

*The scene is in Delia Pearn's room, at her vanity. Her and her mother are preparing for Delia's rehearsal dinner for her wedding to Walker Van Meter. Maybe the scene begins with Mrs. Pearn doing Delia's hair, and it ends with her lacing her corset.*

VO: If the ladies would only realize that they are the torch-bearers of civilization, which, as the great philosopher Confucius has said, is the art of being civil, the world would be a more pleasant place to live in.

Mrs. Pearn: Oh, Delia, at least try to smile.

Voice Over: The Lady's Book of Etiquette, 1903...

Delia: I'm doing everything else you asked. Can there not be a single part of me that is not a lie?

VO: A decent, upstanding lady who wishes to be well regarded by her community, should uphold these rules...

Mrs. Pearn: People are going take one look at that scowl and we will never hear the end of how miserable Mrs. Van Meter looked during her wedding. Do you really want that to be what people remember about you? What they talk about?

VO: A lady shall, one, graciously accept gentlemanly offers of assistance...

Delia: Honestly mother, at this point do you really think it matters to me.

VO: Two, attend church every Sunday in her best dress...

Mrs. Pearn: That's enough. We've have been through this all before. I thought you had finally decided to grow up and act like a proper lady.

VO: Three, wear gloves on the street, at church & other formal occasions, except when eating or drinking...

Delia: I know mother, I know. As the day gets closer I just feel more and more... trapped.

VO: Four, do her best to attend every social event of the season...

Mrs. Pearn: Trapped... That's an interesting choice of words dear. I don't know if there's anyone who doesn't feel trapped by *something*. Why would you think you would be the exception?

VO: A lady shall *not*, one, reveal her bare ankles...

Delia: I don't believe that. People find freedom all the time! I hear everyday about people who move to the city and live exciting lives and travel the world and find love and live the life they want to live!

VO: Two, sit with her legs crossed, except at the ankles if necessary for comfort or habit...

Mrs. Pearn: This is not a romance novel Delia. But fine, think what you want to things, you're going to marry that man whether you like it or not.

VO: Three, work unless to assist a father or brother in bookkeeping or in a Millinery shop...

Delia: If we're all trapped, mother, what are you trapped by?

VO: Four, socialize with those considered... inappropriate...

Mrs. Pearn: (short laugh) You.

VO: Five, discuss anything to do with the subject of sex, including, but not limited to, those women of the "actress" profession and those men deemed "confirmed bachelors..."

Delia: Me? How so?

VO: Six, appear imbued. After the seventh month, she shall not leave the house.

Mrs. Pearn: Do you think I enjoy forcing my daughter to do something she doesn't want to do? Learn to fight the battle within your marriage if you must. Walker is a nice man, you can make you're marriage what you want and you will be fine.

VO: Seven, receive, god forbid... a divorce...

Delia: If you hate doing it then why are you?

VO: Eight, part one's hair to the side, Play cards, Dance, Look into the open door of a blacksmith shop, Walk past a saloon, Own a dog.

Mrs. Pearn: To protect you.

VO: Consequences of not following the rules of etiquette can include, undesirability...

Delia: To protect me?! You aren't protecting me mother; you're selling me off to the highest bidder and forcing me into a lifetime of unhappiness!

VO: Ostracism...

Mrs. Pearn: Don't be dramatic Delia. Walker Van Meter is a fine man and will do everything in his power to give you a good life. I will hear no more of this. The most we can ask for in life is to get to choose our chains. Many don't get the choice. Trust me dear, there are fates far worse than a pleasant marriage to a man who will provide for you and give you children to take care of you in your old age.

VO: And finally... lobotomization.

Mrs. Pearn: Now get ready, I'm going to lace this up.

*Delia leans head against wall. Her mother pulls the strings tight. Lights out.*