

THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

Written by

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Based on the novel by Edith Wharton

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INT. ARCHER HOME - EVENING

A crackling fire and the ticking of a clock echo in a cozy room as a man buttons up his evening shirt. Cufflinks, tie shoes. He runs a monogrammed brush through his hair.

The clock on the mantle STRIKES. The man nods to himself in the mirror and exits the room with a self-possessed calm.

In the hallway he passes a well-decorated yet conservative, victorian room and nods to the two women sitting inside. They smile.

At the front door he breaks off a gardenia bud and puts it his suit pocket. Checking himself in the mirror with tranquil satisfaction he walks out the door.

EXT. ARCHER HOUSE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The man enters and sits in an awaiting carriage. He takes out a small book from his pocket which he attempts to read in the passing light, but decides to watch the passing view. The SOUND of horse hooves clack on the street.

EXT. OPERA - NIGHT

The man exits the carriage and walks through the crowds, past people in furs, past gentlemen walking with glossy canes. The usher at the door nods to him with a "Mr. Newland" as he enters. The plush red carpet makes a cushioning sound beneath his steps. He walks up a flight of stairs to a heavy black curtain which he pushes back, and is greeted by the lilting chords of the Faust Opera's *Il m'aime*. Settling into an empty seat he nods to LAWRENCE LEFFERTS, a thin, middle-aged man with a regal air, and SILLERTON JACKSON, a man in his 30s with jet black hair and an radar for gossip.

He sits and raises his opera glasses. The stage strewn with flowers. In the box directly across the way MAY WELLAND, an athletic girl in her early 20s with an air of freshness, sits with a large bouquet of lilies of the valley lying in her lap. She looks up at Mr. Newland - the man watching her, with a coy smile. He puts the opera glasses down and smiles to himself with self-satisfaction.

LAWRENCE LEFFERTS

Well upon my soul.
(also looking across the
way)

The men's eyes turn towards May Welland's box. A woman in her early 30's wearing a stunning blue velvet dress enters the box, hugs May, and sits next to her.

LAWRENCE LEFFERTS (CONT'D)
 (snorts) I didn't know the Mingotts had it in them.

SILLERTON JACKSON
 What just happened?

LAWRENCE LEFFERTS
 That's Ellen Olenska (nodding to Ellen), May's cousin. She has decided to divorce her husband.

YOUNG MAN
 He's an awful brute from what I heard.
 (From behind the men)

LAWRENCE LEFFERTS
 The very worst. I knew him at Nice, a white sneering fellow. Rather handsome, has blue eyes with too many lashes. (disgusted) Well, I'll tell you the sort. When he wasn't with women he was collecting china. Paying any price for both, I understand. He was also known to have a temper.

MONTAGE

Olenski's hand slaps Ellen Olenska across the face

END MONTAGE

As he says this, Countess Ellen Olenska leans forward to watch the opera exposing most of her uncovered chest.

Newland puts his glasses down through pursed lips and averts his eyes, glances to Lefferts.

INT. OPERA RECEPTION AREA - NIGHT

Passing acquaintances greet Lefferts, Jackson, and Newland with nods as they wait for the Mingotts. When May and her Mother MRS. WELLAND, a tall, thin woman with all the graces of a woman who knows her place in the world, finally come down the stairs, Ellen Olenska follows close behind. Lefferts leans over to Sillerton for the gossip. Newland shoots them a glaring look but Sillerton returns a sly smile.

LAWRENCE LEFFERTS
 She bolted with her husband's
 secretary.

SILLERTON JACKSON
 Oh, I see.

LAWRENCE LEFFERTS
 It didn't last long, though. I
 heard she was living alone in
 Venice when Lovell Mingott went out
 to get her. He said she was
 desperately unhappy, but this
 parading at the opera is another
 thing.

Newland turns to watch May descend the stairs. She's like a
 statue of a young, flowering Athena, . Something glitters and
 catches his eye. It's Ellen's necklace. He looks at Ellen,
 trying to remember a memory. Shaking himself out of his
 reverie and offers May his hand and kisses hers as she
 approaches.

MAY WELLAND
 Hello Newland.

MRS. WELLAND
 Well, Well Newland, a pleasure. I
 see you've captivated May as
 usual(large smile). Lefferts,
 Sillerton (nodding).

Lefferts and Sillerton clear their throats and they join the
 small group.

MRS. WELLAND (CONT'D)
 This is my niece Countess Olenska,
 this is Newland Archer, May's beau,
 Lawrence Lefferts and Sillerton
 Jackson. Newland, I believe you two
 know each other.

Newland looks up.

FLASHBACK:

A montage of a small girl smiling and laughing at the camera.

END FLASHBACK.

NEWLAND ARCHER
 (Realization) Yes, I know her.(to
 May) I hope you've told Madame
 Olenska that we're engaged.
 (MORE)

NEWLAND ARCHER (CONT'D)

I want to announce it this evening
at the Beaufort ball.

MAY WELLAND

If you can persuade mama. I thought
you were going to wait.

Newland looks lovingly into May Welland's eyes. The nearness
of their wedding spreads a smile across his face.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

You should tell my cousin, I give
you leave. She says she used to
play with you when you were
children.

Ellen overhears and joins.

ELLEN OLENSKA

We did used to play together,
didn't we?

FLASHBACK:

Two children's hands holding each other

END FLASHBACK

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

You were a horrible boy and kissed
me once behind a door.

(laughs)

But it was your cousin Vandie
Newland, that I was in love with.
Ah, how this brings it all back to
me. I see everybody here in
knickerbockers and pantalettes.

The three look around to see a theater goer wearing an odd
hat, another wearing strange colored knickerbockers.

NEWLAND ARCHER

Yes, (cough) you have been away for
very long.

Ellen catches Newland's gaze and smiles back innocently.

ELLEN OLENSKA

So long, I'm sure I'm dead and
buried and this old place is
heaven.

MAY WELLAND

Oh look, Mama is ready to leave.
(to Newland) I will see you at the
Beaufort ball?

NEWLAND ARCHER

Yes.

He kisses May's hand sending her into a blush. Ellen smiles
goodbye with a wave.

EXT. THE BEAUFORT HOUSE BALL - NIGHT

GUESTS are arriving at the ball when Newland exits the
glossy, black coupe parked in front of the Beaufort house.
The slight strains of MUSIC can be heard from the street. The
air is filled with champagne bubbles of excitement.

INT. THE BEAUFORT HOUSE BALL - NIGHT

Music floats through the rooms as Newland passes ball goers
dressed expensively in sleek shoes, ruffles, feathers,
broaches, flowers, hats, and tails. A few people nod to
Newland as he passes by.

At the doorway of the ballroom he stops and takes in the
merriment. Champagne sparkling in crystal glasses exchanges
hands. He spots May amongst a group of ladies. She's still
smiling and holding the bouquet of lilies as the ladies
around her squeal in delight. He walks up to her and asks for
a dance. They move to the dance floor and take their places.

NEWLAND ARCHER

Now we have a chance to talk.

They dance and stare lovingly into eachother's eyes. After a
couple of dances, he leads them to the conservatory

INT. CONSERVATORY - NIGHT

Newland looks around, walking into the decadently decorated
conservatory hand-in-hand with May.

MAY WELLAND

I've shared our engagement with
Lorie and Violet and the ladies.
(beaming)

NEWLAND ARCHER

I'm so glad. It couldn't wait. Only I wish it hadn't had to be at a ball. I would have preferred if we had been alone to ask you.

MAY WELLAND

Yes, I know. But after all, even here we're alone together aren't we?

NEWLAND

Always.

He strokes her cheek and leans in to her, kissing her softly. He leads them to a sofa. They are blissfully in a heaven all their own.

MAY WELLAND

Did you tell my cousin, Countess Ellen Olenska?

NEWLAND

(Shaken from his heaven) No, I hadn't the chance.

MAY WELLAND

Ah. You must then, for I didn't either, and I shouldn't like her to think she's being left out.

NEWLAND

Of course not.
(strokes her cheek)
But wouldn't you like to do it?

MAY WELLAND

She's one of the family and she's been away for so long that she's rather sensitive. I think you must explain that I'd asked you to tell her at the opera before speaking about it to everybody here.

NEWLAND

Sweet angel, of course I will tell her. Is she here?

MAY WELLAND

No, at the last minute she decided not to come. She decided that her dress wasn't smart enough for the ball.

They look at each other and laugh. Newland kisses her on the lips.

NEWLAND

Hmm...well my Angel, I will find the time to tell her. Tomorrow we shall call upon your grandmother and mother. We shall make this official.

They return to the dance floor.

EXT. NEXT DAY

Montage of Newland getting ready, picking up May and her mother, and driving to Granny Mingott's house.

INT. GRANNY MINGOTT'S FAMILY ROOM - DAY

GRANNY MINGOTT, MRS. WELLAND, May and Newland sit around a quaint day room. Granny Mingott, a sharp, happy woman in her 70's with a permanent smile occupies the largest seat in the house since over the years her love for cakes and tarts had known no bounds. She wears what she loves, often stacking rings on her plump fingers, and gold around her soft neck.

GRANNY MINGOTT

Well, well, well my loves.
(takes up tea cake)
I must say my delight in this news is not to come off as a surprise.

Newland and May Welland smile apprehensively while they wait for a reaction. Granny signals to the SERVANT who comes over and hands her a small box with a ring. She shoos him over to Newland. Newland and May Welland look at each other as he accepts the box and opens it, extracting from its interior a stunning sapphire ring. Mrs. Welland gasps.

MRS. WELLAND

It's the new setting. Oh! It shows the stone beautifully! But it looks a little bare to old fashioned eyes.

GRANNY MINGOTT

Old fashioned eyes? (snorts)
I hope you don't mean me, my dear.
I like all the new things.

She signals for the ring and studies it close to the eye.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)

Very handsome. In my time a cameo set in pearls was thought sufficient. But it's the hand that sets off the ring, isn't it my Dear Archer. (looking at her own hand) Mine was modeled in Rome by the great Ferrigiani. You should have May's done--no doubt he'll have it done, my child.

Picks up May's hands and studies it. Mrs. Welland picks up the other.

MRS. WELLAND

Her hand is large because of the archery--it's these modern sports that spread the joints, but the skin is white.

Newland and May look at each other awkwardly.

GRANNY MINGOTT

(leans forward) And when will the wedding be?

NEWLAND

As soon as ever it can, if only you'll back me up, Mrs. Mingott.

MRS. WELLAND

We must give them time to get to know each other a little better, Mamma.

GRANNY MINGOTT

Fiddleticks! Know each other? Everybody in New York has always known everybody. Let the young man have his way. My dear, don't wait till the bubbles are off the champagne. Marry them before lent.

Joy floods into the room with smiles.

I may catch pneumonia any winter now. And I want to give the wedding breakfast. (threatening)

May exclaims and jumps up, hugging her. Newland and Mrs. Welland start to get up when Countess Ellen Olenska enters the room with JULIUS BEAUFORT.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)
Beaufort!

She holds out her hand.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)
This is a rare favor!

JULIUS BEAUFORT
Thanks. I wish it might happen
oftener.
(barely hidden arrogance)
I'm generally so tied down; but I
met the Countess Ellen in Madison
Square and she was good enough to
let me walk home with her.

GRANNY MINGOTT
Ah! This house is happier now that
Ellen's here! Sit down, sit down
Beaufort, push up the yellow arm
chair! Ah, now that I've got you I
want a good gossip. I hear your
ball was magnificent and I
understand you invited Mrs.
Lemuel Struthers? Well, I've a
curiosity to see that woman myself.

Newland, May Welland, and Mrs. Welland bow themselves out of
the room and walk into the hall to leave.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)
Of course you and Regina invite
her, it's settled. We need new
blood and new money. I hear she's
still very good looking. (cackles)

INT. GRANNY MINGOTT'S RECEPTION ROOM

The Wellands, and Newland put on their furs while Countess
Ellen Olenska watches.

NEWLAND
Of course you already know about
May and me. She scolded me for not
giving you the news at the opera
last night. I had other orders to
tell you we were engaged, but I
couldn't in that crowd.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
(smiling)
Of course I know, yes.
(MORE)

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

And I'm so glad. But one doesn't
tell such things in a crowd.

She kisses May goodbye. The three make their way out the door.

INT. CARRIAGE - MINUTES LATER

MRS. WELLAND

I dare say, Ellen is making a mistake by being seen parading Fifth Avenue at these hours with Julius Beaufort. And she ought to know that a man who's just engaged doesn't spend his time calling on married women. But I daresay in the set she's lived in, they do-they never do anything else.

(pause)

I'm so glad Mama received us.
Alone.

Newland and May glance to one another.

INT. ARCHER FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Domesticity is in full swing as JANEY ARCHER, Newland's hyper-romantic, 29 year-old spinster sister, waters her ferns. MRS. ADELINE ARCHER, Newland's doting and caring mother, works on lace and wool embroidery; and Newland reads. THE MAID is carefully dusting the statuettes and frames that got the room. The clock on the mantle in the room TICKS softly. The doorbell RINGS downstairs.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Would you get the door, Mrs. Wheeler? That should be Mister Jackson. I'll go make sure that lunch is ready.

She gets up.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)

What are you reading, Newland?

NEWLAND

Dickens.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

(sighs)

Oh goodness, why can't you read something nice like Thackeray or Bulwer? Dickens couldn't write a gentleman if he saw one on the street.

Newland looks up at his mother with a slight smile on his lips. He sets his book down.

NEWLAND

Come Janey, let us lunch. Mr. Jackson is here.

INT. ARCHER DINING ROOM - DAY

Mr. Sillerton Jackson, Newland, Janey, and Mrs. Adeline Archer enjoy a lunch as mild as the conversation.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

It's a pity the Beauforts asked Leumel Struthers to attend the ball, but then Regina always does what Julius asks of her.

SILLERTON JACKSON

Certain nuances escape Beaufort.
(poking at his burnt food item)

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Beaufort is a vulgar man. My grandfather Newland always used to say to my mother, "Whatever you do, don't let that fellow Beaufort be introduced to the girls."

She glances at Janey who is engrossed in the conversation and wants to know what that means, but Mrs. Archer looks back at Sillerton Jackson and changes the subject.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)

But this, Mrs. Struthers...

Mrs. Archer passes the cucumbers along to Sillerton. He accepts the plate of cucumbers with a barely visible disbelief, and regretfully puts them on his on plate.

SILLERTON JACKSON

Lemuel Struthers came along and saved her—took her out of the pit—put her face on the shoe-polish posters, and, well, he e-ven-tually married her.

He eyes the wilted cucumbers on his plate suspiciously.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Oh well, at the pass we've come nowadays, it doesn't matter.

Sillerton Jackson receives a floppy fish fillet from a mournful BUTLER who looks as skeptical about it as Jackson. Mrs. Archer slides into the next segment of the conversation with a very well-hidden interest.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)

And Newland's cousin-Countess Olenska?

She takes small bites of her food.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)

Was she at the ball as well? (well-feigned disinterest)

Sillerton rejects the mushroom sauce after getting a whiff of it from the Butler. He leans back in his chair, takes a breath, and gives a faint smile.

SILLERTON JACKSON

No, she was not at the ball.

JANEY

Perhaps the Beauforts don't know her? (attempt at snobbery).

SILLERTON JACKSON

Mrs. Beaufort may not—but Beaufort certainly does, for she was seen walking up Fifth Avenue this afternoon with him but the whole of New York!

Mrs. Adeline Archer and Janey drop their forks and gasp. Newland shoots Jackson a look of disgust.

JANEY

I wonder if she wore a round hat or a bonnet in the afternoon.

(MORE)

JANEY (CONT'D)

At the opera I knew she had on dark blue velvet, perfectly plain and flat like a nightgown.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

(feigning surprise and trying to look audacious)

Janey! My word! At any rate, it was in better taste not to go to the ball.

NEWLAND

I don't think it was a question of taste with her. May Welland said she meant to go, and then decided that the dress in question wasn't smart enough.

Mrs. Archer looks at Newland and nods compassionately, changing her tone.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Poor Countess Ellen Olenska. (sigh)

We must always bear in mind what an eccentric bring-up Medora Manson gave her.

JANEY

It's strange that she should have kept such an ugly name as Ellen. I should have changed it to Elaine.

Janey looks around the table to see the effect her words have had. Newland snorts.

NEWLAND

Why Elaine?

JANEY

Oh I don't know...Ellen sounds more conspicuous; and that can hardly be what she wishes.

NEWLAND

(laughing)

Why not? Why shouldn't she be conspicuous if she so chooses? She had the bad luck to make a wretched marriage, but I don't see that that's a reason for hiding her head.

SILLERTON JACKSON
That, I suppose, is the line the
Mingotts mean to take.

JANEY
I hear she means to get a divorce!

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER
There are rumors.

Sillerton Jackson looks over his shoulder to the butler.

SILLERTON JACKSON
Perhaps that sauce...just a little,
after all-

NEWLAND
I hope she will!

Everything falls silent. The clock TICKS. Sillerton Jackson
clears his throat. Mrs. Archer's eyebrows raise. Newland
coughs, picks up his fork.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

After lunch Sillerton Jackson and Newland Archer are sitting
and enjoying their after-luncheon smoke.

NEWLAND
Who has the right to make over her
life if she hadn't?
(pause)
I'm sick of the hypocrisy that
would bury a woman alive of her age
if her husband prefers to live with
harlots.

Sillerton Jackson merely raises and eyebrow and continues his
smoke

NEWLAND (CONT'D)
Women ought to be free-as free as
we are.

There's a pregnant pause. He isn't sure if he ever thought
this before, but now that he's said it, he can't go back. It
just makes so much sense. Sillerton stretches his ankles
nearer the fire and takes a breath.

SILLERTON JACKSON
Well, apparently Count Olenski
takes your view;
(MORE)

SILLERTON JACKSON (CONT'D)

for I never heard of his having
lifted a finger to get his wife
back.

INT. ARCHER HOUSE AND FRONT DOOR - LATE AFTERNOON

Newland walks Sillerton Jackson to the front door. As he's walking back upstairs, he waves to his mother and Janey as he walks past their room.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

The fire is stoked in the library emitting a cozy and inviting warmth. Newland collapses into the arm chair, picks up a box on the table, examines it, and sets it down again with a bored exhale.

He looks at the framed picture of May Welland on the table and smiles. He lightly touches it and motions to pick it up.

FLASHBACK:

INT. FLASHBACK OF OPERA - NIGHT

May Welland holds the white lilies with a smile.

INT. FLASHBACK OF THE BEAUFORT HOUSE - NIGHT

May Welland smiles at the ball.

INT. FLASHBACK OF OPERA RECEPTION AREA - NIGHT

May coming down the Opera stairs to greet Newland. Suddenly Countess Ellen Olenska emerges from behind May, glowing.

END FLASHBACK.

Newland's smile fades. He gets ready for bed.

INT. ARCHER DINING ROOM - MORNING

Newland reads the newspaper while Mrs. Archer and Janey are whispering to each other about the latest juicy gossip. There is a KNOCK at the door and a few seconds later a SERVANT comes in with a letter and gives it to Mrs. Archer. As she reads it her mouth hangs open.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Oh, it's an invitation from the Lovell-Mingotts to a formal dinner...to meet The-Countess-Olenska. (pause)

Mrs. Archer looks up wide-eyed. Newland raises his head slowly. A look of incredulity washes over Janey's face as she looks around in disbelief.

JANEY

Well!

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Well...we shall send over our acceptance today.

She looks shocked. Janey grabs the invitation from her mother's hand and reads. Newland continues reading his newspaper, unbothered.

INT. ARCHER FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Newland is unboxing the latest package from his bookseller in London. He hears an approaching SHUFFLING from outside his door. He hunches down in the chair and brings a book up closer to his face. Mrs. Archer walks in.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Oh Newland, how was your day?

NEWLAND

Hello Mumma. (through clenched teeth). It was to be expected. (looks up with a forced smile)

Mrs. Archer approaches Newland and kisses him on the forehead. She begins to exit the room but turns around.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Wonderful. Oh! You'll never guess about the poor Lovell-Mingotts. They've been refused! Everyone except for the Beauforts and Mr. Jackson have declined their invitation for the dinner for Countess Olenska! (pause) Well...what did they expect?

Newland lays his book down.

NEWLAND

Are you serious, Mother? Is poor
Countess Olenska that deplorable?

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

(Chuckling)

Noooo, of course not, Newland.
But she IS rather European. AND not
to mention she IS separated from
her husband.

NEWLAND

Mother, she is May Welland's
cousin. I will not have a relation
of May's- especially one that has
done nothing wrong, treated thusly.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

I know.

(sighs)

But what is to be done?

Mrs. Adeline Archer takes a step towards the door.

NEWLAND

Can't you persuade someone about
this? This is atrocious and a snub
to Ellen is a snub to Us.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

I know; I'll go talk to Louisa van
Der Luyden. Maybe she can help.
Louisa van der Luyden is fond of
you, I wish you to go come with me;
and of course it's on the account
of dear May that I'm taking this
step and also because if we don't
all stand together, there'll be no
such thing as society left!

(excited)

She exits the room in a huff.

EXT. VAN DER LYUNDEN'S FRONT DOOR

Newland and his mother are helped out of their carriage and
stand looking up at the massive mosoluem that is the Van der
Luyden's house.

INT. VAN DER LYRUNDEN'S RECEPTION ROOM - DAY

The Van der Luyden's and the Archers sit facing each other in a massive reception room sparsely decorated with statuettes and art. Where the Archer home is warm and inviting, the Van der Luyden mansion is like a museum, cold and painstakingly preserved. The Archer's display books and art. The Van der Luyden's reflect the opposite: everything has a place and everything is categorized. Almost as if things need to ask permission to exist within the walls.

Silence.

Archer and his mother wait with baited breath. They have just finished telling the Lovell-Mingott dinner story to MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN.

MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN

(pause)

I think I should like Henry to hear what you have told me.

The FOOTMAN is called over.

MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN (CONT'D)

(lowered voice)

If Mr. Van der Luyden has finished reading the newspaper, please ask him to be kind enough to come.

(to the Archers)

Henry always enjoys seeing you, dear Adeline; and he will wish to congratulate Newland.

(smiles)

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN enters, as a pope returning from reading the lost books of Jerusalem. He looks so much like Mrs. Van der Luyden, not only in appearance - tall and sharp - but in manner and facial expression that they could be mistaken for twins. The gentle coldness and precision of the energy in the room gets all the more concentrated when he enters and sits next to his wife. They even wear the same toned clothing: humble and minimal.

As Mr. Van der Luyden comes in he congratulates Archer in a cousinly fashion. He sits down next to his wife.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN

I had just finished reading The Times.

(MORE)

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN (CONT'D)

In town my mornings are so much more occupied that I find it more convenient to read the newspapers after luncheon.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Ah, there's a great deal to be said for that plan--indeed I think my Uncle Egmont used to say that he found it less agitating not to read the morning papers till after dinner.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN

Yes; my father abhorred hurry.
(pause) But now we live in a constant rush.

He sighs and looks around. The clock TICKS lightly somewhere in the room. Mrs. Archer shifts in her chair and adjusts her dress. A DOG BARKS somewhere outside.

MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN

But I hope you finished your reading, Henry? (very concerned)

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN

Quite, quite.

He pats her hand, smiling.

MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN

Then I should like Adeline to tell you.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Oh, it's really Newland's story.

She smiles and turns to Newland. Newland looks at his mother confused. Wasn't she the one who was going to tell the story? He takes a breath and turns to the Van der Luydens.

NEWLAND

Well--

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

(interrupting)
-The Lovell-Mingotts are hosting a dinner in honor of the Mrs. Ellen Olenska, but they have been snubbed!

Newland shoots her a look.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)

...Of course, Augusta Welland and Mary Mingott both felt that, especially in view of Newland's engagement, you and Henry ought to know.

Silence. The clock TICKS again somewhere off in the distance. A MAID passes through the room with tea. Mrs. Archer tries to keep from looking anxious, as a lady shouldn't look anxious, but she cannot stop herself from literally being on the edge of her seat.

Newland, on the other hand, is completely relaxed and at ease after the diatribe. Mr. and Mrs. Van der Luyden look at each other thinking. Mr. Van der Luyden finally speaks.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN

(to Newland)

You really think this is due to some-intentional interference? Of Lawrence Lefferts, you say? How so?

NEWLAND

I'm certain of it, sir. Larry has been having an affair with the postmaster's wife in their neighborhood...or something of that sort.

Whenever poor Gertude Lefferts begins to suspect anything and he's afraid of trouble, he makes a show of awfully moral he is-and talks about not wanting his wife to meet people he considers immoral. He's simply using Madame Olenska as a scape-goat; I've seen him try the same thing before.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN

(incredulous)

The Leffertses?

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

The Leffertses! What would our Uncle Egemont have said of Lawrence Lefferts's pronouncing on anybody's social position? It shows what society has come to!

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN

(affronted)

We'll hope it has not quite come to that.

(MORE)

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN (CONT'D)

I had no idea that things had come to such a pass.

(small pause)

Have you read this morning's Times, Newland?

NEWLAND

Why, yes sir.

He sits up straighter with a serious consultation. A clock TICKS somewhere in the background.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN

Please tell Mrs. Lovell-Mongott that we would be happy to fill the places of the Lefferts at her dinner if only Louisa's health allowed for it...

(pauses)

He looks at Louisa.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN (CONT'D)

...Unfortunately we cannot go. But Newland tells me that he has read this morning's Times therefore he has probably seen that Louisa's relative, the Duke of St. Austrey, arrives next week on the International Cup Sailing Race. (increasing benevolence) Before taking him down to Maryland we are inviting a few friends to meet him here-only a little dinner with a reception afterward. I am sure Lousia will be as glad as I am if Countess Olenska will let us include her among our guests.

MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN

(also standing)

I will leave the invitation myself when I go out.

MR. VAN DERE LUYDEN

Well I'm glad that's sorted out. If you'll excuse me I must finish the paper.

He gets up, bows his body towards his cousins.

Mrs. Adeline Archer gets up and gives her heartfelt thanks.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN

There is nothing to thank me for, dear Adeline; nothing whatever. This kind of thing must not happen in New York.

(serious)

It shall not as long as I can help it.

Mr. Van der Luyden steers his cousins to the door.

EXT. VAN DER LUYDEN'S FRONT DOOR - LATER

The footman opens the front door as Mr. Van der Luyden approaches. Mrs. Archer and Newland find themselves outside on the top step with the door shut behind them.

Adeline looks at Newland, exhales, and kisses him on the head with a squeal. Together they walk to the carriage.

MONTAGE:

INT. VAN DER LUYDEN'S STUDY - MORNING

Louisa van der Luyden writes out the invitations on gold leaf monogram.

EXT. CARRIAGE TO VARIOUS HOUSES - DAY

The letters are sent out via carriage to their respective INVITEES. Front doors open and close as they receive the invitations.

EXT. LEFFERT'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

Leffert's door opens and the invitation is received from a bowing BUTLER.

INT. LEFFERT'S STUDY - DAY

Lefferts opens the invitation and looks up shocked. The Mrs. Lefferts enters asking what it is.

MONTAGE END.

INT. VAN DER LUYDEN PARLOR - EVENING

A very well-dressed Newland, Van der Luydens, Leffertses, The Duke and a group of SOLEMN GUESTS gather in the waiting room. They guests are all ridiculously dressed up with jewels, ostrich feathers, lace, gloves, and lipstick, and are impatiently awaiting dinner. A clock is TICKING somewhere off in the distance; there is murmuring here and there as they quell their stomachs with small talk.

The scene is so very morose, one would think it were a fancy funeral, until Countess Ellen Olenska walks in. She strides in with an alien confidence, one glove off and fastening her bracelet and half-smiling. She leaves the air lit with an electric charge. She's absolutely radiant.

She looks about her, notices Newland, and smiles. Countess Ellen Olenska approaches Newland like a streaking comet across the sky.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Newland! It's so good to see you.

She holds out hands to his. Lefferts, who is seated next to Newland, coughs and looks away.

NEWLAND

Good to see you Ellen.

Newland reaches out his hands to take hers, but as he does a BUTLER comes in and announces the start of dinner.

INT. VAN DER LUYNDEN'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The guests are gathered around a lavishly laid table. Meats, vegetables, stews and truffles overflow from their serving dishes at the center of the table. Steam rises up from the cavernous mounds of vegetables and meats. Newland chats with his neighbor, MR. URBAN DAGONET OF WASHINGTON, a mild and anxious hypochondriac of a man.

Newland looks around the table taking in the various guests, mainly older, and their ostentatious finery. Then his eyes settle on Ellen. She's dressed more simply, with less makeup, and wearing simple earrings. He contemplates the minimalism.

MR. URBAN DAGONET

(leaning over)

Though I usually don't dine out between the months of January and April, I so wanted to meet our European resident, the mysterious Countess Olenska.

Newland nods.

NEWLAND

She is quite mysterious.
(smiling)

MR. URBAN DAGONET

I do say, of all the dinners I've enjoyed over the years, the Mr. and Mrs. Van der Luyden have never had a soggy asparagus in sight. A marvel.

NEWLAND ARCHER

(nods)
Yes, Mr. Dagonet.

Mr. Urban Dagonet begins speaking with his other neighbor, Mrs. Van der Lyuden. Newland looks at Ellen one more time.

At the end of dinner everyone stands and moves to the drawing room.

INT. VAN DER LYUNDEN'S DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

The Duke leaves a very confused Mr. and Mrs. Van der Luyden and Mr. Dagonet in the dust to chat with Madame Olenska as they all had plans to chat with one of the two guests. Newland moves to the other end of the room to relax.

After a while, Ellen stands and moves away from her conversation with The Duke. A cold wind blows through the guests as they hold their breaths at the audacity of a younger woman with a lesser title leaving the side of the Duke. Ellen's heels CLICK across the floor and stop before Newland. Newland looks up to see her approaching and smiles as she sits down beside him on the settee.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

I want you to talk to me about May.

She smiles openly. Newland looks towards the Duke.

NEWLAND

You knew the Duke before?

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Oh yes—we used to see him every winter at Nice. He's very fond of gambling. He used to come to the house a great deal.

(pause)

(MORE)

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

I think he's the dullest man I ever met.

They laugh.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

May is a darling! I've seen no young girl in New York so handsome and so intelligent. Are you very much in love with her?

NEWLAND

(laughs)

As much as a man can be.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Do you think then, that there is a limit?

NEWLAND

To being in love? If there is I haven't found it!

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

(glowing)

Ah! It's really and truly a romance?

NEWLAND

The most romantic of romances!

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

How delightful! And you found it all out for yourselves—it was not in the least arranged for you?

NEWLAND

(taken aback) Have you forgotten, that in our country we don't allow our marriages to be arranged for us?

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

(deeply blushes)

Yes, I'd forgotten. You must forgive me if I sometimes make these mistakes. I don't always remember how things are done so easily here.

She looks down at her Viennese fan of eagle feathers. Newland notices that her lips are trembling. He reaches out to touch her, but stops.

NEWLAND

I'm so sorry, but you are among
friends here, you know.

Ellen continues to look down.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Yes, I know.

She inhales and collects herself.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

Wherever I go I have that feeling.
That's why I came home, I want to
forget everything else and become
an American again like the Mingotts
and Wellands, and you and your
delightful mother...

(lightly touches his hand
with her fan)

...and all the other good people
here tonight.

She looks around. Newland studies her.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

Ah, here's May arriving! You will
want to hurry away to her.

She looks at Newland and smiles, her eyes resting on his
face. Newland returns the glance.

May Welland enters the room dressed in a silver and white
dress with a wreath of silver blossoms in her hair, looking
like a painting of Athena come to life. A few people come
towards her, including the Duke, asking for a word.

NEWLAND

I have so many rivals. She's
already surrounded. Even the Duke
came to chat.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

(cute whisper)

Then stay with me a little longer.

She lightly touches his knee with her fan playfully. Newland
feels a thrill at that second touch. He's not sure why.

NEWLAND

Of course.

(laughing)

Mr. Van der Luyden approaches Ellen and Newland, followed by Mr. Urban Dagonet and the Leffertses. Countess Ellen Olenska greets them with a smile. Mr. Van der Luyden looks at Newland sternly. After a few seconds Newland jumps up quickly and gives his seat to the men. As he starts to walk away Ellen holds out her hand to him.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Tomorrow then, after five, come
visit—I shall expect you.

She turns back to Mr. Dagonet and continues talking with him. Newland gives a quizzical nod and walks away.

LEFFERT'S WIFE approaches Ellen.

LEFFERT'S WIFE

I think we used to go to dancing
school together when we were
children.

Newland passes a long line of PEOPLE queued up to meet Countess Ellen Olenska They are the same people who declined to attend the party in her honor at the Lovell-Mingotts. He feels a touch on his arm. He turns to see a smiling Mrs. Van der Luyden.

MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN

It's good of you, dear Newland, to
devote yourself so unselfishly to
Madame Olenska. I told Henry, "He
really came to the rescue".

The words send a blush up Newland's face. Mrs. Van der Luyden quickly changes the subject.

MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN (CONT'D)

I've never seen May looking
lovelier. The Duke thinks her the
handsomest girl in the room.

She smiles and winks at Newland, who swivels his head towards May.

INT. ARCHER BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING

Dressed work for and ready for breakfast, Newland goes downstairs for breakfast. A fresh-faced Mrs. Adeline Archer and Janey sit at the dining table.

NEWLAND

Good morning mother, Janey.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER
 Good morning Newland!

Newland sits.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)
 So, how did the dinner fare?

JANEY ARCHER
 Yes, do tell!

Newland looks at his audience as he's putting a napkin in his lap. He takes his time.

NEWLAND
 It went well.
 (picking up fork, exhales)
 To be expected.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER
 Well, yes, tell me how was Mrs. Olenska?

JANEY ARCHER
 Was May there as well?

Newland looks up incredulously at his mother and sister.

NEWLAND
 Yes, May was there as was Mrs. Olenska. I do believe she had a wonderful time, speaking with the Duke and Mr. Dagonet of Washington. The Leffertses were present as well.

Mrs. Archer lets out a small gasp.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER
 I knew that Mrs. Olenska was like us! So on the nose with society!

Janey chats with her mother, leaving Newland to eat his breakfast and to bury himself in the morning paper.

INT. THE LAW OFFICES OF LETTERBLAIR, LAMSON, AND LOW - DAY

When he arrives to work at the law offices of LETTBLAIR, LAMSON, AND LOW, Newland nods to his fellow EMPLOYEES and makes his way to his desk. The clock on his desk starts to SPIN wildly, and the day is done and it's time to go home.

He stretches his legs and yawns, puts on his hat.

EXT. STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

Newland calls a coupe on the street to take him to May's house.

EXT. MAY WELLAND'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

May sees Newland's carriage arrive and gets in. He tries to kiss her, but her mother calls out to her as he leans in.

MONTAGE:

Newland and May are announced at the homes of various relatives. Various cups of tea and biscuits and cakes are passed around. Newland holds May's hand and smiles with each announcement of matrimony.

END MONTAGE:

Back in the carriage on the way home, Newland leans back, exhausted.

MAY WELLAND
Oh I'm so happy, dear!
(squealing and squeezing
his hand)

NEWLAND
Yes, a thoroughly eventful day.

The carriage pulls up at May's house.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)
I'll see you soon, my dear angel
(kisses May)

She exits with a smile.

INT. CARRIAGE RIDE - EARLY EVENING

Newland settles into the cozy back seat of his carriage. He checks his watch, and looks out the window. Sights of the city pass by. VENDORS, MOTHERS, SHOE SHINERS, NEWSPAPER and ERRAND BOYS, FRUIT VENDORS, MUSICIANS, GENTLEMEN, WOMEN, PROSTITUTES chatting with clients; they fill the city sidewalks and streets. The coupe pulls up to a shabby street.

EXT. STREET - EARLY EVENING

Newland exits carriage. He thanks the driver and walks up the street, passing the dusty, open windows of DRESSMAKERS, BIRD STUFFERS, and WRITERS at their business.

He recognizes a house a little farther up. It's NED WITSETT's, a journalist friend of his. He notices Ned, a tall man in his 30's with a slightly worn coat, closing his front door. He calls out to him, but Ned doesn't hear and walks away. Newland arrives at the front of Ellen's house, takes note of the peeling stucco, wisteria-lined balcony, and painted window panes.

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

He rings the bell. Neighborhood KIDS run by screaming and laughing. After a second he walks up the stairs again just as a swarthy-looking Italian MAID opens the door.

NEWLAND

Good evening, I'm here to see The
Countess Olenska

The maid nods her head.

MAID

La Contessa torno presto. Entra per
favore.

Newland is waved in.

INT. COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA'S HOME - EARLY SUNSET

MAID

Il quartiere è carino, vero? La
Contessa è molto impegnata in
questi giorni, ma ha sempre
compagnia.

She leads him to a drawing room and leaves just as quickly. Newland stands in the middle of the lightly lit drawing room perplexed. He takes a few steps in just as the maid re-enters with a lamp, and begins to stoke the fire.

MAID (CONT'D)

La Contessa è sempre qua e la.
Dico a mio ragazzo che ha piu
affari di una regina.
(laughs)

Joy comes out from the folds in her body. She stands up with a groan, hands him the lamp and leaves with a pat of his shoulder.

The room is less than what he expected, but he looks around the room fondly inspecting the Italian and Greek art.

Sinking into the chair next to the window, he warms his feet at the fireplace as it lets off snaps and crackles. The clock on the mantle happily CLICKS away. A minute passes and he hears CLICKS coming down the hall. He raises his head to see Ellen, but it's the maid. She fixes the fire.

MAID (CONT'D)

La signora e fuori, ma verra subito.

She rises and flashes him a half-toothed smile, moves towards him and draws the curtains closed behind him.

MAID (CONT'D)

Sarebbe stato ritardato da una delle sue orde di galanti amorevolli.

(laughs)

Verra-verra.

She nods to the front door and disappears with a SONG.

Newland exhales, looks at his waistcoat watch and starts to get annoyed. He gets up and starts towards the door to leave when he hears hooves outside on the street. Through parted curtains he spies JULIUS BEAUFORT helping Ellen out of his carriage.

They exchange a couple of words before Ellen shakes her head and frowns. She walks up the steps as Beaufort begrudgingly climbs back into his carriage and drives off. The front door opens. The maid and Ellen murmur to each other. The fire CRACKLES.

Newland's hand fidgets, goes to his waistcoat to get his watch out. As he takes a step towards the door to leave, Ellen appears. It's as if she's made of light and the room is filled with a thousand candles. She casually smiles at him.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

How do you like my funny house?

(pause)

To me it's like heaven.

She unties her velvet bonnet and tosses it on a chair. Newland exhales and decides to stay for a few minutes, but is still decided on leaving.

NEWLAND

You've arranged it delightfully.

Newland slightly smiles, he's annoyed but Ellen Olenska doesn't notice.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Oh, it's a poor little place. My relations despise it, but at any rate it's less gloomy than the Van der Luyden's.

She laughs. Newland is completely shocked by her statement, but eventually laughs.

NEWLAND

It's beautiful, what you've done here.

(looking around)

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

I like the little house but I suppose what I like is the blessedness of its being here, of me being alone in it.

NEWLAND

You like so much to be alone?

Clock on the mantle TICKS.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Yes, of course my friends keep me from being too lonely when they visit. Nastasia will bring the tea presently.

She sits in a chair and points to another in Newland's corner for him to sit. There's a moment where Newland runs through excuses in his mind, anything to leave. But when he opens his mouth nothing comes out. He sits. The clock TICKS on the mantle.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

This is the hour I like best, don't you?

NEWLAND

Yes, I was afraid you'd forgotten the hour. Beaufort must be very engrossing.

(chuckles)

Ellen watches the fire.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Mr. Beaufort took me to see a number of houses—since it seems I am not to be allowed to stay in this one. I've never been in a city where there seems to be such a feeling against living in des quartiers excentriques. What does it matter where one lives? I'm told this street is respectable.

NEWLAND

It isn't fashionable.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Fashionable!

(laughing)

Do you all think so much of that? Why not make one's own fashions! But I suppose I've lived too independently at any rate. I want to do what you all do—I want to feel cared for and safe.

NEWLAND

New York is an awfully safe place.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Yes it is, isn't it? One feels that being here is like being taken on a holiday when one has learned how to behave.

She smiles at the joke.

NEWLAND

Last night, New York laid itself out to you. The Van der Luydens do nothing by halves.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

How kind they are! It was such a nice party. Everyone seems to have such esteem for them.

NEWLAND

(pompously)

The Van der Luydens are the most powerful influence in New York society.

(leans back)

Unfortunately, owing to their health they receive very seldom.

Ellen looks at Newland for a second, then back to the fire.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
 Isn't that perhaps the reason?
 (softly testing the waters)

NEWLAND
 The reason...?

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
 For their great influence; that
 they make themselves so rare.

Completely shocked, Newland laughs.

NEWLAND
 I suppose you're right.

Nastasia enters with tea. She sets out aromatic tea in a Japanese set.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
 But you'll explain things to me-
 you'll tell me what I ought to
 know.

She hands him a cup. Their fingertips touch briefly. Nastasia leaves.

NEWLAND
 It's you who are telling me.
 (laughs jovially)
 Opening my eyes to things I'd
 looked at so long that I'd ceased
 to see them.
 (shakes his head)

Countess Ellen Olenska detaches a small cigarette case from a handbag, holds it out to him, their fingers touch very lightly again as he takes a cigarette. He spots the spill on the mantle and brings it over.

He offers her the light. He's enjoying this moment as is she. He lights his cigarette.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
 Ah, then we can both help each
 other. You must tell me just what
 to do in New York.

She puffs the cigarette. Newland glances to her out of the corner of his eye reproachfully with warning.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - MINUTES EARLIER

Countess Ellen arrives to her home in Beaufort's carriage. Laughing at something he said, she touches his arm.

END FLASHBACK.

Countess Ellen Olenska stretches her hands out to the logs.

NEWLAND

There are plenty of people who will tell you what to do.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

All of my aunts
(scoffs)
and my dear old granny. They're all a little vexed with me for setting up for myself-poor granny especially. She wanted to keep me with her, but I need freedom.

NEWLAND

I think I understand how you feel. But your family can advise you, show you the way.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

There are only two people here who help me understand things: You and Mr. Beaufort.

Newland gives her side-eye and catches his breath.

NEWLAND

I understand, but don't let go of Granny and Welland- they like and want to help you.

Countess Ellen Olenska shakes her head.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

I know but on condition that they don't want to hear anything unpleasant. I keep my truth to myself. The real loneliness is living among all these kind people who only ask one to pretend!

She begins to sob. Newland rushes to her.

NEWLAND

Oh Ellen.

He bends towards her, draws her hand, holds it.

NEWLAND

It will be okay.

Countess Ellen Olenska frees herself and looks up through wet lashes.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

I suppose no one cries here either.
there's no need to in heaven.

She laughs and fixes her hair.

NASTASIA

(poking her head in)
Il tuo amico e arrivato.

Ellen smoothes her hair and wipes her face.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Gia, gia. Yes, invite them in
please.

ITALIAN MAID

(mutters)
Gia, gia

The DUKE OF ST. AUSTREY, a middle-aged man with a serious face, enters with a woman, a MRS. STRUTHERS. Mrs. Struthers, a middle-aged woman dressed fantastically, almost knocks her massive black, red-plumed wig off her head trying to enter the room, but quickly recovers. Her face is caked in too-light makeup, red lips, and darkly painted eyes. Her confidence is unparalleled.

DUKE

My dear countess.

He takes Ellen's hand.

DUKE

I've brought an old friend of mine
to see you-Mrs. Struthers. She
wasn't at the party last night and
she wants to know you.

Mrs. Struthers smiles warmly at Countess Ellen Olenska and Newland. She and the Duke don't perceive what happened in the room a few seconds earlier.

Countess Ellen Olenska tries to gather herself.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
Welcome, please, make yourselves at
home.

(slightly shy)

MRS. STRUTHERS
I want to know everybody who's
young and interesting and charming,
so of course I want to know you, my
dear! (smiling widely)

MRS. STRUTHERS
And the Duke tells me that you like
music, that you're a pianist, I
believe. Well I am having Saraste
play at my house tomorrow evening.
You'll find a number of your
friends.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
Oh how kind! How kind of the Duke
to think of me!

She pushes chair up to tea table.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
Of course I shall be happy to come!

Mrs. Struthers sinks into the chair.

MRS. STRUTHERS
And bring your young gentleman with
you.

She winks at Newland sending bright red across his cheeks.

MRS. STRUTHERS
I can't put a name to you but I'm
sure I've met you-and I've met
everybody here or in Paris or
London. Aren't you in Diplomacy?

The Duke starts pulling on his beard.

DUKE
Rather.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Newland is walking down Ellen's street and heading home.
Evening's dusk is setting onto the city.

Walking past candle and lamp-lit windows he sees MOTHERS feeding their CHILDREN, FATHERS slumped in their chairs while their children scream at each other, GRANDFATHERS playing flutes and falling asleep buy stoves, GRANDMOTHERS knitting.

Newland passes a LITTLE BOY playing a panpipe while his SISTER dances in the street next to him.

In the store window of his florist, MR. PFEIFFER, he notices white lilies. Walking in he nods to the man.

MR. PFEIFFER

Good evening, Mr. Archer. Lilies for your lady?

NEWLAND

Yes please, Mr. Pfeiffer. It slipped my mind to send them in the morning. Something must have come over me.

Pfeiffer slides a blank card to Newland and begins to box up the flowers. Newland looks up from writing his message and notices a large cluster of stunning-yellow roses on a table. He thinks to change the flowers, but stops. He walks towards the roses and touches the petals.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

These as well-separately.

The florist nods and hands Newland another blank card. He writes Countess Olenska.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

They'll go at once?

MR. PFEIFFER

Yes, at once.

Before putting his signed envelope in the box with the roses, he changes his mind and throws the envelope away.

NEWLAND

Wonderful. Thank you.

EXT. PARK - LATE MORNING, A FEW DAYS LATER

A snow-covered park glistens in the afternoon sun. The large, bare trees sparkle with ornamentation: the frozen dew lights up frigid branches like Christmas candles.

Newland is waiting on a bench, reading. He looks up at the occasional passer-by, an expectant look on his face.

Footsteps approach him. They stop directly in front of him. His head raises to meet the eyes of a smiling May Welland. Her beauty surprises him.

MAY WELLAND

It's so delicious waking every morning to smell lilies of the valley in one's room.
(smiling)

Newland stands up to greet her.

NEWLAND

Yesterday they came late. I hadn't time in the morning.

He motions for her to sit next to him.

MAY WELLAND

But your remembering each day to send them makes me love them so much more than if you'd given a standing order.

NEWLAND

(blushes)

It pleases me that you like them. When I sent your lilies yesterday I saw some yellow roses and had them sent to Madame Olenska. Was that right?

MAY WELLAND

Oh how dear of you! (genuine)
Anything for that kind delights her! It's odd that she didn't mention it at luncheon today. She spoke of Mr. Beaufort having sent orchids and cousin Henry Van der Luyden sending over a whole hamper of carnations from Skuytercliff. She thinks sending flowers is such a pretty custom.

NEWLAND

(stiffly)

Oh well, no wonder mine were overshadowed by Beaufort's.

He opens his mouth to mention that he went over to see Countess Ellen Olenska, but decides not to.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

No matter...
About this long engagement.

He turns to May mischievously.

MAY WELLAND

(laughs)

Long! Isabel Chivers and Reggie
were engaged for two years: Grace
and Thorley for nearly a year and a
half. Why aren't we very well off
as we are?

She mockingly looks at Newland. Newland rises up, offers May Welland his hand and helps her up.

NEWLAND

We might be better off. We might be
altogether together—we might
travel.

He looks at May and kisses her hand.

MAY WELLAND

That would be lovely.

They start walking the trails of the park.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

But Mother wouldn't understand us
wanting to do things
so...differently.

NEWLAND

It's just a slight change, not too
different!

MAY WELLAND

Newland! You're so original!

Newland looks at May smiling, his smile fades.

NEWLAND

Original!
(looks up at the sky)
We're all like paper dolls cut out
of paper. Can't you and I strike
out for ourselves, May?

They stop walking. May looks slightly shocked.

MAY WELLAND

Mercy.
(recovers)
Shall we elope? (jokingly)

NEWLAND

If you want to.

He clasps her hands and kisses her hands.

MAY WELLAND

(blushes)
You do love me, Newland. I'm so
happy

Content with that, she starts walking again. They continue as they hold hands.

NEWLAND

Then why not be happier?

May starts to get annoyed.

MAY WELLAND

We can't behave like people in the
novels, can we?

Finished with the matter she turns her face back to the walking path and tries to smile again.

NEWLAND

Why not?
(He kisses her hand again)
Why not?
(kisses her other hand)
Why not?
(kisses her cheek)

May looks bored and annoyed, but enjoys the kisses.

MAY WELLAND

Not outright.
(exhales)
Newland, I'm not clever enough to
argue with you, but that kind of
thing is rather-vulgar-isn t it?

NEWLAND

Are you afraid, then, of being
vulgar?

MAY WELLAND

(taken aback)

Of course I should hate it--so
should you.

Irritatedly, May changes the subject.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

Oh, did I tell you that I showed
Ellen my ring? She thinks it's the
most beautiful setting she ever
saw. There's nothing like it in the
rue de la Paix.

(stops walking)

I do love you, Newland, for being
so artistic!

DREAM

Newland watches himself sleeping in his chair. He approaches himself and notices that the Newland in the chair has become old. Wrinkles cover his face and hands; he's almost become the chair. He tries to wake him up. He says 'Wake up', but no sound comes out. He says it a little louder 'wake up', but nothing. He puts his hands on top of Newland's and shakes, 'Wake up' he yells but nothing.

End Dream.

INT. ARCHER'S LIBRARY - DAY

The cigarette burning between Newland's fingers wakes him up with a start. The clock on the mantle TICKS. Someone is watching him. He lifts his head slowly to see Janey peeking in at him from outside the door, pretending to preen the plants. How long has she been there? He shakes off the sleep and picks the book back up.

Janey takes his waking up as an invitation to come in. A rustle of skirts WHOOSH into the room as she enters casually, looking at the décor, the wallpaper, the pictures, finally Newland's books. He pretends not to see her. Newland raises his eyes from behind his book as she picks up one of the titles on the table.

JANEY

Contez Drollatiquezzzz

She looks at Newland and makes a face and puts the book back down. Newland quickly averts his gaze back to his book. A few enormous pauses go by. Uncomfortably he raises his eyes and sees that she's now stealthily sitting in the chair beside him.

NEWLAND
(frightened) Ah!

JANEY
Mother's very angry.

NEWLAND
Angry?
(puts book down)
With whom? About what?

JANEY
Miss Sophy Jackson has just been here. She brought word that her brother Sillerton would arrive after dinner. He's with the Van der Luyden's right now but he wishes to give all the details himself.

She begins pacing around his library, looking at his things.

NEWLAND
(very confused)
For heaven's sake, my dear girl, try again. It would take an omniscient deity to know what you're talking about.

JANEY
Don't be profane, Newland. Mother feels badly enough about you not going to church.

Newland flickers his eyes at his sister, shakes his head and goes back to his book.

JANEY (CONT'D)
Newland! Your friend Madame Olenska was at Le-mu-el Struthers party last night!

She looks at Newland.

JANEY (CONT'D)
She went with the Duke and Mr. Beaufort!
(dramatic)

His annoyance level is reaching maximum levels. He lets out a little laugh.

NEWLAND
Well? What of it? I knew she meant to.

JANEY

(gasps)

If you knew she meant to—and you didn't try to stop her?! Warn her?

NEWLAND

Warn her?

(laughs)

Stop her? I'm not engaged to the Countess Olenska.

JANEY

You're marrying into her family!

NEWLAND

Oh! Family! Family.

JANEY

Newland...you, you don't care about family?

Janey looks like she is almost about to cry. Newland looks directly into her eyes, baiting her.

NEWLAND

Not a brass farthing.

JANEY

Nor what Cousin Louisa Van der Luyden will think?

NEWLAND

Not half of one. Hang then all!

(breath)

Don't be a goose, Janey—I'm not her keeper.

(serious tone)

JANEY

No, but you did ask the Wellands to announce your engagement sooner so that we might all back her up. And Cousin Louisa invited her to the dinner for the Duke.

NEWLAND

Well, what harm is there in inviting her? She was the best-looking woman in the room. She made the dinner a little less funereal than the usual Van der Luyden banquet.

JANEY

You know, cousin Henry asked her to please you. And now they're so upset that they're going back to Skuytercluff tomorrow. You don't seem to understand how Mother feels, Newland. You better come down.

Newland lifts himself up off the sofa. He descends the stairs with a sigh.

INT. ARCHER FAMILY ROOM

Newland enters to find Mrs. Archer working on her needlework. Her eyes are sunken in and she looks as if she hasn't slept in two days. She looks up startled at Newland.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Has Janey told you?

NEWLAND

Yes, but I can't take it very seriously.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Not the fact of having offended cousin Louisa and cousin Henry?

NEWLAND

The fact that they can be offended by such a trifle as Countess Olenska's going to the house of a woman they consider common.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

(offended)

Consider?

Newland takes a breath.

NEWLAND

Well...who is; but who has good music and who amuses people on Sunday evenings when the whole of New York is dying of boredom.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Good music?

She drops her needlework on the floor.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)

Newland, I heard there was a woman who got up on a table and sang the things they sing at the places you go to...

(whispers)

In. Paris.

(inches her face closer)

There was smoking...and champagne!

(enunciating each word)

NEWLAND

Well—that kind of thing happens in other places. And the world still goes on.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

I don't suppose, dear, that you are really defending this, this, Parisian activity?

NEWLAND

I've heard you often enough, Mother, grumble at the English activities when we've been in London.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

New York is neither Paris nor London!

(offended)

NEWLAND

Oh no, it's not. (eye roll)

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

You mean, I suppose, that society here is not as exciting? You're right I daresay; but we belong here, and people should respect our ways when they come among us. Ellen Olenska especially: she came back to get away from the kind of life people lead in 'exciting' societies.

Newland regards his mother with frustration. Mrs. Archer stands.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)

I was going to put on my bonnet and ask you to take me to see cousin Louisa for a moment before dinner.

(MORE)

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)
I thought that you might explain to
her that society abroad is...

She turns and looks at him dramatically.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)
...different.

Newland just realized that his mother may be nuts.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)
It would be in Madame Olenska's
interest if you did.
(bating)

NEWLAND
Mother, I really don't see how we
are concerned in the matter. The
Duke took Madame Olenska to Mrs.
Struthers, and in fact I was there
when he brought Mrs. Struthers to
call on her. If the Van der Luydens
want to quarrel with anyone, they
should take it up with the Duke.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER
Quarrel? The Van der Luydens don't
quarrel. Besides, the Duke is their
guest and a stranger too. Strangers
don't discriminate, how could they?
Countess Olenska is a New Yorker
and should have respected the
feelings of New York.

NEWLAND
Well then if they must have a
victim you have my leave to throw
Madame Olenska to them. I don't see
myself-or you either-offering
ourselves up to expiate her crimes.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER
Oh of course you see only the
Mingott side.
(snorts)

The BUTLER enters the room and clears his throat.

BUTLER
Henry Van der Luyden

Mrs. Adeline Archer catches her breath in panic.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER
Another lamp! Another lamp!

Mrs. Archer runs around the room straightening pillows and statues and candles. Newland watches her unruffled as Mr. Van der Luyden enters.

NEWLAND
Cousin (nodding) We were just
talking about you.

Henry Van der Luyden is uncomfortable with that statement. He takes off his gloves and shakes hands with Janey and Mrs. Archer.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)
Oh, and Coutness Olenska.

Janey shoots Newland a distressed look as Mrs. Archer catches herself from fainting.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN
Ah, a charming woman. I have just
been to see her.

Henry sinks into a chair, puts hat and gloves on floor.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN (CONT'D)
She has a real talent for arranging
flowers. I sent her a few
carnations from Skuytercliff, and
instead of massing them in big
bunches as our gardener does, she
had scattered them about loosely
here and there...I can't say how.
Astonishing. The Duke had told me,
he said: "Go and see how cleverly
she's arranged her drawing room". I
should really like to take Louisa
to see her, if the neighborhood
were not so...unpleasant.

A pause fills the air. Mrs. Archer nervously picks up her needlework and elbows Janey while Newland leans against the mantle twisting a hummingbird feather screen in his hand.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN (CONT'D)
The fact is...

He strokes beard, a massive ring on his finger glitters.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN (CONT'D)

The fact is I dropped in to thank her for the very pretty note she wrote me about my flowers; and also— but this is between ourselves, of course to give her a friendly warning about allowing the Duke to carry her off to parties with him. I don't know if you've heard—

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Has the Duke been carrying her off to parties?

(a little too loudly)

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN

You know what these English Lords are. They're all alike. Louise and I are very fond of our cousin, but it's hopeless to expect people who are accustomed to the European courts to trouble themselves about our little New York distinctions. The Duke goes where he's amused.

Mrs. Archer is absolutely transfixed by Henry Van der Luyden; Janey is trying to figure out the needlework.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN (CONT'D)

Yes it seems the Duke took the Countess to Lemuel Struthers. We found out from Sillerton Jackson and Louisa was rather troubled. So I thought the shortest way was to go straight to Countess Olenska and explain how we feel in New York about certain things. She was grateful for our guidance.

Henry lights up with a self-satisfied smile. Mrs. Archer softly gasps.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

How kind you both are always! Newland will particularly appreciate what you have done because of dear May and his new relations!

Mrs. Archer shoots Newland reproachful eyes.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)

Immensely sir, I was sure you'd
like Madame Olenska.

Henry smiles with immense benevolence.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN
Louisa will be waiting. We are
dining early to take the Duke to
the opera.

He rises from his chair. Janey, Mrs. Adeline, and Newland
rise along with him.

INT. ARCHER FRONT DOOR - A FEW MINUTES LATER

All three wave to Henry Van der Luyden from the front door.
As soon as the door is shut Janey swivels around.

JANEY
Goodness it's all so romantic!

INT. - LAW OFFICES OF LETTERBLAIR, LAMSON, AND LOW - DAY

Newland reclines in a chair at his desk, hands crossed behind
his head as the clock on his desk TICKS. He is going in and
out of a daydream. SOMEONE hands him a note which he reads
lazily. He puts it down with annoyance. He grabs his jacket
and walks to his superior's office.

Newland knocks on the ornate wooden door of MR. LETTERBLAIR's
office and opens it slightly.

LETTERBLAIR
Ah Newland, my dear sir.

Newland is let in.

INT. OFFICE OF LAW FIRM LETTERBLAIR, LAMSON, AND LOW

Newland comes and sits with Letterblair, a mature man in his
60s who is precise with the law, his speech, and his meals.

MR. LETTERBLAIR
I have sent for you for a little
matter which I prefer not to
mention to the other lawyers—a
family matter.
(breath)
(MORE)

MR. LETTERBLAIR (CONT'D)

Mrs. Manson Mingott sent for me yesterday. Her granddaughter, the Countess Olenska, wishes to sue her husband for divorce. Certain papers have been placed in my hands. In view of your prospective alliance with the family, I should like to consult you before taking any further steps.

He unlocks a drawer and pulls out a stack of paperwork. Mr. Letterblair slides the papers over to Newland.

MR. LETTERBLAIR (CONT'D)

If you will run your eye over these papers...

Newland frowns and doesn't touch the papers.

NEWLAND

I beg your pardon, sir, but just because of the prospective relationship I should prefer your consulting another lawyer.

Mr. Letterblair is affronted and taken aback. He gives a nod.

MR. LETTERBLAIR

I respect your scruple sir, but in this case true delicacy requires you to do as I ask. The suggestion is not mine but Mrs. Manson Mingott's and her sons. I have seen Lovell Mingott and also Mr. Welland. They all named you.

NEWLAND

(anger rising)

I really think her uncles ought to deal with this.

MR. LETTERBLAIR

They have. They are opposed to the Countess idea; but she is firm and insists on a legal opinion.

Newland looks at the packet of paper.

NEWLAND

Does she want to marry again?

MR. LETTERBLAIR

She denies it though it is suggested.

NEWLAND

Then-

MR. LETTERBLAIR

Will you oblige me, Mr. Archer, by first looking through these papers? I would like for you to come dine with me so we can go into the matter afterward.

Newland bows and leaves with the pile of papers.

INT. NEWLAND'S DESK - DAY

Newland walks to his desk, reads over the papers, bored, angry, exasperated. Grabs his coat and hat and exits.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Newland watches the PEOPLE pass, the rooftops, the carriages. Out of the corner of his eye he sees a hat he recognizes. His gaze follows it through the crowd.. He notices the wearer of the hat reach out her hand to shake an acquaintance's hand.

Newland watches and after a couple of breaths decides to cross the street and approach the wearer, but she turns around and he realizes it's not who he thought it was. He continues home with an exhale.

INT. ARCHER FRONT DOOR - LATE AFTERNOON

After the BUTLER helps Newland with his coat, Newland climbs the stairs to his drawing room.

INT. ARCHER DRAWING ROOM

Newland pens a letter to Ellen Olenka. A MESSENGER BOY is called and sent off running to her home. When the panting boy returns he's given a penny and sent off. Newland opens the note that returned. It reads "Skyutercliff"

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA OLENSKA (V.O.)

Reads it as he opens the note:

At Skyutercliff enjoying the winter snow. This must be heaven.

-Ellen.

Newland looks piqued. The clock on the mantle STRIKES. His head swivels to meet the chimes. Swiftly descending the stairs, he grabs his coat and hat and leaves to Mr. Letterblair's.

EXT. LETTERBLAIR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Letterblair opens the door to greet a half-smiling Newland. With a large smile he shakes Newland's hand and gives him a healthy pat on the back.

LETTERBLAIR
Newland, right on time. Dinner's
ready to be served.

The clock in his house somewhere STRIKES as he turns to let him in.

INT. LETTERBLAIR'S DINING ROOM

They make their way to a shabby-looking dining room that looks as it hasn't been updated in 30 years. Letterblair is mumbling something about work to Newland. They take their seats and he suddenly looks up.

LETTERBLAIR
Right?

NEWLAND
(confused) Yes, right.

Letterblair laughs and continues his monologue through the various dishes being served. He changes the subject from work to the divorce as dinner continues on, occasionally stopping to look up at Newland and asking him what he thinks, which Newland states with a *Of course*.

MR. LETTERBLAIR
The whole family is against the
divorce, and I think rightly.

Another platter is served.

MR. LETTERBLAIR (CONT'D)
She's here, he's there, and the
Atlantic is between them. She'll
never get back a dollar more of her
money than what he's voluntarily
returned to her. Olenski's acted
generously: he might have turned
her out without a penny.

Newland looks up.

MR. LETTERBLAIR (CONT'D)

So my dear Mr. Archer. Have you considered the consequences if Countess Olenska decides for divorce?

NEWLAND

You mean the threat in her husband's letter?

(exhasperated)

What weight would that carry? It's no more than a vague charge of an angry blackguard.

LETTERBLAIR

Yes, but it might make some unpleasant talk if he decides to defend the suit.

NEWLAND

Unpleasant?

Newland suddenly stands up. Letterblair stops smoking his cigar and looks at a now standing Newland who realizes how useless his protestations are and sits back down while Letterblair still eyes him curiously.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Divorce is always unpleasant.

Mr. Letterblair resumes his smoking and nods.

MR. LETTERBLAIR

So you agree with me?

NEWLAND

(quickly) Naturally.

MR. LETTERBLAIR

Well then, I may count on you and the Mingotts may count on you to use your influence against the idea?

NEWLAND

(pauses, looks down)

I can't pledge myself till I've spoken with the Countess Olenska.

LETTERBLAIR

(exhales and leans back)

Mr. Archer, I don't understand you.

(MORE)

LETTERBLAIR

Do you want to marry into a family
with a scandalous divorce-suit
hanging over it?

NEWLAND

With all due respect, sir, I don't
think that has anything to do with
the case.

Letterblair sets his wine glass down, looks at Newland with
apprehension and caution.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

You may be sure, sir, I'd rather
not give my opinion till I've heard
what the Countess Olenska has to
say.

Letterblair nods.

EXT. STREET

Newland walks to the almost deserted street after leaving
Letterblair's house. He spies Beaufort getting into his
carriage leaving to do some nightly visits elsewhere.

Newland walks to Olenska's street and knocks on her door.

INT. ELLEN OLENSKA'S FRONT ROOM

Nastasia lets him in, helping him with his hat and coat, he
notices an overcoat with a monogram in the lining:

J.B.

Newland's eyes bore into the coat. Nastasia clears her throat
to break the spell he's under. He follows her to the drawing
room.

INT. ELLEN'S DRAWING ROOM

Julius Beaufort is leaning against the mantle smiling at
Countess Olenska when he enters the space. Newland feels the
blood rising to his cheeks. He nods towards Beaufort and
makes his way towards a casual Countess Ellen Olenska.

JULIUS BEAUFORT

Lord love us! Three whole days at Skyutercliff! You'd better take all your furs and hot water bottle.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Why? Is the house cold?

She holds out her hand for Newland. Newland approaches her and leans in to shake her hand, but for a split second he thinks about kissing it.

JULIUS BEAUFORT

No, but the Missus is.

He nods to Newland.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Oh but I thought Mrs. Van der Luyden so kind. She came herself to invite me! Granny said I certainly must go.

JULIUS BEAUFORT

Granny would, of course (dryly)
It's a shame you're going to miss the little oyster supper I'd planned for you at Delmonico's next Sunday. Campanini and Scalchi and a lot of jolly people will be present.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Oh! That does tempt me!

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

I've not met a single artist since I've been here, except at Mrs. Strutherses.

NEWLAND

What kind of artists?

He sits in a chair.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

I know one or two painters that I could bring you to see if you'd allow.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Painters? Are there painters in New York?

(MORE)

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

That would be charming, but I was thinking of actors, singers and musicians. My husband's house was always full of them. I do think the imprevu adds to one's enjoyment. It's perhaps a mistake to see the same people every day.

JULIUS BEAUFORT

New York is dying of dullness and when I try to liven it up for you, you go back on me. Come—think of it! Sunday is your last chance for Campanini leaves next week for Baltimore and Philadelphia. And I've a private room, and a Steinway, and they'll sing all night for me.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

How delicious! May I think it over and write to you tomorrow morning?

JULIUS BEAUFORT

(pauses) Why not now?

He stares at Countess Ellen Olenska.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

(chuckles)

It's too serious a question to decide at this late hour.

Beaufort looks at the clock on the mantle and then eyes Newland suspiciously.

JULIUS BEAUFORT

Do you call this late?

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Yes.

She looks at Beaufort with a warning.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

Because I still have to talk business with Mr. Archer for a little while.

JULIUS BEAUFORT

Ah.

(hurt)

Beaufort looks at his pocketwatch, walks towards Countess Olenska and kisses her hand with a practiced air, gives a slight nod to Newland as he exits.

JULIUS BEAUFORT (CONT'D)

I say, Newland, if you can persuade the Countess to stop in town, of course you're included in the supper.

Beaufort finally exits with heavy, important steps while trying to be casual.

There is a quiet in the air. Newland and the Countess look at each other. The fire CRACKLES, the clock on the mantle TICKS.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

You care for painting?

NEWLAND

Immensely. When I'm in Paris or London I never miss an exhibition. I try to keep up.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

(looks down)

I used to care immensely too; my life was full of such things. But now I want to try not to.

NEWLAND

Why, may I ask?

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

I want to try to get away from it all and be like everybody else here in New York.

NEWLAND

I know.

(pause)

Mr. Letterblair has told me.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Ah?

She looks down at her hands.

FLASHBACK:

Ellen looks down at her wrist which is bruised with purple fingerprint marks.

END FLASHBACK.

NEWLAND

That's the reason I've come. He asked me to...you see I'm with the firm. I'm here to talk about it.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

I want to be free.
(exhales)
I want to wipe out all the past.

NEWLAND

I understand that.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

So then you'll help me? In this country are such things tolerated? I'm a Protestant—our church does not forbid divorce in such cases.

NEWLAND

Certainly not. I looked through the papers you gave Mr. Letterblair, if your husband chooses to fight the case he can say things—things that might be unpleasant, might be disagreeable to you; they might harm you even if...

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

If?

NEWLAND

I mean no matter how unfounded they were.

Long Pause.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

(looks up)
What harm could such accusations, even if he made them publicly, do me here?

NEWLAND

New York society is a very small world ruled by very few people with old-fashioned ideas. Our legislation favors divorce—our social customs don't.

Clock TICKS.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
 And so my family-our family for you
 are to be my cousin soon - do you
 take their views?

He gets up, looks at the fire.

NEWLAND
 What should you gain that would
 compensate for a lot of beastly
 talk?
 (not buying his own
 words)

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
 (notices)
 But my freedom-is that nothing?
 (presses)

NEWLAND
 (breath)
 Aren't you as free as air as it is?
 Who can touch you? Mr. Letterblair
 tells me the financial questions
 have been settled.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
 Yes.

NEWLAND
 Well then, think of the newspapers-
 their vileness! It's all stupid and
 narrow-but is it worth while to
 risk what maybe disagreeable and
 painful?

She looks at him.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
 No.

NEWLAND
 It's business, you know, to help
 you see these things as the people
 who are fondest of you see them.

Newland doesn't believe anything that he is saying.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

The Wellands, The Mingotts, the Van der Luydens, all of your friends and relations: If I didn't show you honestly how they judge such questions it wouldn't be fair of me.....would it?

He looks at the clock on the mantle and wants to go home. The fire CRACKLES. Countess Ellen Olenska rises and goes to it.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Very well, I will do what you wish.

She faces him. They look at each other.

NEWLAND

I do want to help you, Cousin.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

You do help me. Goodnight, Cousin.

Newland takes her hands to kiss them, but she draws them away and leaves the room. He exits.

EXT. STREET

Newland passes by a group of SINGERS singing a beautiful MUSIC CUE: TUNE in a home on her block.

EXT. PORT - NIGHT INTO DAY

MUSIC CUE: tune from previous carries through

Night turns into day, the weather becomes cooler. Newland continues walking into May's goodbyes at the port. Her parents have boarded the boat to St. Augustine, Florida for their seasonal retreat and are waiting for May to board. Newland kisses her hand as she blushes.

MAY WELLAND

Would you do me a favor, dear Newland?

NEWLAND

Anything my sweet dear.

MAY WELLAND

Would you be kind to Ellen? She likes and admires you so much. She's quite lonely.

(MORE)

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

Granny can't understand her wanting anything but lots of dinners and clothes. But honestly I think she's unhappy.
Would you be a dear and keep her company?

NEWLAND

Certainly my dear.

He kisses her hand one last time. He wishes her a wonderful journey, and as she turns to join her waiting party he slips a kiss on her cheek which sends the red running up her cheeks. He smiles and waves her on.

The boat leaves as Newland continues waving and smiling to a parting May on the deck. He turns to walk away.

INT. OPERA - NIGHT

Newland walks up the stairs into the theater where *The Shaughraun* is being shown.

INT. OPERA MINGOTT BOX

Newland walks into the box and nods to Mrs. Beaufort and Mrs. Lefferts. Mr. Sillerton is telling Mrs. Beaufort about the party at Mrs. Struthers' the Sunday before as Newland sits unknowingly behind Countess Olenska.

He straightens his shirt and pants and settles into the play. He overhears the Sillerton/Beaufort conversation and rolls his eyes. The ACTORS onstage are wishing each other adieu and beginning to depart from one another when Ellen Olenska turns around to face Newland. He looks up in surprise.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Do you think he will send her a bunch of yellow roses tomorrow morning?

She motions to the characters onstage. (referring to the characters onstage)

Newland is taken aback by her beauty. She's glowing.

NEWLAND

(blushing) Perhaps.

(smiles)

Yellow roses are quite beautiful, are they not?

Countess Ellen Olenka blushes reluctantly, deeply. She looks at her opera glasses and then back at Newland smiling a glorious smile.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
Tell me, how have you been now that
Ellen is away?

NEWLAND
(suddenly annoyed) I'm fine. I keep
to my work.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
(pause)
I have done what you wished - what
you advised.
(abruptly)

NEWLAND
Ah-I'm glad.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
I understand that you were right.
But sometimes life is perplexing.

NEWLAND
I know.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
And I wanted to tell you that I do
feel you were right; and that I'm
grateful to you.

Right then, Beaufort opens the opera box door. They both turn around to see him saying his greetings to the box. She turns around and brings her opera glasses to her eyes. Newland looks at her then down at his hands. Lefferts leans over to talk to Ellen who brings a smile to her lips with a joke as Beaufort finds a chair and squeezes himself in between Newland and Ellen. Newland looks at him, at Lefferts, and decides to take his leave.

INT. OPERA RECEPTION ROOM - THAT SAME NIGHT

Newland exits down the stairs and cuts through the lobby. As he approaches the door he spots his friend Ned Winsett and smiles as they shake hands.

NED
Newland, how are you?

NEWLAND
Ned, good to see you.

NED

It's been a while, how was the show?

NEWLAND

To be expected. I'm just headed home right now.

NED

Ah I was just going to ask you if you wanted to drink a pint at that German place around the block.

NEWLAND

Oh, thank you so much but I have things to do at home that I must finish. Things for the firm.

NED

Ah, I understand. So have I for that matter. For the newspaper, anyway.

(laughs)

I'll be the Industrious Employee with you.

They both laugh.

NED (CONT'D)

I'll walk out with you.

Newland signs to the door and they walk out together.

NEWLAND

How is your family, Ned?

EXT. OPERA RECEPTION ROOM - NIGHT

NED

To be expected. Mother continues giving her piano and violin lessons, and Father is still sewing at his shop. In fact he got a large order from a furniture firm so he's pleased. My wife is in good spirits.

NEWLAND

Good to hear, Ned.

They continue down the theater steps and into the night.

EXT. STREET

NED

Listen Newland, (friendly)
what I'm really after is the name
of the dark lady in that swell box
of yours-with the Beauforts, wasn't
she? The one your friend Lefferts
seems so smitten by.

Newland becomes annoyed, catches himself and recovers,
continues the conversation carefully, casually.

NEWLAND

It's not for an interview, I hope?
(smile, laugh)

NED

Well, not for the press, just for
myself. The fact is she's a
neighbor of mine-strange quarter
for such a beauty to settle in-and
she's been awfully kind to my
little boy who fell down in the
street chasing his kitten, and gave
himself a nasty cut.
She rushed in bareheaded, carrying
him in her arms, with his knee all
beautifully bandaged and was so
sympathetic and beautiful that my
wife was too dazzled to ask her
name.

DAYDREAM:

Newland smiles as he imagines Ned's son chasing a kitten, He
falls, cuts himself, Ellen rushes out, picks up the boy and
runs him to Ned's house. She flings open the door with
superhuman strength, an angelic glow shining from behind her,
lighting up her aura like an angel. Ned and his wife look up
in awe, basking in her extraordinary glow, smiles stretched
from ear to ear.

END DAYDREAM.

NEWLAND

That is the Countess Oleanska-a
granddaughter of old Mrs.
Mingott's.

NED

Whew! What a countess!
(whistles)
(MORE)

NED (CONT'D)

Well I didn't know Countesses were so neighborly. Mingotts ain't.

NEWLAND

They are, when you get to know them.

NED

Ah! I'll make sure to introduce myself at the next ball.
(laughs)

Newland coughs.

NED (CONT'D)

I wonder how a Countess happens to live in our slum?

NEWLAND

Because she doesn't care a hair about where she lives-or about any of our social sign posts.
(proud)

NED

Hmmmm - been in bigger places I suppose. Well, here's my corner.

Ned looks up, shakes Newland's hands and walks up the street. Newland takes a second to watch him, turns his eyes towards Ellen's house and walks away.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Newland runs around to various FLORISTS asking for yellow roses. He receives numerous head shakes, sorry sir's - until one finally nods. He sends it off. Checking his watch, he realizes that he is going to be late for work.

EXT. NEWLAND'S PLACE OF WORK

With a rush he makes it back to the office. With a huff he pushes open the front door.

Everything is quiet and still. The MEN are working, sleeping or reading the newspaper. One barely pokes his head above the front page that he's holding and gives a barely energetic "*Morning*", and goes back to his paper.

Newland straightens his coat and walks purposefully through the office, noticing the lack interest upon his arrival. He arrives at his desk and sits in his seat.

Bored, taps quill, sighs, plays an opera in his head, plays a ball game with wadded up papers.

He decides to write a note to Ellen and sends it via MESSENGER. Goes about his day.

INT. MEN'S CLUB - LATER THAT DAY

Newland goes to his club to ask for a letter. No letter.

INT. ARCHER DRAWING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Goes home asks for a letter, no letter.

EXT. STREET - THE NEXT MORNING

The next morning on his way to work he sees a cluster of yellow roses in the window of a floral shop and stops for a brief moment, but then decides to keep walking.

INT. ARCHER FRONT DOOR - LATER THAT DAY

He receives an invitation when he arrives home. Mrs. Chivers has invited him to the Chivers house on the Hudson near Skuytercliff on Sunday.

Newland tosses it aside.

INT. NEWLAND'S ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Newland wakes up and goes to work.

INT. NEWLAND'S WORK - LATER THAT MORNING

Bored, taps pen, wads up paper, sings a new opera song in his head, naps.

INT. ARCHER HOME - AFTERNOON

During lunch, Newland goes home where he receives a package from his bookseller in London and a card from Ellen. She's at Skuytercliff. He looks up, thinks for a moment. Looks at his stack of books that just arrived, looks back at the letter, then picks up a card and writes to the Cheeveres accepting their invitation to their home near Skuytercliff on Saturday. He sends the letter off, checks his watch and goes back to work.

EXT. ARCHER HOUSE - MORNING

Newland bids Janey and his mother goodbye.

Montage:

EXT. CHIVERSE HOUSE - MORNING

Newland arrives at the Chiverses on Saturday morning. He gives his greetings.

EXT. ICE BOAT - LATER THAT MORNING

Newland goes on a spin in the ice-boat with his lovely hostess MRS. CHIVERS.

EXT. CHIVERS FARM HORSE STABLE - LATE MORNING

Newland goes over to the farm with REGGIE, gives the stable and the HORSES a looking-over and listens so very attentively to Reggie droning on about his stud and mares.

INT. CHEEVERSE HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Newland takes tea, and speaks with a LADY who professes herself broken-hearted at the news of his matrimony, but then goes on to talk about her own marriage.

INT. CHEEVERS HOUSE - EVENING

In the evening he assisted putting a FROG in SOMEONE'S bed, assisted in scaring SOMEBODY'S AUNT from hiding behind curtains, joined story time and the following music. He goes to sleep.

INT. CHIVERS HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING

Wakes up the next morning, goes to church and then to luncheon. During luncheon he looks at his clock, asks Reggie to borrow the cutter and drives off to Skyutercliff.

EXT. SKYUTERCLIFF - DAY

Newland approaches the mansion through the snow; its high rooftops and regal columns glistening under white flurries. The cutter pulls up to the steps;

He gets out and rings the bell. The bell's pleasant tone bounces off the rooms and hallways inside, as if summoning a dragon from its depths.

A minute later a surprised BUTLER answers through the barely cracked door. Newland asks him about the Van der Luydens and Countess Ellen Olenska, but the Butler shakes his head.

BUTLER

Madame Olenska and the Mrs. Van der Luyden are not present, Sir. They have driven to afternoon service three quarters of an hour ago.

NEWLAND

Oh.

BUTLER

Mr. Van der Luyden is in, Sir, but I heard him say he was intending on going over the Evening Post after luncheon. If you'd like, sir, I might go to the library door and listen.

He smiles and shakes his head.

NEWLAND

No, thank you, I will go and meet the ladies.

The butler nods with relief.

BUTLER

Sir.

He closes the door majestically.

EXT. SKYUTERCLIFF FARM STABLES - AFTERNOON

Newland walks alongside the GROOM guiding the cutter to the stables. Giving a quick nod, he thanks him and takes off along the road.

EXT. SKYUTERCLIFF ROAD - A LITTLE LATER

It begins to snow a little harder. Newland's shoes make a soft CRUNCH in the snow with each step. His breath makes little puffs in the air. The countryside is quiet and brilliant white. He keeps looking up the road but sees nothing. Wondering if he should turn back he stops and turns his head back to Skyutercliff.

But when he turns back to the road his eyes catch a bit of red on the crossing footpath ahead. He begins to walk faster. As the figure gets closer it forms into Ellen Olenska clothed in a brilliant red cloak walking with a DOG. Slowly they approach each other, the dog comes up to Newland, sniffing him. She smiles and removes her hand from her muff, extending it.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Ah! You've come!
(Glowing)

NEWLAND

I came to see what you were running from.

Ellen's face suddenly darkens. In her mind, a hand slaps her across the face.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

(puzzled)
Is everything okay?

She shrugs.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Shall we walk on? I'm so cold after the sermon. And what does it matter, now you're here to protect me from the vicious monsters.

She grabs his arm and wraps hers around it. Newland can feel the blood rise in his temples.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

Oh, let's run a race: my feet are freezing to the ground!

She shrieks and runs ahead with the dog barking after her. Newland stands and watches her, smiling. It's almost as if she's in slow-motion as he takes in her hair, smile, the way she runs. He finally decides to move and catches up to her.

They meet at a gate that leads into the park.

EXT. SKYUTERCLIFF PARK

ELLEN OLENSKA

I knew you'd come visit!

NEWLAND

(laughs)

I see you wanted me to!
(teasing)

They begin to walk again, side by side catching their breath.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Where were you coming from?

NEWLAND

From the Reggie Cheverses.
It was because I received your
note.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

May asked you to take care of me.
(plainly)

NEWLAND

I didn't need any asking.

ELLEN OLENSKA

You mean I'm so evidently helpless
and defenseless.

(laughs)

What a poor thing you must all
think me! But women here seem not-
seem never to feel the need for
help: any more than the blessed in
heaven.

NEWLAND

What sort of help?

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

(pause, looks up at him) Oh I don't
speak your New York language.

(laughs)

I suppose translating.

The words sting Newland.

NEWLAND

What did I come here for if I don't
speak yours?

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Oh my friend. Let's get to the
Patroon house.

She laughs and lays her hand gently on his arm.

NEWLAND

Ellen-why don't you tell me what's happened?

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

(shakes her head)

We're in heaven. Nothing bad happens here. Let's not talk about such things.

She looks around, motions to the house, smiling, and walks ahead. He looks at her frustratedly, shakes his head and joins her.

EXT. PATROON HOUSE

They walk towards the old house-the Patroon. The shutters are open, the windows are washed. There's a fire in the window.

NEWLAND

Why, the house is open!

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Only for today at least. I wanted to see it so Mr. Van der Luyden had the fire lit and the windows opened so that we might stop here on the way back from church this morning.

She rushes up the steps and checks the door.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

It s still unlocked! What luck!

He smiles and approaches the door as she opens it.

INT. PATROON HOUSE RECEIVING ROOM

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Come in, we can have a quiet talk. Mrs. Van der Luyden has driven over to see her old aunt's Rhineneck and we shan't be missed at the house for another hour.

They walk from the receiving room to living room.

INT. PATROON LIVING ROOM

The building is like a small cabin in the woods. Ellen Olenska exhales, goes to the fire and warms her hands, dances about a little bit. Newland takes in the house and its details: cozy, comfy. He walks to the embers and throws a log in the fire. Countess Ellen Olenska takes off her cloak and sits in one of the chairs as Newland leans against the chimney and looks at her.

NEWLAND

Well, whatever it is I hope it doesn't continue to bother you anymore. You seem happy now.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Yes, I can't feel unhappy when you're here.

She smiles at him earnestly, without seduction. Newland smiles back. Looks at her smile. He notices her lips, her chin.

NEWLAND

I shan't
(looks down)
...be here long. (unsure)

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

No, I know, but I'm happy. I'm improvident.

She smiles and shrugs. Newland blushes, smiles, and shares her happy. He moves to the window and stares out at the trees, taking in the countryside. Countess Ellen Olenska looks at him from behind, noticing his details. She looks away as he turns around to talk to her. He turns but decides to say nothing, looks at her for a moment then he turns back around.

NEWLAND

Ellen, what are you running away from? I'm not entirely clear on the details or what is going on.

She looks up at him then back down. The clock on the mantle TICKS. The silence in the room is deafening but isn't uncomfortable. They both fill the space with their beingness. The fire CRACKLES. Newland isn't sure where to go from this moment but just enjoys the quiet.

The clock TICKS.

DAYDREAM:

From behind, two hands begin to wrap around his chest and waist. He brings his own up to meet them, a smile spreading across his face. The hands become arms and tighten their grip. He turns to face their owner. Ellen's eyes light up as he meets hers.

They both smile sweetly taking in each other's love and admiration. Their hands clasp. He wants to kiss her; she senses it and wants to kiss him too. They move their faces closer to one another but before their lips meet...

END DAYDREAM.

...Newland's eyes open in the space and he's once again staring out at the trees. But something has shifted. Beaufort's hurried figure is approaching the house through the snow. He snorts.

Countess Ellen Olenska springs up and moves to his side, sliding her arm into his, but when she sees the figure her face pales and she moves a step back.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Did you invite him?

She shakes her head.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

I didn't know he was here.

Newland looks at her with the blood rising in his cheeks, trying to be sympathetic to her fear through his rising annoyance and jealousy. He moves away from her and towards the front door and opens it.

NEWLAND

Hello Beaufort! This way! Madame Olenska was expecting you!

Beaufort stalls for a second, not expecting Newland, and nods slightly, his aggravation seething. He walks past Newland and greets Olenska who is clearly not appreciative of him. She gives a barely visible nod. Beaufort takes up the space with his voice.

BEAUFORT

Madame Olenska, I just discovered the perfect little house not on the market, and it's just the thing for you. But it will be snapped up instantly if you don't take it.

He sits in chair.

BEAUFORT (CONT'D)

If only this new dodge for talking along a wire had been a little bit nearer perfection I might have told you all this from town, and been toasting my toes before the club fire this moment instead of tramping after you through the snow.

Unable to hide his irritation he looks at Newland. Countess Ellen Olenska shoots Newland a look of panic. Her eyes ask him for help. He looks back at her and Beaufort. Newland thinks about what to do; realizing help won't come.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Ah, the wire is a fascinating thing, is it not? Just imagine the possibilities.

(visibly uncomfortable)

Newland stands back, watching. Looking desperately to get out of the situation, Ellen pleads to him with her eyes.

EXT. TRAIN - EVENING

Snow falls quietly on the window of the southbound train. Evening has fallen. The easy rocking of the moving vehicle sends Newland into a quiet state. He stares out at the passing scenery. Flashbacks to the previous hours pass through his mind.

INT. THE ARCHER HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING

Reading each title with interest, he unpacks his books with an easy excitement. He reads each title out loud and runs his hands over the cover: their enjoyment waiting to be revealed. Sighing, it's getting late and time to get ready for bed.

His reflection bounces off the clock face while changing into his nightwear. He picks up a book and begins to read it in the candlelight, but his mind starts wandering.

He remembers Ellen's hands, her lovely hands.

A sigh escapes his lips as he drops the book and picks up another.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. SKYUTERCLIFF ROAD FLASHBACK - DAY

Ellen's bright red cloak in the snow.

FLASHBACK END.

He sighs and drops that book as well, picks up another called *The House of Life*. His voice lulls over a few pages, reading about a woman. The woman that forms in his mind: Countess Ellen Olenska.

FLASHBACK:

INT. PATROON LIVING ROOM FLASHBACK - DAY

Ellen's arms around him, him reaching for her hand while Beaufort drones and walking out of the cottage into the snow.

EXT. PATROON STREET FLASHBACK

They begin to run, her hand held fast to his. They stop, he draws her close and just looks into her eyes; brushes snow off of her face. He bends down, holding her face in his hands and kisses her cheek.

END FLASHBACK.

He wakes up with a start. The clock on the mantle TICKS, the fire is smoking and the light is out. He opens the curtains and stares out onto the street at the waking morning.

INT. ARCHER BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING

Newland enters the room

NEWLAND

Good morning Mother, Janey.

He sits at table.

JANEY

Mercy, how pale you look. I've noticed lately Newland, that you've been coughing. I do hope you're not letting yourself be overworked?

He stares at Janey barely hiding his mockery, he doesn't do anything with his life.

NEWLAND

Thank you for your concern, Janey.

He eats.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

I will make sure to mention it to
Mr. Letterblair to lighten my load
at the office.

Mrs. Adeline Archer stares at him, then at Janey, continues to eat. Feeds the LITTLE DOG at her feet with thoughts running through her mind.

MONTAGE:

Newland steps out to work.

Comes home.

Goes to work.

Goes to the club. Returns home.

Sees Beaufort and Lefferts on the street, nods, goes home.

Leaves for work. Returns home.

The days go by with a predictable monotony.

END MONTAGE.

INT. ARCHER FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Newland arrives home one night he puts away his coat and hat in the closet and notices a note on the receiving table near the door.

Come late tomorrow, I must explain to you.

-Countess Ellen Olenska.

He puts the note in his pocket and dines out.

He watches a play.

Goes for a drink.

INT. ARCHER LIBRARY - LATE NIGHT

Newland returns home after midnight. Back in his library he is inspecting his books. Standing up, he goes to mantle where the clock TICKS and the fire is CRACKLING. He takes out Ellen's letter and re-reads it. Sitting down, he watches the fire. The clock on the mantle CHIMES. He goes to bed.

INT. NEWLAND'S ROOM - MORNING

Newland is packing a portmanteau. Janey enters with a knock

JANEY

Newland, where are you going?

NEWLAND

Good morning Janey. I'm packing.
I've decided to go visit May in St.
Augustine.

JANEY

Oh how romantic!

She clutches her chest as Newland looks at her puzzled,
disgusted, but laughing.

JANEY (CONT'D)

Maybe you can get some rest there
and get your mind off of work.

NEWLAND

Yes.

He pauses, looks at Janey.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Thank you for your concern.
(genuine)

EXT. ARCHER HOUSE - DAY

The BUTLER helps place the portmanteau in the buggy. Newland
shortly joins it and drives off to port.

EXT. PORT - DAY

He purchases a ticket for St. Augustine and takes in the
sights of the seaside until boarding time.

INT. ST. AUGUSTINE HOTEL - MORNING

The boat pulls up to harbor and Newland disembarks and
arrives at his hotel to drop off the luggage. He enjoys a
walk on the sandy and summery main street. St. Augustine
looks as if it had never known a winter.

EXT. ST. AUGUSTINE STREET - MORNING

He sees SOMEONE on the street and stops them to ask where the Welland home is. They point to up the street, he gives a bow and thanks them. The weather is fine, he is in a high mood.

He nods to the PEOPLE passing.

EXT. WELLAND SUMMER HOUSE - MORNING

The Welland summer residence rises before him, May is standing under a magnolia with the sun shining through her hair. She smiles and feels a thud in her heart, but also thinks that something could be wrong. She approaches him with a felicitous caution.

MAY WELLAND

Newland!

Her smile changes to concern.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

Has anything happened

Newland is confused, annoyed, but happy.

NEWLAND

Yes-I found I had to see you.

MAY WELLAND

(blushing)

It's still too early for breakfast,
let's walk to the orange garden.

Offering her his arm, they stroll to the garden.

EXT. WELLAND GARDEN

They sit on a bench under orange trees. He puts his arm around her and kisses her. He enjoys it. She's not used to the passion, draws back blushing, uncomfortable.

NEWLAND

(smiling) What is it?

MAY WELLAND

Nothing.

Newland exhales and changes the subject.

NEWLAND

So tell me what you do all day.

He leans back, tilts his hat forward, puts his hands behind his head. May starts to talk about her days and the people she's around as he enjoys the sun.

MAY WELLAND

Papa has been returning to health. Mama has a little garden she's started walking. Mrs. Barrett from down the street has invited us to a couple dinners this past month. They are always wonderful but the meat is always a little overdone. I've started reading How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix, one of the first things you read to me, you recall. And would you believe that Kate Merry had never even heard of Robert Browning! I mean, who hasn't heard of Robert Browning! Mrs. Childs from down the street asked us for dinner the other day. I've never had beef wellington that delightful.

(pause)

Oh! We'll be late for breakfast!

INT. WELLAND SUMMER HOUSE

They quickly walk back to the house. MR. WELLAND and Mrs. Welland welcome Newland with open arms and ready handshakes.

MR. WELLAND

Welcome, welcome, Archer. So good to see you.

MRS. WELLAND

Archer, how wonderful to have you here.

MR. WELLAND

We were just about to have breakfast. Won't you join us?

He leads everyone to dining room with accompanied by SERVANTS.

INT. WELLAND SUMMER HOUSE DINNING ROOM

An array of delicacies makes their way to the table via SERVANTS.

Archer is astounded at the banquet of food for four people. Plates of food make their way around a table large enough for ten.

MRS. WELLAND

You see, the doctors want my husband to feel that he is in his own home; otherwise, he would be so wretched that the climate would not do him any good.

MR. WELLAND

You see, my dear fellow—we camp—we literally camp. It's a wilderness out here. I tell my wife and May that I want to teach them how to rough it.

He motions to the servant to bring jam, then continues.

MR. WELLAND (CONT'D)

You can't be too careful, especially towards spring.

He slathers griddle cakes with syrup.

MR. WELLAND

If only I'd been as prudent at your age, May would have been dancing at the Assemblies now instead of spending her winters in a wilderness with an old invalid.

MAY WELLAND

Oh but I love it here, you know I do! If only Newland could stay, I should like it a thousand times better than New York.

She beams at Newland.

MRS. WELLAND

Newland must stay until he has quite thrown off his cold.

NEWLAND

I'll have to make sure the firm is aware of my recovery period.

MR. WELLAND

I'm sure they won't object to a fantastic employee's recovery.

NEWLAND

Even if my recovery is spent in the most beautiful of company.

He looks at May and beams. Mrs. Welland beams at Mr. Welland who is more interested in purveying more syrup and jam from the servant his pancakes than basking in the romantic moment.

EXT. SPANISH MISSION GARDENS - DAY

Newland and May are out for a walk....

NEWLAND

The Alhambra would be fantastic to see. Imagine this little Spanish Mission being nothing against the beautiful walls of the Alhambra in the spring - even the Easter ceremonies at Seville.

He looks up at the mission.

MAY WELLAND

Easter in Seville? And it will be lent next week!

NEWLAND

Why not? Let's get married in Lent!

He Laughs in joy. He looks at May who turns serious. He clears his throat and goes to her.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Of course I didn't mean that, dearest, but soon after Easter-so that we could sail at the end of April. I know I could arrange it at the office.

She smiles at him and exhales at the thought.

MAY WELLAND

Oh Newland, I do love you for your descriptions.

NEWLAND

Why should they only be descriptions? Why shouldn't we make them real?

MAY WELLAND

We shall dearest, of course, next year.

NEWLAND

Don't you want them to be real-
sooner? Can't I persuade you to
break away now?

May looks down, he can't see her eyes.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Why dream away another year? Look
at me, my dear, my wife?

May remains motionless, then raises her head. Eyes sad but
resolute. He releases her.

MAY WELLAND

I'm not sure I DO understand-is it-
is it because you're not certain if
you love me?

Newland gets up from his seat.

NEWLAND

My God.
(angry)
Perhaps, I don't know.

May rises angrily but dignified and resolute.

MAY WELLAND

If that's it....
(breathes)
Is there someone else?

NEWLAND

Someone else? Between you and me?

May sees his uncertainty and becomes more resolute.

MAY WELLAND

Let us talk frankly, Newland.
Sometimes I've felt a difference in
you, especially since our
engagement has been announced.

NEWLAND

Dear...
(trying to recover)
What madness!

May, still unsure, kind of smiling, not really believing.

MAY WELLAND

If it is, it won't hurt us to talk
about it.

She suddenly changes and lifts her head even more.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

Or even if it is true why shouldn't we speak of it?

(pause)

You might so easily have made a mistake.

NEWLAND

Mistakes are always easy to make; but if I had made one of the kind you suggest is it likely that I should be imploring you to hasten our marriage?

May looks down, not sure what to say.

MAY WELLAND

Yes...you might want—once and for all—to settle the question: it's one way.

She looks away. They both sit.

NEWLAND

Well?

MAY WELLAND

You mustn't think that a girl knows as little as her parents. Imagine, one hears and one notices and one has one's own feelings and ideas.

He is sick to his stomach.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

And, of course, long before, you told me that there was someone else you were interested in...

He looks ill.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

.....Mrs. Thorly Rushworth. Everyone was talking about it two years ago at Newport.

Confusion, then relief spread across his face.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

And once I saw you sitting together on the verandah at a dance—and when she went back into the house, her face was sad, and I felt sorry for her; I remembered it afterwards when we were engaged.

NEWLAND

My dear child—was that it? If only you knew the truth.

May raises her head quickly.

MAY WELLAND

Then there is a truth that I don't know?

(pause)

NEWLAND

I meant the truth about what the old story you speak of.

MAY WELLAND

But that's what I want to know, Newland—What I ought to know. I couldn't have my happiness made out a wrong—an unfairness to somebody else.

And I want to believe that it would be the same with you. What sort of life could we build on such foundations?

(distraught)

I've wanted to tell you that, when two people really love each other, I understand that there may be situations which make it right that they should—go against public opinion.

(pause)

Newland, don't give her up because of me.

He looks at her with kindness and love.

NEWLAND

There is no pledge—no obligation whatever between Mrs. Rushworth and I.

(MORE)

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

And since you understand so many things, dearest, can't you go a little farther and understand the uselessness of our submitting to another form of the same foolish conventionalities?

If there's no one and nothing but us, isn't that an arrangement for marrying quickly, rather than for more delay?

May smiles with joy, looks him in the face. He bends down to kiss her; she's tearing up with joy. They walk back to the house, hand in hand.

EXT. ARCHER HOME - AFTERNOON

Newland exits his carriage, and walks into the house. Janey and Mrs. Archer greet him with warm smiles.

INT. ARCHER DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Janey and Mrs. Adeline Archer are reading, the CLINK of dinnerware rings out in the air. The sound of the TICKING clock fills in the gaps.

JANEY

Your cousin the Countess called on mother while you were away.

She takes another bite of her dinner without looking up. Newland looks at his mother. His mother looks at Janey, back at Newland. Janey watches Newland. She continues.

JANEY (CONT'D)

She had on a black velvet polonaise and a tiny green monkey muff. I never saw her so stylishly dressed.

(sighs, clasps her necklace)

She came alone early on Sunday afternoon. She had one of those new card cases. She said that she wanted to know us because you'd been so good to her.

NEWLAND

(blushing)

Madame Olenska always takes that tone about her friends. She's very happy and being among her own people again.

MRS. ARCHER

Yes, so she told us. I must say
that she seems thankful to be here.

NEWLAND

I hope you liked her mother
(plainly)

MRS. ARCHER

She certainly lays herself out to
please, even when she's calling on
an old lady.

JANEY

Mother doesn't think her simple.

MRS. ARCHER

It's just my old-fashioned feeling;
dear May is my ideal.

NEWLAND

Ah! They are not alike.

MRS. ARCHER

Newland, do go visit Mrs. Mingott
today. She asked about you.

Silence and silverware clinking on plates as they eat.

INT. MINGOTT DRAWING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Newland arrives at the Mrs. Mingott's. She welcomes him into
her drawing room with a big smile.

MRS. MINGOTT

Newland, my boy, you're back. How
is my darling May?

NEWLAND

In wonderful spirits-attending to
her father along with Mrs. Welland.
I took leave from work and managed
to surprise May.

MRS. MINGOTT

Ah ha! So you kicked over the
traces, did you? I suppose Augusta
and Welland pulled long faces and
behaved as if the end of the world
had come? But little May, she knew
better, I'll be bound?

NEWLAND

I hope she did, but after all she wouldn't agree to what I'd gone down to ask for.

MRS. MINGOTT

Wouldn't she indeed? And what was that?

NEWLAND

I wanted to get her to promise that we should be married in April. What's the use of us wasting another year?

Mrs. Mingott shows mock prudery, shock, then with a twinkle in her eye.

MRS. MINGOTT

Ask Momma, I suppose—the usual story. Ah, these Mingotts are all alike. Born in a rut. You can't root em out of it. When I built this house you'd have thought I was moving to California! Nobody had ever built above 40th street, nor above the battery either, you'd think I was Christopher Columbus.

(breath)

No,

(sigh)

Not one of them wants to be different. They're as scared of it as small pox. My dear Archer, I thank my stars I'm nothing but a vulgar Spicer. But there's not one of my children who take after me but my little Ellen. Now why in the world didn't you marry my little Ellen?

NEWLAND

(laughing, blushing) Well...for one thing...

Newland thinks about what to say.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

She wasn't there to be married.

MINGOTT

(satisfied)

No-To be sure.

(MORE)

MINGOTT (CONT'D)

More's the pity and now it's too late. Her life is finished.

He looks down angrily.

NEWLAND

Can't-can't I persuade you to use your influence with the Wellands, Mrs. Mingott? I wasn't made for long engagements.

She leans back with approval.

MINGOTT

No I can see that. You've got a quick eye.

She throws head back and laughs. PORTIERS part behind her and BUTLER clears throat.

MINGOTT (CONT'D)

Ah! Here's my Ellen now!

Ellen stoops for her grandmother, holds out hand to Newland who shakes it. She's happy, she's radiating vivacity.

MRS. MINGOTT

I was just saying to Archer, my dear,-Now why don't you marry my little Ellen?

Newland tries to hold back a vivid blush. Countess Ellen Olenska smiles and looks at Newland.

Mrs. Mingott elbows Ellen Olenska smiling.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

(jovially)

And what did he answer?

MINGOTT

Oh my little darling, I leave you to find that out! He's been down to Florida to see his sweetheart.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Yes, I know.

She looks at Newland.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

I went to see you mother to ask where you'd gone.

(MORE)

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

I had sent a note that you never answered and I was afraid you were ill.

NEWLAND

I left in quite a hurry. I meant to write you.

He looks down in guilt of his apathy.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

And of course once you were there you never thought of me again!

(laughs)

MRS. MINGOTT

Look at him—in such a hot haste to get married that he took French leave and rushed down to implore the silly girl on his knees! That's something of a lover!

(laughs gaily)

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Surely, Granny, we can persuade them to make the wedding sooner.

Newland takes in her smile, the light in her eyes, her ear, her hands, her hair, as she laughs with Mingott. He coughs.

NEWLAND

Well I must go.

He stands and nods to Mrs. Mingott. Madame Olenska holds out her hand, he takes it and shakes it. Raises his eyes just one moment to her, avoiding her but he can't. She also looks at him smiling.

She walks him to the door. They are both quiet. Time stretches on to an eternity. He can feel his heart beat in his chest.

He wants to grab her hand and never let go. She walks ahead looking back at him for a moment and then down every so often wanting him to grab her hand and never let go. Newland grabs his waistcoat and hat, then turns to her.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

(business-like) When may I see you?

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Whenever you like. But it must be soon if you want to see the little house again. I'm moving next week.

NEWLAND
(nods) Tomorrow evening?

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
(nods)
Tomorrow yes. But early, I'm going
out.

Newland looks at the hat in his hands.

NEWLAND
Very well, tomorrow evening then.

He nods and leaves.

INT. NEWLAND'S WORK - THE NEXT DAY

Arriving to his job, Newland passes by the same YOUNG EMPLOYEES at their desks, napping, reading the paper and playing cards on the low. They wave at him as he goes to his desk/cubicle. He arrives at his desk, looks at the clock. Pushes some papers around, takes a walk around the office.

Says his hellos to Mr. Letterblair. Gets some water. Goes back to his desk. Pushes papers around, naps, reads the paper. Clock TICKS. Finally time to leave.

Newland gets up and passes the same guys who are also getting up to leave.

INT. ARCHER DINING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

At home he dines with his mother and Janey. Looks at the clock in the dining rooms, excuses himself and leaves the house.

EXT. ELLEN OLENSKA'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Newland approaches the stoop and swings the door knocker. The door swings open and he is let in. He notices other hats and overcoats in the hall and is taken aback. Nastasia walks him down the hall and throws open the door to the reception room.

NASTASIA / ITALIAN MAID
Gia!

INT. ELLEN'S DRAWING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

MARCHIONESS MANSON, a vividly dressed woman in her 50s-60s who also was Ellen's guardian for much of her life, is standing by the fire.

A larger, stout, OLDER MAN is sitting in the sofa, and NED WITSETT is taking up a chair. A large bouquet of crimson roses on the sofa where Madame Olenska usually sits. They are staring at the flowers.

MARCHIONESS MANSON

What they must have cost at this season! Though, of course, it's the sentiment one cares about.

(sighs)

All three turn around as Newland's footsteps ring on the floor. The Lady advances holding out her hand.

MARCHIONESS MANSON (CONT'D)

Dear Mr. Archer-almost my nephew,
Newland: I am the Marchioness
Manson.

He nods and takes her hand.

MARCHIONESS MANSON (CONT'D)

My Ellen has taken me in for a few days. I've spent the winter in Cuba with Spanish friends-such delightful, distinguished people. The Highest Nobility of old Castile-how I wish you could know them! But I was called away by our dear friends here Dr. Carver.

(waving hand to Carver)

MARCHIONESS MANSON (CONT'D)

You don't know Dr. Agathon Carver, founder of the Valley of Love Community?

Dr. Carver nods to Newland.

MARCHIONESS MANSON (CONT'D)

Ah! New York - New York - how little the life of spirit has reached it. But you do know Mr. Winsett. How do you know Mr. Witsett? The spirit bloweth where it listeth.

The Marchioness laughs at her own joke while the other two gentlemen look at one another.

DR. CARVER

List-oh! List! (awkwardly)

MARCHIONESS MANSON

Do sit down, Mr. Archer. We four had a delightful little dinner together and my child has gone up to dress. She expects you. She will be down in a moment.

NED WINSETT

I'm afraid I must be off.
(rising)

NED WINSETT (CONT'D)

Please tell Madame Olenska that we shall all feel lost when she abandons our street. This house has been an oasis.

He nods to Newland and slips out.

MARCHIONESS MANSON

A caustic spirit-un pea sauvage. But so witty, Dr. Carver, do you think him witty?

DR. CARVER

I never think much of wit.
(severely)

MARCHIONESS MANSON

Ah! You never think of much of wit! How merciless he is to us weak mortals, Mr. Archer!

(sighs)

But he lives only in the life of the spirit. He is mentally preparing the lecture he is to deliver presently at Mrs. Blenker's. Dr. Carver, would there be time, before you start for the Blenkers to explain to Mr. Archer your illuminating discovery of the Direct Contract?

Dr. Carver beams with excitement.

MARCHIONESS MANSON (CONT'D)

But no; I see it is nearly nine o'clock and we have no right to detain you while so many are waiting for your message.

Dr. Carver frowns with disappointment, looks at his timepiece, the clock on the mantle and then rises, reluctantly.

DR. CARVER

I shall see you later, my dear friend?

MARCHIONESS MANSON

As soon as the carriage arrives I will join you.

Dr. Carver is about to bow, but stops.

DR. CARVER

If this young gentleman is interested in my experiences, Madame Olenska might allow you to bring him with you.

MARCHIONESS MANSON

Oh if it were possible - he would be curious. But my Countess Ellen Olenska counts on Mr. Archer this evening.

DR. CARVER

(frowning)

That...is unfortunate. But here is my card.

He hands his card to Newland. Carver finally bows out, Marchioness sighs and sits, waves to Newland to sit.

MARCHIONESS MASON

Ellen will be down in a moment. Before she comes I am so glad of this quiet moment with you.

NEWLAND

(slight nod) Thank you March-

MARCHIONESS MANSON

I know everything Mr. Archer. (sighing) Countess Ellen Olenska has told me all you have done for her - your wise advice. Thank heaven it was not too late!

NEWLAND

Madame Olenska exaggerates. I simply gave her legal opinion, as she asked me to.

(embarrassed)

MARCHIONESS MANSON

Little did you know-though-that at that very moment I was being appealed to: being approached by the Count himself from the other side of the Atlantic. My poor, mad, foolish Olenski, who only asks to take her back on her own terms.

NEWLAND

Really?

MARCHIONESS MANSON

I don't defend poor Stanislas, though he has always called me his best friend. He does not defend himself. He casts himself at her feet-in my person. I have his letter right here.

Manson taps the little bag she carries.

NEWLAND

A letter? Has Madame Olenska seen it?

(rising)

Manson shakes her head.

MARCHIONESS

Time, time, I must have time. I know my Ellen-haughty, intractable, shall I just say a shade unforgiving?

NEWLAND

But good heavens! To forgive is one thing, to go back into hell is another!

MARCHIONES MANSON

Ah, yes, so she describes it. My sensitive child.

(shakes head)

But Mr. Archer, if one may stoop to consider such things: do you know what she is giving up? Those roses there on the sofa-acres of them in his matchless, terraces gardens at Nice! Historic pearls; the Sobieski emeralds-sables-but she cares for none. Art and beauty she does care for;

(MORE)

MARCHIONES MANSON (CONT'D)

she lives for, as I always have -
 music, furniture, brilliant
 conversation. That my dear young
 man, is what you've no conception
 of here. She had it all. She even
 tells me she is not thought
 handsome in New York
 -good heavens! Her portrait has
 been painted nine times! The
 greatest artists in Europe have
 begged for the privilege. Are these
 things nothing? And the remorse of
 an adoring husband?

He lets it sink in.

NEWLAND

She knows nothing yet --- of this?

MARCHIONESS MANSON

Nothing directly - but probably
 suspects. The truth is, Mr. Archer,
 from the moment I heard of your
 firm stand you had taken, and of
 your influence over her, I hoped it
 might be possible to count on your
 support - convince you to...

NEWLAND

That she ought to go back?! I'd
 rather see him dead!

Manson studies him.

She sits quietly as the clock on the mantle TICKS. She opens
 and closes her fan. Quietly, she goes and sits next to
 Newland.

MARCHIONESS MANSON

Am I to understand that you prefer
 that.

(points to dried yellow
 roses on the mantle)

Mr. Archer? After all, marriage is
 marriage and my niece is still a
 wife.

Footsteps on the stairs.

MARCHIONESS MANSON (CONT'D)

Here she comes.
 (glowing)

Ellen enters smiling.

ELLEN OLENSKA

What are you two plotting, Aunt Medora?

Ellen is full of splendor, head held high.

MARCHIONESS MANSON

We were saying, my dear, that here was something beautiful to surprise you with.

She gets up and points to the flowers on the sofa. Countess Ellen Olenska stops. Anger rises in her face.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Who is ridiculous enough to send me a bouquet? I'm not going to ball; I am not a girl engaged to be married. Some people are so ridiculous.

She turns to the door and calls out to Nastasia, who appears.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

Here, throw this in the dust bin.

She hands the bouquet to Nastasia. Nastasia looks at the bouquet in protest, then she stops as Ellen changes her mind.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

No, it s not the fault of the poor flowers. Take them three doors down to Mr. Winsett. His wife is ill, they may give her pleasure. Here put my cloak over you. I want the out of the house immediately.

Cloaks Nastasia's shoulders and shuts the drawing room door sharply. Turns around and she's breathing rapidly. Looks like she's going to cry but laughs instead. Looks at Marchioness and Newland.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

And you two have made friends!

MARCHIONESS MANSON

It's for Mr. Archer to say. He has waited patiently while you were dressing

ELLEN OLENSKA

Yes, my hair wouldn't go.
(Patting hair)

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

I see that Dr. Carver is gone and
you'll be late to the Blenker's.

She looks at Marchioness, then to Newland.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

Mr. Archer, will you put my aunt in
the carriage?

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE

Ellen follows the Marchioness Manson to the door where she
fits her with her things. She waves to her and the
Marchioness calls to her from the carriage.

MARCHIONESS MANSON

Mind the carriage is to be back for
me at ten!

Ellen waves.

INT. ELLEN'S DRAWING ROOM

Newland watches Ellen return to the drawing room. He walks
back and enters, catching her at the mantle looking at the
clock, then at herself in the mirror. He walks into the room
slowly moving towards her and approaches her from behind. In
the mirror their eyes lock for a second. She turns away and
throws herself on the sofa.

ELLEN OLENSKA

There's time for a cigarette.
(sighs)

He notices the box on the mantle, gets it and the spill he
just lit and brings it to her. There's palpable tension as he
holds the light to her face and she lights the cigarette. She
wants to look at him, but thinks better of it.

The only hint giving her away is a single eyebrow raising in
the flame light. She laughs after the cigarette is lit.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

What do you think of me in a
temper?

NEWLAND

It makes me understand what your
aunt has been saying about you.

ELLEN OLENSKA

I knew she'd been talking about me
(angrily)
Well?

She smiles, genuine and curious. Newland stands at the mantle.

NEWLAND

She said you were used to all kinds
of things and splendors and
amusements and excitements that we
could never hope to give you here
in New York.

She smiles faintly through the smoke.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Medora is sweet but incorrigibly
romantic, is she not?

NEWLAND

Is your aunt's romanticism always
consistent with accuracy?

ELLEN OLENSKA

You mean does she speak the truth?

She takes a moment to think.

NEWLAND

She says-she pretends-(pause)
-that Count Olenski has asked her
to persuade you to go back him.

Ellen is quiet. Clock TICKS.

ELLEN OLENSKA

She has hinted him asking in a
letter.

NEWLAND

And that's why she's come.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Poor Medora, there's always someone
she wants to marry but perhaps the
people in Cuba just got tired of
her! I really don't know why she
came.

(gives a little laugh)

NEWLAND

She has a letter from your husband,
that's why.

ELLEN OLENSKA

After all it was to be expected.
(shrugs)

He looks at the clock on the mantle. He looks flushed.

NEWLAND

Oh Ellen, forgive me. I'm a fool
and a brute.

ELLEN OLENSKA

You are horribly nervous; you have
your own troubles. I know you think
the Wellands are unreasonable about
your marriage and of course I agree
with you. In Europe, people don't
understand our long American-

NEWLAND

It's not that. May thinks my
impatience is a bad sign. We had a
frank talk.

(blushes)

She thinks I want to marry her at
once to get away from someone else-
that I care for more...

ELLEN OLENSKA

I don't understand.

NEWLAND

She is insisting on a long
engagement to give me time.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Time to give her up for the other
woman.

NEWLAND

If I want to.

He looks up at her. The clock on the mantle is TICKING.

ELLEN OLENSKA

(finally)

Well, that is noble.

NEWLAND

Noble yes, but ridiculous.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Because you don't care for anyone else.

NEWLAND

Because I don't mean to marry anyone else.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Oh!

(pause)

This other woman...does she love you?

NEWLAND

There is no other woman. I mean, the person whom May Welland was thinking-was never...

ELLEN OLENSKA

Then why are you in such haste?

Sounds of HORSE HOOFS outside on the street. Ellen is still looking at Newland, and Newland is still looking at her.

NEWLAND

There's your carriage.

Ellen studies him, half rises, picks up gloves without thinking.

ELLEN OLENSKA

(distant)

I suppose I must get going.

NEWLAND

(nods) Mrs. Struthers is expecting you.

Ellen turns to Newland and smiles genuinely thinking of the night ahead.

ELLEN OLENSKA

I must go where I am invited.

(stops)

Why not come with me?

She looks at him with a smile.

NEWLAND

May guessed the truth. (breath)

There is another woman.

He looks directly at Ellen who is still listening. Curious, Countess Ellen Olenska sits.

He walks over to her and sits, takes her hand, unclasps the gloves and fan from them. They fall to the floor. She starts up, freeing herself from him. Goes to the mantle.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Ah! Don't flirt with me! Too many people have tried that!

NEWLAND

I never had untoward feelings about you and never shall.
(Rebuffed and embarrassed)

He looks at her unflinchingly.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

But you are the woman I would have married if it had been possible for either of us.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Possible for either of us.

She whirls around.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

And you say that-when it's you who has made it impossible.

NEWLAND

I've made it impossible?
(standing)

ELLEN OLENSKA

Yes, you! You! You!

She is on the brink of tears.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

You, who made me give up divorcing - give it up because you showed me how selfish and wicked it was, how one must sacrifice to preserve the dignity of marriage. And to spare one's family publicity, the scandal! And because my family was going to be your family-for May's sake and for yours-I did what you told me.

(switches tone)

Ah! I've made it no secret of having done it for you.

(laughs)

He goes to her, but she sits down.

NEWLAND
 Good God, when I thought...
 (groans)

ELLEN OLENSKA
 You thought?

Newland starts to come back to his senses.

NEWLAND
 I thought you would go back to him,
 the letter...your husband...

ELLEN OLENSKA
 My husband's letter?

NEWLAND
 Yes.

ELLEN OLENSKA
 I had nothing to fear from my
 husband and his letter: absolutely
 nothing! All I feared was to bring
 scandal on the family- on you and
 May!

Newland shakes his head slightly and looks like he's going to collapse

NEWLAND
 Good God. I had it all wrong.

A length of time passes by between them.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)
 I love you.

A cry comes from Countess Ellen Olenska. He goes to her, sits down, puts his arms around her, hugs her. She resists at first then gives in. He kisses her head, her forehead, her cheeks. He raises her head to his. They kiss slow, tender, passionately at the end she breaks away.

ELLEN OLENSKA
 No more. I suppose this had to be.
 But it doesn't alter a thing, my
 dear Newland.

NEWLAND
 It alters my whole life.

ELLEN OLENSKA

No, it mustn't. You're engaged to May and I'm married.

NEWLAND

I don't understand.
(frustrated, stands up)

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

We've no right to lie to other people or to ourselves. We won't talk of your marriage, but do you see me marrying May after this?

ELLEN OLENSKA

You've done so much for me. I was perfectly unconscious about how people thought of me; spoke about me. I didn't know why. Not until you announced your engagement at the ball. You were so kind. You stood against the cruelty and indifference.

Walking towards her, he kneels and holds her hands, looking up at her. She picks him up by the shoulders, exasperated. He slides his hands into hers, thumbs her palms, pulls her towards his—she looks at him with fear, holding back. He puts his other hand to the nape of, slowly leans in and kisses her. She pulls away and looks into his eyes.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

It can't be like this. We can't be.

Archer kisses her again. She enjoys every minute. She draws away and they stand looking at each other. The clock on the mantle TICKS.

NEWLAND

And Beaufort? Is he to replace me?
(jealously joking)

She looks at him, not taking the bait.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

He's waiting for you at Struthers.

Ellen gets up and calls to Nastasia.

ELLEN OLENSKA

I shall not go out this evening.
Tell the carriage to go fetch Signora Marchesa.

She closes the door and turns around.

NEWLAND

Since you tell me that you're
lonely I've no right to keep you
from your friends.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

I shan't be lonely now. I was
lonely.

She goes to him and holds his hands. They are about to kiss.

The bell rings startling them. Nastasia's steps are heard
outside in the hall. She comes in bearing a yellow envelope.

NASTASIA

The lady was very happy with her
flowers. She thought it was her
signor marito who had sent them.
She cried a little and said it was
a folly.

Nastasia hands an envelope to Ellen. Ellen tears open the
envelope and reads it. Nastasia leaves the room with a slight
bow. Ellen hands the telegram to Newland. It's from St.
Augustine, Florida.

NEWLAND

It's from May. Mr. and Mrs. Welland
agree to marriage after Easter.

He looks up at her noting that she looks as if she would cry.

INT. ARCHER FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Newland opens the door to the Archer home. He finds a similar
telegram on top of a pile of letters and notes. He looks at
it. He knows what it's going to say, picks it up anyway.
Reading it on the stairwell, he crumples it up and shoves it
into his pocket. He takes out a small pocket diary and leafs
through the pages, fingers trembling. He doesn't find what
he's looking for. He finds Janey in her room.

INT. JANEY'S ROOM

Someone is knocking on the door impatiently. Janey turns to
it just as it swings open to a sick-looking Newland. She
stands observing him in her purple flannel dressing gown and
hair in pins.

JANEY

Newland! I hope there's no bad news in that telegram? I waited to open it just in case-

NEWLAND

Janey-

He leans against the doorway.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

What day is Easter this year?

JANEY

Easter?! Newland, how unchristian of you! Why, of course, it's the first week in April! Why?

NEWLAND

The first week?

He opens up pocket diary again and calculates under his breath.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

The first week, you say?

He throws head back and laughs. Concern crosses her face.

JANEY

For mercy's sake, what's the matter?

NEWLAND

Nothing's the matter, except that I'm going to be married in a month.

Janey squeals and hugs him around his neck.

JANEY

Oh Newland! How wonderful! I'm so happy for you! Dearest, why do you keep laughing? Do hush or you'll wake Mamma.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Spring winds send dust and the scent of rain spinning into the air. The winds blow through New York, through the cobblestoned streets, and past a church spilling with flowers and billowing fabrics. WEDDING GUESTS file in; younger adults help their musty-furred grandmothers through the doors and into the pews.

INT. CHURCH

Along the pews, WOMEN sit fanning themselves, CHILDREN fidget, ELDERLY MEN nap, and YOUNG WOMEN are chattering dreamily. Henry Van der Luyden, Beaufort, and the Lefferts are also in attendance. Standing in the back, eight BRIDESMAIDS stand holding bouquets and fixing their hair. Henry Van der Luyden leaves momentarily and comes in with a weeping and inconsolable Adeline Archer on his arm.

Newland walks in to the church adjusting the flower in his boutonniere. A young Van der Luyden serves as his best man.

BEST MAN

(whispers)

Got the ring?

Newland searches the pocket in his waistcoat, finds it, takes it out. Scans the engraving on the inside of the ring. He nods and puts it back in his pocket. He resumes standing in his tall hat, pearl grey gloves.

MUSIC CUE: Handel's Wedding March swells in the background, over the pews and up into the vaulting.

BEST MAN (CONT'D)

There they come!

He looks up, but it's merely the STABLE KEEPER surveying the scene from the church doors, then exits and shuts the door.

Newland stands, unruffled. The doors swing open again to allow the procession to finally enter. Mrs. Welland comes in first on eldest son's arm. Mrs. Lovell Mingott follows, followed by the line of relatives. He spots a woman who looks like Countess Ellen Olenska amongst the relatives waiting to enter. His attention is transfixed, he smiles, waits for her to raise her head and when she does he sees that it isn't her. His smile fades. The best man leans in and whispers to Newland:

BEST MAN (CONT'D)

Newland, she's here.

He looks up with a start.

MUSIC CUE: The Spohr symphony begins to play.

Everything seems to be in slow motion. The bridesmaids and GROOMSMEN come up the nave with the pace of a snail. With every breath he takes time seems to slow down. As the bridesmaids and groomsmen approach, their footsteps RING out like the ticking of a clock.

Mrs. Adeline Archer cries in slow motion, the women fanning themselves stop. Even the children playing in the pews stop. Newland looks around, confusion rising on his face. He looks around, even his best man has stopped mid-smile.

Newland steps down off the steps and approaches a WOMAN who's mid-turn smiling to her FRIEND.

He steps in front of her waving his hand in front of her face but nothing happens. He looks around, unsure of what to do - until May is right next to Newland startling him out of his reverie.

As soon as he comes out of his daze, he checks his pocket again to make sure he has the ring. May's eyes are lit with joy, breaking through the fog of his daze. He smiles back and straightens himself up and they turn towards the PRIEST.

RECTOR

Dearly beloved, we are gathered
here today..

The rector drones on, Newland spaces out. The best man's elbow in Newland's side shaking him out of his daze.

RECTOR (CONT'D)

Repeat after me. I take May
Elizabeth Grace Welland...

NEWLAND

I take May Elizabeth Grace
Welland...

He spaces out again.

BEST MAN

(hissing)

Your arm, I say, give her your arm

Newland looks at the best man with confusion, then shakes himself out of his fog and offers May his arm. She takes it with a beaming, gentle smile; The ring glittering on her hand.

MUSIC CUE: Mendelssohn's wedding march plays as they walk down the aisle, out the door and into the throngs of rice-throwing guests.

EXT. CHURCH

They enter a canvas-wrapped tunnel on the steps, approach the awaiting FOOTMAN who wraps May in her cloak, and climb into the brougham. May turns to Newland - She's beaming - and clasps his hand. He smiles.

She says something he can't make out. Her lips are moving in slow motion again. He asks her to repeat what she said.

Reality snaps back.

NEWLAND

Oh! Yes, of course, I thought I lost the ring; no wedding would be complete if the poor chap of a bridegroom didn't go through that. But you did keep me waiting, you know! I had time to think of every horror that might possibly happen.

May turns to him in front of full Fifth Avenue, flings her hand's around his neck.

MAY WELLAND

But nothing can happen now, can it, Newland, as long as we two are together?

NEWLAND

Now we'll have a wonderful time at Aunt du Lac's. I hear the breakfasts are legendary. I have not had the chance to visit the Rhinebeck in ages.

MAY WELLAND

(sighing)

I was surprised, though, that Aunt Medora came after all, even after Ellen wrote that they were neither of them well enough to take the journey.

(sigh)

I do wish it had been she who had recovered! Did you see the exquisite old lace that she sent me?!

NEWLAND

I, uh, yes, no...yes, it was beautiful.

They drive off.

INT. FIFTH AVENUE TRAIN CAR

Newland stares out into the twilight landscape as May dozes in her seat.

INT. TRAIN STATION - EVENING.

The couple waits for their carriage, but Newland notices the livery man from Skuytercliff approaching them.

NEWLAND

How kind of the Van der Luydens-
they've sent their man over from
Skuytercliff to help us.

LIVERY MAN

My sincerest congratulations, Sir
I'm extremely sorry to give you the
news, but a little accident has
occurred at Miss Du Lac's-a leak in
the water tank. Mr. Van der Luyden
heard the news and send a maid up
by the early train to get the
Patroon's house ready-

Newland has a flashback of Ellen when he hears the news.

LIVERY MAN (CONT'D)

...It will be quite comfortable, I
think, you ll find, Sir. And the
Miss Du Lac s have sent their cook
over, so that it will be exactly
the same as if you'd been at the
Rhinebeck.

May is glowing, Newland stares back blankly. A long pause makes everyone uncomfortable. May looks from the livery man to Newland. Confusion washed over the liveryman's face.

MAN

It'll be exactly the same, Sir.

He smiles and nods again. May turns red and breaks the silence.

MAY WELLAND

The same as the Rhinebeck? The
Patroon's house? But it will be one
hundred times better, won't it,
Newland.

She looks at Newland and signals to answer, who doesn't so she looks back at the livery man.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

It is too dear and kind of Mr. Van der Luyden to have thought of it.

The man helps them with their luggage and guides them to the coach. They arrive at the Van der Luyden's and pass by Skuytercliff. Newland watching from his window as coach drives on.

FLASHBACK:

Flashes back to Countess Ellen Olenska and the night they attended the same dinner.

FLASHBACK END.

EXT. PATROON'S HOUSE

Livery man pulls up to the house, and helps May and Newland to exit.

MAY WELLAND

That's where we're going to be?

She looks up at the cabin.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

It's just our luck! The wonderful luck we're going to have together. It's beautiful!

EXT. BEAUFORT PROPERTY NEWPORT-AFTERNOON. MONTHS LATER.

The heat of the August summer is tempered by the Northeastern shore of Newport. A breeze dances through the grass surrounding the Beaufort property where the Newport Archery Club holds its August meeting.

EXT. BEAUFORT NEWPORT VERANDAH - DAY

Newland stands the a second-story verandah enjoying the breeze and taking in the Beaufort's choice of décor. Large flower pots line the walks; their inhabitants bursting with lurid color. Among them the familiar New York social circle mull and talk, laugh and gossip.

Filmy curtains hung over open French doors billow behind him, and light gleams off the slickly waxed parquet floors dotted with poufs and velvet topped tables. After a while of gazing off into the familiar scene he hears the rustle of skirts approaching from the hall. For a split second his mind races to Ellen, but instead hears the voice of Marchioness Manson call out.

MARCHIONESS MANSON

My dear Newland, I had no idea you and May had arrived.

Newland slightly bows.

NEWLAND

I arrived just yesterday. May has been here a week now.

MARCHIONESS

Ah business, business, professional duties, I understand. Many husbands I know find it impossible to join their wives here except for the weekend.

(laughs)

But marriage is one long sacrifice as I often used to remind my Ellen.

Newland looks slightly ill, but recovers.

NEWLAND

Are you staying here with the Beauforts?

MARCHIONESS MANSON

No, I am staying with the Blenkers in their delicious solitude at Portsmouth. Beaufort was kind enough to send his famous trotters for me this morning.

They both walk towards the balcony.

MARCHIONESS MANSON (CONT'D)

The Blenkers, dear beings have hired an old farmhouse at Portsmouth and gathered a few of us around them. This week Dr. Carver is holding a series of Inner Thought Meeting there. A contrast indeed to this lovely scene of worldly pleasure. But I have always lived on contrast.

(MORE)

MARCHIONESS MANSON (CONT'D)

I always say to Ellen: Beware of monotony, it's the mother of all deadly sins. But my poor child is going through a phase of abhorrence of the world. You know that she has declined all invitations to stay at Newport.

I could barely persuade her to come with me to the Blenkers.

(sighs)

MARCHIONESS MANSON (CONT'D)

But shall we go down and watch the match? I hear your May is one of the competitors.

Newland smiles and nods.

EXT. COMPETITION - DAY

On the lawn below, a FEMALE ARCHER eyes a target from her bow and lets her arrow loose. It widely misses the target. The AUDIENCE behind her claps, she walks away with a sigh.

Newland and Marchioness Manson come down from the house and walk towards the tent. A tired and unwell looking Beaufort stands and greets them both, moving to the other side of the Marchioness whispering something that Newland can't hear.

MARCHIONESS MANSON

Que voulez-vous!

She sends Beaufort in a frown. He excuses himself and moves over to speak to Newland.

BEAUFORT

Archer, you know May's going to carry off the first prize.

MARCHIONESS MANSON

Ah, then it remains in the family.
(smiling)

EXT. COMPETITION TENT

They reach the tent at that moment and Mrs. Beaufort comes up to greet them. May exits the tent for her turn at the target. Swathed in a white dress with a pale green ribbon tied at the waist, a wreath of ivy around her hat, and a half-smile, she could have just walked out of a painting of Diana.

She sees Newland and smiles. At the line of chalk, her feet line up the white powder. In her sight the target lines up with her bow as she cocks the arrow. The other ARCHERS behind her wear smiles, grimaces of nervousness, frozen looks of concentration; some looks off across the lawn to the water-enjoying the summer air. Leffert approaches Newland.

LEFFERT

Gad, not one of them holds the bow
as she does.
(to Beaufort)

BEAUFORT

Yes, but that and Newland are the
only target she'll ever hit.
(snorts and knocks on the
side of his head)

Newland reddens and looks at Beaufort as if he could kill him. May looks back at Newland who beams back to her.

She smiles back and holding the bow, letting the arrow fly hitting the bullseye. Clapping and cheering erupt from the CROWD after her target hit. Newland stands joining in with the cheers. May accepts her prize from a representative of the archery club: a glinting pin in the shape of a bow and arrow, and accepts the congratulations of her rivals and friends. Coming through the crowd with a glint in her eye she is flushed with all the activity.

NEWLAND

Well done, dear.

Newland gives her a quick nod. She beams at him.

MAY WELLAND

Shall we go see Granny? I should
like to tell her myself that I've
won the prize. There's a lot of
time before dinner.

NEWLAND

As you wish, dear. (smiles)

Guests huddle around her and congratulate her.

EXT. BELLEVUE AVE - DAY

The two take a joy ride down Bellevue Avenue. May expertly holds the reigns with a look of joy on her face. Newland breaks a little smile as he catches her beauty in the late afternoon sun. The carriage and ponies turn down a lane, drive through iron gates and up to the house.

Laughing, they climb the steps up to a stunning house. Newland's mood has lifted as he leans into the mood of the shared summer afternoon. In the front room facing an open window, Catherine Mingott sits fanning herself with a palm-leaf frond attempting to keep the heat at bay.

MAY WELLAND

Granny! What an amazing day it's been.

Newland kisses her hand.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

I won the archery tournament today! Look at the pin I received!

She shows it to Mrs. Mingott who examines it.

MRS. MINGOTT

Quite the heirloom, my dear. You must leave it to your eldest.

She pinches May's arm. May Welland blushes, Mingott notices.

MRS. MINGOTT (CONT'D)

Well what have I said to make you shake out the red flag? Aren't you going to have any children?

She looks at Newland, then back at May.

MRS. MINGOTT (CONT'D)

Good gracious, look at her blushing again all over her blushes! What-can't I say that either?

(laughs)

Mercy me, I'm begging to have somebody about me that nothing can shock!

Mingott and Newland start laughing, May chimes in.

MRS. MINGOTT (CONT'D)

Well now tell me about the party, my dears. I shall never get a word about it out of that silly Medora.

MAY WELLAND

Aunt Medora? But I thought she was going back to Portsmouth?

MRS. MINGOTT

She is but she's got to come here first to pick up Ellen.

Newland's face pales at the name.

MRS. MINGOTT (CONT'D)

Ah, you didn't know Ellen has come to spend a day with me. Such fol-de-rol, her not coming for the summer, but I gave up arguing with young people about 50 years ago. Ellen! Ellen!

Newland's looks as if he's about to faint. Mrs. Mingott looks out at the lawn, but there is no answer. She raps on the floor with her stick and a MAID comes in.

MAID

I seen Miss Ellen going down the path to the shore.

MINGOTT

Run down and fetch her like a good grandson.

(to Newland)

This pretty lady will tell me about the party.

Newland gets up, kisses May's hand and calmly walks out of the room.

INT. BELLEVUE HALLWAY

Out in the hallway he begins to feel a little odd, and catches himself against the wall for a second but brushes it off as the heat.

EXT. BELLEVUE BEACH

Gathering himself he walks with more purpose out onto the lawn and towards the water. The day is exquisite in the late summer afternoon. The scent of flowers fills the carrying breeze; the water glassy as a diamond; the weeping willows lush with insects and local birds. On his walk he smiles at the landscape around him, but as he approaches a wooden pier the smile falters.

He sees the figure of a woman waiting at the end of the pier. She's looking out at sea. He takes a breath wanting to step forward, but can't for some reason. His face crumbles for a second, but recovers and decides to move forward. He takes a few steps onto the pier.

Countess Ellen Olenska hears a tapping on the wood behind her. FOOTSTEPS. She knows it's him.

Her heart almost jumps out of her chest with each step. She feels sick. Her thoughts run wild with fear and anticipation, but everything stops.

Daydream:

He's behind her, sliding his hand over hers.

Enjoyment begins to spread across her face. She lets out a breath, relaxing into herself again.

His face slides next to hers, he breathes in her perfume. She enjoys his closeness and turns around. Facing him, she wraps her fingers around his and raises her eyes to meet his. They watch each other, observing each other, seeing into each other's presence. He wants to kiss her, but he just looks into her eyes.

She gives a slight nod allowing him to move in closer. He raises his hand to hold her face, tracing his thumb along her chin and jaw. Memorizing the details of her skin and bone underneath. He brings her in and touches her lips with his.

End Daydream.

Newland is at the far end of the pier. He's taken one step onto the pier and then stopped to watch the female figure in the sun at the other end. Her skirt waves in the breeze. Gulls call overhead, the water gurgles and splashes. A sailboat skims across the horizon, approaching the lighthouse out on the verdant cliff. As it passes the lighthouse he decides to turn back and walk back up the hill.

EXT. DRIVE HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

May and Newland sit in a carriage on their way home.

MAY WELLAND

I'm sorry you didn't find Ellen. I should have liked to see her again. But perhaps she wouldn't have cared. She seems so changed.

Newland barely listens.

NEWLAND

Changed?

MAY WELLAND

So indifferent to her friends. Giving up New York and her house.

(MORE)

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

Spending time with strange folks:
how hideously uncomfortable she
must be at the Blenkers! She always
does keep Aunt Medora out of
mischief: to prevent her from
marrying dreadful people.

Quiet.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

I wonder if she wouldn't be happier
with her husband.

NEWLAND

(laughs)

I don't think I ever heard you say
such a cruel thing before!

MAY WELLAND

(laughs) Cruel?

NEWLAND

Well-watching contortions of the
damned is supposed to be a favorite
sport of angels: but I believe even
they don't think people happier in
hell.

MAY WELLAND

It's a pity she never married
abroad then.

May looks out onto the road. The lamps and candles are lit at
the Welland's as they arrive.

EXT. WELLAND'S HOUSE - EVENING

Mr. Welland glances up from a watch he's trying to fix as the
two pull up. SERVANTS come help them out of the carriage. May
goes ahead. Newland takes his time walking to the door. He
looks up at the stars of the night. Inhaling the beautiful
summer air, he steps into the threshold, taking in the cards
and invitations at the door. The TICKING of a clock somewhere
in the house is marking its pace.

INT. WELLAND HOUSE

His shiny shoes make a CRUSHING sound on the plush
carpet/rug. A SERVANT passes him carrying a box, shoes making
the same sound on the carpet. May is greeting Mr. Welland as
Newland walks into the room. He nods and moves down the hall,
past the TICKING of the clock, to the bedroom where he gets
ready for bed.

INT. BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Evening turns into night and Newland lays awake next to a sleeping May. The moonlight spills in the bed from the open window. There is a disquiet in his mind.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. BELLEVUE BEACH FLASHBACK - DAY

The glittering sunset over the water, the call of the gulls, the sound of waves, and a hand on the pier railing.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING

MRS. WELLAND

A party for the Blenkers—for the Blenkers?

Mr. Welland lays down his knife and fork. He looks at his wife incredulously. Mrs. Welland reads the invitation.

MRS. WELLAND (CONT'D)

Professor and Mrs. Emerson Sillerton.

She adjusts her glasses.

MRS. WELLAND (CONT'D)

Request the pleasure of Mr. and Mrs. Welland's company at the meeting of the Wednesday Afternoon club on 25 August at 3 o'clock punctually. To meet Mrs. and the Misses Blenker.

- *Red Gabled, Catherine Street.*

MR. WELLAND

Good Gracious!

MRS. WELLAND

Poor Amy Sillerton—you never can tell what her husband will do next.

(sighs)

I suppose he's just discovered the Blenkers.

MR. WELLAND

Remember when Sillerton went exploring the tombs of the Yucatan? What was he thinking? Who goes to the Yucatan when you have Paris or Rome?

Newland looks up as May gives an awkward smile. Newland feels their snobbery, the SERVANTS look at one another.

MRS. WELLAND

It's a wonder that they didn't choose the cup race day! Do you remember two years ago their throwing a party for a black man on the day of Julia Mingott's the dansant?

Mr. Welland scoffs and laughs. The servants look at each other.

MRS. WELLAND (CONT'D)

Well, you know some of us will have to go.

She looks around the table laughing, then takes a bite of her food.

MR. WELLAND

Some of us? My dear-

He becomes anxious, uncomfortable at the thought.

MR. WELLAND (CONT'D)

More than one?

His voice quiets and grimaces at Mrs. Welland.

MR. WELLAND (CONT'D)

3 o'clock is a very awkward hour. I have to be here at half-past 3 to take my drops. It's really no use trying to follow Ben Combs new treatment if I don't do it systematically and if I join you later, of course, I shall miss my drive.

He whines and lays down knife and fork.

MRS. WELLAND

There's no reason why you should go at all my dear.

(cheerfully)

(MORE)

MRS. WELLAND (CONT'D)

I have some cards to leave at the other end of Bellevue Avenue. I'll drop in at half past three and stay long enough to make poor Amy feel she hasn't been slighted.

Mr. Welland nodding graciously.

MRS. WELLAND (CONT'D)

And if Newland's afternoon is provided for perhaps May can drive you out with the ponies and try out their new russet harness.

Newland and look at each other. May breaks a smile.

MAY WELLAND

Of course I'll drive with Papa. I'm sure Newland will find something to do.

EXT. BLENKER'S PARTY BELLEVUE AVE - DAY

The day is perfect. A northern breeze sends puffs of clouds sailing across the sky. The crystal blue water catches their reflection and smiles. A team of HORSES pulling a brougham races down Bellevue.

Newland goads them on with focus. After a half a mile Newland eases up on the reigns and lets them relax into a calm trot. The wind is in his hair, the sun on his lashes—he's on fire in the serene blaze of the sun. He drives past farms and villages, fields where MEN work in the fields. He turns down a lane where the road ends.

The glimmer of a river sparkles in the distance. After hitching up the team to the gate and the open shed at the end of the road, he makes his way to a tumble-down house past the gate; it's lawn—now a hay field—moves lazily in the slight wind. Though the paint on the house has faded after a few summer seasons, a garden of dahlias and rose-bushes encircle it joyfully on sun-bleached trellis work.

A wooden cupid—who lost his bow and arrow years ago—takes aim as a wind vane on the roof. Newland leans against the gate with a sign that reads "Blenkers". Curious dragonflies and mayflies hover over around him but hastily scatter as he shifts his weight. Somewhere off in the distance a DOG barks a warning. A grizzled Newfoundland dozing by the front door lifts his head in reply, but couldn't be bothered to care more than that and lays back down.

He crosses the gold-brown lawn towards the house. Something on the porch catches his eye: a pink-parasol.

He walks up the rickety steps to an even ricketier chair and sits, holding the parasol. Newland twirls it between his fingers.

DAYDREAM:

Ellen Olenska holds the pink parasole.

DAYDREAM END:

Newland brings the aromatic wood up to his nose and inhales. His lips accidentally brush it. He reaches up and touches them, shocked.

END DAYDREAM.

A sudden RUSTLING of skirts breaks him from his reverie.

SAMANTHA

Oh, Mr. Archer!

Newland looks up, notices that the young girl, SAMANTHA, has pillow marks on her cheeks as if she just woke from a nap.

NEWLAND

Samantha.

He gives a slight nod.

SAMANTHA

Gracious-where did you drop in from? I must have been sound asleep in the hammock. Everybody else has gone to Newport. Did you ring?

Newland clears his throat.

NEWLAND

I was going to. (awkward)
I had just come up the island to see about a horse and I drove over on the chance of finding Mrs. Blenker. But the house seemed empty...

(pause)

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

So I sat down to wait.

SAMANTHA

The house is empty. Mother's not here-or the Marchioness-or anybody but me.

(slightly reproachful)

(MORE)

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Didn't you know that the Professor and Mrs. Sillterton are giving a garden party for mother and all of us this afternoon? I've had a sore throat so I couldn't go.

(sadly)

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Did you ever know anything so disappointing? Of course I shouldn't have minded half as much if I'd known you were coming.

She smiles at Newland with hearts in her eyes. Newland is tolerant, but dismissive.

NEWLAND

But Madame Olenska has gone to Newport too?

SAMANTHA

Miss Olenska - didn't you know she's been called away?

NEWLAND

Called away?...

Samantha notices him holding her parasol.

SAMANTHA

Oh, my best parasol! I lent it to Katie, the careless thing must have dropped it here.

She reaches for it and Newland gives it back to her. Samantha unfurls it and holds it over her head smiling.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Yes, Countess Ellen Olenska was called away yesterday. A telegram came from Boston. She said she might be gone for two days.

(pause)

I do love the way she does her hair, don't you?

Samantha begins to ramble on. The pink parasol floats above her head like a giant heart. Speed and time begin to slow. Newland just stares at the parasol.

NEWLAND

You don't happen to know why Madame Olenska went to Boston?

Samantha becomes annoyed at the questions.

SAMANTHA

I don't know. She's so romantic
looking isn't she?

(sighs)

Doesn't she remind you of Mrs.
Scott-Siddons when she reads Lady
Geraldine's Courtship? Did you ever
hear her?

Newland stands up.

NEWLAND

Well I shall be in Boston tomorrow.
I'll see if I can manage to meet
her.

SAMANTHA

(resigned)

Oh, but of course, how lovely of
you. She's staying at the Parker
House. It must be horrible there in
this weather.

She continues to talk and follow Newland as he walks towards
his HORSES. He turns to wave, she waves back.

EXT. BOSTON STREET - DAY

FLOWER VENDORS, SHOES SHINERS, CHIMNEY SWEEPS, carriages,

FRUIT VENDORS, SHOP OWNERS calling and sweeping, SOMEONE
throws out their bathroom water, DEAD/DYING HORSE in the
gutter, FANCY COUPLE walking over horse poop, DRUNKS throwing
up. Newland emerges from the train station, calm and
cloistered among the daily Boston affairs. He waits for a
carriage and once inside settles to watch the passing street.
At his stop, he emerges from the dark of the carriage and
onto a sidewalk. He looks up at the sign that say Somerset in
cursive scrip.

INT. SOMERSET

Inside a WAITER seats him next to a window overlooking the
street. Breakfast is served, tea is served, he reads the
paper, more toast is served, his tea cup is refilled, he is
greeted by TWO ACQUAINTANCES, more tea, he shifts in his
seat, coffee, ANOTHER ACQUAINTANCE comes to greet him.
Fiddling his fingers, he looks at his watch.

INT. WRITING ROOM

In the privacy of a writing room he writes a note to Madame Olenska and sends it off to the waiter to give to the MESSENGER. He goes back to his table, re-reading the paper he just finished reading cover to cover. *Soon*, he thinks, but the waiter hands his note back with a shake of his head. Newland gets up in a huff, grabs his hat and coat and exits to the street.

EXT. BOSTON STREET

The street is emptier now that the morning rush has receded. The air fills his lungs with adventure as he stands on the sidewalk wondering where to find her. He decides to go to the Parker House by crossing through the Commons, but as he approaches the Commons he sees a familiar figure sitting under a tree on a bench.

His stops immediately. She's there, in front of him. Is it her? He takes a few steps towards the figure, knowing the details beneath the brim of the hat. He notices her parasol is grey, and somehow his feet have taken him to stand right in front of her.

Countess Ellen Olenska notices a figure standing above her and raises her gaze. She meets the handsome face of a young man and realizes it's Newland. She feels a smile spread across her heart and mouth. He meets her gaze and echoes her joy. Was he always this handsome? After a moment she realizes he wants to sit next to her, so she slides over.

NEWLAND

I'm here on business--just got here
(Smiles)
But what on earth are you doing
here?

ELLEN OLENSKA

I?
(blushes)
Oh, I'm here on business too.

She turns her face to look at him clearly. They look at each other for a few seconds regarding each other.

NEWLAND

You do your hair differently.

He looks away.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Differently?

She pats her hair.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)
No-it's only I do the best I can
when I'm without Nastasia.

NEWLAND
Nastasia-but she isn't with you?

ELLEN OLENSKA
No, I'm alone. For two days it was
not worth bringing her here.

NEWLAND
You're alone at the Parker House?
(concern)

Ellen becomes annoyed, but jokingly instigates.

ELLEN OLENSKA
Does it strike you as dangerous?

NEWLAND
(considering)
No, not dangerous...but...

ELLEN OLENSKA
Unconventional...I suppose it is. I
hadn't thought of it.
I've just done something much more
unconventional. I refused to be
paid off.

Newland looks at her as she draws circles with her parasol.

NEWLAND
Someone has come here to meet you?

ELLEN OLENSKA
Yes.

NEWLAND
With an offer? Was it your money?

She nods.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)
You refused-because of the
conditions?

ELLEN OLENSKA
I refused.

NEWLAND

Your husband wants you back at any price.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Well—a considerable price. At least the sum is considerable for me.

NEWLAND

What were the conditions?

ELLEN OLENSKA

Oh, they were not onerous, just to sit at the head of his table now and then.

Newland nods.

NEWLAND

It was to meet him here that you came?

He looks dejected.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Here?

(laughs)

Goodness no, at this season he is always at Cowes or Baden. He sent someone.

NEWLAND

With a letter?

ELLEN OLENSKA

(laughs again)

No, just a message. He never writes. I don't think I've had more than one letter from him. He sent his emissary—the secretary who insisted on waiting till this evening in case—on the chance—I'd change my mind.

Newland exhales.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

I'm taking the afternoon train back to Portsmouth.

Both are quiet, watching people along the path. She turns to take him in.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

You're not changed.

Newland slowly turns to look at her, calmly taking her in. He stands up.

NEWLAND

This is horrible, why shouldn't we go out a little on the bay? There's a breeze, and it'll be cooler.

Ellen quietly looks at him, suspicious.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

On a Monday morning there won't be anybody on the boat. My train doesn't leave until the evening. I would just like your company.

(plainly)

She stands up, opens her parasol, looks around, exhales, looks back at him.

ELLEN OLENSKA

You musn't say things like that to me.

NEWLAND

I'll say anything you like, or nothing. I won't open my mouth unless you tell me to.

(plainly)

All I want to do is to listen to you.

She looks at her pocket watch.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Give me the day! I want to get you away from that man! What time is he coming?

Ellen blushes.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Eleven.

NEWLAND

Then what are we waiting for? It's been a hundred years since we've met—it may be another hundred before we meet again.

He looks down at her. Ellen looks at him, studying him, then looks away.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Why didn't you go down to the beach to fetch me? The day I was at Granny's.

(childlike)

Newland surprised.

NEWLAND

Because you didn't turn around. I swore to myself I wouldn't unless you turned around.

He laughs at himself.

ELLEN OLENSKA

But I didn't turn around on purpose.

Newland looks at her in surprise.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

I knew you were there, when you drove in I recognized the ponies. So I went to the beach.

NEWLAND

(hurt)

To get away from me as far as you could?

ELLEN OLENSKA

To get away from you as far as I could.

NEWLAND

(laughs)

Well, it's no use. I may as well tell you the business I came here for was just to find you.

He looks at her with a smile. She quietly looks at him.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Look, we'll miss our boat.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Our boat! Oh! I must leave a note at the hotel.

She nods.

NEWLAND

Leave the note. We will be back in time so you won't miss a thing.

INT. PIER BOAT - DAY

Newland and Ellen board the half-empty boat and sit side-by-side on a bench. They are quiet, enjoying the view in silence. Newland watches her while she looks out at sea. He looks at her hands, his pinky moving towards hers, almost touching, but she unknowingly lifts her hands to adjust her hair.

He watches her, taking in the details of her face.

Flashback:

Their kiss. END FLASHBACK.

His lips burn, he blushes.

She leans back and closes her eyes. He watches for a few seconds and then also leans back and closes his eyes. The boat docks, they unboard and walk to the inn.

INT. INN

Newland opens the door for her and they both take a breath as they step into a room filled with the noise of groups people talking over one another. The CROWDS are filled with a tense excitement-their bodies filling all the seats to the brim. They look around unable to find a quiet place to sit.

NEWLAND

This is ridiculous. I'll ask for a room.

He walks off leaving her standing in a small space near a wall. When he comes back she follows him to their new space.

INT. INN ROOM

The doors to the veranda doors open, and Newland stands in their frame. Ellen comes through the veranda doors and sits down at the table set outside.

Newland sits a few seconds later. They look at each other. Then she breaks to look at the sea, for a second his eyes stay on her as he flashes back to his hand on hers, then he looks out to sea. They begin to chat.

EXT. PIER BOAT - A FEW HOURS LATER

Newland and Ellen stand on the boat deck enjoying the view. Ellen stands against the railing looking out at sea. With two cups of water for the both of them in his hands, he walks back to her but stops for a second, memorizing her details. His feet carry him on after a few seconds. They don't look at each other, just out at sea. After a few moments of fiddling with the cup of water, Ellen takes a breath.

ELLEN OLENSKA

I haven't seen you in so long, I
almost thought you'd forgotten me.
(laughs)

NEWLAND

Why? Why worry about me? I'm the
man who married another woman
because you told me to.

Ellen's lips tighten in anger and sadness.

ELLEN OLENSKA

I thought you were not to say such
things today!

NEWLAND

Ah! How like a woman! None of you
will ever see bad business through!

Ellen looks up in a rage.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Bas business? For who? You or May?

Newland's lip tightens as he begins to fidget.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

If it's not worthwhile to have
given up, to have missed things so
that other may be saved from
disillusionment and misery-then
everything I came home for,
everything that made my other life
seem by contrast so bare and so
poor-All these things are a sham.

Newland looks away.

NEWLAND

And in that case there's no reason
why you shouldn't go back?

Ellen looks at him, tearing up.

ELLEN OLENSKA
Oh, is there no reason?

Ellen wants to shake him.

NEWLAND
Not if you staked your all on the success of my marriage. My marriage isn't going to be a sight to keep you here.

Countess Ellen Olenska looks shocked and pale. Newland looks at her and then away.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)
Oh, what's the use? You gave me my first glimpse of a real life, and at the same moment you asked me to go on with a sham one.
(angry)
It's beyond human enduring - that's all.

Ellen touches him.

ELLEN OLENSKA
Oh don't say that! When I'm enduring it as well. (they almost kiss)

She becomes aware that they are in a public space. A couple passes by and she drops her arms and looks away weeping. She steps a few steps back and puts some space between them.

He leads her to a quiet room on the boat. They stand apart from each other. She's afraid to go near him. They stand like that for a while just looking at each other. She breaks the spell and turns her back and moves towards the window.

Still crying, her hands shaking. Newland's hand slips into hers. Her hand is surprised but she accepts his. He steps from behind her and puts his chin to her face. She surrenders into his shoulder and exhales. His hand glides up her arm, goes to her jaw and traces her jaw. He lovingly takes his time to remembering her.

NEWLAND
What a life this is.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA
As long as we're a part of each other's lives.

He lightly touch her lips. She turns to face him, letting go of his hands. She moves in to kiss him with trepidation. He moves in as well, closing his eyes. CALL OF ARRIVAL to port rings out. The spell is broken. He hugs her, she wipes her eyes.

EXT. FALL RIVER STATION - AFTERNOON

They part at Fall River Station. Newland is in a daze as he boards the train, still as he exits.

EXT. NEW YORK TRAIN STATION - EVENING

At his station back in New York, PEOPLE pass by in a haze. He travels through them uncaring of their presence. A tree outside the station is flowering in the summer heat, but soon the blooms begin to fall, the leaves being to change into their amber hues, and finally a cold wind blows them off their branches save for one. That one takes us on a journey along the street where people have begun to hang heavy curtains, unroll carpets and light fires.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

Day turns to night and a moth flies past a glittering opera house where people are arriving in heavy coats and furs.

The moth carries on past the poorer neighborhoods where the poor are cleaning up, trying to keep warm, eating, cooking, singing, dancing. As night settles in, they begin to filter back into their homes. The moth settles on a light post in an empty street. A couple drunkards stumble their way home.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - MORNING

Night turns into day, doors begin to open and close, newspapers are printed and sold. Vendors prepare their wares on the streets. Vegetables, fruits, flowers, shoe shining. A BIRD flies down the street, and a little farther up where the homes begin to show well maintained paint and doorways. The day's journey stretches into evening and the homes begin to get a little bigger the farther away the bird flies - till it reaches a street with large mansion-like homes. It flies past Adeline Archer's home.

EXT. ARCHER HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

The Archer house looks warm and well-lit; perfect for company. Through the window, a passerby can see that supper is being prepared

INT. ARCHER DINING ROOM

PEOPLE are gathering themselves around the table and sitting, ready for the meal. The sound of plates and glasses clink and shuffle along the table.

MRS. JACKSON

The extravagance in dress-Sillerton took me to the first night of the opera and I can tell you that Jane Merry's dress was the only one that I recognized from last year and even that had the front panel changed. Yet I know she got it out from Worth only two years ago because my seamstress always goes in to make over her Paris dresses before she wears them. In my youth it was considered vulgar to dress in the newest fashions; and May Sillerton had always told me that in Boston the rule was to put away one's Paris dresses for two years.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Ah, yes, Jane Merry is a true New-Yorker. (sighs)

MRS. JACKSON

Old Mrs. Baxter Pennilow-who did everything handsomely-used to import 12 a year: 2 velvet, 2 satin, 2 silk, and the other 6 of poplin and the finest cashmere. It was a standing order. And as she was ill for 2 years before she died, they found 48 Worth dresses that had never been taken out of the tissue paper. And when the girls left off their mourning, they were able to wear the first lot at the symphony without looking in advance of fashion.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Ah, well, Boston is more conservative than New York.

(MORE)

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)

But I always think it s a safe rule for a lady to lay aside her French dresses for one season.

MRS. JACKSON

It was Beaufort who started the new fashion by making his wife clap her new clothes on her back as soon as they arrived: I must say at times it takes all of Regina's distinction not to look like - like...

She looks around for help, catches Janey's eye who is trying to read what she is saying.

MR. JACKSON

--Like her rivals.

Mr. Jackson smiles exuding that he know's he's clever. All the ladies murmur and nod in agreement. Janey looks on in awe and amazement-learning about these things for the first time. Her mother notices and changes the subject.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Poor Regina! Her Thanksgiving wasn't a cheerful one, I'm afraid. Have you heard the rumors about Beaufort's investments?

Mr. Jackson nods unimpressed.

JANEY ARCHER

(interested)

Oh, what rumors?

Everyone looks around.

MRS. JACKSON

Why my dear, let's just say when a banker goes bankrupt it's time to take him out of the bank.

Janey looks surprised. She's never heard of this. Mrs. Archer changes the subject.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Of course, Newland, I know you let dear May go to Mrs. Struthers Sunday evening..

Everyone looks at Newland who is caught off guard by the sudden question. He looks up completely disinterested in the conversation.

MAY WELLAND

(recovering)

Oh, you know everybody goes to Mrs. Struthers now and she was invited to Granny's last reception.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

I know, dear, I know.

(exhales)

Such things have to be, I suppose, as long as amusement is what people go out for. But I've never quite forgiven your cousin Madame Olenska for being the first person to countenance Mrs. Struthers.

MAY WELLAND

(blushes, slight smile) Oh Ellen.

(depreciating tone)

Newland's eyes glance sideways.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

I've always thought that people like Countess Olenska who have lived in aristocratic societies ought to help us keep up our social distinctions instead of ignoring them.

May blushes.

MRS. JACKSON

I have no doubt we all seem like foreigners.

MAY WELLAND

(Trying to think of the appropriate thing to say)

I don't think that Ellen cares for society, but nobody knows exactly what she cares for.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Ah, well.

MRS. JACKSON

Madame Olenska is a great favorite with the gentlemen.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

That's the danger that -that a young woman like Madame Olenska is exposed to.

Everyone begins to stand for their after dinner gathering.

INT. ARCHER LIBRARY

The men and women retire to their separate rooms. Mr. Jackson lights his evening cigar in the library with the rest of the men. It's quiet save for the TICKING of the clock on the mantle.

MR. JACKSON

If the Beaufort smash comes, there are going to be disclosures.

Newland raises his head. FLASHBACK:

EXT. PATROON HOUSE - DAY

Beaufort's figure walking through the snow.

FLASHBACK END.

MR. JACKSON

There's bound to be the nastiest kind of cleaning up. He hasn't spent all his money on Regina.

NEWLAND

Oh well. My belief is he'll make it out of the woods.

MR. JACKSON

Perhaps. Perhaps. I know he went to see some of the influential people today. Of course, it's to be hoped they can tide him over-this time, anyhow. I shouldn't like to think of poor Regina spending the rest of her life in some shabby foreign watering place for bankrupts. I don't know, of course, how far your wife's family are aware of what people say about Madame Olenska's refusal to accept her husband's latest offer.

Newland looks at Jackson, thinking about what to say.

MR. JACKSON

It is a pity-certainly a pity-that she refused it.

NEWLAND

A pity? In God's name why?

MR. JACKSON

Well, to put it on the lowest ground-what's she going to live on now?

NEWLAND

(confused) Now?

MR. JACKSON

Well, if Beaufort-

Newland's anger is rising.

NEWLAND

What the devil do you mean about Beaufort?

Newland eases up by walking to the mantle.

MR. JACKSON

Well I have it on good authority that the family reduced Madame Olenska's allowance considerably when she refused to go back to her husband. By this refusal she also forfeits the money settled on her when she married-which Olenski was ready to make settled on her if she returned. Why, what do you mean, my dear boy, by asking me what I mean?

NEWLAND

I don't know anything about Madame Olesnka's private affairs, but I do need to be certain of what you insinuate.

MR. JACKSON

Oh I didn't-it was Lefferts for one.

NEWLAND

Lefferts?

(snorts)

Lefferts who made love to her and got snubbed for it.

Mr. Jackson's eyebrows raise.

MR. JACKSON

Did he? Well, well, it's a pity she didn't go back before Beaufort's mishandling. If she goes now, and if he fails, it will only confirm the general impression. Which isn't by any means peculiar to Lefferts.

NEWLAND

(murmuring)

Oh she won't go back now: less than ever...

Mr. Jackson quietly puffs his cigar. He sees that Newland loves her. He takes a breath.

MR. JACKSON

That's your opinion, eh?
Well, no doubt you know. But everybody will tell you that the few pennies Medora Manson has left are all in Beaufort's hands: and now those two women are to keep their heads above water unless he does, I can't imagine.
Of course, Madame Olenska may still soften old Catherine, who's been the most inexorable opposed to her staying; and old Catherine could make her any allowance she chooses. But we all know that she hates parting with good money; and the rest of the family have no particular interest in keeping Madame Olenska here.

Newland tries to control himself.

NEWLAND

Shall we go up and join my mother then?

INT. CARRIAGE - NIGHT

Going home in the carriage, Newland and May bob in silence to the rhythm of the horse's movements. They both look unhappy.

INT. NEWLAND AND MAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Newland retires to his library, May to her room. Before parting for the night he calls to her a little too loudly and frustratedly. She comes, obviously stunned at his tone.

NEWLAND

The lamp is smoking again, I think
the servants might see that it's
kept properly trimmed.

MAY WELLAND

I'm sorry. It won't happen again.
(bright)

She lowers the wick as Newland stares at her. Horror flashes across his face as shortening the wick, the clock starts to TICK. He and she are suddenly old and wasted. The moment is broken by May asking if he's okay. It takes a few times to get him to snap out of it.

NEWLAND

I may have to go to Washington for
a few days soon. Perhaps next week.

May pauses, but recovers in a still fake and cheerful voice, she fidgets, returns to fixing the lamp, though it's fixed.

MAY WELLAND

Oh, on business?

NEWLAND

Naturally. There's a patent case
coming up before the Supreme
Court...

As Newland is talking to May, he's old again. He studies his wrinkled hands.

She's watching him, her heartbeat becomes super loud over his slowed-talking. It's almost like the ticking of a clock. She knows. He's been so distant lately. Break. Back to real-time. Everything stops for a second and is quiet.

MAY WELLAND

Yes, I see. The change will do you
good.

She turns to leave, stops.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

And you must be sure to go see
Ellen.
(Plainly)

Camera on her hand as she turns the wick down, lifts the globe and blows out the flame.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

They smell less if one blows them
out.

(cheerily)

She turns to him for a kiss.

INT. NEWLAND'S WORK - MORNING

The door gives way to Newland's hand as he enters the law firm for work the next morning. He walks in with the usual resigned dispassion, but something is different. As he walks through the door, he notices that his COWORKERS are running around more than usual.

Mr. Letterblair and a GROUP OF MEN passing by murmur amongst themselves '*It's terrible, just terrible, everyone will be affected. Beaufort...*' in an air of panic. Murmuring flies around the workplace with a yell every now and then from one of the offices. Newland walks to his desk among the panic, looking around with confusion.

A note is passed to him by an anonymous coworker's hand. He opens it with the same resigned dispassion he had when he entered, but upon reading it throws it on the desk, and grabs his hat and coat with enough force to knock over the chair. The note lies thrown on the desk:

*GRANNY HAD A STROKE. COME TO THE
HOUSE. -MAY*

INT. GRANNY MINGOTT'S ROOM - DAY

A doctor's bag lays haphazardly on a velvet chair. Blankets, wraps, salves and empty cups are strewn about the room. At her bed, May and Granny Mingott's DOCTOR are attending a limp but lively Granny. The doorbells RINGS, a SERVANT leaves to answer the door. At the front door stands a confused Newland who hands his hat to the servant as he is invited in.

Mrs. Lovell Mingott nods to him while passing into the depths of another room. He takes a couple steps into the house as May appears with a tired smile. In the reception room, she tells him about Mrs. Julius Beaufort arriving the night before to visit Granny, about her asking Granny to cover for her husband, and the stroke after she left. They make their way back to the Granny's room.

Voice-over of action:

MAY WELLAND

Regina Beaufort paid Granny a visit last night at a late hour. The maids didn't even know who she was, she was so shrouded in coats. Granny spoke with her for about an hour, and then she was gone. Before going to bed, Granny seemed distressed but managed. When she rang for the maids at 3 in the morning, though, they found her in this state. Apparently Regina asked Granny to cover for her and Beaufort. Of course she said no 'But Auntie, my name is Regina Dallas. I'm family.' 'It was Beaufort when he covered you in jewels, and it'll be Beaufort now that he's covered you with shame,' said Granny.

Mrs. Lovell Mingott re-appears with pen and paper.

MRS. LOVELL MINGOTT

That was the cause of poor Grandmama Spicer's leaving town. She was your great-grandmother, May. Of course, your great-grandfather's money difficulties were private-losses at cards, or signing a note for somebody-I never knew because Mama wouldn't even speak of it.

Mrs. Welland comes into the room with biscuits.

MRS. WELLAND

Newland!

MRS. LOVELL MINGOTT

(sighs)

I understand that the emerald necklace she wore at the Opera last Friday had been sent on loan from Ball and Black. I wonder if they'll ever get it back?

MAID calls for Mrs. Lovell Mingott into hall. May moves towards Newland to speak to him, but the maid and Mrs. Lovell Mingott come right back in.

MRS. LOVELL MINGOTT (CONT'D)
 She wants me to telegraph for
 Ellen. I had previously to Ellen
 and Medora.

Newland keeps his composure but his eyes light up.

MRS. LOVELL MINGOTT (CONT'D)
 But that's not enough. Now I am to
 telegraph to her immediately.
 (sighs)
 I suppose it must be done.

Upon hearing this May goes to the floor to straighten up the
 newspapers on the floor.

MAY WELLAND
 Of course it must be done.
 (pause)
 Shall I write the telegram for you,
 auntie?

Newland is trying to keep the flush from rising in his face.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)
 If it goes at once Ellen can
 probably catch tomorrow morning's
 train.

MRS. LOVELL MINGOTT
 Well it can't go at once. Jasper
 and the pantry-boy are both out
 with notes and telegrams.

May looks at Newland.

MAY WELLAND
 But here's Newland, ready to do
 anything. Will you take the
 telegram, Newland? There will be
 just time before luncheon.

May seats herself at the desk and begins writing. Newland
 rises from next to the windows, straightens his jacket with a
 look of duty and nods.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)
 What a pity that you and Ellen will
 cross each other on the way!

She turns to mother and aunt.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

Newland is obliged to go to Washington about a patent-law-suit that is coming up before the Supreme Court. I suppose Uncle Lovell Mingott will be back by tomorrow night. And with Granny improving so much it doesn't seem right to ask Newland to give up and important engagement for the firm - does it?

She finished the note and hands it Newland.

MRS. WELLAND

Of course not, darling. Your Granny would be the last person to wish it.

Newland tilts his head to the ladies and exits. As he walks to the door he overhears Mrs. Lovell Mingott saying:

MRS. LOVELL MINGOTT

But why on earth should she make you telegraph for Ellen Olenska? Is it about the business with her husband?

INT. POST OFFICE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

A young female clerk with a disheveled hairdo and crooked glasses assists Newland among a few customers milling about their business.

FEMALE CLERK

Olen - Ole -Howjerr spell it?

She tries to read the telegram.

NEWLAND

Olenska, OL-Len- SKA.

Newland takes the telegram back and re-writes her name.

LEFFERTS

It's an unlikely name for New York telegraph office; at least in this quarter.

Newland turns to the voice and finds Lawrence Lefferts staring back at him.

LEFFERTS (CONT'D)

Hello Newland. Thought I'd catch you here. I've just heard of old Mrs. Mingott's stroke and I was on my way to the house when I saw you turning down the street and nipped after you. You've just come from Mingott's?

Newland looks at Lefferts and gives the telegram back to the woman. Lefferts notices a beautiful, young clerk at the other window and smiles and nods to her. She smiles back.

NEWLAND

Yes.

LEFFERTS

Very bad, eh? I gather it's bad if you're including Ellen Olenska.

Newland looks away checking his impulse to punch Lefferts, then looks back. In his mind he does.

NEWLAND

Why?

Lawrence Lefferts just looks back at him. Newland turns and gives the money to the attendant and they both walk out.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Mrs. Mingott is much better and the doctor feels no anxiety whatsoever.

Lefferts exhales and looks relieved.

LEFFERTS

So have you heard the rumors about the Beaufort failure?

EXT. STREET

Consulting each other about the current state of affairs they walk down the street. PEOPLE on the street are running about with a concerned panic and confusion, some are crying.

SOMEONE buys a newspaper from a YOUNG BOY selling them on the street. The front page strewn with the words Beaufort and Bank Failure. They quickly discard it on the street. An elderly TRASH COLLECTOR picks up the discarded newspaper and stuffs it into his garbage bag.

INT. WELLAND DINING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

A card is read aloud by Mrs. Welland at the lunch table. May Welland, Mr. Welland, Newland, and Mrs. Lovell Mingott are eating at the table.

MRS. WELLAND

Ellen will be arriving tomorrow evening.

(reading telegram)

Wonderful.

(sighs)

Now who will be available to meet her at Jersey City? I can't possibly go. Mr. Welland and I will be visiting your aunt and what if he were to get upset at the sight of your poor aunt? He would need the brougham.

May and Newland continue eating without responding.

MRS. WELLAND (CONT'D)

Your brothers, of course, will be downtown.

She clears throat, looks at Mr. Welland.

INT. A ROOM IN GRANNY'S HOUSE - A SHORT WHILE LATER

May plays the harp. Mr. Welland is busy reading the paper, Mrs. Lovell Mingott moves in and out of the room. Newland vacillates between reading and staring out the window. Mrs. Welland stares out the window at PASSERS and works on her pointe-work.

MRS. WELLAND

Mr. Lovell Mingott would be just back from his shooting, and the Mingott carriage will be engaged in meeting him.

SAME ROOM - A SHORT WHILE LATER

May and Mrs. Welland drink tea.

MRS. WELLAND

And May, you cannot possibly go alone across the ferry to Jersey City.

(MORE)

MRS. WELLAND (CONT'D)

Nevertheless, it will appear inhospitable if Madame Olenska were allowed to arrive without being received.

SAME ROOM - A SHORT WHILE LATER

May is lounging in a chair, Mrs. Welland is sitting with a cloth over her forehead, eyes closed.

MRS. WELLAND

It will appear inhospitable and contrary to Catherine's express wishes if Madame Olenska arrives without family to greet her.

She sighs and rises to sitting up.

MRS. WELLAND (CONT'D)

It's just like Ellen to place the family in such a dilemma. It's always one thing after another. I almost think Momma is less than what Dr. Bencomb will admit since she has this morbid desire to have Ellen come at once no matter how inconvenient it is.

Mr. Welland is astonished. May stops what she's doing, Newland looks up at the two then back at Mrs. Welland. Mr. Welland sharply inhales.

MR. WELLAND

Augusta, she is only following Catherine's wishes, and do you have any other reason for thinking that Bencomb is not to be relied upon? Has he been less conscientious than usual in following up my case or your mother's?

Mrs. Welland straightens up and cheers up. She laughs a little too cheerfully and takes a second helping of tea sandwiches next to her.

MRS. WELLAND

My dear, how could you say such a thing? I only meant that...

MRS. WELLAND (CONT'D)
 ...after Momma decided it was
 Ellen's duty to go back to her
 husband, it seems strange that she
 is asking for her when there are
 half a dozen other grandchildren
 that she might have asked for.
 (sighs)
 But, we must never forget that
 Mamma, in spite of her wonderful
 vitality, is a very old woman.

Everyone is staring at her, incredulous at her mind.

MRS. WELLAND (CONT'D)
 (cheerful)
 I don't see how Ellen's got to be
 here tomorrow evening and I do like
 to have things settled for at least
 24 hours ahead.

NEWLAND
 Shall I fetch her?

Newland doesn't bother to even look up. May looks up at him,
 confused but then worry settles over her face.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)
 I can easily get away from the
 office if May will send the
 brougham.

Mrs. Welland sighs and beams with gratitude.

MRS. WELLAND
 Oh Newland!

May looks at Newland, studying him, but cheery nonetheless.
 She turns to her mother.

MAY WELLAND
 So you see, Mama, everything will
 be settled 24 hours in advance.

EXT. WELLAND HOME - THE NEXT DAY

Newland waits on the sidewalk for the brougham. He checks his
 pocket watch. Looks down the street, and looks down at his
 shoes with a barely hidden excitement. The brougham pulls up
 beside him. May walks out the front door and joins him as he
 gets in. He kisses her on the cheek and smiles at her. She
 smiles back, all love.

MAY WELLAND

I didn't want to worry Mamma by raising fresh obstacles, but how can you meet Ellen tomorrow and bring her back to New York when you're going to Washington?

NEWLAND

(flippant) I'm not going.

May looks at him alarmed.

MAY WELLAND

Not going? Why, what's happened?
(forced smile)

NEWLAND

The case is off-postponed.

MAY WELLAND

Postponed?

She opens curtains absentmindedly.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

How odd. I saw a note this morning from Mr. Letterblair to Mamma saying that he was going to Washington tomorrow for the big patent case that he was to argue before the Supreme Court. You said I was a patent case, didn't you?

NEWLAND

Well-that's it. The whole office can't go. Letterblair decided to go this morning.

MAY WELLAND

Then it's not postponed.

May becomes angry and flustered. Newland looks at her, then away. Why is she insisting?

NEWLAND

No, but my going is.

He turns to hold her gaze, then looks away.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

I'm not going till later on. Luckily for the convenience of your family. (Biting? Sarcastic?)

The atmosphere turns uncomfortable. May switches moods.

MAY WELLAND

Yes, it's awfully convenient.

The carriage stops.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

That you should be able to meet Ellen after all. You saw how much Mamma appreciated your offering to do it.

NEWLAND

(all business)

Oh, I'm delighted to do it.

He gets out without looking at her. He helps her out of the carriage.

MAY WELLAND

Goodbye dearest.

She looks up at him smiling but inside she's realizing something. They face each other for a split second, he pecks her on the cheek. He walks away across Union Square.

The carriage continues on home. Tears begin to well up in her eyes, and for a while the passing scenery outside becomes a watery blur.

INT. CARRIAGE - AFTERNOON

May's dark blue brougham meets Newland at the ferry. As it pulls up and Newland gets in. He sits back on something uncomfortable. Something is caught between the cushions. He pulls it from under himself. It's a fabric flower and ribbon leftover from the wedding. It has Newland's and May's names embroidered on it. He notices rice on the floor, picks it up and examines it. He sits back.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

It's a snowy and dark afternoon. The gas lamps are lit and glittering on the marble. Everything seems magical.

Arriving at the terminal, Newland steps out into a half-empty station. Ellen's train hasn't come into the station yet. He buys a cup of coffee at the café stand, taking his time, leaning on a wall he starts to imagine. A throng of PEOPLE suddenly appear from the steam of the engine pushing past him.

START DAYDREAM

Countess Ellen Olenska steps off the train among a group of people.

From far off he can see her through the steam of the train. She begins to walk towards him, like a goddess emerging from the sea. They stand facing each other as people pass beside them in a blur.

Newland's eyes travel over her face, Ellen's eyes travel over his face. He reaches out his hand to take her luggage with a loving calm. Their hands touch, hers lingers on his hand on hers for a moment. He offers her his arm; she takes it with a smile.

They walk at a quiet pace towards the station doors. She leans her head on his shoulder and laughs. He looks down at her face. He's utterly happy.

Before reaching the doors he notices something on her face, so he stops in the middle of the throngs of people to wipe it off. Her smile fades as she regards him. As his hand moves away, they look at each other and he slides his hand up her cheek and leans in.

END DAY DREAM

Transition - The train arrives.

Arriving into the station, the train startles Newland with a screeching halt. People begin to disboard and push through the crowd. He walks past a few cars then suddenly stops. She is in front of him, standing like a goddess. She reaches out to shake his hand.

He draws her arms through his and takes her luggage. She smiles.

NEWLAND

This way-I have the carriage.

They walk to the carriage talking about Granny and the Beaufort situation all along the way. An eager Newland helps settle Ellen in the carriage, and once on their journey to the ferry, she leans back into the seat looking out the window as Newland drones on. At one moment she shuts her eyes and leans back clutching his hand: a hearse passes by.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Oh I hope it isn't poor Granny!

Newland looks out at the passing hearse and laughs.

NEWLAND

Oh no, she's much better! She's bright, really. There, we've passed it.

He still grips her hand, she relaxes a little. He doesn't take his eyes off her: takes in her face, her hair, her dress collar, and finally settles on her brown glove. He smiles faintly, pleasantly. He decides to unbutton her glove, with no intention behind it. He slides his thumb into the glove and removes it by sliding in onto her palm.

Ellen's eyes open, bewildered. Before he knows it he's put her palm to his lips and kisses it. She closes her eyes for a split second, enjoying it, then takes her hand away with a faint smile, also annoyed.

ELLEN OLENSKA

So you didn't expect me today.

Newland shakes his head.

NEWLAND

No, I meant to go to Washington to see you.

Newland sits back, looking out the window.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

I'd made all my arrangements. I very nearly crossed you on the train.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

Oh-?

Newland laughs.

NEWLAND

Do you know-I hardly remember you?

Ellen looks confused.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

(Chuckles)

I mean-each time I see you, you happen to me all over again.

He is shy that he'd let this out. Leans back and looks away. Ellen looks at his profile. He looks back at her, she looks away.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Does it-do I do that to-to you?

She looks out the windows, looks at him, then looks back out the window and nods.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Ellen.

He grabs her hand.

Ellen.

ELLEN OLENSKA

What a pretty carriage! Is it May's?

She turns to look at him.

NEWLAND

Yes.

She nods and smiles.

ELLEN OLENSKA

It was May who sent you to fetch me then? How kind of her.

Newland looks at her and then away.

NEWLAND

Your husband is still asking for you back, I expect?

ELLEN OLENSKA

(Sighs)

Yes, but no matter. Even if he sends letters, emissaries, or roses it still won't change - the past or my mind.

NEWLAND

I think you're one of the most honest women I've ever met.

He laughs and looks at her. Ellen continues to look out the window.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Oh no - but I'm probably one of the least fussy.

She laughs to herself.

NEWLAND

Call it what you like: you look at things the way they are.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Ah! I've had to.

She turns to look at him.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

I've had to look at monsters in the face.

She changes her voice and snarls. Newland laughs.

NEWLAND

Well the monsters haven't blinded you. You've seen they're just an old boogey like all the others.

ELLEN OLENSKA

They don't blind One; but they dry up One's tears.

She stares at him. He stops rubbing his thumb and looks at her stunned and seeing her clearly. The ferry staggers causing the brougham to jump. It throws him and Ellen against one another. They look at each other. He feels sheepish and embarrassed. She's stunned. He looks away and makes space for her.

NEWLAND

If you're not blind, you must see that this can't last.

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

What can't.

NEWLAND

Our being together and not being together.

ELLEN OLENSKA

No-you ought not have come today.

She hasn't stopped looking at him since the ferry shook them together. She leans towards him and kisses him with such passion his eyes shoot open. She brings her hand to his cheek. Looking down he apprehensively slides his up to her hand to remove it, but she keeps her hand there.

She brings his hand to her heart. The carriage begins to move off the docked ferry; a light of someone walking past flashes through the window. She suddenly releases they can be seen and shrinks to the corner. Newland turns to look at the passing light. The carriage is now on the street.

NEWLAND

Don't be afraid of me. (tender)
 You needn't squeeze yourself back
 into your corner like that. A
 stolen kiss isn't what I want.
 Don't suppose that I don't
 understand your reasons for not
 wanting to let this feeling between
 us dwindle into an ordinary hole
 and corner love affair. I'm looking
 forward to seeing you. Every
 thought is burned up in a great
 flame. But then you arrive and
 you're so much more than I remember
 and what I want of you is so much
 more than an hour or two every now
 and then. That I can sit perfectly
 still beside you like this-with
 that other vision in my mind, just
 quietly trusting it to come true.

ELLEN OLENSKA

(pause)

What do you mean by trusting it to
 come true?

NEWLAND

Why, you know, don't you?
 (chuckles)

She looks at him and laughs.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Your vision of you and me together?
 (acid)
 You choose your place well to put
 it to me!

NEWLAND

(confused)

Do you mean because we're in my
 wife's carriage?

(laughs)

Shall we get out and walk then. I
 suppose you don't mind a little
 snow.

ELLEN OLENSKA

No I shan't get out and walk
because my business is to get to
Granny's as quickly as I can. And
you'll be by my side with me, and
we'll look not at visions but
realities.

NEWLAND

I don't know what you mean by
realities. The only reality to me
is this.

Long silence between them as the carriage rolls on.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Is it your idea, then, that I
should live with you as your
mistress-since I can't be your
wife?

NEWLAND

I want-I want-I want somehow to get
away with you into a world where
words like that - categories like
that - won't exist. Where we shall
simply be two human beings who love
each other, who are the whole life
of each other; and nothing else on
earth will matter.

ELLEN OLENSKA

(sighs)

Oh, my dear, where is that country?
Have you ever been there? I know so
many who've tried to find it, and
believe me they all got out by
mistake at wayside stations, at
places like Boulogne, or Pisa, or
Monte Carlo-and it wasn't at all
that different from the old world
they'd left but only rather
smaller, dingier, and more
promiscuous.

NEWLAND

Yes, the monsters have dried your
tears.

She sees his heart breaking and for a second regrets her
words, looks as if she'll cry, but looks away and doubles
down again.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Well they have opened my eyes too;
They don't blind someone. What they
do is just the contrary - they
fastens someone's eyelids open so
that they're never again in the
blessed darkness.

She tears up.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

Isn't there a Chinese torture like
that?

(laughs)

Ah, believe me it's a miserable
little country.

Carriage still bumping along. A street sign flashes by.
Newland looks at grain of rice left on the floor, picks it up
with his fingers and looks at it in his palm. Ellen looks out
the window.

NEWLAND

What exactly is your plan for us?

ELLEN OLENSKA

For Us? But there is no Us in that
sense. We're only Newland Archer,
husband of Ellen Olenska's cousin,
and Ellen Olenska, the cousin of
Newland Archer's wife, trying to be
happy behind the backs of people
who love them.

Newland sits numb. He realizes that he might be sick and
leans his elbow on his knees. Ellen looks at him out of the
corner of her eye, arms crossed, then looks back out the
window. He starts groping for the bell to stop. RINGS it
twice, carriage pulls up at curbside.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

Why are we stopping? This is not
Granny's.

NEWLAND

No, I shall get out here.

Startled, she tries to detain him by reaching out and
stammering. He leans towards the window, and looks away as
her gaze meets him in the window.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

You're right. I ought not have come
today.

He's hurt, lowers his head, pushes his hat down and starts to walk off.

EXT. STREET - SECONDS LATER

Ellen begins to say something but he's already told the coachman to drive off. She scrambles to the other side to open the window and shout-panic on her face. He watches her drive away.

In the lamplight his face is devoid of all emotion. As the carriage drives off Ellen comes back into the window, puts her hand on her mouth, looks panicked and sad, lets out a yell. She wants to get out, but at the last minute decides not to. She sobs.

Newland watches the carriage disappear down the street. He turns and begins to walk, but after a few meters his face begins to disintegrate into tears. He doubles over, crouching through sobs. A carriage drives by and away. He's left on the street crying.

INT. ARCHER STAIRS TO LIBRARY - NIGHT

Newland arrives to the house and climbs the stairs to his library in silence. He pauses on the stairs. The TICKING of a clock is heard over his breath. Music from out on the street filters in through the windows.

INT. NEWLAND'S ROOM

Somehow Newland finds himself dressing for bed in his room while the clock on his mantle TICKS. He stops as he hears May in her room. He continues to dress in the silence and the ticking of the clock.

INT. ARCHER HALLWAY

He walks into the dimly lit hallway and stands looking at May's room. The ticking of the clock on his mantle gets louder with each breath he takes. In one instant he is overcome with rage. He picks up the table in the hallway and smashes it against the wall. The flower vases, paintings, the clock, anything he can put his hands on is thrown against the wall by his vengeful hands and he begins to scream.

The scream starts out like a normal scream but grows in increasing volume and range until he becomes a wild animal howling in rage and pain.

INT. NEWLAND'S ROOM

Newland's feet carry him into his room where he grabs the clock off the mantle and smashes it against the fireplace, leans against the mantle and begins to cry.

A rustle of skirts announces May. She crosses the threshold of the door and enters the space.

MAY WELLAND

What became of you, dear? I was waiting for you at Granny's when Countess Ellen Olenska came alone. She said she had dropped you on the way because you had to rush off to business. There's nothing wrong?

NEWLAND

(normal)

Only some letters I'd forgotten and wanted to get off before dinner.

MAY WELLAND

(smiles)

Ah, I m sorry you didn't come to Granny's - unless the letters were urgent.

NEWLAND

They were. Besides, I didn't see why I should have gone to your grandmother's. I didn't know you were there.

May turns to the mirror above the mantel piece to fix her hair. Suddenly he remembers her calling to him as he exited the carriage earlier that evening: *meet at Grandma's.*

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Oh no.

MAY WELLAND

Remember, silly? I mentioned it as you were leaving.

NEWLAND

How is your grandmother?

MAY WELLAND

She's improving. Have you heard the latest news of the Beauforts? It seems they're going to stay in New York.

(MORE)

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

I believe he's going into an insurance business or something. They're looking for a small house...

INT. ARCHER DINING ROOM

Newland's face rises from over his soup bowl. May is still talking about the Beaufort business and Granny. All of the sudden she's looking at him—waiting, confused. Newland realizes she's waiting for a response from him.

NEWLAND

Pardon, darling?

MAY WELLAND

(annoyed)

I asked if you'd spoken to

The name zones out, sound of STATIC.

NEWLAND

No, no I haven't.

She blinks at him in disbelief. Recovers. Goes back to cutting her fish. Newland just looks at his glass studying the crystal.

INT. ARCHER DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Newland studies his after dinner coffee in the library. He gets up, lights a cigar at the mantle and takes a book down, looks at it, looks at May who is sewing a cushion a few feet away from him. He looks at her hands, the wedding band flashes in the light. He abruptly lays his book down with a smack.

MAY WELLAND

What's the matter?

NEWLAND

The room is stifling, I want some air.

He walks to the window, pulls back the curtains and opens the window. The air is crisp and cold, pushing needles into his face. Nonetheless he takes in the rooftops and chimneys, scans the sky. Inhales the cold air. He loses himself momentarily in the dark of the night.

MAY WELLAND

Newland, do shut the window, you'll catch your death.

Newland mutters and sighs, closes the window reluctantly. Turns around to face a concerned May. His expression changes from annoyance to concern. Watching him, May takes a bite of her after dinner cookie, but as she puts it down she begins to choke. Her eyes begin to bulge and she grasps her throat, falls onto the floor heaving reaching out to Newland. Her eyes look up at him in fear, and look back down. In a last heave, she falls over, taking a few last gasps and dies. He grasps the window pane behind him white-knuckled, horror in his eyes. Shock ripples through his body and face.

MAY WELLAND (V.O.)

Newland...Newland?

Newland looks up to find May in the same position in the chair, putting her cookie down on the plate. Concern lights up in her eyes.

MAY WELLAND

Newland, are you ill?

Camera on Newland as he shakes his head and turns towards his armchair and sits and looks at her.

NEWLAND

Poor May.

MAY WELLAND

Poor? Why...poor? (strained laugh)

NEWLAND

Because I shall never be able to open a window without worrying you.
(laughs)

She studies him and then bows her head over her work.

MAY WELLAND

I shall never worry if you're happy.

NEWLAND

And I shall never be happy unless I can open the windows!

MAY WELLAND

In this weather?

He smiles back genuinely and buries his head back in his book.

INT. THE ARCHER-WELLAND HOUSE - DAY

Newland returns home from wherever he had been and sees a note from May on the table.

Granny wishes to see you -May

He stares down at the note.

EXT. GRANNY MINGOTT'S HOUSE - DAY

The carriage pulls up to Granny Mingott's house. He stalls for a second before exiting. At the front door he takes a moment before knocking. While he's waiting for the door to open, moments of he and Ellen holding hands in Japan and China flash through his mind.

He shakes his head to clear the thoughts away. The door opens, he enters, leaves his coat and begins the walk to Mingott's room.

INT. GRANNY MINGOTT'S ROOM

Newland's feet are moving without his knowledge. The walls start to close in on him and suddenly he's in Granny Mingott's room, the MAID letting him in, without his realizing. Granny is sitting and dozing on a massive chair near her bed. The rustle of Newland's shoes on the carpet wakes her.

GRANNY MINGOTT

(to maid)

Don't let anyone else in. If my daughters call, say I'm asleep.

Maid nods and exits. Mingott looks at Newland and then laughs. She holds out her massive arms and ring-encrusted hands towards him and smiles.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)

My dear, am I perfectly hideous?

NEWLAND

(smiles)

You are handsomer than ever!

He takes a big gulp.

GRANNY MINGOTT

But not as handsome as Ellen?
(winks at him)

He looks taken aback, but recovers.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)

Was she so awfully handsome the day
you drove her up from the ferry?

Newland's smile wavers, but he recovers.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)

Was it because you told her so that
she had to put you out of the
carriage? In my youth young men
didn't desert pretty women unless
they were made to!

(sighs, leans back)

It's a pity she didn't marry you. I
always told her so. It would have
spared me all this worry. But
whoever thought of sparing their
grandmother worry.

Newland looks at her smiling, but not. He's suspicious as to
why she's talking about this.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)

Well, it's settled anyhow. She's
going to stay with me, whatever the
rest of the family says! She hadn't
been here five minutes before I'd
gone down on my knees to keep her -
if only for the last 20 years I'd
been able to see where the floor
was!

(laughs)

Lovell and Letterblair-Augusta- and
the rest of them-they all talked me
over. That I must hold out and cut
off her allowance, till she was
made to see that it was her duty to
go back to Olenski. But the minute
I'd laid eyes on her I said: you
sweet bird! Shut you up in that
cage again?! Never! And of course,
I've told Letterblair that she's to
be given her proper allowance.

NEWLAND

She couldn't have gone back! It was
impossible!

GRANNY MINGOTT

Ah, my dear, I knew you were on her
side;

(MORE)

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)

and that's why I sent for you today
and why I said to your pretty wife:
I'm pining to see Newland and I
don't want anybody to share our
transports. You see, we shall have
a fight yet: the family doesn't
want her here, they'll say it's
because I've been ill, because I'm
a weak old woman that she's
persuaded me, so you've got to
fight for me.

NEWLAND

I???

GRANNY MINGOTT

Why not?!

She jerks back, eyeing him.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)

Why not??!!

NEWLAND

Oh, I can't, I'm too insignificant.

MINGOTT

You're Letterblair's partner,
aren't you? You've got to get them
through Letterblair. Unless you
have a reason?

NEWLAND

Oh my dear I back you to hold your
own against them all without my
help...

(swallowing)

But you shall have it when you need
it

GRANNY MINGOTT

Then we're safe.

She leans into cushions.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)

I always knew you'd back us up
because they never quote you when
they talk about it's being her duty
to go home.

His ears turn red. His face gives way to a mix of startle,
sheepishness, resignation, and vulnerability.

A little eye twitch escapes him. Mingott drones on, but all Newland tries to do is recover and smile. Finally he nods.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)
Olenska's gone out for the moment
but she'll be back...Regina's a brave
woman and so is she. I've always
liked courage above everything.

Newland gets up and bends down to kiss her hand.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)
Eh? Eh? Whose hand did you think
you were kissing, young man-your
wife's I hope?
(laughs)

Newland is surprised at the jokes, blushes, excuses himself. Granny Mingott calls out to him.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)
Give her her Granny's love, but you
better not say anything about our
talk...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Night is coming, the lamps are lit. Out on a walk, Newland stops at the corner of his block, looks to his house, and makes the sudden decision to walk down Fifth Avenue instead. He approaches Beaufort's house we need to have this house established as beauforts early on. Maybe there's a nameplate on the outside, his footsteps clacking on the sidewalk as he approaches the mansion. A few seconds pass while he waits at the bottom of the steps, watching the flickering of a light upstairs, wondering why he was there in the first place.

He looks down the street trying to decide what to do. His eyes flicker to the street, then to the house. He decides that he's being stupid and turns on his heels to leave. And just as he takes a couple of steps the door opens, as if by fate. Turning his head to look at the figure in the door, he sees a woman.

Ellen Olenska is talking to someone as she's exiting. Her hands hold the railing. Suddenly as if in slow-motion Newland cannot stop staring at the hand. He snaps himself out of it and turns to quickly leave.

Ellen sees movement out of the corner of her eye as she bids Sillerton Jackson adieu. She's frightened at first, as it is such a late hour. But squinting she realizes who it is.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Newland!

Newland stops in his tracks and swallows hard deciding if he should turn around.

NEWLAND

Ellen.

He turns.

Two sets of footsteps can be heard approaching from up the street. They make their way quickly towards the stunned couple. Lawrence Lefferts and the beautiful, young postal worker that was at the post office when he sent for Ellen Olenska pass by under a lamp and into view. As Newland comes into focus, he looks back at them, while Countess Ellen Olenska continues to watch Newland in confusion. As Lefferts nods to Newland with a smirk, he tilts his head and hides his face from Ellen. They quickly walk past. Ellen Olenska places her hand on Newland's, breaking the spell. Newland looks at her in a startled daze.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Granny has told you?

He looks at Ellen, and is at once astounded by her energy and beauty all over again. Something comes out of his mouth that he has no control over.

NEWLAND

Tomorrow let's meet somewhere we
can be alone.

(kicking himself)

He looks down the street to see Lefferts and the postal worker turn the corner. A carriage pulls up to the sidewalk just then. Ellen moves towards it.

ELLEN OLENSKA

But I shall be at Granny's for the
present, that is.

NEWLAND

There's the art museum in the park.

He helps her into the carriage.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

At half-past two I shall be at the
door.

Why is he doing this? She thinks. She settles into the carriage and shoots him a look through the window. Newland watches as the carriage drives away. He kicks himself. He doesn't want to be standing in front of Beaufort's house at such and hour. He doesn't want to desire to see Ellen. He becomes angry and kicks a stray rock in the street. He walks a few paces, stops, decided to write a note cancelling, but on the way home the decision fades and he resigns himself to the next day.

INT. ART MUSEUM - DAY

Open to a large courtyard filled with winter plants. Potted winter bushes and plants dot the doorways and archways of a stone building. A COUPLE OF CHILDREN run through the space laughing with the chase. One of them turns around to look at a strolling Newland and Ellen, sticks his tongue out at them and runs off. They look at each other and laugh.

Canvases take up their seats on the humble museum walls, Newland and Ellen take turns admiring the work of each artist. They walk the halls, sometimes together, sometimes separate, sometimes with the laughing KIDS running through the halls with them. Music is playing off in a distant room. As they approach the sound and round a corner, they find a MAN IN A COAT and a top hat playing a concertina. They walk past and watch him, he tips his hat.

The two find themselves in a room with a divan surrounding a central-radiating system and sit down.

ELLEN OLENSKA

I've never been here before.

NEWLAND

Ah, well, some day, I suppose it will be a great museum.

She nods and stands up. He watches her - looks at her shoes, gloves, hat, hair. She faces a glass cabinet, admiring the objects d'arte shining inside.

ELLEN OLENSKA

It seems so cruel that after a while, nothing matters...

Newland approaches her, looking where her eyes land.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

...anymore than these little things that used to be necessary, important. Now they have to be guessed at.

NEWLAND
Yes, but meanwhile...

ELLEN OLENSKA
Ah, meanwhile...

NEWLAND
Everything matters that concerns
you.

Ellen searches him, trying to figure out what to say, figure out what his intentions are. She turns and walks to the doorway and stands at the courtyard.

ELLEN OLENSKA
What is it you wanted to tell me?

Newland passes by behind her. He lightly brushes her coat, and skirts as he passes to sit back down at the divan. He exhales as he sits.

Suddenly STEPS ECHO somewhere in the museum. We catch Newland awoken from his reveries and check his pocket watch.

NEWLAND
What I wanted to tell you? Why,
that I believe you came to New York
because you were afraid.

ELLEN OLENSKA
Afraid?

NEWLAND
Of my coming to Washington

She looks down.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)
Well?

ELLEN OLENSKA
Well, yes...

NEWLAND
You were afraid? (sad)
Well then..

ELLEN OLENSKA
Well then what? This is better,
isn't it?

NEWLAND
Better?

ELLEN OLENSKA

We shall hurt others less. Isn't it
after all, what you always wanted?

NEWLAND

(angry)

To have you here, you mean in reach
and yet out of reach?

Her face full on in fear as he comes towards her, wraps his
arm around her waist and clasps her.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

To meet you in this way, on the
sly?

(he pulls her closer)

It's the reverse of what I want. I
already told you what I wanted.

ELLEN OLENSKA

And you think this is worse?

NEWLAND

A thousand times.

He kisses her, deeply, passionately, like he's drinking her
in. They pull away, her eyes closed for the kiss, as does he.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

A thousand times.

She looks at him, wants to kiss him, decides against it,
turns around. SOMEONE is walking the halls, she unclasps his
arms and goes to another case.

The museum guardian walks through the room. Newland stands in
the doorway, she is at the case.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

What do you think is better?
(absently)

ELLEN OLENSKA

I promised Granny I would stay with
her because it seemed that here I
should be safer.

NEWLAND

From me?

No answer.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

From loving me?

She starts to shuffle. Newland walks to her, wraps his arms around her waist from behind her.

ELLEN OLENSKA

Don't, let's not be like the others!

She shakes her head and fights him. Newland tips her chin to look at him.

NEWLAND

What others? I don't profess to be any different from my kind. I'm subject to the same wants and the same longings.

She blushes. He lifts her hand, kisses it, still arm wrapped around her. He then kisses her forehead, then her lips.

ELLEN OLENSKA

I don't want to go back home to my husband.

NEWLAND

Why would you?

ELLEN OLENSKA

I can't stay here and lie to the people who've been good to me.

NEWLAND

That's why I've asked you to come away.

He strokes her face.

ELLEN OLENSKA

I can't.

Newland almost says yes, come, but stops himself. He wipes the tears from her cheeks.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

I must go.

She breaks away and checks her pocket watch, she turns and walks off, he catches her wrist.

NEWLAND

Well then, come to me at once.

She looks back, not convinced.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Tomorrow.

ELLEN OLENSKA

(frowns) The day after.

She shakes her wrist free and they watch each other like a show down, but then the love blooms again.

ELLEN OLENSKA (CONT'D)

Oh I shall be late-goodbye. Don't follow me.

She exits.

INT. ARCHER HOME PARLOR- AFTERNOON

Newland walks home still stunned from the kisses. At the bottom of the front stairs the PARLOR MAID answers No to his Is Mrs. Adeline Archer in?

INT. ARCHER LIBRARY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

He enters the library and flings himself in the armchair. Maid follows in bringing in the lamps, stoking the fire. She leaves, leaving him collapsed in the chair.

He notices the clock TICKING on the mantle. It dies down as a daydream seeps into his consciousness.

DAYDREAM:

EXT. JAPAN - DAY

A dress flutters and rustles among cherry blossoms. Newland walks with Ellen in a sunlit park in Japan - her smile is as radiant as the light surrounding her. He holds her hand, pulls her close.

END DAYDREAM.

May's hand turns the doorknob to the library to find Newland sleeping in his chair. She's tired, exhausted. The weeks of caring for her sick Grandmother and a wreckless husband are taking their toll. She wants to end this once situation once and for all.

Daydream:

May walks over to Newland and slaps him.

End Daydream

She walks over to the chair and caresses his shoulder.

MAY WELLAND
I'm dreadfully late-you weren't
worried, were you?

Newland looks up.

NEWLAND
Is it late?

Newland looks at the clock.

MAY WELLAND
It's after 7. You've been asleep, I
believe.

She laughs, begins to take off her hat.

MAY WELLAND
I went to see Granny and just as I
was going away, Ellen came in from
a walk so I stayed and had a long
talk with her. It's been ages since
we had a real talk.

She throws hat on sofa, sits in her armchair.

MAY WELLAND
She was so dear, just like the old
Ellen. I'm afraid I haven't been
fair to her lately. I've sometimes
thought...
(pause)

Newland gets up and stands near the mantle.

NEWLAND
You've thought - ?

MAY WELLAND
Well, perhaps I haven't judged her
fairly. She's so different-at least
on the surface - she takes up such
odd people.

May tries to find a reason to judge her.

MAY WELLAND
She seems to like to make herself
conspicuous.
(MORE)

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

I suppose it's the life she's led in that fast, European society. No doubt we seem dreadfully dull to her. But I don't want to judge her unfairly.

Newland turns to look at her. He notices her beauty. Notices her mercy. He looks at his hands and almost asks for forgiveness for his recent actions.

MAY WELLAND

You understand, don't you, why the family is annoyed? We all did what we could for her at first, but she never seemed to understand. And now that she's gone to see Mrs. Beaufort in Granny's carriage!
(snorts)
And she's alienated the Van der Luydens...

Newland stiffens and shakes his head.

MAY WELLAND

Ah!

NEWLAND

(looks away in distaste)
Well,
(inhales)
It's time to dress; we're dining out, aren't we?

He moves across the room to the doors, as he passes her, she watches him, jumps up and grabs his wrist (as he did to Ellen). He turns, she flings her arms around his neck and smiles.

MAY WELLAND

You haven't kissed me today.

She moves her face towards his and puckers.

Transition

Newland and May exit the house for dinner. The street is quiet in the blanket of evening. At the train station a train comes in and leaves its passengers to find their way home. A train takes off to the north.

Cityscapes and streets melt away to make way for hills and country. At Skuytercliff the Van der Luyden's exit their country home for Fifth Avenue.

INT. VAN DER LUYNDEN'S RECEPTION ROOM

The sun sets and rises again, and we find ourselves at the doorstep of the Van der Luyden's on Fifth Avenue a BUTLER opens the door for Us, we pass through the first floor of the house. The MAIDS and SERVANTS are dusting, polishing, hanging, wiping, lighting; we walk through the kitchen.

INT. VAN DER LUYNDEN'S KITCHEN

COOKS at their dishes, the ASSISTANTS washing.

INT. VAN DER LUYDEN HALL AND STAIRS

Up the stairs more MAIDS dust and polish, clean and set out clothes.

A MAID AND SERVANT FLIRTING in a corner, an OLDER MAID looks at them crabbily.

EXT. VAN DER LUYNDEN'S HOUSE

Back down the stairs and out the door the Van der Luyden's carriage arrive from Skyutercliff. They exit and walk through the front door, shutting it behind them. The sun begins its crawl down towards the horizon. The front doors open again and a MESSENGER runs out carrying cards.

MONTAGE:

A) The cards transfers hands from one messenger to another to DIFFERENT BUTLERS AND MAIDS who finally received them back in Newland's neighborhood. Each received card is distributed to their recipient who opens the card quizzically and gasps. A WOMAN who has received the card motions for Us to come near and read.

You are invited to a dinner tomorrow evening (put date here)

B) A few streets down, a kid out on the street is playing a fiddle. People start to arrive at their houses for dinner. MOTHERS call to CHILDREN, FATHERS change their clothes, some are huddled around a fire out in the street, some are being beat.

INT. VAN DER LUYDEN'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Write in description and people there.

MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN

(to May)

Is it possible, dear, that what I hear is true? I was told your grandmother Mingott's carriage was seen standing at Mrs. Beaufort's.

May blushes, looks around to figure out what to say.

MRS. ARCHER

If it was, I'm convinced that it was there without Mrs. Mingott's knowledge.

Mrs. Van der Luyden looks directly at Mr. Van der Luyden.

MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN

Ah, you think!?

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN

I'm afraid that Madam Olenska's kind heart may have led her into the imprudence of calling on Mrs. Beaufort.

MRS. ARCHER

Or her taste for peculiar people.

MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN

I'm sorry to think it of Madame Olenska.

She pauses, looks at Mr. Van der Luyden.

MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN (CONT'D)

Ah, my dear, you had her twice at Skuytercliff.

SILLERTON JACKSON

At the Court of the Tulieries in France, the standard was excessively lax in respect to lending money, and if you asked where Duke Charles-August de Morny's money came from - or who paid the debts of some of the court beauties, you might have found out the court was involved.

MRS. ARCHER

I hope, dear Sillerton, that you are not suggesting that we should adopt such standards?

SILLERTON JACKSON

I never suggest, but it may make
Madame Olenska's foreign
upbringing. May make her less
particular.

Mrs. Adeline Archer and Mrs. Van der Lyuden mumble
agreements.

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN

Still, to have her grandmother's
carriage at her defaulter's door!

MRS. ARCHER

I've always said that she looks at
things quite differently.

May blushes and looks at Newland.

MAY WELLAND

I'm sure she meant it kindly.

MRS. ARCHER

(pinched face)

Impudent people are often kind.

MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN

If only she had consulted someone.

MRS. ARCHER

Ah, that she never did!

They keep talking, camera on Newland as he continues eating
and focusing on his food. The sound of STATIC starts over the
non-descript chattering. Things start slowing down, and
everyone starts moving in slow-motion as Newland continues to
eat normally. Eventually everything stops. He checks his
pocket watch. It has stopped. He hits it hard, and it starts.
Time goes back to normal.

The ladies are getting up and the men are going to their
cigars. He is still at the table wondering what just
happened.

INT. OPERA - NIGHT

He looks across to May and the ladies sitting horseshoe. He
looks at the stage and notices it's the same opera from two
years ago. He gets up during the solo. Mr. Van der Luyden
shoots him a look but he doesn't notice or care. He stumbles
to May's box.

Just as he opens the door MUSIC CUE: M'ama BLASTS from the stage. He slips between Mrs. Van der Luyden and Sillerton Jackson and taps May on the shoulder.

NEWLAND

I've got a beastly headache, don't tell anyone but come home, won't you?

May looks at him concerned. She whispers to Mrs. Van der Luyden and rises as MARGUERITE onstage falls into FAUST's arms. The door closes behind them and the sound muffles. As they enter the lobby, someone exits the theater and the doors open prompting the solo to be heard again. Newland helps May with her cloak and they get into the carriage. May watches him.

MAY

I'm sorry you don't feel well. I'm afraid they've been overworking you at the office (her hand on his)

NEWLAND

No - it's not that, do you mind if I open the window?

She watches him open the window , glancing at him during the ride home.

They exit the carriage when they arrive, her dress catches and she falls into his arms.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Did you hurt yourself?

MAY

No, but my dress! I've torn it.
(she gathers it and follows him up the stairs up the hall).

The servants start lighting things as soon as the couple enter the door. Newland and May climb the stairs. He goes to his library. He opens the curtains and the window, turns around and sees May who is pale.

NEWLAND

Should I get you some brandy?

MAY WELLAND

Oh, no, but hadn't you go to bed at once?

He opens his cigarette box, but decides against smoking when she says this.

NEWLAND

No, my head is not as bad as that.
(breathes)
There's something I want to say -
something important I must tell you
at once.

May looks nervous, drops into armchair floppily while looking at him.

MAY WELLAND

Yes, dear?

Clock ticks.

NEWLAND

Madame Olenska...

May raises her hand and pouts.

MAY WELLAND

Oh why should we talk about Ellen
tonight?

NEWLAND

Because I ought to have spoken
about her before.

MAY WELLAND

(calm)
Is it really worth while, dear? I
know you've been unfair to her at
times-perhaps we all have. You
understood her, no doubt, better
than we did: you've always been
kind to her, but what does it
matter now that it's all over?

Newland looks at her blankly and blinks.

NEWLAND

All over? What do you mean?

MAY WELLAND

Why since she's going back to
Europe so soon; since Granny
approves and understands and has
arranged to make her independent of
her husband.

Newland falters, catches himself on the mantle. Looks shocked. May continues but it becomes a droning sound, he stares at the clock which starts to melt. He looks at her shakily. She obviously catches him faltering and looks down with an angry blush. She's not stupid.

Back to silence in the room as the clock TICK TICKS. A piece of coal falls in the fire, May reaches forward to fix it. She sits back down. Newland looks at her.

NEWLAND

It's impossible.

MAY WELLAND

Impossible?

NEWLAND

What you've just told me.

MAY WELLAND

I saw Ellen yesterday - I told you I'd seen her at Granny's. And I had a note from her this afternoon. Do you want to see it?

May gets up as she shakes his head.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

No.

She comes back and gives it to Newland who slowly takes it and lifts it.

ELLEN (V.O.)

*May dear, I have at last made
Granny understand that my visit to
her could be no more than a visit;
She has been kind and generous as
ever. She sees now that if I return
to Europe I must live by myself, or
rather with Aunt Medora, who is
coming with me. I am hurrying back
to Washington to pack up, we sail
next week.
You must be very good to Granny
when I'm gone - as good as you've
always been to me.
-Ellen*

The TICKING of the clock is heard as Newland flings the letter and laughs.

NEWLAND

Why did she write this?

He checks his laughter.

MAY WELLAND

(proudly)

I suppose because we talked things over yesterday.

NEWLAND

What things?

MAY WELLAND

I told her I was afraid I hadn't been fair to her - hadn't always understood how hard it must have been for her here, alone among so many people who were relations and yet strangers; who felt the right to criticize, and yet didn't always know the circumstances.

(pause)

I knew you'd be the one friend she could always count on; and I wanted her to know that you and I were the same - in all our feelings.

(pause)

She understood my wishing to tell her this. I think she understands everything.

She moves towards Newland, takes one of his hands and presses it to her cheek.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

My head aches too; good-night dear.

She leaves the room, her torn and muddy dress dragging after her across the room.

INT. NEWLAND'S WORK - AFTERNOON

Newland is at his desk, Letterblair asks for his presence. They go into his office and go over the papers finalizing Madame Olenska's allowance and trust.

INT. MINGOTT DRAWING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Newland arrives at Granny Mingott's.

MINGOTT

You know, she's deserted me!

INT. ARCHER HOME

Coming through the door, an invitation to a party at his house is put in his hand by May who is all smiles.

MAY WELLAND

It's an invitation for our farewell dinner for Ellen.

NEWLAND

A dinner? Why?

MAY WELLAND

But you like Ellen! I thought you'd be pleased.

(smile fades)

NEWLAND

It's awfully nice your putting it that way, But I really don't see...

MAY WELLAND

I want to do it, Newland, the invitations are all written - Mother helped me. She agrees that we ought to...

NEWLAND

(sighs) Oh, alright.

Mrs. Welland calls for help from May Welland from elsewhere in the house. May winks at Newland and turns to leave.

Newland sighs and walks upstairs.

INT. ARCHER DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Newland walks downstairs, grabs punch from a bowl and begins to mull amongst the guests.

Newland takes a casual stroll through the guests and the heavy-handed decorations. He takes a look at some of the vases and sculptures cluttering the tables and shakes his head in disbelief. SOMEONE stops him and talk to him about a painting on the wall. Guest are laughing, sitting, standing, chatting.

Ellen is talking with someone about her upcoming travels but is looking around. She finally gets up to go look for Newland. She walks through a couple rooms until she sees him. She approaches him from behind. He notices someone touching him and turns around, he takes her in with a smile. Time stops and they fall into each other's smiles.

May enters the room, smiling and greeting guests. She looks around the room looking for her husband. She spies him talking to Ellen and moves towards them at normal speed. Time is back to normal as Ellen speaks.

ELLEN OLENSKA

We're sailing tomorrow on the ship
Russia.

Newland as he nods, inhales, and takes a sip of his drink. May shows up like a hovering mother bear.

MAY WELLAND

Newland! Dinner's been announced;
won't you please take Ellen in?

Newland turns to look at May in surprise. His smile fades momentarily but he recovers and nods.

NEWLAND

Yes, my dear.

Newland takes Ellen's arm through his and leads her to dinner.

INT. ARCHER FRONT DOOR - NIGHT, AFTER DINNER

Newland leads Ellen to the front door after dinner. Some of the guests are putting on their coats to leave. People exit leaving Newland and Ellen alone.

NEWLAND

Is your carriage here?

She shakes her head. Newland reaches out to grasp her hand but as he reaches, Mrs. Van der Luyden enters the entryway as well.

MRS. VAN DER LUYDEN

We are driving dear Ellen home.

Ellen has a fan in her hand, other hand out-stretched to Newland

ELLEN OLENSKA

(Smiling) Good-bye.

Her smile falters.

NEWLAND

(smiles) Good-bye...
I shall see you soon in Paris.

ELLEN OLENSKA

(from over her shoulder)

Oh if you and May could come that
would be so dear.

Mr. Van der Luyden lends Ellen his arm, they are in the landing and then they are gone. Newland watches the carriage move down the street and out of earshot. He exhales, goes up the stairs where he crosses Lawrence Lefferts coming down with GERTRUDE. Lefferts lets his wife pass and speaks to Newland.

LEFFERTS

(whispers)

I say, old chap, do you mind
letting it be understood that I'm
dining with you at the club
tonight?

He winks and smiles at Newland, elbows him, and exits.

INT. ARCHER LIBRARY

May watches Newland from the library doorway. He's asleep reading a book. He looks handsome in his dinner clothes. She exhales, glad that it's all over. What a relief. She waits and then finally decides to wake him to talk.

MAY WELLAND

It did go off beautifully, didn't
it?

NEWLAND

Yes, dear. Aren't you awfully
sleepy?

He doesn't even get up or open his eyes.

MAY WELLAND

No, I'm not sleepy, I thought I'd
sit with you a little.

He gets up and pushes her chair to the fire.

NEWLAND

Very well.

May sits down as does Newland. Clock TICKS. They just look at each other. Finally Newland speaks realizing this is stupid.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Since you're not tired and want to talk, there's something I must tell you. I tried the other night...

MAY WELLAND

Are you alright?

NEWLAND

I'm very tired, horribly tired.

MAY WELLAND

Oh! I've seen it coming on, Newland! You've been so overworked.

NEWLAND

(sighs)

Perhaps it's that. Anyhow, I want to take a break.

May pauses and blinks a few times.

MAY WELLAND

A break? To give up the law?

NEWLAND

No-to go away at once. On a long trip-far away from everything.

MAY WELLAND

Where, for instance?

NEWLAND

Oh I don't know-India or Japan.

MAY WELLAND

(Gets up, goes over to him, hover above his chair. Does she stroke his hair?) As far as that?

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

But I'm afraid you can't, dear...Not unless you take me with you.

Newland looks up at her.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

That is-if the doctors will let me go, but I'm afraid they won't. For you see, Newland, I've been sure of this morning of something that I've been so longing for-hoping for.

Newland looks up at her, then she kneels down at his knees. He looks sick.

NEWLAND

Oh my dear...

He strokes her hair automatically. She gets up.

MAY WELLAND

Did you guess?!

NEWLAND

Yes-I-no. That is, of course I'd hoped.

Have you told anyone else?

MAY WELLAND

Only Momma and your Mother. That is and Ellen. I told you we'd had a long talk one afternoon and how dear she was to me.

NEWLAND

(Silence) Ah.

MAY WELLAND

Did you mind me telling her first, Newland?

May grabs his hand.

NEWLAND

Mind? Why should I? But didn't you see Ellen a fortnight ago. I thought you said you weren't sure until today?

MAY WELLAND

(embarrassed)

No..

(fumbles)

I wasn't sure then...but I told her I was expecting, and you see?! I was right!!

(Smiling)

Newland's eyes go blank. He knows he's been set up. His life is sealed.

MONTAGE:

We visit each room in the Archer household, and in each room the kids get older as Newland and May interact with them in various ways. Learning how to walk, sew, play instruments, all the stages of life until Newland is now just past middle age and looking at framed photos of the kids and of May in the family room. Phone clicks, Newland picks it up.

OPERATOR

Chicago wants you.

NEWLAND

Thank you.

DALLAS, Newland's exuberant, gracious, handsome 21 year-old son, speaks to him from Chicago.

DALLAS

Hallo, dad, yes. How are you?

NEWLAND

Well, good as to be expected
(Smiling)

DALLAS

I'm glad to hear. Say, how do you feel about sailing on Wednesday? We'll be going on the Mauritania. Our client wants me to look at some Italian gardens before we settle anything, and has asked me to get on the next boat. I've got to be back by the first of June.

(laughs)

We must look alive. I say, Dad, I want your help. Do come.

(pause)

Think it over? No sir, not a minute. You've got to say yes now.

(pause)

Why not? - I'd like to know. If you can allege a single reason-No, I knew it. Then it's a go, eh? I can count on you to book a return on a boat from Marseilles. I say, Dad, it'll be our last time together, in this kind of way before the wedding.

(pause)

Oh good! I knew you would! Okay, good bye for now, Dad.

Hangs up.

Newland looks out the window and begins to pace. He's not sure about the trip. He looks at the photographs in the room. Picks one up that show's May's birth and death dates. He looks around the room. He looks at himself in the mirror. He got so old.

NEWLAND

When did I get so old? When did I get so comfortable?

INT. HOTEL PARIS - MORNING

Newland looking out of his hotel window at the Parisian streets below. He takes in the gaiety and the fun below. He smiles, then he catches a glance of himself in the mirror. Sees his age and his widening waistband and looks out the window again and recoils. A hand appears over his shoulder.

DALLAS

Hallo Father, this is something, isn't it?

They stay a while looking out the window.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

Time to go to the Bristol, Dad.

NEWLAND

Ah, so you've chosen the Bristol for us?

DALLAS

Didn't you refuse to go to any of the newfangled palaces? So I have to take you to some jolly-old fashioned places.

NEWLAND

Old fashioned?! In my day the Bristol was the home of kings and emperors!

DALLAS

It's 18(year), times have changed, Dad.

Newland starts to ready himself.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

Oh, by the way, I've got a message for you.

NEWLAND

Hmm?

He combs his hair.

DALLAS

The Countess Olenska expects us
both and half-past five.
(casually)

Newland slowly turns to look at Dallas.

NEWLAND

What?

Dallas has a twinkle of malice - like Granny Mingott's - in his eye. Dallas looks in the mirror and combs his hair.

DALLAS

Oh, didn't I tell you? Fanny made me swear to do three things while I was in Paris: get her the score of the last Debussy songs, go to the Grand-Guignol, and to see Madame Olenska. You know she was awfully good to Fanny when Mr. Beaufort sent her over from Buenos Aires to the convent school. Fanny hadn't any friends and Madame Olenska used to trot her around on holidays. She was a great friend of Mrs. Beaufort's, and she's our cousin, of course. So I rang her up this morning and told her we were here and wanted to see her.

NEWLAND

You---told her I was here?

DALLAS

Of course, why not?

Dallas walks over to Newland and slips his arm through his father's.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

I say, Father, what was she like?

Newland blushes bright pink.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

Come on, own up, you and she were great pals, weren't you? Wasn't she most lovely?

NEWLAND

Lovely?

He looks at Dallas, then away.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

I don't know. She was different.

DALLAS

Ah! There you have it! That's what it always comes to! When she's in front of you, she's different - and one doesn't know why. That exactly how I feel about Fanny.

Newland draws back a step and releases Dallas's arm.

NEWLAND

About Fanny!? But my dear fellow, I should hope so! Only I don't see why we have to go...

DALLAS

Dash it, Dad, don't be prehistoric! Wasn't she once - your Fanny?

He smiling, egging him on. Newland turns to look at him, and sees the love beneath the banter.

NEWLAND

My Fanny?

A small smile spreads on Newland.

DALLAS

Well, the woman you'd have chucked everything for. Only you didn't.

NEWLAND

(nodding) I didn't.

He looks out the window.

DALLAS

But mother said-

NEWLAND

Your mother?!

DALLAS

Yes, before she died. It was when she sent for me alone-you remember?

(MORE)

DALLAS (CONT'D)

She said she knew we were safe with you, and always would be, because once when she asked you to, you'd given up the thing you most wanted.

Newland looks out the window into the city below. He could cry, he's not sure if it's because he misses May or because of something else tugging at him from the depths of time. Dallas watches him from behind.

NEWLAND

Your mother never asked me.

DALLAS

No, I forgot. You never did ask each other anything, did you?

(bantering)

And you never told each other anything. You just sat and watched each other and guessed at what was going on underneath.

Newland is shocked.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

Well, I back your generation for knowing more about each other's private thoughts than we ever have time to find out about our own.

Newland is quiet. Dallas watches him.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

I say Dad, you re not angry with me? If you are, let's make up and go and lunch at Henri's. I've got to rush out to Versailles afterward.

MONTAGE:

A) Newland is roaming the streets of Paris. He walks to Place de la Concorde and the Tuileries gardens and then the Louvre. Taking in the streets and sights. He wanders through the galleries. His eyes widening and a smile spreading across his lips for the first time in a long time. He catches his reflection in something and smiles at himself.

NEWLAND

But I'm only fifty-seven!

MONTAGE END.

EXT. HOTEL PARIS - LATE AFTERNOON

He meets Dallas in front of the hotel and together they walk across streets as Dallas talks excitedly about Versailles.

EXT. PALACE DES INVALIDES - EARLY EVENING

They turn a corner and are at the Place des Invalides, with the dome of Mansart floating above them as the sun approaches the horizon. The light glitters between leaves. It feels warm on his face. They walk on, enjoying the moment. Dallas stops in front of a building.

EXT. PORTER BUILDING - EARLY EVENING, AS THE SUN SETS

DALLAS

It must be here. (They look up) I wonder which floor.

Dallas walks into the Porter's lodge and comes back.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

It's the fifth floor.

They both look up.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

It must be the one with awnings.

Newland remains planted, looking up at the windows. After a while, Dallas comes to stand next to him.

DALLAS (CONT'D)

(whispers)

I say, you know, it's nearly six.

Newland looks at his son, at the bench behind him, at the fifth floor, then back at the bench. Newland moves to the bench.

NEWLAND

I believe I'll sit here a while.

DALLAS

Why?! Aren't you well?

NEWLAND

Oh, perfectly. But I should like you, please, to go up without me.

DALLAS

(pauses)

But I say dad: do you mean you
won't come up at all?

NEWLAND

(breathes) Oh, I don't know.

DALLAS

If you don't, she won't understand.

NEWLAND

Go, my boy, perhaps I will follow
you.

He nods up to the fifth floor. Dallas looks at him through
the twilight.

DALLAS

But what on earth shall I say?

NEWLAND

My dear fellow, don't you always
know what to say?

DALLAS

(confused)

Very well, then, I shall say you're
old-fashioned, and prefer walking
up the five flights because you
don't like lifts.

NEWLAND

Say I'm old-fashioned. That's
enough.

Dallas looks at him, he's worried, then turns and walks to
the building. Newland's smile fades as he changes his mind.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Son!

Dallas turns around. Newland gets up and leads the way into
the building. They walk through the front lobby, past the
porter, into the elevator.

INT. PORTER BUILDING - TWILIGHT

They exit the fifth floor, Dallas stays behind near the
elevator and Newland walks down the hall by himself, arriving
at Ellen's front door. (Not sure if there's a bell or he
knocks or what is used to announce) He takes a breath and
knocks. Waiting, he hears noise from inside.

He opens the door and steps in. Ellen is standing at the window, but turns around as he enters.

Light spills around her. She's radiant. She sees him, as he opens the door. He's older but handsome nonetheless. His smile as radiant as before. There's a relief in it. They walk towards each other, stopping a few feet away. He reaches out to hold her hand, she reaches out and grasps his. Newland moves towards her, just looking at her. He holds her other hand. She smiles, he smiles. She starts to laugh, he starts to laugh. They hug, she takes a step back to look at him.

NEWLAND

It's so good to see you.

ELLEN OLENSKA

It's been years, Newland.

NEWLAND

Ellen.

Ellen.

He looks at her and taking her in.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Ellen.

(softly)

He runs his hand over her cheek. He puts his hand behind her neck and kisses her. Softly yet lovely yet deeply but not. Just enjoying the moment as the twilight fades into night and the lights in the living room become brighter. We move past them, out the window and down into the little square to the bench that Newland is sitting on. He's still there.

EXT. PORTER BUILDING - TWILIGHT

A CAT walks by in front of him in the dusky silence. The lights start appearing in the various apartments; he looks up at the front of the building, watching Dallas shoes disappear into the lobby. Then he casts his eyes onto the fifth floor where he sees the lights come on. Nighttime starts settling in with a relaxing sigh. He stays rooted in place, watching the balcony. A light shines from Ellen's fifth floor balcony. Newland looks up with a start, is it her?

Ellen's MANSERVANT who comes out to draw the awnings and close the shutters. Newland looks up resigned. His smile fades.

NEWLAND

It's more real to me here than if I went up.

He smiles with tears in his eyes. He nods, breathes, and then gets up, and without looking at the balcony walks the streets back to his hotel. Newland never sees Ellen again.

The End.