***Woman in White***

***Part 2***

***Section 1***

***Chapter 5***

***Summary:***

* Laura fills Marian in on what a farce her marriage is.
* She says Sir Percival has nothing but contempt for her and frequently berates her for her confession about Walter.
* Marian also learns that Sir Percival is growing abusive. She sees nasty bruises on Laura's arms from where he grabbed her.
* Marian is horrified.
* Outside, the two women see a figure in white. Nice to see you again, Anne.
* The girls also think they are being watched and followed. They rush back to the house, spooked.
* Marian encounters Fosco and he accounts for everyone's presence in the house.
* So who was following her and Laura?

***Detailed Summary (Ch1-5):***

It is June 11th, 1850, a full six months since the wedding, and Marian anticipates the return of Sir Percival and Laura to England. Marian waits for them at Sir Percival's home called Blackwater Park in Hampshire. Since the wedding, Solicitor Gilmore suffered a stroke and his business partner is abroad. Frederick Fairlie is cataloging his treasures through photography. Marian explores the ancient home and property, which she finds partly in disrepair. She finds a dying dog and brings it to the house, where she is told that the dog was probably shot by the groundskeeper and that it could be Mrs. Catherick's. Mrs. Catherick of Welmingham had been to the house the day before looking for her daughter, Anne.

Marian finds Laura changed. In their first private conversation, Laura insists thay never speak of her marriage, but that all other topics are open. This drives a small wedge in their relationship. Sir Percival returns peevish and critical of the servants. He is distressed that they cannot identify a man who visited to ask when Sir Percival would return. Count Fosco and Countess Fosco (Frederick Fairlie's sister) arrive with Sir Percival and Laura, now called Lady Glyde. Marian remembers Eleanor Fairlie as a vain, foolish young woman, but she appears at age forty-three dressed in dark, matronly clothes. Count Fosco once saved Sir Percival from assassination and robbery in Rome, according to the maid. He is corpulent, travels with his pet birds and mice and Marian finds him attractive. On the 16th of June, Solicitor Merriman arrives unexpectedly from London and meets in the library with Sir Percival.

Marian overhears Merriman advise Sir Percival to get Laura to sign documents in the presence of two witnesses, documents that will rescue Sir Percival financially. Marian tells Laura, who promises to act cautiously. Laura confides in Marian that she does not like Count Fosco, who is singing Figaro's song from the Barber of Seville. The next morning Sir Percival accompanies Laura, Marian, a cage of Fosco's mice and the Foscos to the boat house to look at the lake. There Sir Percival jokes about the lake being too shallow to drown someone. Fosco says it is too shallow to hide the body. Laura and Count Fosco gently debate that crime is for fools and wise men are not criminals. Laura adds that "crimes cause their own detection." This irritates Sir Percival and amuses Fosco. Fosco argues that a wise criminal never gets caught, which leads to the assumption that only fools commit crime. While looking for a stray mouse, Fosco finds bloody ground. Alarmed he points it out, but Marian explains that the blood came from Mrs. Catherick's dog. The news that Mrs. Catherick had been to the house disturbs Sir Percival. He goes to question the housekeeper, while Fosco questions Marian. Sir Percival prepares to leave by horse-cart using his long-distance mare Brown Molly, but before he leaves he asks Laura and the Foscos to join him in the library to sign a few papers, which he calls a "mere formality." He shuts out Marian.

Sir Percival invites Marian to come to the library to be a witness to Laura's signature in place of Countess Fosco. He evades the fact that the real reason for the exchange could be a conflict of interest on Countess Fosco's part by pretending that it would look better to have someone sign who favored Laura's interests. He orders Laura to sign the document and becomes outraged when she asks to read it first. Count Fosco tries to calm Sir Percival, but is rebuffed. Sir Percival accuses Laura of not trusting him, of being ungrateful. Insulted, Laura refuses to sign until she has read every word of the documents. Sir Percival locks up the documents and warns her that she will sign tomorrow when he returns. Laura and Marian speak privately and agree to send a messenger to Gilmore's partner, Mr. Kyrle, to advise them about the papers. Laura also says that she wants to speak to Marian about her marriage soon. When Marian puts the letter to be sent out in a bag in the hallway she is intercepted by Countess Fosco, who takes her on a long walk talking more than ever before. When they return to the house, Marian checks the post bag and finds that her letter has been expertly unsealed and resealed.

After dinner, Laura and Marian go to the boat house where they can talk privately. Laura confides in Marian that Sir Percival's motive for marriage was money, simply money and that he guessed that Laura's secret affection was for Walter Hartright. Sir Percival vowed to make her and Hartright miserable. After dusk they walk back to the house and realize they are being followed. Marian discreetly learns that no one has been outside the house while she and Laura were out. Laura loses the brooch that Marian gave her.

***Detailed Analysis (Ch1-5):***

The fate of Anne's dog foreshadows Anne's fate. Both die as a result of Sir Percival's control. Both are equally defenseless against his wishes. The dog is shot capriciously by Sir Percival's groundskeeper with Sir Percival's consent.

Marian is at last reunited with Laura in her new surroundings, but Laura has changed into someone more distant, more troubled. Sir Percival arrives with his entourage of co-conspirators: Count Fosco, Countess Fosco and Solicitor Merriman. Their secretive behavior alarms Marian putting her on the defensive. The change in Countess Fosco from party-girl to dour matronly slave demonstrates Count Fosco's insidious charm and control.

Sir Percival attempts to force Laura to give up her money through legal documents he does not want her to read. When she refuses, it sets in motion plan B, to get the money through her death. Neither Marian nor Laura yet understand the evil determination of Sir Percival, but the reader is given that knowledge. Collins thereby creates suspense for the reader, who knows more than the empathetic characters. The reader, like the helpless Laura, can only watch the dangers build and close in on Laura.

Marian's behavior changes to suit the situation. Once trusting and kind, she grows suspicious and cautious, and then her suspicions are confirmed.

The brooch serves as a means for Anne to connect with Laura and to show her good intentions. She could have sold the brooch for money, but she values her connection to Laura more.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

That evening at dinner, [**Count Fosco**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) is lively and entertaining. [**Marian**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) remarks that she and [**Laura**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) are almost as mesmerized by his stories as [**Madame Fosco**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/madame-fosco) is, and that women are unable to resist a man “who knows how to talk to them.” After dinner, she and Laura take a walk through the plantation to the boathouse. It is a still, dreary evening, and a heavy mist hangs over the grounds.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Although women were not considered to be men’s equals in conversation or intelligence in the nineteenth century, Collins undermines this idea by suggesting that women like to be spoken to like equals, which shows that they are just as capable of conversation as men are.

***Summary Part 2:***

Once at the boathouse, [**Laura**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) begins to tell [**Marian**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) about her marriage. She is deeply ashamed and confesses that it has been humiliating to discover that her husband does not care about her. She tells Marian about a day in Rome when she felt affectionate towards [**Sir Percival**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) and made an effort to connect with him.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Laura feels rejected and ashamed because of Sir Percival’s cruelty towards her. Like many women who are abused by their husbands, she believes that his treatment of her is somehow her fault, even though, of course, it is not.

***Summary Part 3:***

They were on a visit to a tomb which was built by a man to commemorate his wife. [**Laura**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) asked [**Sir Percival**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) if he would build her a tomb and he callously joked that, if he did, he would “build it with her own money.” Seeing that this upset her, Sir Percival told her that she was hard work and told her to imagine that he had treated her lovingly and paid her compliments. This exchange hardened Laura’s heart against Sir Percival and, after this, she never again prevented herself from thinking about [**Walter Hartright**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright).

***Analysis Part 3:***

Laura feels especially rejected by Sir Percival because she has tried to make the effort to connect with him and he has responded sarcastically. He implies that he does not care about her but only cares about her money. His statement about building a tomb with her money is also very sinister because it suggests that Sir Percival may kill her himself.

***Summary Part 4:***

[**Laura**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) confesses that [**Sir Percival**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) left her alone a lot during their honeymoon and that she often imagined what it would be like if she were with [**Walter**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright) instead. [**Marian**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) begs Laura to be discreet. She is worried that they will be overheard, but Laura replies that Sir Percival knows everything, even Walter’s name.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Laura sees that she will not succeed in making Sir Percival love her, so she abandons herself to memories of her true love: Walter.

***Summary Part 5:***

She tells [**Marian**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) that one day, when they were in Rome, they met a woman in a gallery who asked [**Laura**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) if she liked drawing. Laura said that she used to, and the woman said that the best drawing master she ever had was a man named [**Walter Hartright**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright). Laura tried to conceal her embarrassment, but she saw from [**Sir Percival**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde)’s face that he understood everything. When they returned to their hotel room Sir Percival forced her down into a chair and announced that she had spared him the trouble of seeking out the name of her lover for himself and that now, Walter Hartright would be made to pay.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Sir Percival reveals that he never had kind intentions towards Laura and that his behavior at Limmeridge was all an act. Before their marriage, he pretended to admire her honesty when she told him that she loved another man, but now he reveals that he is secretly bitter and jealous   and has planned to get revenge on Walter. This shows that he also has a possessive attitude toward Laura and sees her as one of his belongings.

***Summary Part 6:***

[**Laura**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) tells [**Marian**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) that [**Sir Percival**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) uses this knowledge against her every time they have a disagreement. Marian is heartbroken to hear Laura’s story and regrets that she is the one who sent [**Walter Hartright**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright) away from Limmeridge “for the sake of Sir Percival Glyde.”

***Analysis Part 6:***

Marian deeply regrets that she encouraged Walter to leave. She sees now that, despite their difference in class and wealth, Walter truly loved Laura and would have treated her far better than Sir Percival does.

***Summary Part 7:***

[**Marian**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) begins to cry, and [**Laura**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) comforts her. After a long while they realized that it has almost grown dark and that they must walk back through the plantation to the house in the gloomy dusk. Just as they make up their minds to leave the boathouse, they see a figure—half concealed in the mist—travel along the bank past the boathouse and vanish into the plantation. They are frightened and cannot tell if the figure is a man or a woman.

***Analysis Part 7:***

This figure seems ghostly and mysterious in the dusk, which adds to Laura and Marian’s apprehension about their safety at Blackwater, as well as the overall sinister mood of the book at this point.

***Summary Part 8:***

[**Marian**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) eventually convinces [**Laura**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) to enter the plantation—where the mysterious figure has disappeared and which they must go through to reach the house—and the women cautiously begin their journey home, traveling as fast as they can. At one point, they hear a rustling behind them which sounds like footsteps, and they reach the house shaken by what has occurred.

***Analysis Part 8:***

It seems that the unknown figure is on the plantation with them and possibly even following and spying on them.

***Summary Part 9:***

[**Marian**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) tells [**Laura**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) to go straight to her room and begins to make investigations to see if anyone is missing from the house—and if this might be the figure that they saw. She finds [**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) in the library and is convinced that they have not been out in the plantation, because Count Fosco questions Marian about where *she* has been. On her way to bed, she meets a servant who confirms that none of the maids have been away from the house, and Marian goes to bed wondering who the strange figure could be.

***Analysis Part 9:***

Marian demonstrates her intelligence and investigative abilities, using a similar technique to that used by Count Fosco when he questioned the groom about Sir Percival’s horse. She asks the servants indirect questions about their activities that evening to find out where they were and if any of them could have been the mysterious figure.