

The Woman in White - From the novel by Wilkie Collins - Adapted by Constance Cox

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

MRS. VESEY, the housekeeper, elderly - Puts up with a lot for the girls but she has a breaking point.

WALTER HARTRIGHT, late 20's (ideally) – The drawing master, working-class

MARION HALCOMBE, 25 (ideally, but can be older as Laura and Marian's mother married twice) – Not an heiress, so is having to rely on relatives

MR GILMORE, the family solicitor, elderly

MR FREDERICK FAIRLIE, Laura's hypochondriac uncle – Very self-centred.

LOUIS, his valet, Swiss - (no audition piece, lines off-stage, will cast amongst who I know to be available)

LAURA FAIRLIE, Marion's half-sister, 20 – the heiress. However, nice, down to earth, decent, perhaps someone who expects everyone to have morals like her. Trusts too easily. Gets married because she trusted her father's opinion.

ANNE CATHERICK, 20s (played by same actress as Laura) – Unwell, dying, wary, trusts no-one.

SIR PERCIVAL GLYDE, 40 (ideally, but could be older with script change) – Comes across as nice at first but we see the true Glyde once he gets what he wants. Not as evil as the Count though.

COUNT FOSCO, middle-aged – Can change from pleasant, verging on smarmy, to evil, and back again, in a split second.

COUNTESS FOSCO, middle-aged – the Count's wife and side-kick. Does what she's told and equally unpleasant.

MRS CATHERICK, Anne's mother, middle-aged – Also unpleasant, selfish but likes having a good standing in the community where she lives. She feels she has earned that right.

AUDITION PAGES:- (We won't do all but please look at all. By doing this, I can see certain characters alongside others)

MRS. VESEY, Pages 9-11, 23-24, 30, 38, 39

WALTER HARTRIGHT, Pages 2-3, 4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-11, 12-14, 42, 43-44

MARION HALCOMBE, Pages 7-8, 12-14, 15-17, 23-24, 25-26, 27-29, 31-32, 33-34, 42

MR GILMORE, Pages 5-6, 19-20, 21-22, 42

MR FREDERICK FAIRLIE, Pages 2-3, 19-20, 21-22

LOUIS, his valet, Swiss - (no audition piece, lines off-stage, will cast amongst who I know to be available)

LAURA FAIRLIE, Page 4, 15-17, 18, 21-22, 23-24, 25-26, 27-29, 33-34

ANNE CATHERICK, Pages 9-11, 31-32

SIR PERCIVAL GLYDE, Pages 15-17, 18, 19-20, 21-22, 27-29, 35-37, 38, 40-41

COUNT FOSCO, Pages 25-26, 27-29, 30, 35-37, 38, 39, 40-41

COUNTESS FOSCO, Pages 35-37, 40-41

MRS CATHERICK, Pages 43-44

PAGES:- (In brackets, little dialogue)

2-3 Walter Hartright, Mr Fairlie

4 Laura Fairlie, Mr Hartright

5-6 Mr Gilmore, Walter Hartright (Mrs Vesey)

7-8 Marion Halcombe, Walter Hartright,

9-11 Mrs Vesey, Walter Hartright, Anne Catherick

12-14 Marion Halcombe, Walter Hartright (Mrs Vesey)

15-17 Sir Percival Glyde, Marion Halcombe, Laura Fairlie (Walter Hartright)

18 Sir Percival Glyde, Laura Fairlie

19-20 Mr Fairlie, Sir Percival Glyde, Mr Gilmore, (Mrs Vesey)

21-22 Laura Fairlie, Mr Gilmore, Sir Percival Glyde, Mr Fairlie

23-24 Mrs Vesey, Marion Halcombe, Laura Fairlie

25-26 Marion Halcombe, Laura Fairlie, Count Fosco

27-29 Laura Fairlie, Sir Percival Glyde, Count Fosco, Marion Halcombe

30 Mrs Vesey, Count Fosco

31-32 Marion Halcombe, Anne Catherick, Count Fosco

33-34 Laura Fairlie, Marion Halcombe

35-37 Count Fosco, Countess Fosco, Sir Percival Glyde

38 Mrs Vesey, Sir Percival Glyde, (Count Fosco)

39 Count Fosco, Mrs Vesey

40-41 Sir Percival Glyde, Count Fosco, Countess Fosco

42 Mr Gilmore, Marion Halcombe, Walter Hartright

43-44 Mrs Catherick, Walter Hartright, (Mr Gilmore)

WALTER HARTRIGHT/MR FAIRLIE

HARTRIGHT *(unable to bear the silence any longer; moving DC to Mr Fairlie)* I would like to thank you, Mr Fairlie for the generous way in which I've been welcomed. I hope I -

MR FAIRLIE *(interrupting; holding up his hand)* Are you Mr Hartright?

HARTRIGHT Yes, sir.

MR FAIRLIE Then would you be so kind as to speak a trifle less heartily? The slightest sound goes through my head like a knife.

HARTRIGHT I beg your pardon, I -

MR FAIRLIE *(holding up his hand again)* Would you mind standing a little further off? Germs positively fly to me.

(Hartright moves away to stand further SL (in front of the armchair?))

Thank you. Forgive me for not shaking hands with you, but I never touch anybody – not even my nieces. You won't mind if I occasionally close my eyes, will you? The fatigue – coming along all those corridors -

HARTRIGHT I'm sorry, I could have come to you.

MR FAIRLIE Ah, but my apartments have been fumigated, and you've just come from a train. I don't hold that against you -

HARTRIGHT I should have found it difficult to come to Cumberland otherwise.

MR FAIRLIE Quite, quite, I appreciate that. But I've found there is no place as germ-laden as a train, and germs simply fly to me. Mrs Vesey -

MRS VESEY *(takes a step forward and curtseys)* Mr Fairlie?

MR FAIRLIE I can hear you breathing. Go away.

(Mrs Vesey moves between Hartright and Mr Fairlie and exits UR)

HARTRIGHT Does my respiration offend you, Mr Fairlie?

MR FAIRLIE Yes, exceedingly. But as I have to speak with you I must bear with it.

(Hartright controls his feelings.)

Kindly make it as gentle as you can. Now to business. As I explained in my letter, I wish you – in the intervals of instructing my nieces in drawing and painting – to repair and mount some valuable water-colours I purchased recently. You may know I have a reputation as a collector.

(Hartright nods.)

I am a wretched invalid but one must do what one can to imbue a vulgar world with an appreciation of beauty. Louis, the portfolio!

(Louis takes the portfolio from the side of the chair)

You may sit down, Mr. Hartright.

(Hartright sits in the armchair)

Don't move the chair! It may scroop! Hand that to Mr Hartright, Louis.

(Louis hands the portfolio to Hartright, then returns to stand behind Mr Fairlie's chair)

Pray give me your opinion.

HARTRIGHT *(looking in the portfolio)* Some of them have been badly misused, but I'm sure I can restore them. *(With enthusiasm)* They're superb examples, I do congratulate you ...

MR FAIRLIE *(holding up his hand)* Listen! I'm sure I heard horrid children in the garden.

HARTRIGHT I heard nothing.

MR FAIRLIE Possibly not. You were talking. Kindly oblige me by making sure.

(Hartright rises, goes to the french windows, and opens the curtains LFXA14 during the following)

Sometimes the servants encourage the brats from the village. Ah, be careful, the light!

(Louis holds the fan before Mr Fairlie's eyes as Hartright looks out)

HARTRIGHT *(closing the curtains LFXA15 and moving L)* The garden is quite empty. *(He glances again at the portfolio)*

MR FAIRLIE Thank you. My poor nerves, I suppose.

(The door UR opens and Laura Fairlie enters.)

Now who is that? I can feel a draught!

LAURA FAIRLIE/WALTER HARTRIGHT

LAURA I'm sorry my uncle was rude to you, Mr Hartright, but he's the same to everybody.

HARTRIGHT *(smiling)* I could forgive much more in anyone who gave me the chance to handle such treasures. *(Going to the portfolio)*

LAURA *(She joins Hartright at the desk.)* Oh, they're beautiful.

HARTRIGHT Aren't they?

LAURA *(looking at him, smiling)* What a fortunate man you are, Mr Hartright.

HARTRIGHT *(smiling back)* Am I? In what way?

LAURA You love your work. I can tell that from the way you handle beautiful things.

HARTRIGHT Yes, that's true.

LAURA How I envy you men! To be able to choose your professions – to go where you please - unhampered and free of control. *(Moves DSL)*

HARTRIGHT *(smiling)* We still have to work. And the work isn't always as congenial as this.

LAURA No, but ... *(She moves to the armchair while Hartright continues at desk with portfolio)* Oh, I can't express it. Forgive me if I sounded stupid.

HARTRIGHT *(following her DS but to R)* I think I know what you mean.
(There is an immediate attraction between them of which both are conscious.)
(Warm lights on them both. LFXA17 SFXA05)

LAURA How long will you be staying?

HARTRIGHT Three months.

LAURA Oh - then you'll be gone before I go.

HARTRIGHT Go? Are you leaving Limmeridge Hall?

LAURA Yes. *(Pause)* In the autumn. *(Warm lights fade. LFXA18 Music fades SFXA06)* *(She moves DL with sudden reticence.)*

MR GILMORE/WALTER HARTRIGHT/(MRS VESEY)

GILMORE *(looking after Laura; and then turning back to Mrs Vesey who is USR)* Well, go and tell him!

MRS VESEY Couldn't it wait until after dinner, Mr Gilmore? Mr Fairlie says if he discusses law before dinner, it gives him indigestion.

GILMORE You go and tell him if he doesn't see me now, I'll slam every door in the house and give him palpitations! Go on!

(Mrs Vesey exits hurriedly out of the door UR. Gilmore sees Hartright DSR and comes DS – either between sofa and armchair, or DSL)

 I beg your pardon. Staying here?

HARTRIGHT *(Smiling)* Not exactly. I'm the new drawing master. My name's Walter Hartright.

(Hartright moves to Gilmore and they shake hands.)

GILMORE Gilmore. Chancery Lane. Here to do some legal business for the family. Do you play chess?

HARTRIGHT *(startled)* Yes, as a matter of fact I do.

GILMORE Shake hands again. It's a pleasure to meet a civilized man in this house. You must come and give me a game at my inn.

HARTRIGHT Doesn't Mr Fairlie play?

GILMORE *(He sits in armchair)* Fairlie! This house hasn't been the same since the other Mr Fairlie died.

HARTRIGHT There've been some changes? *(Moves toward sofa)*

GILMORE Changes! Time was when you could meet every family in the county in this drawing-room. Philip Fairlie was a man – not a fossilized mummy like his brother. Yes, there used to be some characters meet here. Old Joshua Wansborough, the magistrate – Andrew Weldon, who kept the village school -

HARTRIGHT *(eagerly)* Would that be the school Mrs Fairlie founded?

GILMORE Why, yes, I think it was. Why do you ask?

HARTRIGHT I'm interested in it, that's all. *(He sits on sofa)* Do you think it would be possible to see this Mr Weldon?

GILMORE I shouldn't advise you to try. He's been dead eleven years.

HARTRIGHT Oh.

GILMORE What's your interest in him?

HARTRIGHT I was – hoping to trace a pupil of his.

GILMORE No, afraid I can't help you there. Death's taken a toll pretty freely amongst us. Poor old Andrew! The quarrels I've listened to between him and Joshua Wansborough. All because Josh had the strangest hobby.

HARTRIGHT What was it?

GILMORE *(rising)* Copying the Marriage Register of the Parish Church. *(He moves to the french windows)* The church you can see from here. Old Welmington.

HARTRIGHT *(rising)* Curious! *(He follows Gilmore to the windows)*

GILMORE He was a character. "You can laugh", he used to say, "but the register's not safe lying about the vestry the way it is. Supposing there was a fire, or you wanted to check the date of a marriage. Then you'd thank me." And he kept it up-to-date for thirty-five years. *(Pacing US)*

HARTRIGHT And did anyone ever use it?

GILMORE No, and there never was a fire. Poor old Joshua! All that effort and work for nothing!

HARTRIGHT What happened to his labour of love?

GILMORE Heaven knows! Buried in the dust somewhere, I suppose. *(By the end of his pacing, finishes by the fireplace. Hartright has stayed US by windows)*

(Mrs Vesey enters UR carrying a pair of slippers)

Well, can the poor suffering invalid see me?

MRS VESEY Mr Fairlie is very low. I wish he were ten feet lower! Does he think his niece can get married without a proper settlement?

(Hartright reacts to this.)

(To Gilmore) He says he'll see you if you put on these slippers so as to make no noise.

GILMORE Slippers! I'll be hanged if I will! Slippers, indeed!

(Gilmore stamps out UR)

MRS VESEY But he expressly said - *(A door slams off SFXA08)*

Oh dear, oh dear!

HARTRIGHT *(crossing to Mrs Vesey)* Mrs Vesey – did Mr Gilmore say Miss Halcombe was to be married?

MRS VESEY Not Miss Halcombe. Miss Fairlie.

HARTRIGHT Miss Fairlie! In the autumn?

MRS VESEY Yes, to Sir Percival Glyde. Such a delightful gentleman. He's coming to stay next month, so you'll be able to meet him. *(Moves towards Hartright so will be C)*

Marion, do you hear Mr Gilmore? I believe he does it on purpose. Oh dear, oh dear!

MARION HALCOMBE/WALTER HARTRIGHT

MARION *(moving into the room, causing Hartright to come DS.)* Mr Hartright. I want you to look at this. It's an old letter of my mother's, written twelve years ago. *(She hands him the top sheet.)* Read it.

HARTRIGHT *(moving DR, reading)* "We have a new pupil at the school, dear Philip -"

MARION Laura's father.

HARTRIGHT "and I have taken a violent fancy to her. *(He sits in the chair DR)* The poor little thing's intellect is not as developed as it should be at her age, but I have every hope of remedying that."

MARION You said the woman you met on the road was young?

HARTRIGHT Twenty. Perhaps younger.

MARION Now see what it says further.

HARTRIGHT "I arranged yesterday that some of Laura's old white frocks and hats should be altered for little Anne Catherick, explaining to her that little girls of her age and complexion looked better in white than anything else ..." Miss Halcombe!

MARION Go on! *(Gentle music starts. SFXA10)*

HARTRIGHT "Her little hand clasped mine and she said 'I will wear white as long as I live, dear Miss Fairlie. It will help me remember your goodness when I go away and see you no more.'" Then the woman I met on the road was -

MARION Anne Catherick!

HARTRIGHT Have you the rest of the letter?

MARION Yes. Listen to this. I think it will surprise you. *(Reading from the second sheet and moving to DSR)* "Now for the real reason for my fondness for little Anne Catherick. Although she is not half so pretty, she is, nevertheless ..."

(Hartright rises, slowly)

 What is it?

HARTRIGHT I think I know what is coming next. But go on.

MARION *(reading)* "She is, nevertheless, in her complexion, the colour of her hair and eyes, the living, speaking likeness of my own dear Laura." *(She lowers the letter)*

(Laura, in a white dress, appears on the terrace outside, looking across the garden, her profile to those inside. Hartright sees her, Marion does not)

HARTRIGHT *(looking towards Laura)* Yes ... It's true... They are horribly alike. *(Music stops. SFXA11)*

MARION Why do you say horribly? There's nothing dreadful in an accidental resemblance.

HARTRIGHT I never told you the sequel to my meeting with Anne Catherick.
(Laura moves out of sight along the terrace)

MARION Sequel?

HARTRIGHT Not ten minutes after she left me, a carriage drove past at a furious speed. *(We hear the carriage and then an underscore of urgent music starts - combined. SFXA12. Lighting change. LFXA19)* It pulled up ahead. A man jumped out and approached a constable on patrol and asked if a woman dressed in white had passed that way. He said that she had escaped from – an asylum! *(Music stops dead. Single note on “Asylum”. SFXA13 Lighting reverts. LFXA20)*

MARION An asylum! The poor, poor thing! *(She sits in the chair DR)*

HARTRIGHT *(moving to her)* I’m glad I helped her, but I can’t bear to think of any association, however remote, between that helpless, sickly, frightened creature and Miss Fairlie. The one seems to cast a shadow over the future of the other.

MARION You’re being fanciful, Mr Hartright. Laura has a brilliant marriage and future before her.

HARTRIGHT With someone she loves?

MARION *(with slight reproof)* With someone she respects.

HARTRIGHT I beg your pardon. I had no right to ask.
(Laura reappears on the terrace)
Please don’t tell her what we’ve discovered.
(Laura enters, coming to the table at the end of the sofa. She is surprised at the expressions of Marion and Hartright)

MRS VESEY/WALTER HARTRIGHT/ANNE CATHERICK

MRS VESEY Why, Mr Hartright, you're in here. I was so surprised when the young ladies came back from their drive alone. I thought you'd gone with them.

HARTRIGHT No. *(A noticed change has come over Hartright.)*

MRS VESEY But you haven't been out with them all this week, and you used to enjoy it so much. You mustn't work too hard, Mr Hartright. All work and no play, you know. *(She closes the curtains.)*

HARTRIGHT *(standing and turning)* Mrs Vesey – do you think Mr Fairlie would see me for a few minutes tonight?

MRS VESEY I don't know, I'm sure. Is it important?

HARTRIGHT Very.

MRS VESEY Then I'll see what I can do. *(She moves near him.)* Mr Hartright -

HARTRIGHT Yes?

MRS VESEY It isn't my business, I know, but you haven't seemed very happy these past two weeks. Is anything the matter? Is there anything I can do?

HARTRIGHT There's nothing you can do, Mrs Vesey, but thank you all the same.

MRS VESEY Well, if ever I can ... *(Music fades out naturally. She moves up to the desk and sees his work)*
Oh, what a pretty drawing. It's Old Welmington Church! How clever you are! *(She picks up the drawing)*

HARTRIGHT It's a little wedding gift for Miss Fairlie.

MRS VESEY Oh, how kind of you. She'll love it. It's quite beautiful. *(She puts the picture back on the desk.)*

HARTRIGHT Thank you.

MRS VESEY I'll speak to Mr Fairlie now. *(She moves to the door UR then turns)* And, Mr Hartright, I do hope you'll join us after dinner tonight and not go up to your room again. We've missed your company sadly.

(Mrs Vesey exits. Haunting music, quietly at first. SFXB02)

(Hartright takes up his drawing and looks at it. The handle of the terrace window is tried gently. SFXB03 He notices nothing. Then he takes the drawing to the mantelpiece, places it upon it and stands back to look at it. The handle moves again. SFXB04 This time he hears it and looks round. The window begins to open slowly. Hartright moves swiftly to the corner UL and presses himself against the wall. A hand parts the curtains, and Anne Catherick, dressed all in white, enters timidly. She is the exact counterpart of Laura but looks pale and ill. She carries a letter in her hand. Anne moves softly towards the table by the sofa, and is about to lay the letter down, when Hartright moves and shuts the window. She spins round, terrified, a gasp escaping her, her body bent in fear. She looks all round and takes a few steps back, backing DR, trying to escape. SFXB05 Music ends abruptly when Hartright speaks and SFXB06 takes over)

HARTRIGHT *(moving C)* Don't be frightened. I won't harm you, Miss Catherick.

(Anne gasps)

That is your name, isn't it?

ANNE *(whispering)* How do you know my name?

HARTRIGHT Don't you remember me? We've met before.

(Anne shakes her head)

... on the road to London.

ANNE The road – to London?

HARTRIGHT We walked quite a way together.

ANNE Oh, yes. I do remember now. You were very kind to me. *(Quickly)* You won't betray me now?

HARTRIGHT *(moving DS)* What are you doing here?

ANNE I came because I saw it in the newspaper – I wanted to warn dear Mrs Fairlie's daughter.

HARTRIGHT Warn Miss Fairlie? *(He moves closer to Anne)* Against what?

ANNE Against *(Pauses, and breaks DR)*

HARTRIGHT Won't you trust me, Miss Catherick? I did help you to escape.

ANNE *(gasping, retreating from Hartright)* You know – about that?

HARTRIGHT I know where you'd run away from.

ANNE *(moving C)* I'm not mad – truly I'm not. I've been very frightened – it was so awful in there. Promise you won't tell them that you've seen me?

HARTRIGHT I give you my word. *(Moving to her)* Now won't you tell me what you came to warn Miss Fairlie about?

(Anne looks all round the room)

ANNE *(whispering)* Is it true she is to marry – him?

HARTRIGHT Sir Percival Glyde, do you mean? Yes, it's true.

(Anne gasps)

(Gently) Does it affect you so?

(Anne retreats from Hartright DR)

Miss Catherick, I'm Miss Fairlie's friend as well as yours. Can't you tell me?

ANNE No, I dare not. But -

HARTRIGHT Yes?

ANNE If you will give her this. *(She makes to hand over the letter, then draws it back again)* You won't say that it came from me?

HARTRIGHT Providing you assure me that it contains nothing that will distress Miss Fairlie.

ANNE It will help her – really it will. Please give it to her.

HARTRIGHT Very well. *(He takes the letter)*

ANNE Thank you. *(She runs to the french windows)*

HARTRIGHT Miss Catherick -

(Anne stops)

- Is there no-one who can be of help to *you*? Have you no friends or relatives? Isn't your mother living?

ANNE *(fiercely)* My mother? Yes, she's living! But she hates me. She called me an idiot. I'm not an idiot. I know what people say as well as anyone. That's why they put me away.

HARTRIGHT *They?* Your mother and who else?

(Anne makes to speak, then changes her mind and slips out through the window. She disappears from view. Hartright step outs after her; calling)

 Miss Catherick! *(Haunting music stops. SFXB07 There is no reply. Hartright turns back into the room, heads DL and looks at the letter in his hand. Marion enters UR)*

MARION HALCOMBE/WALTER HARTRIGHT/(MRS VESEY)

MARION Was someone here? I thought I heard voices.

HARTRIGHT You did. Anne Catherick was here.

MARION Anne Catherick *here?* (*She moves to Hartright.*) What did she want?

HARTRIGHT She gave me this letter for Miss Fairlie.

MARION Laura? Why should she write to her?

HARTRIGHT She said she wished to warn her. (*He hands her the letter*)

MARION Against whom?

HARTRIGHT I understand her to mean – the man Miss Fairlie is to marry.

MARION Sir Percival Glyde?

 (*Hartright nods*)

 But, surely -

HARTRIGHT That was what she said.

MARION (*after a moment of perplexity*) Mr Hartright, I'm going to open this letter. I won't have Laura worried. If it contains nothing but the ravings of a deranged mind, there's no need for Laura to see it.

HARTRIGHT I think Anne Catherick knows very well what she's saying.

MARION Nevertheless ... (*She opens the letter and reads it*) Oh, this is infamous! Read it, Mr Hartright. (*She hands him the letter*)

 (*Hartright reads the letter during the following*)

 I never heard anything so abominable!

HARTRIGHT (*looking up*) There are no names mentioned. Does this description fit Sir Percival Glyde?

MARION Yes. There's no doubt she means it for him.

 (*Hartright returns to the letter, finishes it and looks up*)

 Well?

HARTRIGHT Shall you do as Anne Catherick suggests? Advise Miss Fairlie to enquire into his past life before she marries him?

MARION (*taking the letter back*) You don't know what you say, Mr Hartright. There are not the slightest grounds for these insinuations. I've never heard a word against him. He was born in this very county – his parents were Mr Fairlie's dearest friends. He himself lived in Welmington until their death.

HARTRIGHT How long ago was that?

MARION Twenty – twenty-five years.

HARTRIGHT Then you know nothing of his life since then?

MARION *(turning on him angrily)* If there had ever been a breath of scandal against him, don't you think it would have reached us here?

HARTRIGHT There are things that are not made public.

MARION You believe this letter, don't you?

HARTRIGHT *(after a hesitation)* I know Anne Catherick well enough to know she does not lie.

MARION Very well. Then Sir Percival shall explain it himself. *(She pulls on the bell-cord which is near door UR)*

HARTRIGHT You mean to send it to him?

MARION That won't be necessary. He arrived half an hour ago.

(Mrs Vesey enters UR)

 Mrs Vesey, be so good as to ask Sir Percival to step here for a moment.

MRS VESEY I think he's with Mr Fairlie, Marion.

(Hartright crosses to the fireplace)

MARION Never mind. This is more important than Mr Fairlie.

MRS VESEY Very well, dear. Oh, and Mr Fairlie will see you in ten minutes, Mr Hartright.

HARTRIGHT Thank you.

(Mrs Vesey moves to the door)

MARION Wait! Ask Laura to come here, too.

MRS VESEY Yes, dear.

(Mrs Vesey exits UR)

HARTRIGHT Is it wise to drag Miss Fairlie into this?

MARION Why not? *(She moves to him)* Don't you think she should hear her future husband vindicate himself? Or perhaps you think he won't?

(Hartright is silent)

 Mr Hartright, you seem determined to condemn somebody you don't know on the unsupported statements of a woman whose mind, to say the least, is unstable. *(Moving DSR)*

HARTRIGHT I beg your pardon. I have Miss Fairlie's welfare at heart, too – more perhaps than befits my position.

MARION *(after a moment)* So that is why you've been avoiding us?

HARTRIGHT I'm asking Mr Fairlie to release me from the rest of my engagement. If he will, I shall leave tomorrow morning. *(Back to DSL)*

MARION I'm very sorry this has happened, Mr Hartright. I wish I could offer you some word of comfort. But you must see how hopeless it is. *(Moving to C)*

HARTRIGHT I know, she's a wealthy woman and I'm - well – what I am.

MARION The difference of fortune would never matter to Laura, but hers is an engagement of honour- if not of love. It was her father's dearest wish that she should marry the son of his great friend, and unless the engagement is terminated by mutual consent, I can hold out no hope for you.

SIR PERCIVAL GLYDE/MARION HALCOMBE/(WALTER HARTRIGHT)/LAURA FAIRLIE

(Sir Percival Glyde enters UR)

GLYDE *(moving C)* Ah, Miss Halcombe, you were inquiring for me, I believe?

MARION Yes, Sir Percival. You haven't met Mr Hartright, have you? Mr Hartright, this is Sir Percival Glyde.

(Glyde moves towards Hartright. Hartright and Glyde shake hands.) [M – G – H]

GLYDE How do you do, Mr Hartright. I've been seeing some of your work. Most excellent.

HARTRIGHT Thank you.

GLYDE If you'd allow me to take some specimens with me to Italy, I believe I could put some commissions your way.

HARTRIGHT You live in Italy?

GLYDE *(smiling)* Alas, no – in Hampshire. My estate there, Blackwater Park. But we shall be spending the honeymoon in Naples with my greatest friend Count Fosco, and afterwards, he and his wife are returning with us to England. But perhaps you don't know of my good fortune, Mr Hartright? My marriage, I mean.

HARTRIGHT Yes ... I do know of it. My – congratulations.

GLYDE Thank you.

(Laura enters UR to DSR. [L - M – G – H] Glyde moves in front of Marion to Laura and takes her hand)

Laura, my dear, did you know I've been in this house for half an hour without seeing you?

LAURA *(withdrawing her hand)* I'm sorry. Mr Gilmore kept me. You wanted me, Marion? *(She moves to Marion)* [G - L – M – H]

MARION Yes. Laura, this anonymous letter was left here for you. I opened it because I feared it might distress you. Now I think you should see it.

(Laura takes the letter. Hartright keeps DSL)

GLYDE *(strolling to the mantelpiece)* My dear Miss Halcombe, you sound serious.

MARION I am serious. Read it, Laura.

(Laura goes to sit on the sofa. Marion follows, and sits alongside, concerned)

GLYDE *(picking up the drawing)* Old Welmington Church. Do you think it worth your pains, Mr Hartright?

HARTRIGHT Don't you? The architecture is interesting.

GLYDE I think it is an eyesore! I wish to heaven they'd pull it down!

(Hartright looks surprised at his vehemence.) [L - M - G - H]

(Smiling at Hartright's reaction) You'll gather I don't like Old Welmington, Mr Hartright. I think it the dullest place.

LAURA *(looking up from the letter)* Marion, I don't understand this.

MARION Give it to Sir Percival. He may be able to explain it. *[M - L - G - H]*

GLYDE I? *(Coming DS) [M - L - G - H]*

(Laura hands Glyde the letter)

May I? It's addressed to you.

LAURA I want you to read it. I think it refers to you. *(Moves back to Marion)*

GLYDE Indeed? *(He quickly reads a little of the letter)* Yes, you're right. This is obviously meant to be me. *(He finishes the letter.)* Poor demented creature.

MARION *(surprised, standing, coming DS)* You know who wrote it?

GLYDE Certainly. It's apparent that this was written by a woman named Anne Catherick. May I ask how it came into your hands? *(looking at the letter, not looking up)*

(Marion makes to speak. Marion and Hartright exchange a look)

HARTRIGHT *(forestalling her, moving in a little)* I found it lying on the table.

LAURA But who is Anne Catherick? What does it all mean?

GLYDE *(moving to SR)* It means, my dear, that a very dangerous lunatic is at large. I will have to inform the authorities.

LAURA But why should she be so vindictive about *you*?

GLYDE Because she thinks I was the cause of her being restrained.

LAURA And were you?

(Hartright moves USL looking thoughtful, to fireplace.)

GLYDE In a way, yes. *(He crosses back, and sits in the armchair L. Marion moves SR)* Her mother is a tenant of mine at Old Welmington. Quite early in life this girl, her daughter, developed symptoms of a mental affliction which made it necessary for her to be under proper medical care. Mrs Catherick had a natural aversion to a public asylum, so I arranged for her daughter to be admitted to a private home for the insane.

MARION Could Mrs Catherick afford the fees?

GLYDE I undertook to be responsible for them.

LAURA That was generous of you.

GLYDE Unfortunately, the girl discovered my share in having her put away and conceived an intense hatred of me.

(Silence. Glyde looks from one to the other. Then stands)

 I can obtain confirmation of everything I say if you wish it.

MARION No, please, that's quite unnecessary.

GLYDE *(looking at Laura)* All the same, I think I should prefer it, for my own sake. *(He moves to the desk and scribbles an address)* This is Mrs Catherick's address. Write and ask her whether what I did for her daughter was done with her knowledge and sanction. You may have an answer in a quarter of an hour.

LAURA No, please. I believe you. *(If masking Glyde, rises and moves SL slightly)*

GLYDE Then you, Miss Halcombe. *(He moves to Marion)* You need have no feelings of loyalty towards me.

MARION *(goes to Glyde, and taking the address)* Very well. *(She moves UR)*

(Glyde follows Marion)

 I'll write at once.

(Glyde opens the door for her.)

 Remember it is you who wish it.

GLYDE I insist upon it.

(Marion goes out. Meanwhile Glyde moves DSR.)

(Directs speech at Hartright.)

 I'm sorry you've been dragged into this unpleasant affair, Mr Hartright. Accept my apologies. But the woman is quite insane. *(He glances at Hartright obliquely)* You caught no glimpse of her, I suppose?

HARTRIGHT Why do you ask?

GLYDE Naturally, the poor creature must be found as soon as possible for her own sake. So if you could assist me -

HARTRIGHT I'm sorry, I can't. Will you excuse me? I have to see Mr Fairlie.

(Hartright gives a slight bow, crosses to the door UR and exits)

(Glyde looks after him)

SIR PERCIVAL GLYDE/LAURA FAIRLIE

GLYDE Charming fellow. I must certainly do something for him.

LAURA *(too quickly; rising here, if hasn't already)* Oh, if only you would!

(Glyde looks at her)(Correcting herself) I mean – he's so clever. *(Sits back down, left of sofa)*

GLYDE *(smiling slightly)* So it would appear. *(He sits by her, taking her hand.)* Laura -

LAURA *(rising and moving L so not looking at him at first)* No, please ... I've something very important to say to you.

GLYDE *(rising)* Oh? *(He waits)* Well?

LAURA *(turning to him. Proceeds with difficulty)* I want you to – to release me from my engagement to you.

GLYDE *(slowly)* I see. I am to be condemned on the incoherent ravings of a madwoman.

LAURA That has nothing to do with it!

GLYDE You must forgive me if I find that difficult to accept.

LAURA It's true. *(She moves towards him.)* I've said I don't believe the letter. You've never shown me anything but kindness and affection -

GLYDE *(stiffly)* I'm grateful that my poor endeavours have been noticed.

LAURA Please try to understand. When I entered into this engagement I was guided by my father. I thought he knew what was best for me, and I was happy to obey him -

GLYDE But now?

LAURA Now I realize – it's only fair to tell you – I don't love you. I respect you – I esteem you – but that's all.

GLYDE And I value that respect and esteem a hundred times more than the love of any other woman.

LAURA Then you'll release me? *(She begins to draw off her engagement ring)*

GLYDE No, my dear. *(He moves to her)* I have love enough on my side for both, and I shall hope, in our life together, to win yours. *(He replaces the ring.)* Let me put this back.

LAURA *(hiding her disappointment)* Then – may I ask you one other thing?

GLYDE Of course.

LAURA When we return from Italy – would you be angry if Marion came to live with us?

GLYDE *(smiling, taking Laura's hands)* If the granting of such a little wish can make you happy, then I don't think very much will go wrong with us.

MR FAIRLIE/(MRS VESEY)/SIR PERCIVAL GLYDE/MR GILMORE

MR FAIRLIE *(off)* How can people be so unsympathetic?

MRS VESEY Oh dear, he's here already! *(USC)*

GLYDE *(opening the door UR)* This is unexpected, Mr Fairlie.

(Mr Fairlie is wheeled in by Louis to C) [L – G – L/MF - MV]

MR FAIRLIE You may well be surprised, Sir Percival. I am far more fit for my bed than for being propelled through draughty corridors. But people delight in annoying me. They combine to plague me. Is the window shut, Mrs Vesey?

MRS VESEY Yes, Mr Fairlie.

MR FAIRLIE Then your skirts are making a draught. Go away.

(Mrs Vesey exits UR. Glyde can move SL before moving DS)

 I was preparing for a quiet night when Mr Hartright, a nonentity whom I'd engaged at a preposterous salary from London, suddenly informs me he must go back to town immediately. No warning – scarcely an apology. Must go, that's all.

GLYDE Most irritating. *(He moves to the fireplace) [L – L/MF - G]*

(Gilmore enters UR and stays by the door)

MR FAIRLIE *(Not seeing Gilmore)* I had barely recovered from this when that horrid Gilmore arrives to tell me there's some hitch in Laura's marriage settlement, and I've got to be adamant about something. As if I could be adamant about anything in my state of health. I ask you, is it likely?

GILMORE *(coming forward)* I hope to persuade you to be, Mr Fairlie.

MR FAIRLIE *(unperturbed)* Oh, are you there, Gilmore? Come and sit down. All of you. I like people to sit down and be quiet and not fidget.

(Laura sits DSR, Glyde sits DSL)

GILMORE I prefer to stand. *(Moves DSR next to Laura)*

MR FAIRLIE Then kindly keep in one position. Be ready to fan me, Louis. Well, what are we waiting for?

GILMORE For you to stop talking. *[L – Gi – L/MF - PG]*

MR FAIRLIE Oh, how rude you are. You know I haven't the strength to be rude back.

GILMORE You manage uncommonly well.

GLYDE Do I understand this is something to do with the marriage settlement, Mr Gilmore?

GILMORE Yes, Sir Percival. As you know, Miss Fairlie is Mr Fairlie's sole heir and will inherit his entire property on his death.

MR FAIRLIE Which, if I am pestered much more – is likely to occur at any moment.

GILMORE That, however, is straightforward, and needn't trouble us. The point I wish to raise is the disposition of Miss Fairlie's private fortune of eighty thousand pounds -

(Mr Fairlie gives a prodigious yawn)

(Glaring at him) Mr Fairlie!

MR FAIRLIE I beg your pardon, dear Gilmore. Go on.

GILMORE Your lawyer, Sir Percival, has made a demand which I consider wholly inadmissible. He insists that, in the event of *your* surviving *her*, Miss Fairlie's fortune should come to you. I, on the other hand, say that she should be at liberty to dispose of it as she pleases. Miss Fairlie, don't you agree with me? *(He moves to her)*

LAURA FAIRLIE/MR GILMORE/GLYDE/MR FAIRLIE

LAURA (*roused from her thoughts*) I beg your pardon.

GILMORE Wouldn't you prefer to keep this money under your own control? I take it there are some friends or relatives you would like to benefit?

LAURA I would like to be able to leave something to Marion. And there is also a – a friend to whom I should like to leave some little resemblance.

GLYDE My dear, do you think for one moment I'd oppose you in that?

GILMORE That's all very well, Sir Percival, but good intentions are not good in law! (*moving to Glyde*) I appeal to your sense of justice. Let me arrange for you to have a life interest in the money, and the capital to be disposed of as Miss Fairlie chooses.

GLYDE (*rising*) It's useless to appeal to me, Mr Gilmore. I've consented to be guided by my lawyer, and these are the terms he demands.

MR FAIRLIE In any case, Gilmore, the whole thing is nonsense! Is it likely, in the first place, that a girl of twenty-one will die before a man of forty-five?

GLYDE Forty.

MR FAIRLIE Is that all? I beg your pardon. You had some severe illness in your youth, I suppose? In the second place, is a devoted husband the kind of person to prevent his wife from making some little presents to her friends?

GILMORE I don't say it's at all likely in the present circumstances -

MR FAIRLIE They, pray, what are we all arguing about?

GILMORE But I have known it happen when the circumstances were quite as favourable as they are now!

MR FAIRLIE Poor Gilmore, you must move among some singularly unpleasant people.

GILMORE (*looking at Mr Fairlie*) I do. Mr Fairlie, for the last time I appeal to you to insist that this clause be altered!

MR FAIRLIE Oh, my dear Gilmore, am I well enough to insist upon anything?

GILMORE You refuse?

MR FAIRLIE At last we understand each other. I do.

GILMORE Very well. Then I suppose there's no need to delay any further in signing this. (*He takes a document from his pocket*) I shall need Miss Halcombe and Mr Hartright as witnesses. (*He rings the bell.*)

MR FAIRLIE (*plaintively*) Must they come in here?

GILMORE (*going to the desk*) It won't hurt you to breathe the air with six people for once. (*He brings a pen and the inkstand from the desk to the table beside the sofa*)

MR FAIRLIE You don't know what hurts me, Gilmore, and what's more, you don't care. My smelling salts, Louis.

(Louis hands Mr Fairlie a vial of smelling salts. Mrs Vesey enters UR. Louis pulls Mr Fairlie's chair to LC.)

[LF – Gi – L/MF - PG]

GILMORE Ask Miss Halcombe and Mr Hartwright to step in here, Mrs Vesey, if you please.

MRS VESEY/MARION HALCOMBE/LAURA FAIRLIE

MRS VESEY Marion, do you think I should? I have no place here any more.

MARION But you shall have a new place very soon. Laura will be delighted to have you as her housekeeper when she and Sir Percival go to Blackwater Park.

MRS VESEY But if Mr Fairlie knew I was still here -

MARION Well, he won't. He's safe enough in his hydro for a month, thinking about his imaginary complaints.

MRS VESEY Well, if you say so, Marion. But I have my bag packed if dear Laura shouldn't want me. *(She places her bag by the door UR)*

MARION She will, so stop worrying. *(She moves to the fireplace to look at the clock)* It's almost four. They'll be here any moment now.

MRS VESEY *(taking off her bonnet and mantle and placing them on the chair DR)* How pleasant it will be for you to have dear Laura home again.

MARION Yes, I have missed her.

MRS VESEY But you won't be parted again. You'll be going to live with them at Blackwater Park when the house is ready.

MARION I hope so.

MRS VESEY Hope so? I thought it was all arranged.

MARION I thought so too but ... Mrs Vesey, did Laura write to you from Italy? *(She moves to the sofa)*

MRS VESEY Yes, dear, such delightful letters. Surely you heard from her as well, Marion? *(She moves to the sofa)*

MARION Yes, but - *(she sits on the sofa)* didn't it strike you there was something strange about her letters?

MRS VESEY Strange, dear?

MARION Didn't you notice she wrote only about the places they'd been – the galleries and museums and so on? Nothing about herself or her husband – or his greatest friend Count Fosco.

MRS VESEY It must have been such a novelty, travelling to all those places.

MARION Yes, but I should have thought that on one's honeymoon one writes to say one is happy.

MRS VESEY Oh, my dear, you're being fanciful!

MARION Perhaps. *(She rises and moves to the fireplace)* Do you think Mr Hartright's drawing of Old Welmington Church looks well there? I hope Laura will like the frame I have chosen.

MRS VESEY It looks beautiful, dear. What a pleasant young man Mr Hartright was.

MARION Yes, indeed. *(She listens)* Is that the carriage? *(She runs to the window. We hear the carriage. SFXC01)* She's here. Laura's here! *(Sound stops SFXC02)* *(makes to leave UR)*

MRS VESEY *(moves to the window also. Checks Marion)* Don't go and meet here, dear. There are strangers with them.

MARION *(returning to window)* Yes, I forgot. They must be Count and Countess Fosco. Oh, to see Laura again after all these months! *[M – MV]*

(Laura enters UR. She looks unhappy) *(Marion comes DS to her)*

Laura!

LAURA Marion! Dear! How lovely to see you!

MARION *(They embrace)* Welcome home, Laura darling.

MRS VESEY My dear Laura. *(Moving DS to C)*

LAURA *(breaking away and moving to Mrs Vesey)* Mrs Vesey. Did you stay to welcome me? Oh, how kind. *(She kisses Mrs Vesey)* My uncle wrote that you were leaving here. *[M – L - MV]*

MARION She is, Laura. Uncle Frederick has told her to go, after all her years of service.

MRS VESEY No, Marion dear, that isn't quite correct.

MARION As nearly as makes no matter.

MRS VESEY *(to Laura)* He explained to me that now you are going away, he preferred a bachelor establishment – and I daresay it's true I am a little past my work. *(Moves DSL a little in embarrassment.)*

LAURA Did he say that? Oh, how monstrous of him. *(Follows her DSL)*

MARION But you'll help her, Laura, won't you?

LAURA Help her?

MARION When you go to Blackwater Park. You'll need a housekeeper. Sir Percival can have no objection -

(Laura turns away)

Laura, don't say you don't want her either!

LAURA No – no, it's not that – only - *(with difficulty)* my husband wishes us to live very simply -

MARION But it's for you to say what staff's to be engaged!

LAURA You don't understand, Marion. But I'll do what I can, Mrs Vesey. I'll ask him if you may come with us. *[M – L - MV]*

MRS VESEY Thank you, dear. *(She moves to the door UR, behind Laura and Marion)* I'll bring in the tea now. I'm sure you must need it after your journey.

MARION HALCOMBE/LAURA FAIRLIE/FOSCO

MARION Laura, have you been ill? You look different. So much paler.

LAURA *(taking off her hat and putting it on the chair DL)* No. The heat of Italy didn't agree with me, that's all. I shall be better now I'm back in England and have you beside me. *(She suddenly turns to Marion.)* You will stay with me, won't you?

MARION Of course I will. I said I would.

LAURA *(desperately)* But you must promise!

MARION *(astonished)* Laura, what's wrong?

LAURA *(moving away)* Nothing.

MARION *(following)* That's not true. Won't you tell me what it is? You know you can trust me.

LAURA Ssh! He may be listening. *(She gives a terrified glance at the door UR)*

MARION Your husband?

LAURA No, Count Fosco.

(Marion looks at Laura, then makes to go to the door UR)

No, don't do that. *(She draws Marion back)* You don't know him. I think he watches me all the time. Both of them do! *(She brings Marion DL)*

MARION Both?

LAURA He and his dreadful wife who hardly ever speaks. *(She covers her face)* Oh, Marion!

MARION Laura, you're distraught! Why should the Count watch you?

LAURA I don't know. I only know that when you think yourself quite alone, he's suddenly at your elbow. He terrifies me!

MARION Laura -

(The door UR opens. Lighting change on door. LFXC02)

LAURA *(seeing this)* Sssh!

(Laura grasps Marion's hand, and they wait, rigid and silent. Foreboding lingering music. SFXC03 The door opens fully and Count Fosco enters. He is dressed in indoor clothes. Although his manner is bland and genial, there is nonetheless a sinister air about him, and he watches Laura constantly.)

FOSCO Ah, my dear ladies, you are here. *(Maybe when the door lighting goes LFXC03, a different lighting plot could be used to represent the sinister atmosphere. LFXC04)* I come to make myself known. This is the famous Marion, I doubt not. *(He offers his hand)*

LAURA *(trembling)* Marion – this is Count Fosco. *[CF – M – L]*

MARION *(taking the offered hand)* Famous is scarcely the word, Count.

FOSCO No? But famous in your language means well-known, does it not? And I know you well.

MARION How could you?

FOSCO *(smiling)* Because Lady Glyde here, she never cease speaking of Marion, the kind half-sister. If my friend Glyde were not such a good man, he might be jealous of the place you hold in his Laura's heart.

(Laura sits on the sofa. Marion sits by her. Fosco moves to the chair DR)

What do you think of your sister, Miss Halcombe? Does she look well? *(He sits)*

MARION Not as well as I had hoped.

FOSCO Ah, we could not give her all the comfort we had wished. But next time she come to Italy, it shall be to the Villa Fosco.

(Countess Fosco glide in UR. She is silent and watchful. She carries a little box from the contents of which she perpetually rolls cigarettes for the Count. She has discarded her outdoor things.)

(Rising and moving up to Countess Fosco) Ah, Eleanor, my love, you must meet Miss Halcombe. My sweet wife, the Countess. *(He brings her DR. Countess Fosco bows frigidly, then sits DR and rolls a cigarette)*

I have been telling Miss Halcombe of our hope one day to repossess the Villa Fosco.

MARION Has it passed from your family, Count?

FOSCO Alas, yes. But soon we shall have the means to buy it back again.

(Laura rises and goes towards the door UR. Fosco immediately steps in front of her. Countess Fosco rises)

You wish something, Lady Glyde?

LAURA *(nervously)* I was wondering why tea was so late.

FOSCO Permit me to ring the bell. *(He does so and moves DR again)*

LAURA FAIRLIE/SIR PERCIVAL GLYDE/COUNT FOSCO/MARION HALCOMBE

GLYDE Laura ... I owe you an apology.

LAURA For what in particular?

GLYDE For making you unhappy these past few weeks.

LAURA I've wished myself dead. I know now you never loved me, but why did you marry me? Why?

GLYDE You're wrong, Laura. I do love you. I always have. It's you who has never had the slightest affection for me. Why didn't you tell me there was someone else?

LAURA You – *know*?

GLYDE (*nodding*) Why didn't you tell me?

LAURA It was so hopeless ... I was pledged to you. I did *ask* you to release me -

GLYDE But I didn't know then. Was it fair, Laura, to give me second best?

LAURA (*rising*) I meant to be a good wife to you! I *have* tried!

GLYDE (*walking to the mantelpiece and touching the drawing*) With your mind on *him* all the time. (*He turns and faces her*) That first night after our marriage, on the crossing. I had such plans for us. I'd won you at last. I meant to win your love as well. Then *his* name was mentioned casually by another passenger, and your attention was gone. I might never have existed. I knew in that moment that I'd attained – with all my efforts - a wife with more affection for him in her little finger than she had for me in her whole body.

LAURA You make me feel ashamed ... I didn't understand ... I didn't know I'd hurt you. (*She sits on the sofa*)

GLYDE I behaved badly to you after that, I know, but all my hopes had come crashing down.

LAURA What do you mean?

GLYDE When one is loved it's easy to ask favours; it's impossible when one is not.

LAURA Had you a favour to ask? Tell me what it is. I've made you unhappy. We'll put the past behind us – we'll begin again – if only you'll help me and be kind to me -

GLYDE (*sitting by Laura and taking her hands*) Laura. [*G – L*]

LAURA Is it money you need?

(*Glyde is silent*)

Is it?

GLYDE Yes. I never concealed from Mr Fairlie that I wasn't wealthy.

LAURA I know.

GLYDE My father left the estate in a bad shape and I need a small sum to put some of the farms in order.

LAURA I'll write at once to Mr Gilmore - *(She rises)*

GLYDE *(quickly)* That won't be necessary. *(He rises)*

LAURA But surely he must -

GLYDE *(producing the document and going to the desk)* My solicitor has drawn this up. It makes over to me from your estate the amount I need. You've only to sign it. *(He folds the paper down half-way and puts a paperweight on the folded half)* That is, if you will.

LAURA Of course I will. Most willingly.

GLYDE *(lifting Laura's hand to his lips)* I'll call Fosco and Miss Halcombe to witness your signature.

(Laura sits at the desk and prepares to sign. Glyde, moving to the french windows, calling)

 Fosco! *(Glyde exits UR)*

(Off) Miss Halcombe!

(Laura reaches for a pen and in doing so knocks the paperweight aside. The paper springs back and reveals the rest of the writing. She is about to replace the weight when her attention is riveted by the contents of the document. She picks it up and begins to read. Glyde enters, sees what Laura is doing and starts towards her. Laura rises and moves away from Glyde DL, holding the paper.)

 Put that down!

(Fosco enter through the french windows) [G – F – L]

LAURA So your small sum was eighty thousand pounds!

GLYDE I couldn't tell you all I owed. I hated to deceive you - *(approaches Laura DS)*

LAURA Oh, don't lie to me any more!

GLYDE Laura!

LAURA I've been foolish, but don't try to treat me like a child! Why have you tried to rob me?

FOSCO Rob is a harsh word, Lady Glyde.

(Marian enters UR and moves DSR)

LAURA What other word is there? *(Moving to Marion)* Read this, Marion! Sir Percival wished me to sign it without seeing the contents!

MARION It's everything you have!

LAURA Yes – everything I have. *(To Glyde)* Why do you want this money?

GLYDE I'm not bound to explain to you!

LAURA Nor am I bound to help you!

GLYDE You are my wife – it's your duty to do as I say! You'll sign this paper or I won't answer for the consequences!

FOSCO *(moving DSL to Glyde)* Control your temper, you fool! [*L – M – G – F*]

GLYDE *(shaking Fosco off)* Leave me alone. *(Moving to Laura)* I'll give you twenty-four hours to think it over. At the end of that time I advise you be ready to sign!

(Glyde exits L)

FOSCO You must not heed him, Lady Glyde. He has an unfortunate temper and been worried of late. I will speak to him.

(Fosco follows Glyde out L)

MARION Laura, what does it mean?

LAURA *(sitting on the sofa)* It means this is what he married me for. I stood up to him this time, but I may not always be able to do so. He has ways – you don't know ... Oh, Marion, what am I going to do?

MARION *(sitting by Laura)* I'll write to Mr Gilmore. He will advise us what to do.

LAURA But it will take two days to get an answer – and he may try again!

MARION I'll ask for a reply by special messenger. Then we shall hear by tomorrow. Go to your room now. If Sir Percival comes, say you're resting. Don't see him again today.

(They rise)

LAURA And you'll write at once?

MARION At once. I promise.

COUNT FOSCO/MRS VESEY

FOSCO Ah, the good Mrs Vesey! The very person I wished to see. I had no chance to make myself known before. I am Count Fosco.

MRS VESEY *(curtseying)* Good-afternoon, Count.

FOSCO *(at his most affable)* You have been here a long time, I believe?

MRS VESEY Yes, sir, I have. For thirty years.

FOSCO Thirty years. It *is* a long time. You have seen Lady Glyde grow up then?

MRS VESEY Oh, yes, sir. After poor Mrs Fairlie died, she almost looked upon me as a mother.

FOSCO I'm sure. I am so sorry for her.

MRS VESEY For Lady Glyde? You, sir?

FOSCO Oh, I know I am the friend of her husband but I am shamed to see the way he treats poor Lady Glyde. She needs some good advice.

MRS VESEY Oh, but Miss Halcombe has already advised her, sir. Only this moment she's written to Mr Gilmore in London.

FOSCO *(smiling)* I am so glad.

MRS VESEY Oh, sir, what a joy it is to discover you are her friend as well!

FOSCO Ah, but I must beg you do not speak of it to either of the ladies. You realize I must affect to keep on good terms with Sir Percival.

MRS VESEY Oh, I do, sir!

FOSCO But you may tell me everything they do in perfect confidence, and I will do all in my power to assist. *(He pats her hand)*

MRS VESEY God bless you, sir! You've taken such a weight off my mind!

FOSCO That is what I wished. Go along now, Mrs Vesey.

MARION HALCOMBE/ANNE CATHERICK/(COUNT FOSCO)

MARION Laura – what are you doing out there? *(She backs away L)* You're not Laura!

ANNE *(staying by the windows)* I'm Anne Catherick. I must see Miss Fairlie. Please, I *must* see her!

MARION Miss Fairlie is not well enough to see anyone.

ANNE Please! I have risked so much to see her. Are you her friend?

MARION I am her sister.

ANNE Then let me speak to you! It is very, very important.

MARION Wait! *(She crosses and locks the doors UR; then goes to the door L)* There's no key to this. *(She places a chair under the handle)* Now, come in.

(Anne enters the room)

It's uncanny – your likeness to my sister.

(Anne clings to the back of the sofa)

Sit down, you're tired.

ANNE No – I'm not tired ... I'm very ill ... *(She moves around and sits in the sofa)* What is your name? *(During the following, she picks at her white shawl with her nervous fingers and pulls off and drops, unnoticed, a piece of the white fringe)*

MARION Marion Halcombe.

ANNE I must say to you what I had hoped to say to your sister because – I am dying.

MARION Oh, no! You're ill, as you say, but - *(She sits by Anne)* [A – M]

ANNE It is true and I must make atonement.

MARION Atonement? For what? You have done us no injury.

ANNE I have done Miss Fairlie a great injury. I could have prevented her marriage, but I was afraid to speak out. Wouldn't you be afraid of a man who shut you up in a madhouse, and would do so again if he could?

MARION But you are no longer afraid?

ANNE No. If they catch me now – I wouldn't be there very long.

(Marion makes a sympathetic movement)

Don't pity me, Miss Halcombe. I shall be happy to join dear Mrs Fairlie.

MARION *(with a glance at the door)* I don't wish to hurry you, but we must be quick.

ANNE *(passing a hand across her forehead)* What was I saying? When Mrs Fairlie is in my mind, all else goes from it.

MARION You were saying you could have prevented my sister's marriage -

ANNE Yes, it's too late for that now, but I can give you a weapon to fight him with. He has a secret -

MARION A secret?

ANNE A secret he is terrified of anybody knowing! I threatened him with it once – that's why he put me in the madhouse! But if Miss Fairlie knew it, then he wouldn't dare to treat her badly!

MARION How did you learn of it?

ANNE I heard him and my mother speak of it once. He gives my mother money to keep it -

(The handle of the door L is turned. Marion sees it turn and grips Anne's arm. The door is tapped)

MARION Yes? Who is it?

FOSCO *(off)* I, Fosco.

MARION The door is locked. I have a headache. I'm trying to rest.

FOSCO *(off)* Your pardon, I will not disturb you.

MARION *(softly)* We mustn't go on talking. He may have heard your voice. You must come back tomorrow. When can you come?

ANNE I don't know. But I will leave a message for you. At the grave of dear Mrs Fairlie. A note in a bunch of flowers.

MARION Very well.

ANNE You promise me you'll tell Miss Fairlie what I've said?

MARION *(rising)* Every word. But you shall see her yourself tomorrow. And Mr Gilmore, her friend and lawyer. I've written to him tonight. Now I shall add a postscript to my letter, telling him to come here himself. You shall speak in front of *him*! Now, go quickly!

ANNE *(rising)* Thank you for listening to me, Miss Halcombe – and for not thinking me mad.

LAURA FAIRLIE/MARION HALCOMBE

LAURA Marion -

MARION (*entering*) Is it safe to talk?

LAURA Yes, they're still in the dining-room. Did you see Anne Catherick?

MARION No, she wasn't. But she left this note as she promised. Read it quickly.

LAURA (*taking the note from Marion. Reading*) "I was ill yesterday and could not come. I must see you tonight for I am told I have only a few days to live." Marion! "I shall wait outside your house. When it is safe for me to come in, place a bowl of flowers in the window, and we will speak again of your husband's secret. Don't fail me. I shall never again be able to help you."

MARION Laura, you *must* see her tonight. It may be your last chance to free yourself.

LAURA But what does it matter what she tells us? We've no means of using her information. There's been no reply to your letter to Mr Gilmore.

MARION No. Either my own letter or the reply has been intercepted ... Laura, I'm going to go to London tonight ... there's a train at ten o'clock. I shall go straight to Mr Gilmore's private house and bring him back with me tomorrow.

LAURA (*moving to Marion*) But you'll never get away from here! You know how they watch us!

MARION Yes, but by the mercy of providence Sir Percival is away until tomorrow. That leaves only Fosco and his wife. As soon as they come in here I shall say I'm going to bed. I've a bag concealed in the hall and shall slip out the house and run for the station. They can't pursue as Sir Percival has taken the only horses.

LAURA But, Marion - (*sitting on the sofa*) I shall be alone with – Fosco.

MARION Don't be afraid, he'll do nothing. He's only a guard on us, and I shall be back tomorrow. Wait in your room till all is quiet, then come down and place this bowl of flowers in the window. (*She indicates the bowl on the table R*)

LAURA How shall I know Anne Catherick?

MARION (*moving back to the table where the coffee is set*) Very easily. (*sitting on the sofa*) I haven't told you this before – but she is the exact counterpart of yourself.

LAURA Of *me*?

MARION You might be her twin – except that she looks so pale and ill – as I'm afraid you're doing.

LAURA How strange ... I wish we could do something for her.

MARION If what the poor creature says is true, there's nothing anyone can do. But I have a feeling, Laura, that she'll bring you your release.

(*Laura presses Marion's hand*)

Now let us have our coffee and look as composed as we can.

LAURA

I wish you weren't leaving me.

MARION

I wish I weren't. But it's our only chance.

(The door left opens. Marion sees it opening and changes her tone) [L – M – F]

COUNT FOSCO/COUNTESS FOSCO/SIR PERCIVAL GLYDE

FOSCO Well?

COUNTESS FOSCO Hidden where you heard her say. I copied it and then replaced it. *(She closes the french windows and the curtains and moves to DSR during following dialogue, handing Fosco the note)*

FOSCO Did Miss Halcombe come?

COUNTESS FOSCO Yes, she read it, then hurried back to the house.

FOSCO *(glancing through the note)* So Anne Catherick comes tonight! *(Reading)* "When it is safe, place a bowl of flowers in the window -"

COUNTESS FOSCO Listen! *(She moves towards the UR door)*

FOSCO *(moving to her, stopping her)* It is only Miss Halcombe leaving for the station. She thinks she has outwitted us, my angel. She does not guess that Fosco intercepted her letter so she would be forced to leave her darling Laura alone. She thinks it is by accident that Glyde is out of the house so that her escape is made easy -

(Glyde enters L. Countess moves to DSR and sits)

What are you doing here? *(He moves to Glyde)* You are half an hour before your time!

GLYDE I'm lucky to be here at all! My gig broke down a mile away. *(He moves to the sideboard and pours himself a drink from the decanter)* Now perhaps you'll be good enough to tell me why I've been kept away from the house in this fashion! *(Keeps to SL)*

FOSCO Speak low. Your wife might be within hearing.

GLYDE Where's Miss Halcombe?

FOSCO Gone to catch the London train.

GLYDE Gone! *(He moves to Fosco)* You fool! Don't you know she'll go straight to Gilmore?

FOSCO Control yourself! I wished for her to go!

GLYDE You wished ...! Are you trying to ruin me?

FOSCO No, my friend. Listen. *(Fosco moves to the sofa and sits)* What is the most important thing to you at this moment?

GLYDE *(moving towards Fosco, in front of armchair)* The capture of Anne Catherick, I suppose.

FOSCO Exactly. The capture of Anne Catherick. Two days ago Miss Halcombe had a secret visitor -

GLYDE *(terrified)* Not - *(sinks into armchair)*

FOSCO Yes, my friend, Anne Catherick. You need not look so terrified. You are not ruined yet.

GLYDE How do you know? How can you tell what that woman told her?

FOSCO She did not tell her the secret – that I am convinced of -

GLYDE Why?

FOSCO Because she has arranged to speak with them again. *(He hands the note to Glyde. Gets up but returns to sofa)* Read this. From her to Miss Halcombe.

GLYDE *(after reading the note)* Anne Catherick is coming here tonight!

FOSCO Yes!

GLYDE Fosco, we must make sure of her, once and for all! But how? She seems to sense me a mile off!

FOSCO She will have no cause to be alarmed. When Anne Catherick walks into this room Miss Halcombe will be waiting for her.

GLYDE *(rising and moving DSL)* Miss Halcombe! You said she'd gone to the station!

FOSCO Fool! *(rises and moves to Countess Fosco)* Must I explain everything? Someone she *thinks* to be Miss Halcombe. *(He kisses his wife's hand)*

GLYDE *(understanding)* Madame Fosco?

FOSCO Precisely. My angel wife.

(Countess Fosco looks up from her rolling of cigarettes.)

GLYDE Well, what then?

FOSCO When Anne Catherick has been returned to the lunatic asylum, we will turn our attention to Lady Glyde.

GLYDE *(rising)* Lady Glyde! *(He moves to the sideboard and pours another drink)*

FOSCO *(pause)* My friend, how much do you care for your wife? *(stays CR)* [CF, Fosco, PG]

GLYDE *(startled, his glass clicking against the decanter)* What? That's rather a downright question.

FOSCO To which I should like a downright answer.

GLYDE You've seen us together. She cares nothing for me. She's in love with a poverty-stricken drawing master.

FOSCO And you care even less for her. How much have you with her at present?

GLYDE You mean in money? *(Fosco nods)* Nothing but the interest of her eighty thousand.

FOSCO Nothing more?

GLYDE The reversion of the Fairlie estate when her uncle dies.

FOSCO Ah, yes. But men of that sort live long and marry when you least expect it. So there is nothing more that comes to you from your wife?

GLYDE Nothing – except in the event of her death.

FOSCO Ah. Yes. Her death. When you would receive the entire eighty thousand pounds ...

GLYDE Now see here, Fosco, I don't know what's in your mind -

FOSCO You could never fathom a mind such as mine. Now, suppose, your wife should die before the year is out -

GLYDE Drop it, Fosco! I'll have no hand in such a thing!

FOSCO I speak of your wife's death as a possibility, that's all.

GLYDE Drop it, I tell you! *(He sits DSL)* Speak of some other way out of our difficulty – but not that!

FOSCO *(taking out his watch)* Very well. *(He rises)* It is now a quarter to ten. We should be making preparations to receive our visitor. Eleanor, my love.

COUNTESS FOSCO *(rising)* Yes, Count.

FOSCO *(moving UR)* Attend to Lady Glyde's door as you pass.

(Countess Fosco goes out UR. The Count moves to the bell)

 Now, my friend, I wish you to do something in which you are adept. *(He rings the bell)* I wish you to be rude to the good Mrs Vesey.

GLYDE Rude? Why?

FOSCO Do you need a reason? You do it so naturally.

GLYDE *(rising, and approaching Fosco, SR)* By heaven, Fosco I stand a good deal from you -

FOSCO *(viciously)* You will stand as much as I choose!

MRS VESEY/ SIR PERCIVAL GLYDE/(COUNT FOSCO)

MRS VESEY Did I hear the bell, sir?

GLYDE *(after a glance of fury at Fosco; to Mrs Vesey)* Where the devil have you been? I rang five minutes ago.

MRS VESEY I beg your pardon, sir. I was just retiring.

GLYDE Retiring? You take things easily here, don't you?

MRS VESEY I asked Lady Glyde if there was anything further -

GLYDE I'm the head of this household during Mr Fairlie's absence! Not Lady Glyde!

MRS VESEY You were not here, Sir Percival. I understood you were not back until the morning.

GLYDE I see. So that's why things were so lax.

MRS VESEY I hadn't realized they were, sir. But I will ask for your instructions in the future.

GLYDE The future! You take things for granted, don't you? What makes you suppose I mean to have you in my household in the future?

MRS VESEY But Lady Glyde said -

GLYDE What Lady Glyde said is neither here or there!

FOSCO My friend, you will wound Mrs Vesey *(moving DSL)*

GLYDE *(throwing Fosco a baleful look)* Mrs Vesey can take herself out of this house tomorrow morning!

MRS VESEY Oh, sir!

GLYDE Is that clear? I don't want to see your face again!

MRS VESEY Yes, sir, quite clear. I will do as you say *(moving back towards door UR)*

(Fosco gestures over Mrs Vesey's back for Glyde to go. Glyde moves towards the door L. Mrs Vesey stops and comes back DS and addresses Glyde)

 Sir Percival -

GLYDE *(pausing)* Well?

MRS VESEY I am not often rude. I hope I shall never be so again. But I cannot leave without saying that I think you the basest gentleman I have ever met in all my born days.

(Fosco is highly amused)

 I know it's wicked to wish anybody dead, but for my dear Laura's sake, I wish you had died before you met her! I wish you were dead ... I wish ... Oh ... *(She breaks down)*

COUNT FOSCO/MRS VESEY

FOSCO *(moving to Mrs Vesey)* There, there, Mrs Vesey. Sit down. *(He brings her to the sofa)*

MRS VESEY Not in your presence, sir!

FOSCO Never mind that.

(Mrs Vesey sits)

 There, now.

MRS VESEY Thank you, indeed, Count, for trying to interpose.

FOSCO Have you somewhere to go when you leave here?

MRS VESEY No, sir, nowhere.

FOSCO *(handing her a card)* Then take this address. It is a good hotel in London and not expensive. *(He produces his wallet)* And this as well. *(He hands Mrs Vesey some money from the wallet)* It will help you till you find another place.

MRS VESEY Oh, sir, I couldn't.

FOSCO Come – let Fosco make amends for the ill-manners of his friend.

MRS VESEY Thank you, sir.

FOSCO Now you shall have a little glass of wine to settle your nerves. *(He moves up to the sideboard)*

MRS VESEY Oh, I never touch wine, sir – or very rarely.

(Fosco turns his back to Mrs Vesey, pours a glass of wine and fumbles something over it - a sleeping draught)

FOSCO Then this shall be one of those rare occasions. *(He brings the glass to her)* Drink this, Mrs Vesey. It will make you feel better.

MRS VESEY *(after drinking about half of the glass)* Thank you, Count. You're very kind.

FOSCO I try to be, Mrs Vesey. Now, down with the rest.

MRS VESEY *(drinking the rest)* Count, you will look after Laura, won't you? *(She puts the glass down on the sofa table. Fosco leads Mrs Vesey to the UR door)*

FOSCO Rest assured, Mrs Vesey, I am most concerned of all with Lady Glyde. Sleep well.

MRS VESEY Good-night, Count, and thank you.

(Mrs Vesey exits UR.)

SIR PERCIVAL GLYDE/COUNT FOSCO/COUNTESS FOSCO

GLYDE *(looking round)* Has she gone?

FOSCO Yes, she will be dead to the world the moment her head touches the pillow. *(He laughs again)*

GLYDE That was a rotten thing to make me do. I felt a complete blackguard.

FOSCO Never mind, my friend, she's not a witch – her curse won't stick.

(Countess Fosco enters UR in a dress, cap and shawl of Marion's)

(Moving to her) Ah, my love, you look splendid! *(To Glyde)* You see? Miss Halcombe's dress and shawl, and if she sits here with the one lamp - *(He brings Countess Fosco DR)*
[CF – Fosco – PG]

GLYDE Yes, I see. I'm not an idiot. *(He moves to the sideboard and fills his glass)*

FOSCO *(to Countess Fosco)* The lights have been attended to?

COUNTESS FOSCO I lighted the lamps in our rooms as I went up and extinguished them as I came down.

GLYDE Why all the trouble? Anne Catherick is mad. *(He drinks)*

FOSCO I have only your word for that. I have never seen her. Now she will assume we have all retired. This lamp must go out - *(he blows out the candle LFXD02)* and that -

(Glyde moves to another lamp)

 No, not yet. The flowers on the window table. So. *(He places the bowl of flowers on the sideboard)* Now, Eleanor, when we are gone, draw back the curtains that she may see them.

GLYDE Where shall we be?

FOSCO In the hall behind those doors.

GLYDE Fosco, you don't think we can fail?

FOSCO We shall not fail.

GLYDE That woman said she was dying in the letter. If she's died and left a statement-

FOSCO Pull yourself together!

GLYDE That's all very well for you! You've nothing at stake but a paltry ten thousand. I have everything! Do you think I want to live like you – an outcast – a parasite -

(Fosco snatches the glass from Glyde's hand and dashes the contents into Glyde's face. Glydes gasps, staggers back)

FOSCO If it were not for the money I could wish myself well rid of you!

(Glyde goes to speak)

 Don't threaten! And get to your post! Little is required of you but do that little well!

(Glyde, after a second's hesitation rises and exits L)

Now the other lamp. *(He blows out the other lamp LFXD03)* You will sit here, my love, in the shadow, with your embroidery. *(He hands her Laura's embroidery)* And give me a minute before you draw back the curtains.

(A faint knocking is heard, off. SFXD05)

Ah, Lady Glyde has discovered her door is locked.

COUNTESS FOSCO Can she be heard outside? *(She sits DSR)*

FOSCO I think not. We must risk that. She will soon tire of it. *(He surveys his wife)* That is well, my angel. To crazy eyes you look just like Miss Halcombe.

GILMORE/MARION/WALTER HARTRIGHT

GILMORE Is this right? Am I to come in this way?

MARION Mr Gilmore! Yes, please.

(Gilmore enters the room. Marion closes the windows)

GILMORE *(taking off his coat)* Nasty day. Blowing up a gale. *(He puts his hat and his coat on the desk chair)*

MARION Please speak softly. I don't want any of my uncle's servants to know either of you is here.

GILMORE My dear Miss Halcombe, what is this mystery? First, both Hartright and I receive an urgent summons from you to come here, and now you say you don't even wish our presence to be known.

MARION *(sitting on the sofa)* I've something of the utmost importance to tell you. Sit down, please.

(Gilmore sits in the armchair LC, Hartright on the sofa [M – H – G])

Mr Gilmore, do you remember a day, four months ago, when I came to see you in London? You were ill, and I had to wait three days before I could see you.

GILMORE I remember. You told me of an infamous attempt by Sir Percival to obtain his wife's signature to a deed that would make him master of her entire fortune. I advised you to tell her not to sign on any account.

MARION And you know the sequel to my journey. When I finally reached home I was told my sister was dead and buried.

GILMORE Yes, most distressing. I'd no idea she was suffering from a disease of the heart.

MARION She was not!

GILMORE Mr dear Miss Halcombe, the doctor's report proved it.

MARION My sister was alive and well at that moment! Not here – but in an asylum!

HARTRIGHT Miss Halcombe!

MARION The woman who died and was buried in her place, was Anne Catherick!

GILMORE Do you know what you're saying?

MARION I know very well what I'm saying.

GILMORE But it's utterly fantastic!

MRS CATHERICK/(MR GILMORE)/WALTER HARTRIGHT

MRS CATHERICK *(stopping at the door)* I asked to see Miss Halcombe.

GILMORE Miss Halcombe is engaged. I am her solicitor. You may state your business to me.

MRS CATHERICK And if I do not choose?

GILMORE Then it must remain unspoken. Miss Halcombe is unacquainted with you, so it can hardly be for her ears alone. *(Hartright turns round)*

MRS CATHERICK Very well.

HARTRIGHT Won't you sit down?

MRS CATHERICK *(staring at Hartright)* Yes – if I wish to. *(To Gilmore)* I received news from the asylum that my daughter has escaped again. The superintendent stated that Miss Halcombe was the last person to speak with her. I wondered if she might be able to throw some light on her disappearance. *(As she goes to sit on the sofa, Hartright moves around to DSR)* [H – MC – G]

GILMORE From a natural interest in your daughter's welfare, I presume?

MRS CATHERICK No. I don't like idiots. I don't want her at large.

HARTRIGHT Why? Because she might talk?

MRS CATHERICK *(with a scornful laugh)* Talk! Her? What could she talk about?

HARTRIGHT Something which Sir Percival Glyde might prefer to keep unknown.

MRS CATHERICK I don't know what you mean. If you can give me no news of my daughter I shall go. *(She rises)*

HARTRIGHT But I can give you news of your daughter.

MRS CATHERICK Well?

HARTRIGHT She is dead.

MRS CATHERICK That is certain?

HARTRIGHT Yes.

MRS CATHERICK Then I am glad to hear it.

GILMORE Glad! Great heavens, have you no feelings?

MRS CATHERICK Feelings! Do you think I ever had any love for her? A maniac I was ashamed to have borne? I'm glad she is dead – glad, do you hear? I never saw her face without wanting to spit in it!

HARTRIGHT Aren't you to be the loser now she's dead?

MRS CATHERICK Must you talk in riddles?

HARTRIGHT Will Sir Percival Glyde continue to send you money now she's out of the way?

(Mrs Catherick turns to the door. Hartright blocks her way.)

He does send you money, doesn't he, to buy your silence?

MRS CATHERICK Let me pass!

HARTRIGHT But you're not safe, you know. Before she died your daughter told the secret to Lady Glyde!

MRS CATHERICK What!

HARTRIGHT There'll be no more help from Glyde, so you may as well tell us everything!

MRS CATHERICK You're lying! I can see you're lying! You know nothing. You're trying to trap me!

HARTRIGHT Are you so afraid of him?

MRS CATHERICK Afraid – of *him*! Do I look as if I were afraid of Glyde?

HARTRIGHT Why shouldn't you be? He's a powerful man – a baronet – the descendant of a great family -

(Mrs Catherick laughs scornfully) Why do you laugh?

MRS CATHERICK Oh, yes, a baronet - a powerful man - the descendant of a great family. Bah, you make me tired! You know nothing and you'll learn nothing from me. If Lady Glyde knows the secret ask *her*!
(She moves to go)

HARTRIGHT Mrs Catherick, wait. Let me appeal to you. I'm trying to help right a great injustice. By telling the truth you can help someone who is very near and dear to me from a life that must be worse than your own daughter's ...

MRS CATHERICK What do I care for anyone who's very near and dear to you? Nobody cared for me! I was pursued by the tongues of slander when I'd done no wrong. A few scandalmongers saw me once in the vestry of the church with Glyde and concluded I was a light woman. *I've* suffered enough, I can tell you!

HARTRIGHT Why were you in the vestry of the church?

MRS CATHERICK Why shouldn't I be? My husband was parish clerk of Old Welmington.

HARTRIGHT *(looking at Gilmore)* Old Welmington.

MRS CATHERICK When my husband died they tried to drive me from the village, but I wouldn't go. I was innocent and I determined to stay. Now there is nobody more respected here than I am. Let this person who you say is near and dear to you, live it down as I did! Find out what you want in your own way! You'll get no help from me! *(Laura enters L. Mrs Catherick sees Laura and staggers back)*

HARTRIGHT Mrs Catherick -

MRS CATHERICK You told me she was dead! Why did you tell me she was dead?

HARTRIGHT This is not your daughter. This is Lady Glyde.

MRS CATHERICK *(staring at Laura)* Lady Glyde! *Lady Glyde!* *(Mrs Catherick exits quickly UR.)*