Laura does not prioritize her own feelings over the men around her—her society does not treat women as equal to men, and doesn’t view women’s feelings or opinions as valid in comparison to men’s.

***Summary Part 11:***

[Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) watches [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) interact with [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) and observes the change that has come over her sister. She feels that, since [Walter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright)’s departure, Laura has lost all her hope and vivacity but seems quietly determined to keep her promise. Sir Percival wants to marry Laura by the end of the year and Marian acknowledges, bitterly, that there is nothing she can do to stop this. After finalizing the date with Laura, Sir Percival leaves Limmeridge to prepare his house in Hampshire for his new bride.

***Analysis Part 11:***

Laura has decided to marry Sir Percival because of a sense of responsibility to her father and her uncle rather than affection for her husband. This was a common situation for women in the nineteenth century, who were often married off by their male relatives for financial or political reasons. As women could not own property, Laura must go to live at her husband’s house rather than remain at Limmeridge, which belongs to her uncle.

***Summary Part 12:***

[Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) decides that a change of scenery will be good for [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) and invites her to visit some friends of theirs in Yorkshire. Laura—in her new “coldly passive” state—agrees. Marian sends a quick note to [Mr. Gilmore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-gilmore) to inform him about the upcoming wedding. She also hears that a place has been found for [Walter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright) on an expedition to Honduras, and, saddened that their dear friend will be so far away, Marian sets out with Laura for Yorkshire.

***Analysis Part 12:***

Laura has become “passive” because she no longer has any power in her situation. She has done her best to escape but now feels that she must go through with it since it is expected of her. The nineteenth century in Britain was a period of expansionism and colonialism, and it was common for British explorers to journey to foreign countries to colonize new territories or carry out scientific or anthropological research.

***Summary Part 13:***

After a week in Yorkshire, [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) hears that [Walter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright) has departed on his expedition to America. The next day she receives a letter from [Mr. Fairlie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-fairlie) that asks her and [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) to return to Limmeridge house at the request of [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde).

***Analysis Part 13:***

Walter is clearly in a desperate state of mind to undertake such a long and dangerous voyage. He obviously feels that he has nothing to lose without Laura.