***Woman in White***

***Part 2***

***Section 3***

***Chapter 1***

### ***The Story Continued by Eliza Michelson, Housekeeper at Blackwater Park***

***Summary:***

* Mrs. Michelson says her testimony was solicited and that she's providing an honest account of what she saw go down at Blackwater Park.
* We kind of wish someone would announce that they're deliberately providing a dishonest account just to mix things up a bit.
* Mrs. Michelson picks things up when Marian gets sick.
* A doctor, Mr. Dawson, arrives on the scene and promptly starts butting heads with Fosco, who turns into a backseat medical adviser.
* Marian goes from bad to worse and develops typhus, a dangerous bacterial infection.
* Mrs. Michelson is not a fan of Sir Percival, who acts like a punk toward her (surprise, surprise).
* She is, however, a great defender of Fosco and finds him charming. Sigh.
* Seriously, is Fosco giving off pheromones or something? The ladies seem to love him.
* Mrs. Michelson takes over caring for Marian, acting as her nurse.
* Laura is kept from the room due to Marian's dangerous fever.
* Then a mysterious woman named Mrs. Rubelle arrives.
* She's apparently a nurse hired by Percival to care for Marian.
* After some tense days, Marian slowly turns the corner.
* But Dawson finally leaves after having one too many disagreements with Count Fosco.
* Then Percival drops a bombshell—he's leaving and plans to shut up the house.
* He tells Mrs. Michelson to fire all the servants, except Margaret Porcher.
* Mrs. Michelson is super disturbed by this and finds the house very lonely with nearly everyone gone.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

The narrative is then taken up by [Mrs. Michelson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mrs-michelson), who was the housekeeper at Blackwater park and who has been asked by [Walter Hartright](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/walter-hartright) to write down what happened while [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) was ill and why [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) left Blackwater. She has been informed that her evidence may help uncover the truth of what occurred and—since she is the widow of a clergyman—Mrs. Michelson feels very strongly about truth as a virtue.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Mrs. Michelson is a slightly self-righteous and self-important woman who considers it her duty to tell the truth while she provides her evidence. This suggests that her narrative may be trusted, as it tells the truth as she sees it, but that it may also be biased, as it reflects only her slightly pompous perspective.

***Summary Part 2:***

Although [Mrs. Michelson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mrs-michelson) cannot remember the exact dates, she states that one morning in June, [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) did not appear at breakfast as she usually did. When it got late and there was still no sign of her, a servant went up to check her room and found her pacing the floor in a confused and feverish state. The servant called for help and got her into bed and [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) sent for the doctor. While he waited for the doctor’s arrival, the Count prepared a medicine himself for Marian, but she refused to drink it.

***Analysis Part 2:***

The dates between the period of June and July will become crucial as the novel progresses. Mrs. Michelson believes that Marian is too feverish to drink the medicine Count Fosco prepares, not that Marian is afraid of the Count. Throughout the narrative, those who don’t know Sir Percival and the Count give them the benefit of the doubt because of their rank.

***Summary Part 3:***

The doctor, [Mr. Dawson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-dawson), also refused [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco)’s help when he arrived to treat [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe). [Mrs. Michelson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mrs-michelson) observes that she is very fond of the Count because, although of noble birth, he took such an interest in the servants. She notes that he enquired about [Fanny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters), the servant who [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) dismissed, and wondered where she had gone. Sir Percival, on the other hand, Mrs. Michelson strongly disliked and found that he was stubborn and uncivil.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Mrs. Michelson is a conservative woman and admires members of the upper-class and nobility. She is taken in by the Count’s façade of gentility and believes that his enquiries about the servants are genuine and a sign of his great refinement. She dislikes Sir Percival, though, because he is openly more brutal and less civilized than Count Fosco.

***Summary Part 4:***

On the second day of [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe)’s illness, there was no improvement. As [Mrs. Michelson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mrs-michelson) was heading upstairs, after completing some chores, she saw [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) arriving home from a walk. When he arrived, [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) looked out from the library and asked the Count if he had “found her.” The Count smiled but said nothing and Sir Percival, noticing Mrs. Michelson, rudely dismissed her. Count Fosco, however, called her back and informed her that he planned to send for a nurse from London to help take care of Marian, which Mrs. Michelson thought very generous.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Sir Percival refers to Anne Catherick when he asks if Count Fosco has “found her,” and the Count’s smile seems to suggest that he has. Again, Mrs. Michelson does not suspect any ulterior motive when Count Fosco makes a point of telling her about the nurse.

***Summary Part 5:***

The next day, [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) remained much the same and [Madame Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/madame-fosco) prepared to travel to London. [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) took her to the station and returned the next day with the nurse, [Mrs. Rubelle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mrs-rubelle), a very quiet, foreign woman. [Mrs. Michelson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mrs-michelson) congratulates herself on her lack of prejudice towards foreigners—despite the “blinds errors” in their cultures—and notes that she was surprised that [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie) did not want Mrs. Rubelle left alone with her sister. Although the doctor also objected to the Count’s interference, Mrs. Michelson could see nothing to complain of in the way Mrs. Rubelle cared for Marian.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Mrs. Michelson’s belief that she is not prejudiced is ironic, as she clearly believes that British culture is superior to other countries. Her attitude is condescending, and she feels that she does foreigners a favor by tolerating them despite their inferior backgrounds and cultures. It is also ironic that she believes Laura is prejudiced and does not suspect that Laura’s distrust of Count Fosco may stem from anything other than this.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) traveled to London for a week during [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe)’s illness. Even though Marian seemed to improve during this period, [Madame Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/madame-fosco) confided in [Mrs. Michelson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mrs-michelson) that she did not trust the doctor, [Mr. Dawson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-dawson). She wrote to the Count every day; proof, Mrs. Michelson believes, of the ideal state of their marriage. On the third day of the Count’s absence, Marian took a turn for the worse.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Mrs. Michelson is flattered by Madame Fosco’s confidence in her. She does not suspect Madame Fosco of trying to turn her against the doctor. It is very ironic that Mrs. Michelson believes Count Fosco and Madame Fosco have an ideal marriage, as Madame Fosco is little more than a spy and a slave for the Count. This further critiques conventional nineteenth-century beliefs about gender and marriage, which suggested that a perfect marriage was one in which a wife was totally obedient to her husband. Collins shows that the reality of this is monstrous.

***Summary Part 7:***

When [Count Fosco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/count-fosco) returned he was horrified to discover that [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe)’s fever had turned into typhus. He was furious with [Mr. Dawson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mr-dawson). He hired a new doctor to get a second opinion. This doctor agreed with the Count that it was typhus and said that they would have to wait at least five days to see if Marian would recover. On the tenth day after this, Marian was declared out of danger. On the same day, Count Fosco had another huge argument with Mr. Dawson and sent him away from the house. Although Marian was not yet well, [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde) refused to hire another doctor.

***Analysis Part 7:***

It is unclear whether Count Fosco is genuinely concerned about Marian or whether he is trying to make her illness worse by dismissing Mr. Dawson. The doctor he brings in could be one of his conspirators, but it is left ambiguous at this point. Sir Percival seems to be in on this.

***Summary Part 8:***

Later that day, [Mrs. Michelson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/mrs-michelson) was summoned to [Sir Percival](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/sir-percival-glyde)’s study where he informed her that he planned to dismiss all the servants—except her and [Margaret Poacher](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/margaret-poacher)—immediately. He said that he needed to save money and that, as soon as [Marian](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/marian-halcombe) could travel, himself, Marian, [Laura](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-woman-in-white/characters/laura-fairlie), and [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) would leave Blackwater Park for the rest of the summer. Mrs. Michelson was horrified and tried to reason with Sir Percival, but he accused the servants of taking advantage of him and of wasting his money. Mrs. Michelson was insulted but, reluctant to leave Laura and Marian alone in the house with no help, carried out Sir Percival’s orders.

***Analysis Part 8:***

Mrs. Michelson is confused by Sir Percival’s sudden announcement and at his careless treatment of Laura and Marian, who will be left with almost no servants to help them. Although she is deeply offended by Sir Percival’s attack on the servants, she feels pressured to stay for the sake of Laura and Marian. It seems likely that Sir Percival counts on her feeling this pressure and knows that, because of this, she will carry out his orders unquestioningly.