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*Wilkie Collins*

# THE WOMAN IN WHITE

## 白衣女人



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世·界·文·学·经·典·名·著·文·库

白衣女人

王建红 注释

THE WOMAN IN WHITE

[英] WILKIE COLLINS

译者：王建红

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地址 西安市南大街 17 号

邮编 710001

电话 (029) 7279676

传真 (029) 7279675

电子信箱 xian.wpc @ public. xa. sn. cn

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## 作者简介

威尔基·柯林斯(1824—1889)是英国小说家,著名的神秘和情感小说作家。柯林斯1824年出生于伦敦,其父为著名的风景画画家,而威尔基这一名字也是他父亲根据他的一位画家朋友大卫·威尔基(David Wilkie)的姓名所取。柯林斯早年曾在伦敦的私立学校就读,但常被全家国外的旅行中断;1836—1838年,他同家人在意大利旅居两年,这教给他许多知识。他很早就喜爱写作和绘画,其绘画作品曾在皇家学会展出。后来,他曾在一家茶叶进口公司就职。1846年,他入林肯法学院,但很快就将兴趣转入文学阅读和创作方面。1848年,他的第一本书,即关于他父亲的生平传记出版。他的第一本小说《罗马衰落》(*The Fall of Rome*)发表于1850年。1851年,他同狄更斯相识,并结为文坛上的密友。柯林斯唤起了狄更斯性格中天真、冒险的个性,他们一起游历,也合作创作了《两个闲汉的浪游》(*The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*)等作品。在创作中他们俩互相学习,各取所长。柯林斯在小说情节构思方面的写法被狄更斯所采纳,而狄更斯在人物刻画方面的技巧也给柯林斯颇多启示。柯林斯经常为狄更斯创办的《家常话》(*Household Words*)和《一年四季》(*All the Year Round*)和其它杂志投稿,写作短篇小说、游记和戏剧。从1852年《巴塞尔》(*Basil*)的发表开始,柯林斯发现他的写作长处是在描写神秘和犯罪方面。在此领域代表他最高成就的是两部小说:《白衣女人》(*The Woman in White*, 1860)和《月亮宝石》(*The Moonstone*, 1868)。《白衣女人》最早连载在狄更斯主编的《一年四季》杂志上,小说以法国七十年前发生的一件谋杀案为线索,让目击者轮流叙述他们所知道的事件,逐渐将这一神秘故事的来龙去脉交代清楚。这

种叙事手法开辟了新的写作领域。为后来的侦探小说创造了吸引读者的新形式，也为他赢得了大批的读者，从而奠定了他在文坛的地位。《月亮宝石》通过印度的月亮宝石失而复得的故事，成功地塑造了善解疑团的探长卡夫、驼背使女罗莎娜、米雪的求婚者哥德弗雷等人物形象。小说情节惊险曲折，结局出人意料，是一部侦探小说的杰作。

从1870年到他去逝，柯林斯还创作了其它十五部小说，但在艺术水准上都不及以前的作品。他的声誉也在下降。晚年柯林斯健康状况极为糟糕，他患有严重的痛风病和吸食鸦片；他一生没有结婚，但长期同两位女子同居，并生有三个私生子，在个人的私生活方面受非议颇多。另外，他虽住在伦敦，但广泛游历法国、意大利、瑞士等国，1873—1874年他还曾去美国作巡回演讲。

柯林斯一生阅历广泛，创作甚丰。他是英国侦探小说之父。他首创了让不同的当事人叙述同一事件的方法；另外，他的小说构思巧妙新颖，情节曲折离奇，跌宕起伏，扣人心弦，使读者能够感到和作品主人公同样的恐惧、激动、好奇和悲哀。他的人物刻画虽有些散漫和格式化，但仍然栩栩如生，吸引读者。他使用的语言诙谐幽默，通俗易懂。他的侦探小说成为这一文学形式的代表，被后人模仿达一个世纪之久。柯林斯在晚年也曾写社会批判小说，对英国的婚姻制度、妇女的堕落、继承权等问题提出批判，如《可怕的天才》(*The Evil Genius*, 1886)，《该隐的遗产》(*The Legacy of Cain*, 1889)等。柯林斯于1889年在英国去逝。

## 故事梗概

经意大利朋友的引荐，沃尔特·哈特莱特来到英格兰坎特伯兰郡的利默瑞奇庄园任家庭绘画教师。临去前，他月夜从乡间返回伦敦住所，途中突然遇到一位白色穿戴的女子向他询问去伦敦的路。沃尔特惊恐万状，而白衣女人也紧张不安。谈话间，沃尔特发现她对自己要去的庄园的情况似乎很熟悉。不一会，白衣女子飘然离去。这时，一辆四轮马车急驰而来，车上一位乘客问警察是否看到一个白衣女孩，因为她从疯人院逃走。警察说没有看到，而沃尔特则犹豫未答。

沃尔特到了利默瑞奇庄园，见到了他要教的两个学生。玛丽安长相平平，但举止优雅，聪慧能干。她的同母异父的妹妹，即利默瑞奇庄园的未来的继承人劳拉，却美丽温柔、纯朴善良。在劳拉的叔叔弗德里克的监护下，劳拉和玛丽安行影不离、相依为命。弗德里克自私、挑剔、并患有疑难病，整天把自己关在屋子里，很少和外界来往。沃尔特把有关白衣女子的故事告诉了玛丽安，玛丽安翻阅了母亲以往的信件，并断定那个白衣女子就是菲利普·费尔利夫人生前关心照顾过的安·凯瑟里克。虽然沃尔特和安只有一面之交，但他觉得劳拉和安容貌酷似。

沃尔特对劳拉一见钟情。几个月后，玛丽安看出沃尔特深深爱着劳拉，便建议沃尔特离开庄园。因为劳拉的父亲临终前已经答应把劳拉嫁给珀西瓦尔爵士，而珀西瓦尔爵士即将前来商定婚事。就在此时，劳拉收到一封匿名信，试图阻止她与珀西瓦尔的婚事。匿名信是安写的。后来，沃尔特在墓地暗中与安相见，得知珀西瓦尔的一些情况，并对他的品德产生怀疑。为了劳拉，沃尔特有心查明真相，但终因力不从心，黯然离去。沃尔特离开后，珀西瓦尔爵士来庄园。劳拉内心极度矛盾。她暗暗爱



着沃尔特，对珀西瓦尔毫无感情，但又不愿违背父亲的遗命。虽然她坦诚告诉珀西瓦尔，自己心中另有所爱，但珀西瓦尔虚伪地表示劳拉真诚高洁的心地深深打动了她，他因此更爱劳拉。几个月后，他们举行了婚礼，并去意大利度蜜月。沃尔特得知这个消息，心碎欲绝。后来，经玛丽安朋友介绍，他参加了一支去中美洲的考古探险队。

珀西瓦尔和劳拉蜜月归来。玛丽安发现劳拉很沮丧，因为珀西瓦尔直言不讳地告诉她，他娶劳拉的目的是想占有她的巨额财产。珀西瓦尔真相毕露，时常无端大发雷霆，不愿让玛丽安和他们同住在“黑水公园”的家中。

福斯科伯爵同夫人，即劳拉的姑母来到“黑水公园”做客。福斯科伯爵是个身高体胖、自信狡猾的意大利人，他同珀西瓦尔在一笔钱财上有牵连。为了逼迫劳拉交出她全部财产的处置权，他们俩互相勾结，想逼迫劳拉在财产的契约上签字，未能得逞。他们的密谋被玛丽安暗中听到，家中充满了猜疑和恐惧。之后，劳拉偶然遇见白衣女子，从她的口中得知了一些珀西瓦尔的生活秘密。但是当她还要告诉劳拉有关珀西瓦尔的一件不可告人的秘密时，伯爵出现，白衣女子受惊而逃。这个秘密与安和她母亲凯瑟里克夫人有关。珀西瓦尔以为劳拉已经掌握了自己的秘密，就凶狠地将劳拉禁闭起来。

伯爵表面彬彬有礼，实际上极端狡诈阴险。为了从劳拉的财产中捞得一份，他极力为珀西瓦尔出谋划策。两人定计制造劳拉“死亡”骗局，以攫取她的财产。警觉的玛丽安黑夜冒雨窃听到两人的密谈。但玛丽安还没来得及采取行动，就因风寒发烧，卧床不起。劳拉也神秘地病倒了。

后来，劳拉听说姐姐去了伦敦。她惊讶万分，因为她不相信玛丽安会不辞而别。其实，玛丽安在沉睡中被转移到一间偏僻的房子。劳拉为追随姐姐，赶到伦敦。伯爵接待了她，并暗中给她灌了药，换上安的旧衣服，被送进了安逃出的疯人院，并冒称

就是逃出的安。这样，珀西瓦尔就把安当作劳拉埋葬在费尔利夫人的墓旁。

玛丽安病愈后，听说妹妹死亡。她全然不信，便去疯人院找安。发现疯人院里的人却是劳拉。玛丽安帮劳拉逃离疯人院，一起回到了利默瑞奇庄园。但劳拉冷酷无情的叔叔声称侄女已死，将她们拒之门外。劳拉身心受到极大摧残，丧失记忆，无法证明自己的身份。玛丽安和劳拉愤怒之下离开庄园。她们路过墓地时，遇到了前来拜谒劳拉坟墓的沃尔特。

沃尔特得知劳拉蒙受奇冤，决心为她昭雪。沃尔特便追查珀西瓦尔的秘密。原来珀西瓦尔的父母没有正式结婚，他无权继承爵位。他曾收买安的母亲，协助他伪造了父母结婚的登记。后来，他以为安知道了他的秘密，就伙同她母亲把她关进了疯人院。沃尔特还了解到，安和劳拉实际是同父异母的姐妹。

珀西瓦尔觉察到沃尔特正在追查他的秘密，黑夜潜入教堂，准备焚烧自己出生的证据，不料，烛火引起了大火，珀西瓦尔自己也葬身火海。

沃尔特转而查访福斯科伯爵的底细。经查他原来是一个秘密组织的成员。沃尔特找到福斯科，以宣布他的身份相威胁，迫使他写下坦白书，交代他和珀西瓦尔合伙借尸夺产，迫害劳拉的罪行。后来，福斯科逃离英格兰。不久，在巴黎被暗杀。

劳拉终于恢复了健康，并重获合法身份。劳拉和沃尔特结为伉俪。他们又回到利默瑞奇庄园和劳拉的叔叔交涉。他被迫承认劳拉是继承人。劳拉的叔叔死后，劳拉和沃尔特带着儿子又回到了庄园。从此过着美满幸福的生活。

## Preamble

This is the story of what a woman's patience can endure, and of what a Man's resolution can achieve.

If the machinery of the Law could be depended on to fathom every case of suspicion, and to conduct every process of inquiry, with moderate assistance only from the lubricating influences of oil of gold, the events which fill these pages might have claimed their share of the public attention in a Court of Justice.

But the Law is still, in certain inevitable cases, "the pre-engaged servant of the long purse; and the story is left to be told, for the first time, in this place. As the Judge might once have heard it, so the Reader shall hear it now. No circumstance of importance, from the beginning to the end of the disclosure, shall be related on hearsay evidence. When the writer of these introductory lines (Walter Hartright, by name) happens to be more closely connected than others with the incidents to be recorded, he will describe them in his own person. When his experience fails, he will retire from the position of narrator; and his task will be continued, from the point at which he has left it off, by other persons who can speak to the circumstances under notice from their own knowledge, just as clearly and positively as he has spoken before them.

Thus, the story here presented will be told by more than one pen, as the story of an offence against the laws is told in Court by more than one witness—with the same object, in both cases, to present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect; and to trace the course of one complete series of events, by making the persons who have been most closely connected with them, at each successive stage, relate their own experience, word for word.

Let Walter Hartright, teacher of drawing, aged twenty-eight years, be heard first.

## CHAPTER 1

### *The Narrative Walter Hartright, Of Clement's Inn, London*

#### I

It was the last day of July. The long hot summer was drawing to a close; and we, the weary pilgrims of the London pavement, were beginning to think of the cloud-shadows on the corn-fields, and the autumn breezes on the sea-shore.

For my own poor part, the fading summer left me out of health, out of spirits, and, if the truth must be told, out of money as well. During the past year, I had not managed my professional resources as carefully as usual and my extravagance now limited me to the prospect of spending the autumn economically between my mother's cottage at Hampstead, and my own chambers in town.

The evening, I remember, was still and cloudy; the London air was its heaviest; the distant hum of the street-traffic was at its faintest; the small pulse of the life within me and the great heart of the city around me seemed to be sinking in unison, languidly and more languidly, with the sinking sun. I roused myself from the book which I was dreaming over rather than reading, and left my chambers to meet the cool night air in the suburbs. It was one of the two evenings in every week which I was accustomed to spend with my mother and my sister. so I turned my steps northward, in the direction of Hampstead.

Events which I have yet to relate, make it necessary to mention in this place that my father had been dead some years at the period of which I am now writing; and that my sister Sarah, and I, were the sole survivors of a family of five children. My father was a drawing-master before me. His exertions had made him highly successful in his

profession; and his affectionate anxiety to provide for the future of those who were dependent on his labours, had impelled him, from the time of his marriage, to devote to the insuring of his life a much larger portion of his income than most men consider it necessary to set aside for that purpose. Thanks to his admirable prudence and self-denial, my mother and sister were left, after his death, as independent of the world as they had been during his lifetime. I succeeded to his connexion, and had every reason to feel grateful for the prospect that awaited me at my starting in life.

The quiet twilight was still trembling on the topmost ridges of the heath; and the view of London below me had sunk into a black gulf in the shadow of the cloudy night, when I stood before the gate of my mother's cottage. I had hardly rung the bell, before the house-door was opened violently; my worthy Italian friend, Professor Pesca, appeared in the servant's place; and darted out joyously to receive me, with a shrill foreign parody on an English cheer.

On his own account, and, I must be allowed to add, on mine also, the Professor merits the honour of a formal introduction. Accident has made him the starting-point of the strange family story which it is the purpose of these pages to unfold.

I had first become acquainted with my Italian friend by meeting him at certain great houses, where he taught his own language and I taught drawing. All I then knew of the history of his life was, that he had once held a situation in the university of Padua; that he had left Italy for political reasons (the nature of which he uniformly declined to mention to anyone); and that he had been for many years respectably established in London as a teacher of languages.

Without being actually a dwarf—for he was perfectly well proportioned from head to foot—Pesca was, I think, the smallest human being I ever saw, out of a show-room. Remarkable anywhere, by his personal appearance, he was still further distinguished among the rank and file of mankind, by the harmless eccentricity of his character. The ruling idea of his life appeared to be, that he was bound to show his gratitude to the country which had afforded him an asylum and a means of subsistence, by doing his utmost to turn himself into an Englishman. Not content with paying the nation in general the compliment of invariably carrying an umbrella, and invariably wearing gaiters and a white hat, the Professor further aspired to become an Englishman in his habits and amusements, as well as in his personal appearance. Finding us distinguished, as a nation, by our love of ath-

letic exercises, the little man, in the innocence of his heart, devoted himself impromptu to all our English sports and pastimes, whenever he had the opportunity of joining them; firmly persuaded that he could adopt our national amusements of the field, by an effort of will, precisely as he had adopted our national gaiters and our national white hat.

I had seen him risk his limbs at a fox-hunt and in a cricket-field; and, soon afterwards, I saw him risk his life, just as blindly, in the sea at Brighton. We had met there accidentally, and were bathing together. If we had been engaged in any exercise peculiar to my own nation, I should, Of course, have looked after Pesca carefully; but, as foreigners are generally quite as well able to take care of themselves in the water as Englishmen, it never occurred to me that the art of swimming might merely add one more to the list of manly exercises which the Professor believed that he could learn impromptu. soon after we had both struck out from shore, I stopped, finding my friend did not gain on me, and turned round to look for him. To my horror and amazement, I saw nothing between me and the beach but two little white arms, which struggled for an instant above the surface of the water, and then disappeared from view. When I dived for him, the poor little man was lying quietly coiled up at the bottom, in a hollow of shingle, looking by many degrees smaller than I had ever seen him look before. During the few minutes that elapsed while I was taking him in, the air revived him, and he ascended the steps of the machine with my assistance. With the partial recovery of his animation came the return of his wonderful delusion on the subject of swimming. As soon as his chattering teeth would let him speak, he smiled vacantly, and said he thought it must have been the Cramp.

When he had thoroughly recovered himself and had joined me on the beach, his warm Southern nature broke through all artificial English restraints, in a moment. He overwhelmed me with the wildest expressions of affection—exclaimed passionately, in his exaggerated Italian way, that he would hold his life, henceforth, at my disposal—and declared that he should never be happy again, until he had found an opportunity of proving his gratitude by rendering me some service which might remember, on my side, to the end of my days. I did my best to stop the torrent of his tears and protestations, by persisting in treating the whole adventure as a good subject for a joke; and succeeded at last, as I imagined, in lessening Pesca's overwhelming sense of obligation to me. Little did I think then—little did I think af-

terwards when our pleasant Brighton holiday had drawn to an end—that the opportunity of serving me for which my grateful companion so ardently longed, was soon to come; that he was eagerly to seize it on the instant; and that, by so doing, he was to turn the whole current of my existence into a new channel, and to alter me to myself almost past recognition.

Yet, so it was. If I had not dived for Professor Pesca, when he lay under water on his shingle bed, I should, in all human probability, never have been connected with the story which these pages will relate—I should never, perhaps, have heard even the name of the woman, who 'has lived in all my thoughts, 'who (has possessed herself of all my energies), who has become the one guiding influence that now directs the purpose of my life.

## II

Pesca's face and manner, on the evening when we confronted each other at my mother's gate, were more than sufficient to inform me that something extraordinary had happened. It was quite useless, however, to ask him for an immediate explanation. I could only conjecture, while he was dragging me in by both hands, that (knowing my habits) he had come to the cottage to make sure of meeting me that night, and that he had some news to tell of an unusually agreeable kind.

We both bounced into the parlour in a highly abrupt and undignified manner. My mother sat by the open window, laughing and fanning herself. Pesca was one of her especial favourites; and his wildest eccentricities were always pardonable in her eyes. Poor dear soul! from the first moment when she found out that the little Professor was deeply and gratefully attached to her son, she opened her heart to him unreservedly, and took all his puzzling foreign peculiarities for granted, without so much as attempting to understand any one of them.

My sister Sarah, with all the advantages of youth, was, strangely enough, less pliable. she did full justice to Pesca's excellent qualities of heart; but she could not accept him implicitly, as my mother accepted him, for my sake. 'Her insular notions of propriety rose in perpetual revolt against Pesca's constitutional contempt for appearances; and she was always more or less undisguisedly astonished at her mother's familiarity with the eccentric little foreigner. I have observed, not only in my sister's case, but in the instances of others,

that we of the young generation are nothing like so hearty and so impulsive as some of our elders. I constantly see old people flushed and excited by the prospect of some anticipated pleasure which altogether fails to ruffle the tranquillity of their serene grandchildren. Are we, I wonder, quite such genuine boys and girls now as our seniors were, in their time? Has the great advance in education taken rather too long a stride; and are we, in these modern days just the least trifle in the world too well brought up?

Without attempting to answer those questions decisively, I may at least record that I never saw my mother and my sister together in Pesca's society, without finding my mother much the younger woman of the two. On this occasion, for example, while the old lady was laughing heartily over the boyish manner in which we tumbled into the parlour, Sarah was perturbedly picking up the broken pieces of a teacup, which the Professor had knocked off the table in his precipitate advance to meet me at the door.

"I don't know what would have happened, Walter," said my mother, "if you had delayed much longer. Pesca has been half-mad with impatience; and I have been half-mad with curiosity. The Professor has brought some wonderful news with him, in which he says you are concerned; and he had cruelly refused to give us the smallest hint of it till his friend Walter appeared."

"Very provoking; it spoils the set," murmured Sarah to herself, mournfully absorbed over the ruins of the broken cup.

While these words were being spoken, Pesca, happily and fussily unconscious of the irreparable wrong which the crockery had suffered at his hands, was dragging a large arm-chair to the opposite end of the room, so as to command us all three, in the character of a public speaker addressing an audience. Having turned the chair with its back towards us, he jumped into it on his knees, and excitably addressed his small congregation of three from an impromptu pulpit.

"Now, my good dears," began Pesca (who always said "good dear," when he meant "worthy friends"), "listen to me. The time has come—I recite my good news—I speak at last."

"Hear, hear!" said my mother, humouring the joke.

"The next thing he will break, mamma," whispered Sarah, "Will be the back of the best arm-chair."

"I go back into my life, and I address myself to the noblest of created beings," continued Pesca, vehemently apostrophising my unworthy self, over the top rail of the chair. "Who found me dead at the



bottom of the sea (through Cramp); and who pulled me up to the top; and what did I say when I got into my own life and my own clothes again?"

"Much more than was at all necessary," I answered, as doggedly as possible for the least encouragement in connexion with this subject invariably let loose the Professor's emotions in a flood of tears.

"I said," persisted Pesca. "that my life belonged to my dear friend, Walter for the rest of my days—and so it does. I said that I should never be happy again till I had found the opportunity of doing a good something for Walter—and I have never been contented with myself till this most blessed day. Now," cried the enthusiastic little man at the top of his voice. "the overflowing happiness bursts out of me at every pore of my skin like a perspiration; for on my faith, and soul, and honour, the something is done at last. and the only word to say now, is—Right-all-right!"

✓ It may be necessary to explain, here, that Pesca prided himself on being a perfect Englishman in his language, as well as in his dress, manners, and amusements. Having picked up a few of our most familiar colloquial expressions, he scattered them about over his conversation whenever they happened to occur to him, turning them, in his high relish for their sound and his general ignorance of their sense, into compound words and repetitions of his own, and always running them into each other, as if they consisted of one long syllable.

"Among the fine London houses where I teach the language of my native country," said the Professor, rushing into his long-deferred explanation without another word of preface, "there is one, mighty fine, in the big place called Portland. You all know where that is? Yes, yes—course-of-course. The fine house, my good dears, has got inside it a fine family. A Mamma fair and fat; three young Misses, fair and fat; two young Misters, fair and fat; and a Papa, the fairest and the fattest of all, who is a mighty merchant, up to his eyes in gold—a fine man once, but seeing that he has got a naked head and two chins, fine no longer at the present time. Now mind! I teach the sublime *Dante* to the young Misses, and ah! my-soul-bless-my-soul! —it is not in human language to say how the sublime *Dante* puzzles the pretty heads of all three! No matter—all in good time—and the more lessons the better for me. Now mind! Imagine to yourselves that I am teaching the Young Misses to-day, as usual. we are all four of us down together in *the Hell of Dante*. At the Seventh Circle—but no matter for that; all the Circles are alike to the three