***Woman in White***

***Part 2***

***Section 1***

***Chapter 4***

***Summary:***

* Marian gets called in as well to act as a witness.
* Sir Percival won't let Laura see what she's signing, so she refuses.
* Sir Percival gets increasingly angry and starts shouting at everyone.
* Fosco intervenes and tries to calm everyone down.
* Sir Percival finally leaves, and Fosco apologizes for Percy's temper.
* Marian decides to contact Mr. Gilmore's partner, Mr. Kyrle.
* Mr. Gilmore is ill and on a leave of absence from work.
* Marian gets suspicious of the Foscos and fears they're monitoring the mail, so she seals up Mr. Kyrle's letter for security.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) is about to go upstairs to her room when [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) emerges from the library and calls her back. He tells her that [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) objects to the idea of he and his wife being the sole witnesses and would like Marian present as a witness instead of [Madame Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/madame-fosco). Marian follows him into the library and sees [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) behind the desk, looking anxious. The Count explains that his wife should not be a witness alongside him, as they are a couple and only share one opinion: his. Therefore, he feels it will be fairer if Marian is present. Madame Fosco, as though receiving orders from her husband, gets up and leaves the room.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Count Fosco puts on a show of extreme transparency. He claims that he wants to help Sir Percival carry out his business in a way that is as fair as possible to Laura and Marian, and invites Marian to be a witness so that she will not suspect that anything underhanded is taking place. This makes it difficult for Laura and Marian to question or criticize the Count’s motives. Madame Fosco’s abrupt departure shows the extent to which she is under her husband’s control.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) produces a parchment and sets it in front of [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) with the body of the text folded down, so that everything in the document is concealed except the blank space where Laura should sign. [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) and [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) takes their place as witnesses behind her. Laura glances at the parchment and then asks timidly what it is she signs. Sir Percival irritably tells her that he has no time to explain—his horse and cart are saddled and waiting—and that she must sign and be done with it.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Sir Percival tries to pressure Laura into signing the document, even though she cannot read it or see what it is. He tries to make her feel that she is inconveniencing him by refusing to sign, as he is in a hurry. However, he is bad at pulling off this act, and so only draws more suspicion to himself.

***Summary Part 3:***

Distressed by this, [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) asks again what she will be signing. [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) snaps that women have no need to understand business matters. Laura protests that her old lawyer, [Mr. Gilmore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-gilmore), always explained contracts to her and Sir Percival angrily retorts that Mr. Gilmore was her employee, while he, as her husband, does not have to explain himself. When Laura still refuses to sign, Sir Percival grows even more aggressive and shouts at Laura that she distrusts him. [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) intervenes and tries to calm Sir Percival down, but he is adamant that Laura must sign.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Sir Percival tries to use his position of power over Laura, as a man and as her husband, to convince her that she must sign. He wants to make her feel that wives must unquestioningly obey their husbands. When she still refuses, he tries to make her feel guilty and suggests that she is a disloyal wife because she does not trust his intentions towards her.

***Summary Part 4:***

Seeing [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie)’s distress, [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) tells [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) that she cannot, in good conscience, be a witness if Laura is forced to sign something that she does not have any knowledge of. Sir Percival rebukes Marian for accepting his hospitality and then disrespecting him in his home. Marian jumps up, furious, and thinks that, if she was a man, she would fight Sir Percival. Restraining herself for Laura’s sake, Marian sits down again.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Marian tries to assert some power over Sir Percival. She refuses to be a witness, which means that he will be unable to use the legal document even if Laura signs it. However, because Marian is physically weaker than Sir Percival, and lives in his house—which he may turn her out of whenever he wants—there is not much she can do to help her sister. Collins shows a great deal of sympathy for the frustration felt by women when placed in this position by society.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) again tries to reign in [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde)’s temper. Sir Percival blames [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) for aggravating him, and, when she asks him to treat her with some decency and explain the contract to her, Sir Percival scornfully declares that she has proved herself to be without decency when she married him. [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) does not understand this insult, and sees that the Count does not either, but Laura is insulted and storms from the room. Marian hears Count Fosco rebuke Sir Percival as she follows Laura from the library.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Sir Percival tries to place the responsibility for his temper onto Laura and suggests that she is a hypocrite for expecting him to treat her decently when she herself is not a decent or moral woman. Marian does not understand this, because she knows Laura is an honest person and has always been honest with Sir Percival about her feelings.

***Summary Part 6:***

As they are about to leave, [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) civilly calls the two women back. He asks [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde), who is sulky and sullen now, if the signature must absolutely be acquired today. Sir Percival says no, but that he would prefer it today. Count Fosco asserts his superiority over Sir Percival and mockingly asks him if he has forgotten that his horse and cart wait for him outside. Grudgingly, Sir Percival agrees to leave and get the signature tomorrow. Count Fosco apologizes to the ladies for Sir Percival’s behavior and [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) feels horribly and desperately aware of her reliance on the Count, as she is sure that Sir Percival would have sent her away from Blackwater if it were not for the Count’s influence.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Count Fosco exposes Sir Percival and makes it obvious that he has tried to trick Laura. He reminds Sir Percival that his carriage is waiting outside, which Sir Percival seems to have forgotten, and this makes it clear that Sir Percival’s journey is not as urgent as he pretended it was. As she and Laura can do nothing to protect themselves against Sir Percival’s anger, Marian feels that their only ally is Count Fosco, who is able to calm Sir Percival down, but who she also does not trust.

***Summary Part 7:***

Left alone and shaken by their experience, [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) and [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) discuss what has happened. Laura wonders where [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) is going and if he plans to ride to Wellingham to interrogate [Mrs. Catherick](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mrs-catherick). Marian avoids this conversation and Laura confesses that she is mortified by her husband’s treatment of Marian, and admits that this constant violence and ridicule reveal the true state of her marriage, which she can no longer conceal from her sister. They speculate on what might be in the document that Sir Percival wishes Laura to sign, and agree that it is likely to be a signature for a loan to borrow money in Laura’s name to pay Sir Percival’s debts. Marian decides to write to [Mr. Kyrle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-kyrle)—[Mr. Gilmore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-gilmore)’s replacement and their new lawyer—for advice, as he is the only trustworthy friend that the women can think of to approach.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Laura reveals that she has not told Marian about Sir Percival’s treatment of her because she is ashamed of how her husband abuses her. The women are in a desperate and lonely position, as the only person who might be able to help them is a stranger to them both, and will not necessarily be reliable.

***Summary Part 8:***

[Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) writes her note and hatches a plan with [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) to ensure that they receive their answer and advice from [Mr. Kyrle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-kyrle) before [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) can demand Laura’s signature again the next day. Marian attaches a note that asks the reply to be brought to them by a messenger, before the usual post, and that Laura should hide in the grounds until the messenger arrives so that Sir Percival cannot call her in to sign the contract. Laura asks why she cannot stay shut up in her room, and Marian replies that she is afraid of [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) and dreads alerting him to their plan.

***Analysis Part 8:***

Marian feels that Sir Percival may try to trick Laura again, so she asks her to hide from him until advice has arrived from their lawyer. She is afraid that Count Fosco is working with Sir Percival and that if Laura is in the house, then Count Fosco will help Sir Percival trick her.

***Summary Part 9:***

[Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) heads downstairs and [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) puts her letter into the postbag, which hangs in the hall. [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) and [Madame Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/madame-fosco) are talking by the front door and Madame Fosco calls Marian over and encourages her to walk around the [fountain](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/symbols/the-fountain) with her. Marian is startled to find that Madame Fosco is talkative and confidential with her. She discusses [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde)’s dreadful behavior and keeps Marian talking for a long time. Suddenly, she abruptly ends the conversation and drifts off, leaving Marian totally confused.

***Analysis Part 9:***

Madame Fosco’s behavior is very suspicious and out of character. She seems to be playing a role as she talks to Marian in a new, friendly way and then, suddenly, returns to her normal uncommunicative manner as though she is following instructions to behave in a certain way for a short period of time. This suggests that she is supposed to be distracting Marian while the Count checks her mail.

***Summary Part 10:***

[Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) goes back into the house and finds [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) putting a letter of his own into the postbag. He greets her sadly and walks out. Marian feels a strange impulse to check and reseal her own letter. When she takes it out of the bag, the seal pops open and Marian hurries back to her room to fix this. She tries not to think about why she has found the letter open in the bag.

***Analysis Part 10:***

Marian suspects that Count Fosco has read or interfered with her letter in some way. Although she reseals the letter, the fact that the letter is open in the post bag is worrying because, although it may have popped open itself, it also may mean that Count Fosco knows that she has written for help.