

THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

Written by

Rebecca Rodriguez

Based on the novel by Edith Wharton

Copyright (c) 2023 This screenplay may not be used or reproduced for any purpose including educational purposes without the expressed written permission of the author.

Registered WGA
No. 2172992

rodriguez8rebecca@gmail.com
562-269-8726

INT. ARCHER HOME - EVENING

A CRACKLING FIRE and the TICKING of a CLOCK echo in a cozy room as NEWLAND ARCHER buttons up his evening shirt and cufflinks, and ties his 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 - his mother MRS. ADELINE ARCHER and his 26 year-old spinster sister JANEY ARCHER. They smile. At the front door he breaks off a White Oleander 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 CUSHING 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 is 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 in her lap. She looks up at Mr. Newland, with a coy smile. He puts the opera glasses down and smiles to himself with self-satisfaction.

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

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

(nodding to Ellen)

That's Ellen Olenska, May's cousin.
She has decided to divorce her
husband.

YOUNG MAN

(From behind the men)

He's an awful brute from what I
heard.

LAWRENCE LEFFERTS

The very worst. I knew him at Nice,
a white sneering fellow. Rather
handsome, has blue eyes with too
many lashes.

(disgusted)

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.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

Olenski's hand slaps Ellen Olenska across the face.

END FLASHBACK

As he says this, Countess Ellen Olenska leans forward to
watch the opera exposing a lot of her ample 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. 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 with Ellen 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
 (V.O. said over the next
 action)
 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
 (nodding)
 Well, Well Newland, a pleasure. I
 see you've captivated May as usual.
 (large smile)
 Lefferts, Sillerton.

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.

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

COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA

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

(laughs)

I was in love with your cousin
Vandie Newland. Ah, how this brings
it all back to me.

(looks around)

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

(coughs)

Yes, you have been away for very
long.

ELLEN OLENSKA

(smiling back)

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. 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 each other's eyes. After a dance, 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

(beaming)

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

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

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.

CUT TO BLACK.

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. She love cakes and tarts, and wears whatever she desires, 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

Fiddlesticks! 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.

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)

I may catch pneumonia any winter now.

(threatening)

And I want to give the wedding breakfast.

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

GRANNY MINGOTT (CONT'D)

(holds out her hand)

Beaufort! This is a rare favor!

JULIUS BEAUFORT

Thanks. I wish it might happen oftener.

(barely hidden arrogance)

(MORE)

JULIUS BEAUFORT (CONT'D)

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 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.

(cackles)

I hear she's still very good looking.

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. 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.

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.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)

(getting up)

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. 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 Lemuel Struthers to attend the ball, but then Regina always does what Julius asks of her.

SILLERTON JACKSON

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

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, dying 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 with regret 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-tu-ally 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. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)

(skillfully changing the subject)

And Newland's cousin-Countess Olenska?

She takes a small bite of her food.

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)
 (well-feigned disinterest)
 Was she at the ball as well?

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

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

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER
 (feigning surprise)
 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. ADELINE ARCHER
 (sighs, nods
 compassionately)
 Poor Countess Ellen Olenska.

(MORE)

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER (CONT'D)

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

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. 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.

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
 (shocked)
 Well...we shall send over our
 acceptance today.

JANEY'S HAND COMES INTO VIEW, TAKES THE INVITATION GRABS THE INVITATION FROM HER MOTHER'S HAND TO RED. CAMERA ON MRS. ARCHER.

Newland continues reading his newspaper, unbothered.

INT. ARCHER FAMILY ROOM - LATER THAT 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
 (looks up with a forced
 smile)
 Hello Mumma. It was to be expected.

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! 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

(changing her tune)

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 because if we don't all
stand together, there'll be no such
thing as society left!

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 mausoleum that is the Van der
Luyden's house.

INT. VAN DER LYUNDEN'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. 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.

LONG SILENCE AS FOOTMAN EXITS, CAMERA ON THE GROUP.

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. 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

(very concerned)

But I hope you finished your reading, Henry?

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. 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 being on the edge of her seat. Newland is completely relaxed and at ease. 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. I had no idea that things had come to such a pass.

(small pause)

(MORE)

MR. VAN DER LUYDEN (CONT'D)

Have you read this morning's Times,
Newland?

NEWLAND

Why, yes sir.

He sits up straighter with a serious consultation.

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...

(looks at Louisa)

...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 DER LUYDEN

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

(standing up, bowing)

MRS. ADELINE ARCHER

Thank you, cousin, we are most
obliged.

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 are impatiently gathered in the waiting room. They guests are all ridiculously dressed up with jewels, ostrich feathers, lace, gloves, and lipstick, and are 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 like a fancy funeral, until Countess 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 Olenska approaches Newland like a streaking comet across the sky.

COUNTESS 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 LUYDEN'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 simply, with less makeup, and wearing simple earrings. He contemplates her 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

(nodding, smiling)

She is quite mysterious.

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 Luyden. Newland looks at Ellen one more time. At the end of dinner everyone stands and moves to the drawing room.

INT. VAN DER LUYDEN'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 Countess Olenka. 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 party. The guests hold their collective breaths at the audacity of a younger woman with a lesser title leaving the side of the Duke. SLOW MOTION: Ellen's heels CLICK across the floor and stop before Newland. END SLOW MOTION. Newland looks up to see her approaching and smiles as she sits down beside him on the settee.

COUNTESS 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 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)

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

They laugh.

COUNTESS 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 OLENSKA

Do you think then, that there is a limit?

NEWLAND

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

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(glowing)

Ah! It's really and truly a romance?

NEWLAND

The most romantic of romances!

COUNTESS 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 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 OLENSKA

Yes, I know.

She inhales and collects herself.

COUNTESS 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 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 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

(laughing)

Of course.

Mr. Van der Luyden approaches Ellen and Newland, followed by
Mr. Urban Dagonet and the Leffertses. Ellen 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 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 look 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 Ellen. 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 for work 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 his job 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

The carriage arrives and May gets in. Newland 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
 (squealing and squeezing
 his hand)
 Oh I'm so happy, dear!

NEWLAND
 Yes, a thoroughly eventful day.

The carriage pulls up to May's house.

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

She exits with a smile.

INT. CARRIAGE RIDE - LATE AFTERNOON

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 - LATE AFTERNOON

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 - LATER

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.

MAID

(nodding her head)
La Contessa torno presto. Entra per
favore.

Newland is waved in.

INT. COUNTESS ELLEN OLENSKA'S HOME - LATER

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 stokes the fire.

MAID (CONT'D)

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

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 FOOTSTEPS 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 OLENSKA

How do you like my funny house?

(smiles)

To me it's like heaven.

She unties her velvet bonnet and tosses it on a chair. Newland, ready to leave, exhales and decides to stay for a few minutes.

NEWLAND

(smiles, annoyed)

You've arranged it delightfully.

COUNTESS 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

(looking around)

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

COUNTESS 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 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. 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 OLENSKA (CONT'D)

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

NEWLAND

(chuckles)

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

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(watches the fire)

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 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 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 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 OLENSKA

(testing the waters)

Isn't that perhaps the reason?

NEWLAND

The reason...?

COUNTESS OLENSKA

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

NEWLAND

(laughs, shocked)

I suppose you're right.

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

COUNTESS 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, shakes
 head)
 Opening my eyes to things I'd
 looked at so long that I'd ceased
 to see them.

Ellen 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 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. Ellen stretches her hands out to the logs.

NEWLAND

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

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(scoffs)
 All of my aunts 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 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.

Ellen shakes her head.

COUNTESS 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 (CONT'D)

It will be okay.

She frees herself and looks up through wet lashes.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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 in many rooms.

DUKE

(takes Ellen's hand)
My dear countess. I've brought an old friend of mine to see you-Mrs. Struthers.

((MORE))

DUKE (CONT'D)

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. Ellen tries to gather herself.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(slightly shy)

Welcome, please, make yourselves at home.

MRS. STRUTHERS

(smiles widely)

I want to know everybody who's young and interesting and charming, so of course I want to know you, my dear! 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 OLENSKA

(pushes up chair to table)

Oh how kind! How kind of the Duke to think of me! 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 (CONT'D)

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 - SUNSET

Newland is walking down Ellen's street and heading home. Evening's dusk is near. 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 WEEK 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

(smiling)

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

NEWLAND

(stands)

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! 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

(recovers)

Mercy.

(jokingly)

Shall we elope?

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 WELLAND

(annoyed)

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.

(irritated)

Oh, did I tell you that I showed
Ellen my ring? She thinks it's the
most beautiful setting she ever
saw.

(MORE)

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

There's nothing like it in the rue
de la Paix.

(stops walking)

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

INT. ARCHER'S LIBRARY - DAY

Newland takes a puff of his cigarette. He sits in his chair
and watches the fire. He blinks a couple times.

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

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 strollig 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!
 (dramatic)
 She went with the Duke and Mr. Beaufort!

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)

(MORE)

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

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

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?
(drops needlework)
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...
(enunciates)
...and champagne!

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

(offended)

New York is neither Paris nor London!

NEWLAND

(eye roll)

Oh no, it's not.

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. 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)

(bating)

It would be in Madame Olenska's interest if you did.

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

(snorts)

Oh of course you see only the Mingott side.

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. Janey pretends to fluff some flowers.

NEWLAND

(nods)

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 Countness 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.

He sinks into a chair, and lays his hat and gloves on a side table.

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

(a little too loudly)

Has the Duke been carrying her off to parties?

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

(smiling with immense
benevolence)

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
(fainting on couch)
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.

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)
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 on with an exhale.

CUT TO:

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.

PACE SPEEDS UP, DISHES ARE A BLUR

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. 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 - LATER THAT EVENING

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 Ellen'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 Ellen when he enters. Newland feels the blood rising to his cheeks. He nods towards Beaufort and makes his way towards a casual Ellen.

JULIUS BEAUFORT

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

COUNTESS 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 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 OLENSKA

Oh! That does tempt me! I've not met a single artist since I've been here, except at Mrs. Strutherses.

NEWLAND

What kind of artists?

(sits)

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

COUNTESS OLENSKA

Painters? Are there painters in New York? 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 OLENSKA

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

JULIUS BEAUFORT

(pauses, staring)
Why not now?

COUNTESS 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 OLENSKA

Yes.

She looks at Beaufort with a warning.

COUNTESS OLENSKA (CONT'D)

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

JULIUS BEAUFORT

(hurt)
Ah.

Beaufort looks at his pocket watch, 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 attempting 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 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 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 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 OLENSKA

(looking down at hands)

Ah?

FLASHBACK

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

END FLASHBACK

Ellen rubs her wrists with a look of pain.

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 OLENSKA

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

NEWLAND

I understand that.

COUNTESS 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 OLENSKA

If?

NEWLAND

I mean no matter how unfounded they were.

Long Pause.

COUNTESS 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 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

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

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(notices, presses)
But my freedom-is that nothing?

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 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 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 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 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

MUSIC CUE:

Newland passes by a group of SINGERS at home singing a beautiful TUNE.

EXT. PORT - NIGHT INTO DAY

MUSIC CUE: The tune from previous scene 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. 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.

PORTMAN
 All aboard for Saint Augustine!

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.

BLENDS INTO:

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 Olenka. 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 turns around to face Newland. He looks up in surprise.

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

She motions 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?

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

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

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

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

NEWLAND
 Ah-I'm glad.

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

NEWLAND
 I know.

COUNTESS 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 leave.

INT. OPERA RECEPTION ROOM - THAT SAME NIGHT

Newland approaches the exit 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. THEATER - 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

(friendly)

Listen Newland, 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

(laughs)

It's not for an interview, I hope?

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

(laughs)

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

Newland coughs.

NED (CONT'D)

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

NEWLAND

(proud)

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

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. He pushes the front door open with a puff. 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 Chivers accepting their invitation to their home near Skuytercliff on Saturday. He sends the letter off, checks his watch and goes back to work.

MONTAGE

EXT. CHIVERS HOUSE - MORNING

Newland arrives at the Chivers' on Saturday morning. He gives his greetings to MR. and MRS. REGGIE CHIVERS - a well to do couple with odd hobbies and scientific interests.

EXT. ICE BOAT - LATER THAT MORNING

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

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. CHIVERS 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. CHIVERS 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

Newland 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.

END MONTAGE

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 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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(glowing)

Ah! You've come!

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. She reaches up to soothe her cheek.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)
 (puzzled)
 Is everything okay?

She shrugs.

COUNTESS OLENSKA
 (smiling)
 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.

COUNTESS 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

COUNTESS OLENSKA
 I knew you'd come visit!

NEWLAND
 (laughs, teasing)
 I see you wanted me to!

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

COUNTESS OLENSKA
 Where were you coming from?

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

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

NEWLAND

I didn't need any asking.

COUNTESS 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 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 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 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 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 tries the door.

COUNTESS 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 OLENSKA

Come in, we can have a quiet talk. Mrs. Van der Luyden has driven over to see her old aunt's Rhinebeck 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 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. Ellen 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 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.

COUNTESS 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. Ellen 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. 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. Ellen 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

Did you invite him?

She shakes her head.

COUNTESS 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. Ellen 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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(uncomfortable)

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

Silence. The camera pans from Newland, to Ellen, to Beaufort catching the awkwardness of the new addition to the meeting.

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. 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 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.
(eating)
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

(swoons in doorway)
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)

(genuine)
Thank you for your concern.

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. 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 so wonderful to see you! 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, changes subject)

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.

The conversation blurs into breakfast.

INT. WELLAND SUMMER HOUSE DINING ROOM - LATER

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.

(MORE)

MR. WELLAND (CONT'D)

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.

(MORE)

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

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? It will be lent just 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.

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.

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.

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.
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?

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. 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.

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

(plainly)

I hope you liked her mother

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)

((MORE))

MRS. MINGOTT (CONT'D)

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'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 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 OLENSKA

Yes, I know.

(looks at Newland)

I went to see your mother to ask where you'd gone. I had sent a note that you never answered and I was afraid you were ill.

NEWLAND

(guilty of his apathy)

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

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(laughs)

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

MRS. MINGOTT

(gaily)

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!

COUNTESS 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. Ellen 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 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 OLENSKA
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.

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
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 Ellen usually sits. They are staring at the flowers.

MARCHIONESS MANSON

(sighs)

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

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)

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
 (awkward)
 List-oh! List!

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

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
 (severely)
 I never think much of wit.

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

(embarrassed)

Madame Olenska exaggerates.

(MORE)

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

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

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

(rising)

A letter? Has Madame Olenska seen it?

MARCHIONESS

(shaking her head)

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.

(tsks)

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.

((MORE))

MARCHIONES MANSON (CONT'D)

Art and beauty she does care for;
 she lives for, as I always have -
 music, brilliant conversation. That
 my dear young man, 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 that sink in.

NEWLAND

She knows nothing yet --- of the
 letter?

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.

Ellen enters smiling.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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

COUNTESS OLENSKA

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

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(sighs)

There's time for a cigarette.

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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(smiles faintly)
Medora is sweet but incorrigibly romantic, is she not?

NEWLAND

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

Ellen is quiet. Clock TICKS.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

She has hinted him asking in a letter.

NEWLAND

And that's why she's come.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(little laugh)
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.

NEWLAND

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

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(shrugs)
After all it was to be expected.

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

NEWLAND

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

COUNTESS 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...

COUNTESS OLENSKA

I don't understand.

NEWLAND

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

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(finally)

Well, that is noble.

NEWLAND

Noble yes, but ridiculous.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

Because you don't care for anyone
else.

NEWLAND

Because I don't mean to marry
anyone else.

COUNTESS 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...

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

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

NEWLAND

(Rebuffed and embarrassed)

I never had untoward feelings about you and never shall.

(unflinching)

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

COUNTESS OLENSKA

Possible for either of us.

She whirls around.

COUNTESS OLENSKA (CONT'D)

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

NEWLAND

(standing)

I've made it impossible?

COUNTESS OLENSKA

Yes, you! You! You!

(almost crying)

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, laughs)

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

He goes to her, but she sits down.

NEWLAND

(groans)

Good God, when I thought...

COUNTESS OLENSKA

You thought?

Newland starts to come back to his senses.

NEWLAND

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

COUNTESS OLENSKA
My husband's letter?

NEWLAND
Yes.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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.

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

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

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?

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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

(bitter)

And Beaufort? Is he to replace me?

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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

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

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. 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 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.

Newland 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 - MOMENTS LATER

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—

FLASHBACK

Ellen smiling the house.

END FLASHBACK

LIVERY MAN (CONT'D)

...It will be quite comfortable, I think, you ll find, Sir. And the Miss Du Lacs 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.

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. ONE YEAR 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. 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.

(sighs)

I could barely persuade her to come with me to the Blenkers.

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

(smiling)

Ah, then it remains in the family.

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

(to Beaufort)

Gad, not one of them holds the bow as she does.

BEAUFORT

(snorts and knocks on the side of his head)

Yes, but that and Newland are the only targets she'll ever hit.

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

(smiles)

As you wish, dear.

Guests huddle around her and congratulate her.

EXT. BELLEVUE AVE - DAY

The two take a joy ride down Bellevue Avenue. May expertly holds the reins 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. She raps on the floor with her stick and a MAID comes in.

MAID

(entering)

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, kisses May's hand and calmly walks out of the room. Camera rotates in a circle up down.

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. The day is exquisite in the late summer afternoon. The breeze carries the scent of flowers; 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. His face crumbles for a second, but recovers and decides to move forward. He takes a few steps onto the pier. Ellen sees a figure out of the corner of her eye. FOOTSTEPS. She knows it's him. Her heart almost jumps out of her chest with each step. She feels sick. Suddenly, everything stops.

DAYDREAM

Newland is behind her, sliding his hand over hers. Enjoyment begins to spread across her face. She lets out a breath. 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. 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. He brings her in and touches her lips with his.

END DAYDREAM

Newland is at the far end of the pier. He takes one step onto the pier, then stops to watch the sun-crowned figure 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. Camera floor POV. Newland's shoes walk out of the scene.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT. THE LAWNS OF NEWPORT.

Fireworks reflect in Newland's eyes. Fire Crackers sound off in the distance with the echoes of laughing children. The blooming colors blaze across the waters. The crowd around him claps and exclaims with each explosion. May leans over to him

MAY WELLAND
(smiling)
Isn't it lovely?

Newland smiles back.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)
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.

May looks away and the smile on Newland's face fades. He gives May a kiss on the hand.

NEWLAND ARCHER

I'll be back.

He walks to the pier and stands where he saw Ellen hours earlier. He walks back to the crowds, nodding to friends and familiar faces along the way. He glimpses someone in the crowd - someone with Ellen's countenance - and follows her. Could it be? Newland watches from a distance as the woman leaves the crowds behind and walks a ways away. He sees her figure in the lights of the fireworks and catches up. He grabs her arm, and turns a stunned Ellen Olenska around to face him.

NEWLAND

I was looking for you earlier, at the pier.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

I know.

NEWLAND ARCHER

I was waiting for you to turn around.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(looks away, then back)

I know.

NEWLAND

Why didn't you? Turn around?

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(looking up)

I wanted to get away from you.

NEWLAND

I haven't seen you in a year.

She pulls away and starts to walk off. Newland catches up to her, turns her around and embraces her.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(cries)

Oh let's stop. I don't want to do this.

Newland looks at her, caresses her face, and after many moments and kisses her. She falls into his embrace. He clasps her hand and drags her to a nearby hot-house. It's surrounded by over-grown ivy, brambles and trees. It's filled with roses. Newland opens the door and steps in.

He turns to kiss her as he shuts the door, the reflection of fireworks in the glass walls and in their eyes. They continue to passionately embrace among the roses.

Slow motion

CUT TO:

May looks around for Newland amongst the people, her head swiveling around the crowd. END CUT.

NEWLAND ARCHER

(whispering)

I've missed you. When will I see you again? I love you.

Newland unclasps Ellen's top buttons, she looks at him with tears in her eyes and kisses him. SLOW MOTION: They make love. The fireworks reflecting in their eyes and in the glass of the hothouse. END SLOW MOTION. Everything back to normal pace.

CUT TO:

May not seeing Newland, looking around a bit more, but giving up and turning back to her friends. END CUT.

Newland and Ellen make love among the roses. He lifts her onto a work table and wraps her legs around his waist and embraces her. Fireworks go off in the distance, their light reflecting off Newland's and Ellen's skin. We see a close-up of a stunning rose a few inches away, in full bloom. But with all the activity, it sustained a broken stem. It falls to the floor without ceremony.

INT. NEWLAND'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Newland wakes in a delightful mood, the memory of Ellen still on his lips as he touches them while looking out the bedroom window. He looks at the vase of roses in the room, smells it with a smile.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

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.

(adjusts glasses)

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 an Indian man
on the day of Julia Mingott's the
dasant?

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-
(anxious, uncomfortable)
More than one?

(MORE)

MR. WELLAND (CONT'D)

(grimaces, glances at his wife)

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 his down knife and fork.

MRS. WELLAND

There's no reason why you should go at all my dear.

(cheerfully)

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.

(pause)

Oh, and I heard you missed Ellen yesterday. She left for Boston this morning. Apparently on business.

Newland's eye twitches.

MAY WELLAND

Of course I'll drive with Papa. I'm sure Newland will find something to do.

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. 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

(sighs)

Ah, yes, Jane Merry is a true New-Yorker.

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. 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 confused. 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.

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.

MR. JACKSON (CONT'D)

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.

(MORE)

MR. JACKSON (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

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.

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

(bright)
I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

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 becoming 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)

(plainly)

And you must be sure to go see Ellen.

Camera on her hand as she turns the wick down, lifts the globe and blows out the flame.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

(cheery)

They smell less if one blows them out.

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 is 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

Camera pans from doctor's bag, then on the doctor's hand holding Granny's hand, then on Granny. It cuts to Newland and May talking in the other end of the room. Blankets, wraps, salves and empty cups are strewn about the room. MRS. LOVELL MINGOTT nods to him while passing into the depths of another 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 assists Newland while customers mill 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

(forced smile)
Not going? Why, what's happened?

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)

(Biting? Sarcastic?)
I'm not going till later on.

(MORE)

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Luckily for the convenience of your family.

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.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

Meet me at Granny's!

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. Newland gets in and 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. The train arrives as he's finishing his cup. He walks towards the throngs of people disembarking. Countess Ellen Olenka 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. Everything slows and he's in another dimension where everything is glittering and beautiful. Ellen is standing in front of him.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

Newland. Newland!

Someone bumps into Newland with a 'Sorry!', startling him out of his reverie. Ellen is in front of Newland confused. He shakes his head and grabs her luggage. 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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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 OLENSKA

Oh-?

Newland laughs.

NEWLAND

Do you know-I hardly remember you?

Ellen is 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.

(takes her hand)

Ellen.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

What a pretty carriage! Is it May's?

She turns to look at him.

NEWLAND

Yes.

She nods and smiles.

COUNTESS 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?

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

Ah! I've had to.

(looks at him)

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.

COUNTESS 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 OLENSKA

What can't.

NEWLAND

Our being together and not being
together.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

(pause)

What do you mean by trusting it to come true?

NEWLAN

(chuckles)

Why, you know, don't you?

She looks at him and laughs.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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.

(MORE)

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA (CONT'D)

Isn't there an old world 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?

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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

DAYDREAM

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. Camera on May. She crosses the threshold of the door and enters the space.

END DAYDREAM

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. 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

(laughs)

Because I shall never be able to open a window without worrying you.

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 - DAYS LATER

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.

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!

GRANNY MINGOTT

(winks at him)

But not as handsome as Ellen?

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; 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)

(laughs)

Eh? Eh? Whose hand did you think
you were kissing, young man-your
wife's I hope?

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 dawning, 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, his footsteps clacking on the sidewalk as he approaches the mansion. The Beaufort nameplate shines in the light. 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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

Newland!

Newland stops in his tracks and swallows hard deciding if he should turn around.

NEWLAND

(turning)

Ellen.

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 Ellen 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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

But I shall be at Granny's for the
present, that is.

NEWLAND

There's the art museum in the park.

(helping her into the
carriage)

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 an 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 meeting.

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. 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.

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

It seems so cruel that after a
while, nothing matters...

Newland approaches her, looking where her eyes land.

COUNTESS 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...

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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 awaken 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.

COUNTESS OLENSKA

Afraid?

NEWLAND

Of my coming to Washington

She looks down.

NEWLAND (CONT'D)

Well?

COUNTESS OLENSKA

Well, yes...

NEWLAND

You were afraid? (sad)

Well then..

COUNTESS OLENSKA

Well then what? This is better,
isn't it?

NEWLAND

Better?

COUNTESS 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.

COUNTESS 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)

(absently)

What do you think is better?

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? Come with me.

He strokes her face.

ELLEN OLENSKA

I can't. I can't lie to the people who have been good to me.

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 LIBRARY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

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 (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

She was so dear, just like the old Ellen. I'm afraid I haven't been fair to her lately. I've sometimes thought...

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 (CONT'D)

She seems to like to make herself conspicuous. 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 (CONT'D)

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)

(MORE)

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

And she's alienated the Van der Luydens...

Newland stiffens and shakes his head.

MAY WELLAND (CONT'D)

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.

INT. OPERA - NIGHT, A FEW HOURS LATER.

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. 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. Camera takes us down the stairs, out the front door, down various streets to the Van der Luyden's city home.

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 crabily.

EXT. VAN DER LUYNDEN'S HOUSE

Back down the stairs and out the door the Van der Luyden's carriage arrives 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. A few streets down, a CHILD is out on the street is playing a fiddle. PEOPLE start to arrive at their respective 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. ARCHER HOME - AN HOUR LATER.

Coming through the door, Newland receives an invitation to a party at his house. May, who is all smiles, puts it in his hand.

MAY WELLAND

It's an invitation for our farewell dinner for Ellen.

NEWLAND

A dinner? Why?

MAY WELLAND

(smile fades)

But you like Ellen! I thought you'd be pleased.

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.

Swift transition from night to day

INT. ARCHER DINING ROOM - THE PARTY NIGHT.

CAMERA: on Newland back of head POV as he walks downstairs, punch in hand and mulls amongst the guests. He takes a casual stroll through the visitors 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 talk about a painting on the wall. Guests 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. They fall into each other's smiles. May enters the room, with smiles and greetings. She looks around the room looking for her husband. She spies him talking to Ellen and moves towards them like a shark.

COUNTESS 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.

Gets up, goes over to him, hover above his chair, strokes his hair.

MAY WELLAND

As far as that? 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

(pause)

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?!

(smiling)

I was right!!

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 two ARCHER CHILDREN grow and 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.

END MONTAGE

The PHONE CLICKS, Newland picks it up.

OPERATOR
Chicago wants you.

NEWLAND
Thank you.

DALLAS, Newland's exuberant, gracious, handsome 21 year-old son, calls him from Chicago.

DALLAS
Hallo, dad, yes. How are you?

NEWLAND
(smiles)
Well, good as to be expected.

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.

Newland Hangs up. He 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?

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL PARIS - MORNING, A WEEK LATER.

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 been years. 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

(casually)

The Countess Olenska expects us
both and half-past five.

NEWLAND

(turns slowly to Dallas)

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

Newland roams 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, 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. They transform into their younger selves. 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)

(softly)

Ellen.

He runs his hand over her cheek. He puts his hand behind her neck and kisses her. Softly, lovely, and deep. 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 Newland 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 into the space 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.