***Woman in White***

***Part 2***

***Section 2***

***Chapter 1***

### ***The Story Continued by Frederick Fairlie, Esq., of Limmeridge House***

***Summary:***

* We're now subjected to a narrative from Mr. Fairlie, who whines, complains, and reveals himself to be a kind of a dummy.
* Fairlie starts by complaining that he has to write a narrative in the first place.
* He then explains that Fanny arrived abruptly one day with a letter for him from Marian.
* He's too stressed out to deal with the situation.
* Fanny also explained what happened to her at the inn.
* She was there and the countess arrived with messages from Miss Halcombe.
* She insisted they have tea first. Fanny drank hers and promptly fainted.
* When she came around, the countess was there tending to her, then she left.
* Fanny checked and found her two letters safe but crumpled.
* Turns out Countess Fosco is the real super-spy.
* Mr. Kyrle then writes Mr. Fairlie to say he got an envelope from Marian containing nothing but a blank piece of paper.
* Then the count arrives and says the Glydes are having some problems and wonders if Laura can come stay with her uncle for a while.
* Fairlie is like, whatever, and the count says he's happy to arrange everything.
* He also informs Mr. Fairlie that Marian is very ill and will need to be cared for at Blackwater Park until she's strong enough to be moved home.
* Uncle Fairlie agrees to the scheme because he knows that Laura won't leave Marian while she's ill, and then he won't have to deal with either of them.

***Synopsis:***

Frederick Fairlie receives a visit from Fanny, Laura's maid. She tells him that she delivered a letter for the Solicitor and then she gives the second letter to Frederick Fairlie. She says that she was visited at the inn by Countess Fosco (Frederick's sister), who gave her tea that made her faint. When she awoke she found that the letters were crumpled, but still safely tucked into her bosom. Fairlie dismisses her and reads the letter which asks if Marian and Laura can come visit. He gets another letter, this time from the Solicitor reporting that he received a blank paper from Marian and it seems suspicious. Frederick dismisses the blank letter as meaningless and then he writes to Marian that she can visit first, then possibly Laura. A few days later, Count Fosco arrives to report that Marian is ill and that Lady Glyde (Laura) should come back to Limmeridge by way of Fosco's home in London to save the family from public disgrace. Fairlie writes a letter instructing Laura to come home by way of Fosco's home. Fosco leaves with the letter.

Countess Fosco stole the letter meant for the solicitor from Fanny after she drugged her tea. Fairlie, by trying to remove himself from all human interaction, causes great harm. In the closing lines of his narrative, he pleads his innocence in the tragedy that follows. Contrast Frederick Fairlie with Marian, and one sees that Marian makes a better man and a better guardian to Laura than Frederick. One can also compare Frederick's fake invalid state with Marian's real, life-threatening illness. The situation grows worse for Marian and Laura because their efforts to get help are discovered by Count Fosco.

***Critical Analysis:***

[Frederick Fairlie](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-woman-in-white/study-guide/character-list#frederick-fairlie)'s narrative begins with him complaining about being inconvenienced by being asked to think back to his memories of this time period. He recalls having been interrupted by the news that [Fanny](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-woman-in-white/study-guide/character-list#fanny) has arrived bearing a letter from Marian. When she speaks with him, Fanny explains that after receiving the letters from Marian at the inn, she was surprised by the arrival of the Countess Eleanor. The Countess insisted on making tea for Fanny, and after Fanny drank some, she fainted. She awoke to find herself alone, and while she still had the letters, they appeared to have been opened and read. Fanny has nonetheless sent the one letter on to the lawyer, and now delivered the other to Frederick herself.

Upon reading the letter, Frederick is hesitant to interfere. He does not want to get caught up in a conflict between Laura and her husband, and he replies to Marian suggesting that she first come and see him alone so that they can discuss the situation. Three days after sending this reply, Frederick receives word from the lawyer that he has received an envelope addressed from Marian but containing only a blank piece of paper. He is concerned as to what this could mean, but Frederick simply tells him to mind his own business and not worry about it. Six days later, Frederick receives a visit from [Count Fosco](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-woman-in-white/study-guide/character-list#count-fosco), who reports that Marian is seriously ill. Fosco confirms that the marriage between Laura and Percival is very unhappy, and he thinks it would be best for Laura to return to Limmeridge House as soon as possible. Since Marian's illness made it impossible for her to come and urge this course of action, Fosco has taken it upon himself to come in her place. He has also worked out the details of her travel, proposing that Laura will travel from Blackwater Park to London, stay there overnight with him and Eleanor at their rented house, and then continue the second half of the journey the following day. Frederick is sick of listening to Fosco, so he writes a note inviting Laura to come and stay with him. He thinks it is impossible she will accept this invitation, because she will not want to leave Marian alone during her illness.

***Critical Study:***

Frederick Fairlie is Laura's uncle and guardian (until her marriage), and a hopelessly foppish, frail, and self-centered hypochondriac. Despite his shortcomings, however, he has agreed to tell his part of Laura's story at Hartright's insistence. He describes himself, "shattered by my miserable health and my family troubles, I am incapable of resistance."

Mr. Fairlie picks up the story at the point where Fanny, Laura's maid, arrives at Limmeridge with Halcombe's letter. She explains that Countess Fosco visited her at the inn before she left the neighborhood of Blackwater Park and drugged her. When she regained consciousness she had the letters, but they had been opened and read. Fanny delivers Halcombe's letter for Fairlie to read.

Fairlie reads the letter, which asks that she and Laura be welcomed back at [Limmeridge House](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Woman-in-White/symbols/#Limmeridge_House) should they need to leave Blackwater. Fairlie, of course, is perturbed: "I laid down Marian's letter, and felt myself—justly felt myself—an injured man."

A few days later, Fairlie receives a visit from [Count Fosco](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Woman-in-White/character-analysis/#Count_Fosco), whom he finds charming, if exhausting. Fosco tells Fairlie that the relationship between Laura and Sir Percival is coming to a head. He insists that Fairlie open his house to Laura. He also guarantees that Sir Percival will not follow or insist on his wife's return. Before leaving, Fosco recommends that Fairlie write and invite Laura to his home while Halcombe recovers from her illness at Blackwater Park. Most significantly, he asks that the letter mention that Laura should stop along the way at Fosco's home in London. Fairlie complies, simply to get rid of Fosco.

This section solidifies the reader's view of Fairlie as a useless, narcissistic, and expendable character who is unwilling to take responsibility for his own actions. His reluctant attitude toward providing his portion of the narrative shows he will act on behalf of others only when threatened with his own discomfort.

Fairlie's lack of interest in other people leads him to pay little attention to Fanny's account of being visited and drugged by Countess Fosco. He thus misses—and wouldn't care about—the implication that Halcombe's notes have been tampered with.

Fairlie neglects any efforts to safeguard his niece, which assists [Count Fosco](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Woman-in-White/character-analysis/#Count_Fosco) and Sir Percival in enacting their conspiracy regarding Laura and [Anne Catherick](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Woman-in-White/character-analysis/#Anne_Catherick). As Fairlie writes, "I wish to mention, in justice to myself, that it was not my fault, and that I am quite exhausted."

The note that Fairlie provides to Fosco includes an important piece of information that will be significant as the story unfolds. Fosco now has written evidence that Laura has been invited to Limmeridge and is expected to break the journey at Fosco's home in London.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

The next section of the narrative is a letter written by [Mr. Fairlie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-fairlie), which he has been asked to write by [Walter Hartright](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright), and which details his interactions with [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) and a visit he received from [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie)’s maid, [Fanny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters). Mr. Fairlie feels very sorry for himself because he has been asked to write this letter—which is a terrible exertion for one in such poor health—and is deeply resentful that people will not leave him alone.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Mr. Fairlie’s letter showcases his totally selfish personality and his failure to empathize with or care about anyone other than himself. Considering this, it is very unfortunate that he holds so much power over his nieces’ fates simply because of societal norms.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Mr. Fairlie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-fairlie) says that he cannot possibly remember dates but that he thinks [Fanny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters) visited him in June or July. He was busy surveying the artworks he collects—for the sake of the “barbarians” who surround him in the village—when his servant [Louis](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters) announced that Fanny, [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie)’s maid, wished to see him and that she had a letter for him from [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe). Mr. Fairlie was very concerned that the girl’s shoes would squeak and upset him, but he graciously agreed to see her, nonetheless.

***Analysis Part 2:***

The timing of events in the novel—particularly this period between June and July—is crucial as the plot continues. Although Mr. Fairlie is totally self-absorbed, he keeps up a pretense that his interest in culture is necessary to maintain artistic standards in the country. Of course, this is not true and his behavior benefits no one but himself. This is Collins’s satirical criticism of members of the upper class who do not contribute to society at all, and who snobbishly consider themselves better than lower-class people because of their education while actually doing harm to others through their inaction.

***Summary Part 3:***

When [Fanny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters) is shown in, she begins to cry, and [Mr. Fairlie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-fairlie) irritably asks [Louis](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters) to step in and find out what she wants. He wishes the girl would not go into so much irrelevant detail but learns that she has been dismissed from Blackwater and was sent with a letter in her “bosom” from [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe). While resting at the Inn in the village—where she stayed the night after leaving Blackwater—she ordered a cup of tea and was terribly surprised when [Madame Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/madame-fosco) suddenly burst into her room. Madame Fosco told her that Marian sent her with some messages which Marian forgot to give to Fanny. When she saw how upset Fanny was, Madame Fosco acted very kindly and made the tea for her. After drinking a cup, Fanny fell asleep and, when she woke up, Madame Fosco was gone and the letters she carried were crumpled.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Fanny describes the evening she was dismissed from Blackwater by Sir Percival; the same day that he caught Laura on her way to meet Anne Catherick. Fanny’s account of events makes it clear that Count Fosco and Madame Fosco knew that Marian had gone to the village to give Fanny some letters. This is why Count Fosco deliberately brought Marian the postbag—to intimidate her—and why Madame Fosco made the tea in a hurry and looked flushed when Marian returned to the library later that evening; she was tired from her run back from the village. It is implied that Madame Fosco drugged Fanny and read her letters.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Mr. Fairlie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-fairlie) takes [Fanny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters)’s letter and unsympathetically dismisses the crying girl. After she leaves, he has a nap to recover. When he wakes up and reads [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe)’s letter, he becomes deeply indignant about the favors that married people expect from single ones. He feels that Marian has threatened him by suggesting terrible things will happen if he does not take his nieces back into his care and is deeply resentful of this. He requests that Marian come to Limmeridge to talk about the issue with him before he agrees to take his nieces back.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Rather than sympathizing with his niece or perceiving the danger that Marian and Laura are in, Mr. Fairlie relates the whole situation back to himself and the inconvenience it will cause him if he has to get involved. This furthers the portrayal of Mr. Fairlie as a useless member of the nobility who does nothing but live in comfort and ignore the suffering of others.

***Summary Part 5:***

A few days later, [Mr. Fairlie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-fairlie) receives a concerned note from his lawyer, [Mr. Kyrle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-kyrle), which says that the lawyer received an envelope addressed in [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe)’s hand-writing but which only had a blank sheet of paper in it. He believes the note has been tampered with. Mr. Fairlie ignores this and hopes that he will be left in peace. Five days after this he receives another visitor—this time, [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco).

***Analysis Part 5:***

Madame Fosco has not only read Fanny’s letters but has stolen them and replaced the notes inside them with blank sheets of paper.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Mr. Fairlie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-fairlie) immediately assumes that [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) has come to borrow money from him. Instead, Count Fosco has come to inform him that [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) is gravely ill. Mr. Fairlie takes a liking to the Count at first because the Count admires his artworks and is sympathetic towards his suffering. When Count Fosco tells Mr. Fairlie that Marian is ill with fever—after being out in the rain—Mr. Fairlie becomes utterly panicked at the possibility that he will be infected by it, and this distracts him from the interview.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Mr. Fairlie is greedy and obsessed with his own comfort and, therefore, thinks that everyone is trying to take this from him by trying to access his money. He is also slightly suspicious of Count Fosco because he is a foreigner. However, Mr. Fairlie and Count Fosco get along because they are both superficial and affect the false delicacy and refinement of aristocrats. Mr. Fairlie’s aristocratic pretense masks his total selfishness while Count Fosco’s masks his brutality.

***Summary Part 7:***

[Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) goes on to say that [Sir Percival Glyde](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) and [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) do not get along and that he advises they separate for a short time. He asks [Mr. Fairlie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-fairlie) if Laura can stay at Limmeridge. Count Fosco is so insistent and Mr. Fairlie so desperate to get rid of him that, after some persuasion by the Count, he writes to Laura inviting her back to Limmeridge just to get rid of him. After the Count has gone, Mr. Fairlie bathes himself and orders everything in the room cleaned to protect himself from illness.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Count Fosco knows how to manipulate Mr. Fairlie, as he succeeds in manipulating everyone, and gets his own way. He now has a letter of proof that states that Laura will separate from her husband and return to Limmeridge.