A dark and humid night on a London highway... a ghostly woman asking directions... and the reader is away on a tale of deceit, murder, madness, stolen identities and scheming cads, elaborate plots and outrageous coincidences, in the company of some of the most extraordinary characters in fiction.

Hailed as a classic the moment it was written in 1859, *The Woman in White* uses eleven different narrators to tell the tale of a man's determination to save the woman he loves, in the face of the worst intentions of the sly Sir Percival Glyde and the magnificent Count Fosco.

Cast in order of appearance

- **Glen McCready**: Walter Hartright
- **Hugh Dickson**: Vincent Gilmore and Frederick Fairlie
- **Rachel Bavidge**: Marian Halcombe
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- **Teresa Gallagher**: Hester Pinhorn, Mrs Catherick and Jane Gould
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I should like to account first, Miss Halcombe…

Chapter Fifteen
I turned instinctively to the walk…

So far as it is possible to decide…

We got through the dinner…

The rest of the evening passed…

She left the room.

The Story Continued by Vincent Gilmore
I might, perhaps, have been a little…

I was the first to speak in answer…

‘Certainly not,’ replied Miss Halcombe.

Chapter Two
‘No man could say more than that…’

The next morning, as soon as breakfast…

Under other circumstances I might…

I led her at once into speaking…

Chapter Three
So much for the landed property…

At the time when Miss Halcombe’s letter…

I threw the letter away in disgust.

In the case of any other client…

Chapter Four
Mr. Fairlie shook the silver smelling-bottle…

The Story Continued by Marian Halcombe
‘I shall lower myself, indeed…’

November 9th. The first event…

His attentive face relaxed a little.

I was determined to make him declare…

‘May she not give it in the future…’

I tried vainly to soothe her…

Before I close my diary for to-night…

November 13th. A sleepless night…

Chapter Two
But I did say more.

It is burnt. The ashes of his farewell letter…

December 1st. A sad, sad day…

Sir Percival is to arrive to-morrow.

‘You found, of course, that they had heard…’

My pen is running away into…

The Second Epoch – The Story Continued…
Reading is out of the question…

So much for the persons and events…

Twelve o’clock has struck…

Daylight confirmed the impression…

Finding no one in the hall…

I am rather interested about Mrs. Catherick…’

Chapter Two
Oh, Marian!‘ she said…

Most men show something…

And the magician who has wrought this…

His manner and his command…

‘Mind that dog, sir,’ said the groom…

Sir Percival either knows little…

Chapter Three
On leaving the house we directed…

There was no mistaking his manner…

‘And why not,’ asked the Count…

‘It is truly wonderful,’ he said…

‘Miss Halcombe is unanswerable…’

Sir Percival had paid no attention.

The motive of the Count’s interference…

Chapter Four
Sir Percival looked at me sharply…

I had not spoken hitherto…

This unfortunate, yet most natural…

Sir Percival hesitated and looked…

She sighed bitterly. I saw in her face…

‘Afraid of him, after his interference…’

Chapter Five
What answer could I make?

As she said those melancholy words…

I had caught her in my arms…

‘Are you quite sure you have told me…’

When I joined Laura again…

Chapter Six
I beg your pardon,’ I said…

‘Surely. But my little feathered children…’

I was just composing myself…

I saw him for the third time in a wrecked…

‘I am afraid she was hurt by it.’

You tried to make her go on?’

‘What answer could I make? ’

Chapter Seven
After skirting round by the back…

‘No man could say more than that…’

Sir Percival crumpled up the paper in his hand…

‘You dropped this downstairs…’

‘After reading it once through,’ she replied…

‘What can we do, Marian?’

Chapter Eight
‘Most assuredly,’ said the Count’s quiet voice…

The letter to Mr. Fairlie occupied me next.

I was a little doubtful how she would meet…

When I got back to the house I had only…

These considerations occurred to me…

He had detained me in the drawing-room…

Chapter Nine
I had heard the Count say…

No sound reached my ears…

That sentence of the Count’s…

It was well for me that the Count’s…

The Count moved from the verandah…

‘Look here, Fosco, you and I have known…’

‘Yes. I have been to her mother…’

How short a time, and yet how long to me…

Postscript by a Sincere Friend
The Story Continued by Frederick Fairlie
Let me do the girl justice.

I must really rest a little before…

‘I should feel very much obliged to you, sir…’

I have mentioned that my usual course…

Is it necessary to say what my first…

I thought this very convincing and attentive…

When I heard the word fever, and when I…

He had said so much already…

He waved his horrid hand at me…

The Story Continued by Eliza Michelson
Sir Percival was not civil enough…

To resume. The night passed as usual…

At the Count’s particular suggestion…

Remembering Mr. Dawson’s caution to me…

In the course of the next few days…

Before Mr. Dawson could answer…

On the tenth day it pleased a merciful…

I listened to him, perfectly aghast…

Chapter Two
Before I left I took care to satisfy myself…

I found that her ladyship had certainly…

His manner all through this strange…

‘Pray don’t write to Count Fosco…’
I thought it right, at this point… 5:03
At the time named the chaise drew up… 5:01
On turning the corner of the house… 5:01
Mrs Rubelle, whom I had indicated… 5:27
I had hardly walked half-way towards… 5:04
He came punctually, and I found cause… 4:29
I need write no particulars… 3:39
Save the church!  5:25
'I promised you that this confidence…' 4:17
I noted down Major Donthorne's name… 5:50
'Do you fear failure yourself, Walter?'  3:47
'Good! You have mentioned your terms…' 4:59
Lady Glyde's recollection of the events… 6:05
I saw that she was thinking of him now… 5:00
Towards night-time the lady roused up… 4:57
In the eye of reason and of law… 4:22
He came punctually, and I found cause… 4:29
The mention here of Mrs. Fairlie's name… 3:47
I had hardly walked half-way towards… 5:04
The moment he showed himself… 6:22
The first source of information to which… 4:49
'With Catherick, sir – not with his wife.' 4:07
The next morning my wife and I…  5:15
The time was passing, the morning was… 6:17
 reasoning on these assumptions… 5:41
I noted down Major Donthorne's name… 5:50
The first difficulty then was to find… 5:25
Mrs. Clements did all in her power… 6:03
Anne was asleep when they got there. 6:02
'With Catherick, sir – not with his wife.' 5:53
'So we thought at first, sir.' 5:53
'What became of Sir Percival?' I inquired. 4:51
Reasoning on these assumptions… 5:41
The time was passing, the morning was… 6:17
Chapter Eight
Am I trifling, here, with the necessities… 5:09
'Remember what anxious hearts you leave…’ 5:16
'Say, if you please, that my business…’ 5:01
She searched in the pocket of her gown… 6:46
She started up with the activity of a… 4:05
She started to her feet, and came close… 5:17
Chapter Nine
The vestry of Old Welmingham church,… As I moved away from the back of the church… 0:34
Neither he nor his companion attempted… 5:33
'We might be tidier, mightn’t we, sir?’ 4:20
The clerk put on his spectacles… 4:19
'Did you not tell me your former master…’ 5:17
Chapter Ten
My indignation, I may almost say… 5:09
He was a jovial, red-faced, easy-looking man… 5:19
The paltry means by which the fraud… 5:32
The two unhurt men pursued me.  5:04
With that answer he retraced his steps.  5:54
The thought half maddened me.  5:19
Save the church!  5:25
Chapter Eleven
The course that I was myself bound to take… 5:10
The inquest was adjourned over one day… 5:18
As I left the place, my thoughts turned… 3:58
The Story Continued by Mrs Catherick  6:04
But for one consideration he might have… 5:27
The first words I said to him…. 5:13
Now and then I got away and changed… 5:05
His first words, and the tone in which… 4:57
She may have said the same thing to you… 4:52
The Story Continued…  4:50
The London solicitor of the deceased… 4:38
Chapter Two
The house-work, which, if we had dared… 6:52
The only events of former days… 4:12
'There was time enough in the morning… 4:21
Chapter Four
'You mean,' said Marian, ‘the discovery…’ 4:37
Chapter Five
While we were speaking together... 5:28
The first difficulty then was to find… 5:25
Chapter Six
Mrs. Clements did all in her power… 6:03
The nurse was there.  5:31
As I moved away from the back of the church… 0:34
The only events of former days… 4:12
There was time enough in the morning… 4:21
Chapter Three
On the day of the funeral… 5:33
Although Count Fosco’s letter to Mr. Fairlie… 5:09
On inquiry, it turned out that the supposed… 5:08
The nurse was there.  5:31
Lady Glyde’s recollection of the events… 6:05
From this point her recollections were found… 6:02
The scene that followed… 5:46
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The first source of information to which… 4:49
There was time enough in the morning… 4:21
Chapter Four
'Do you believe that I have spoken the truth…’ 5:15
I was obliged to wait and collect myself… 5:08
I considered. The housekeeper could not… 5:24
I looked at the letter while he was speaking… 5:00
The note contained these lines… 5:02
'You mean,’ said Marian, ‘the discovery…’ 4:37
Chapter Five
While we were speaking together… 5:28
The first difficulty then was to find… 5:25
Chapter Six
Mrs. Clements did all in her power… 6:03
Anne was asleep when they got there. 6:02
Chapter Seven
'I can do better than that,” I replied.  5:58
‘I decline to tell you.’  5:09
‘Good! You have mentioned your terms…’ 4:59
‘I accept your conditions,’ I said.  5:17
He dipped his pen in the ink… 4:49
Knowing as well as he did…  5:07
'Mr. Harttright – Monsieur Rubelle.' 4:43
The Story Continued by Isidor Ottavio… 4:52
The situation at this period was emphatically… 4:59
The best years of my life have been… 5:11
Having suggested to Mrs. Clement… 6:08
I had myself previously recommended… 5:15
The next morning my wife and I…  5:15
I had written a note in the morning… 5:20
I took my visitor upstairs into a back room… 4:58
At the ripe age of sixty, I make this… 3:53
The Story Concluded by Walter Hartright  5:43
I now had in my possession all the papers… 4:56
I occupied the interval day at the farm… 5:07
Mr. Kyrle rose when I resumed my seat… 5:37
Chapter Two
Approaching Notre Dame by the river-side… 6:57
Chapter Three
A dark and humid night on a London highway... a hand on a shoulder... a ghostly woman asking directions... and the reader is away on a tale of deceit, murder, nightmares, bigamy, madness, stolen identities and scheming cads, elaborate plots and outrageous coincidences, lost love and redemptive happiness, in the company of some of the most extraordinary characters in fiction. The Woman in White is regarded as one of the first (and probably the best) of the 'Sensation' novels of the mid-nineteenth century, books which told stories that were inspired by a combination of the reassuringly believable and the terrifyingly unlikely. For Wilkie Collins (1824–1892), the combination was ideal – it gave him a chance to discuss some of his particular concerns in a manner that had the audience almost literally baying for more when it was serialised; and it allowed him the licence to sensationalise a matter that was a genuine concern at the time.

There had been a case in France some fifty years earlier, and reported in a book that Collins picked up in Paris in 1856, that formed the basis for much of the plot of The Woman in White; but there was also a scare in England at the time about the possibility that husbands would lock their wives away in asylums for the financial gain their incarceration would bring about. The issue was so much of a concern that Parliament established a committee to look into it, and given the atmosphere of the time – which was much the same as it always is; the public ever on the look-out for the latest reason to be scared out of its wits and keen to be terrified and intrigued by fictional variations – it was no surprise that writers thought there was mileage in it. Collins was also in the position of knowing someone who, after a very public falling out, had actually had his wife forcibly incarcerated (Bulwer-Lytton, the writer and politician who coined two phrases that writers everywhere should recognise as ennobling their profession – ‘The pen is mightier than the sword’ – and deflating any pretension that believing it might entail – ‘It was a dark and stormy night’. The wife was released and spent much of the rest of her life continuing her attacks upon him). So while the newspapers and novels of the time were alive with this paranoia, depending as it does on the impossible definitions of sanity and who determines them, Collins was personally involved in it. As a result, when he was asked for a new story to be serialised in Charles Dickens’s magazine All the Year Round, he realised he could use the Parisian case he had read about, his personal experience, and the growing desire for freakish insanity-based thrills that seemed to be taking over the nation at the time to create a sensation. And he did. The serial was wildly popular, the book followed shortly afterwards, and there were pirated and legitimate theatrical versions almost immediately, as well as a satisfyingly wide range of associated merchandise (you could get Woman in White shawls, perfumes, hats and even dances) that just goes to prove how little tastes have changed.

Wilkie Collins's acute ear for a thrilling tale that made it into one of the most popular novels of its time and since. Notes by Roy McMillan
Cast in order of appearance

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Allan Corduner: Count Fosco and The Doctor

Glen McCready trained at The Webber Douglas Academy. Stage credits include: Oberon in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Son in A Voyage Round My Father and Walter Langer in Five Finger Exercise. Television appearances include Arthur Symons in Casanova’s Lost Letters. He has narrated numerous audiobooks including The Lost World by Arthur Conan Doyle, The Woman in White by Wilkie Collins, The Children of the New Forest by Frederick Marryat and The Visible World by Mark Slouka for Naxos AudioBooks, as well as The Finishing School by Muriel Spark and many others.

Rachel Bavidge was born in North Shields in Tyneside and moved to Oxford in her early teens. She has narrated numerous audiobooks and has just completed six months as a member of the BBC Radio Drama Company. Theatre credits include Mrs Boyle in Whose Life is it Anyway? (West End) and Margaret in Much Ado (Theatre Royal, Bath) both directed by Peter Hall. TV includes The Bill, Casualty, Doctors, The IT Crowd, Inspector Lynley, Wire in the Blood, and Bad Girls.

Hugh Dickson is a former member of the Royal Shakespeare Company and the BBC Radio Drama Company. He has specialised in verse-speaking, working with many leading poets on radio, platform and recordings. Stage appearances include Escalus in Measure for Measure and Prof Riley in Shadowlands. Radio work includes Camillo in The Winter’s Tale and Guy Crouchback in Sword of Honour. He has also read the part of the Archbishop in Henry V and the part of Lucretius in The Rape of Lucrece for Naxos AudioBooks.

Teresa Gallagher has performed in many leading roles in both plays and musicals across the country, London’s West End and Broadway. In addition, she is a well-known voice to listeners of BBC Radio Drama. Her work on film includes The Misadventures of Margaret and Mike Leigh’s Topsy Turvy. For Naxos AudioBooks she has recorded the Biography of Jane Austen and selections from The Decameron by Boccaccio. She has also read Classic Women’s Short Stories, Heidi, The Treasure Seekers, The Woldbegoods, The Story of Jesus, Thailand from after the quake, and Little Lord Fauntleroy.

Allan Corduner’s distinguished acting career spans over 30 years. He is currently filming Defiance with Daniel Craig, directed by Edward Zwick. His theatre work includes the critically acclaimed Two Thousand Years at the National Theatre, The Comedians at the Acorn Theatre in New York, Fucking Games at the Royal Court, and Caryl Churchill’s Serious Money at the Royal Court, which later transferred to Broadway. Radio credits include Insignificance, Dr Freud Will See You Now, The Irresistible Rise of Arturo Ui (all for BBC Radio 4) and The Night Listener by Armistead Maupin.

Marie Collett was born in New Zealand but has lived in England for many years. Her theatre work has included productions at Manchester’s Royal Exchange Theatre, The Count of Monte Cristo, Lady Windermere’s Fan (which transferred to London’s Theatre Royal, Haymarket), and The Happiest Days of Your Life. She was in Mr Heracles at the West Yorkshire Playhouse and Lindsay Anderson’s production of Holiday at the Old Vic. Audio work includes Dr Who and several Talking Books for the Royal National Institute of the Blind.

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