

Your main commentary should be focused on *OF constructions*. Other topics may also be addressed.

WEDNESDAY 14TH MAY. It's some time since I made the last entry in this journal. I haven't felt like writing anything down, even for my own eyes only, about the events of the last three weeks. I've been too preoccupied with living them. No, that's not the real reason. A journal is a kind of mirror in which you look at yourself every day, candidly, unflinchingly — without the protective disguise of a mask, without even the flattery of make-up — and tell yourself the truth. I haven't felt like doing that since Messenger and I became lovers. I didn't want to record my behaviour because I was afraid that scrutinizing it and analysing it might awaken scruples of conscience and inhibit my pleasure. (In fact I still shrink from examining this experience with the straight unflinching gaze of the first person. Let me try it another way ...).

For that was what she had become, a woman of pleasure, a scarlet woman, a woman of easy virtue, a woman no better than she should be — or so she would have been described in the pages of an old novel. Not in a modern one, of course. She was only doing what everybody else was doing, evidently: fulfilling her desires, making hay while the sun shone, squeezing every drop of joy from her ageing body before it was too late, because '*This is the only life you will have,*' etc., etc. And whatever happened she would never regret it, it had been so exciting.

Nerve-racking, too, at times, because they had taken tremendous risks. Twice she had gone to the house on Pittville Lawn to cook dinner for the family, and stayed overnight on the pretext that she'd drunk too much wine to drive home, and on both occasions he crept into her room and her bed in the middle of the night, just as she had fantasized on the night of his birthday party, and they made love that was somehow all the more sensuous and passionate because they dared not make a sound, in case one of the children should wake and hear them. They had to mime their ecstasy to each other like a pair of dancers, in the movements of their limbs and the expressions on their faces. They lay on a sheepskin rug on the floor because the bed creaked, and he held his hand over her mouth as she reached her climax. She bit on the cushion of flesh at the base of his thumb as if it were a bridle or a

gag, to stop herself from crying out, and heard a sharp intake of breath as he stood the pain. (He called her 'Biter' in pillow-talk. He seemed to like it, but she had stopped doing it, because Carrie was coming home soon, and mustn't find her husband visibly nibbled and gnawed, like a joint attacked by mice.) After the silent, balletic sex, she had to unlock the door and peer out on to the landing to make sure that it was safe for him to slink back to his own bedroom, for it was always possible that one of the children would get up to go to the toilet and see him coming out of the guest room.

One afternoon they were in bed at Horseshoes, and a car drew up outside and someone rang the doorbell. Messenger crept, naked, to the window, and peeped out through a gap in the curtains. 'It's the VC!' he whispered. 'It's Sir Stanley and Lady Viv. What the fuck are they doing here?' Helen found this untimely visitation terribly funny, and got the giggles, but Messenger was afraid of discovery and hissed at her to keep quiet. His car was parked in the drive, so the visitors knew he was in the house or not far away. Helen and Messenger lay low in the curtained bedroom until they got tired of ringing the doorbell and calling over the garden wall, and drove off.