



Learn English Through Stories

B1 Novels and Stories

Pre-Intermediate Level

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The Turn of the Screw

Chapter 1

Bly

We were sitting by the fire telling ghost stories. 'Would you like to hear a ghost story about two children?' Douglas asked. 'I've never told it to anyone. It's too horrible. It happened to my sister's governess a long time ago.'

The woman, Douglas explained, was twenty when she left home to look for work. She went to see a man who needed a governess for his brother's two children. He was a gentleman - rich, good-looking, and kind - with an expensive house in London. The children, a boy and a girl, came to live with him after their father died. But he had no wife or children himself, so he sent them to live at Bly, his house in the country, with his housekeeper, Mrs Grose. They also had a governess there, at first, but then she died, so the boy went away to school while the little girl stayed at Bly.



She went to see a man who needed a governess for two children.

The rich man now needed a new governess for the girl, and for the boy too during the school holidays. He asked my friend not to worry him by sending him any news, letters, or questions about the children. She had to decide everything for herself.

The young woman thought that this was strange, but she needed the money, and she wanted to please the gentleman. So she agreed - and went to Bly.

This is her story; she wrote it down years later and sent it to Douglas before she died.

I came to Bly one fine afternoon in June. It was a large, old happy house with bright flowers outside.



The housekeeper, Mrs Grose, opened the door to me. And I met the little girl Flora soon after. She was like a beautiful angel, with gold hair and a sweet face. I liked her at once. I was sure too that Mrs Grose - a nice, strong, country woman - would be my friend. She was happy to see me. Perhaps too happy, but I didn't stop there and then to ask myself why.

At dinner I asked about Flora's brother, Miles.

'He will be here on Friday,' said Mrs Grose.

That night they moved Flora's bed into my room, and I spent the next day with her. She was happy to show me the gardens and the house; dancing in her blue dress from one room to another, running up and down the stairs, and taking me to the top of a big tower. And all the time she told me little secrets about each place that we visited.

On Wednesday evening a letter came for me from the children's uncle. There was another letter, still in its envelope, inside it. The children's uncle wrote to ask me to read this letter, which came from Miles's school, and to decide myself what to do about it without worrying him. I read it that evening, and got very little sleep that night.

'They have expelled Miles from his school,' I told Mrs Grose next morning.

She looked at me strangely, worried by the news.

'But what has he done, Miss?'

'They don't say. They only say he cannot go back there. Is he bad for the other boys, do you think?'

'Master Miles? But he's just ten years old!'

She was right; it was hard to believe.

'So is Miles never bad?' I asked her some time later.

‘No - I can’t say that. But a boy who is never bad is not a real boy for me.’

‘I agree. Boys must be bad sometimes - but they must not corrupt others,’ I said.

Mrs Grose gave a strange laugh. ‘Are you afraid, Miss? Could the young master corrupt you?’ she asked.

The next day I spoke to Mrs Grose again.

‘What was she like, the last governess?’

‘Young and beautiful, Miss - like you.’

‘He likes us young and beautiful, then,’ I said, thinking of the rich gentleman in London.

‘Oh he did,’ replied Mrs Grose. ‘He liked everyone that way . . . I mean, he does,’ she finished.

‘Who were you speaking of just then?’ I asked her.

‘Oh, the Master, of course.’

I went on thinking about the last governess.

‘Did she die here?’

‘No, Miss. She went home for a holiday, but she never came back. And then the Master told us that she was dead. And now,’ said Mrs Grose, ‘I must get back to work.’

When Miles arrived, I knew at once that the letter was a terrible mistake. He was a good, sweet child, just like his sister. I spoke to Mrs Grose immediately.

‘Anyone can see he is not bad. Look at him!’

She smiled. ‘Yes, Miss. So what will you do about the letter now?’

‘Nothing,’ I said.

‘And what will you tell the Master?’

‘Nothing.’

And what will you say to the boy?’

‘Nothing!’

‘Then I’ll help you, Miss,’ she said, kissing me happily. I knew then that she was my friend.

And so I began lessons with Miles and Flora. The children were young, strong, and happy, and were always nice to me. But soon something happened at Bly that changed everything.

In those long summer days I often went outside for a walk when the children were in bed. On these evening walks I often thought about how well I was doing my job - and about the children’s uncle in London. Did he ever think of me?

One evening I was walking in the garden and thinking of him when I looked up. Suddenly I got a great shock. I saw him there - on top of the tower. Then I got a second shock. The man on the tower was not the Master. I felt cold and afraid. Everything was quiet; nothing moved. Who was this man? Why did I know nothing about him? I could think of no answer to my questions.

How many long minutes did I stand there, looking at him silently? I do not know. I did not speak; he said nothing. The birds in the garden were silent too. But all the time his eyes never left me. And then, suddenly, before I knew it, the tower was empty.



Chapter 2

Peter Quint

That evening, after seeing the man on the tower, I stayed outside for a long time. I walked in the gardens until late, afraid and full of black thoughts. Was there a secret at Bly - a room that people always locked, a relative that no one talked about?

It was dark when I came into the house, Mrs Grose met me at the door, happy to see me. She was so good and kind to me and I decided not to worry her. So I said nothing about the man on the tower, and went to bed.

For some days the man on the tower stayed in my thoughts. Who was he? Where did he come from? How did he get into the house? I found no answers to my questions. Neither Mrs Grose nor the other servants knew anything about him, I was sure. And so I told myself a story: 'Perhaps a traveller, interested in old houses, saw Bly, climbed the tower to see the view, and then went away.' That explained it.

When I was with the children, I forgot all about the man on the tower. Usually a governess is bored with her work after a while, but with Miles and Flora it was different. Working inside the house, or playing outside in the garden, I always found something new and interesting in those children. But one thing about them was still a mystery: Miles never said anything about his school, or about his teachers and friends there. I was sure now that the school letter was a mistake; Miles was a good child, a happy child.

One Sunday it rained all day, so Mrs Grose and I decided to go to church in the evening, when the rain stopped. Before we left, I went to get my gloves from the downstairs dining room. They were on a chair by the window. As I picked them up I had a terrible shock. There was someone outside the window. It was the man from the tower. His face was near the glass, and at first he looked hard at me. Then he began to look around the room. Suddenly I knew that he was looking for somebody - and I felt that somebody was not me!

At once I ran out of the room, out of the house and into the garden. I ran round to the dining-room window, but when I got there, I found nobody. I looked around at the trees and the garden, but still I could see no one. I stood at the window and then looked through it into the dining-room - at that moment Mrs Grose came into the room and her white face looked back at me.

‘Why was she afraid?’ I asked myself. She ran out of the room, and I waited for her to come to me.

She soon came round the corner of the house and said, ‘What is the matter? You look terrible!’

‘I was so afraid,’ I answered. I saw a man. He was here - looking into the dining-room through the window.’

‘Who was he?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘Was he a gentleman?’

‘No. He was a monster.’

‘Have you seen him before?’

‘Yes - once. On the old tower.’

‘Let’s go to church now,’ said Mrs Grose.

‘No, I can’t go now,’ I said. ‘I can’t leave the children alone with him.’

Mrs Grose looked at me again. ‘What’s he like?’

‘He has very red hair, and a long white face with red whiskers. His eyes are small, and his mouth is big. He’s tall, and he doesn’t wear a hat.’

Mrs Grose’s face was white, and her mouth fell open, ‘But is he handsome?’

‘Oh, yes. Very!’ I answered.

She waited a second and then said, ‘It’s Peter Quint - the Master’s servant. He was here for some time last year. Then he went.’

‘He went? Where?’ I asked.

At this question Mrs Grose made a strange, terrible face. ‘Who knows where!’ she cried. ‘He died.’

‘Died?’ I nearly shouted.

‘Yes. Mr Quint is dead.’

We didn’t go to church that evening. Instead we talked.

‘He was looking for someone, you say - but not you?’ Suddenly, I knew the answer. ‘He wants Miles.’

I knew then that only I could stop him.

‘It’s strange that the children never talk about Quint.’ I went on. ‘Why is that?’

‘Flora was very young, Miss. I’m sure she doesn’t remember him. But don’t say anything to Master Miles about all this . . . Quint played a lot with him when he was here, put strange thoughts in his young head. He was a bad man, Miss. I knew it - but the master didn’t. And he was clever. I was afraid to tell the Master how bad he was.’

Quint stayed at Bly for many months, she told me. Then one cold snowy winter night he went drinking in the village, and on the way home he fell and hit his head on the hard road. They found his body the next morning.

I knew now that there was something evil at Bly, and that it was my job to protect the children from it.

One afternoon Miles stayed inside reading a book and Flora and I went out by the lake. I sat on the grass, mending one of my gloves, while Flora played. Suddenly I felt sure that we were not alone - there was a third person there, on the other side of the lake. I looked at Flora. A moment ago she was by the water, but now she was standing with her back to the lake. She was very quiet - and I was sure she knew that there was somebody there. Slowly I looked up across the lake to see who it was.



Chapter 3

The Woman in Black



I ran to Mrs Grose as soon as I could. 'Flora's seen something strange in the garden,' I said, 'but she hasn't said anything about it!'

'Then how do you know?' asked Mrs Grose. I could see it too. There was a woman, dressed in black, and very evil, on the other side of the lake. It was Miss Jessel, the governess who died - I'm sure of it.'

'What did she do?'

'She stared at Flora all the time. She never looked away once. She wanted Flora. She was beautiful - yes, very beautiful. But she was so evil.'

Mrs Grose took my hand. 'Miss Jessel was evil,' she said. 'They were both evil.'

'Now, Mrs Grose,' I said, 'you must tell me about Quint and Miss Jessel.'

'They were very different,' she said. 'She was a lady, and he was not a gentleman. But they were very close. He did what he wanted with her - poor thing!'

'Do you know why she died, Mrs Grose?'

'No - I didn't want to know. I believe that she had to leave - she couldn't stay here as she was. Not as a governess anymore.'

I felt worried and unhappy. Mrs Grose held me close to her and I began to cry. 'Oh, Mrs Grose. It's my job to protect the children from these monsters - but I can't do it! I can't!'

That night Mrs Grose and I talked in my room. Quint and Miss Jessel were both dead long before I came to Bly, but I described them both to her. And so she believed what I told her.

She told me more about Miles and Quint. 'For several months, when Peter Quint lived here, he spent a lot of time with Master Miles, while Flora stayed with Miss Jessel. The young master knew that Quint and Miss Jessel were very close, but he lied to me and said that there was nothing special between them. When I told him not to spend so much time with Quint, because he was just a servant, he laughed. "You're just a servant too!" he said, and that hurt me. Because of that, when you asked me about him, I couldn't truly say that the young master was never bad.'

'I see.'

Now I knew that I had to watch Miles very carefully.

For the next few days everything was as usual. The two children were very kind and loving; they told me stories, read to me, dressed up as animals or people from earlier times, or played the piano. Sometimes I thought about a new school for Miles, but I never did anything about it. A clever boy like Miles didn't need to go back to school just yet.

One evening, very late, I was sitting in my room reading. Suddenly I heard something. Was somebody moving about in the house? I stood up, took a candle and left the room, locking the door behind me.

At the top of the stairs my candle went out, but by the light from the window I could see somebody on the stairs. It was Quint - and he stared at me just as before. He was an evil, dangerous person, but to my surprise I was not afraid of him.

We stood there for a long time. I looked at Quint; and he looked at me, but we didn't speak. Then he turned and went down the stairs into the darkness.

When I went back to my room, I saw that Flora's bed was empty. My heart stopped for a moment, but then I saw Flora coming out from behind the curtains at the window. She looked at me.

'Where have you been?' she asked. 'I woke up, and you weren't there, so I was looking for you out of the window.' She crossed the room and I took her in my arms.

'You thought that I was outside?' I asked.

'Well, I thought that someone was,' smiled Flora.

'And did you see anyone?'

'No,' she answered.

I knew that she was lying. I wanted to look her in the eyes and say, 'You know that isn't true. Tell me what you saw,' but I couldn't do it. Instead I took her to her bed, and I held her hand while she went to sleep. After that I often walked through the house at night, but I never saw Quint there again. Once I saw a woman sitting on the stairs, with her head in her hands. She disappeared before I could see her face, but I knew it was the unhappy Miss Jessel.

Nothing unusual happened for some days. Then one night I woke up suddenly at one o'clock. Flora was not in her bed. I could see her at the window, and she was looking out at something - or someone. I was sure that Miss Jessel was outside, staring back at Flora. Quickly and quietly I left the room. I didn't want Flora to know what I was doing, but I wanted to see for myself who - or what - was outside.

Where could I go? I thought for a moment, and then went to an empty bedroom at the bottom of the old tower. I crossed the room without a sound and stood next to the window. The moon was bright, and I had a good view of the garden. On the grass outside there was a person who was looking up above me. I was sure that there was someone on top of the tower, and that the person on the grass was looking up at them. I felt ill as I looked. The person on the grass was not Miss Jessel - it was Miles.

Chapter 4

The End of Summer



The following afternoon I talked with Mrs Grose. We were sitting outside in the afternoon sun; below us the children were walking together on the grass.

'That's where I found Miles last night,' I said. 'He came to me immediately and I took him to his room.'

I didn't tell Mrs Grose what I was thinking when we walked into the house. I felt that it had to be Miles, not me, who began talking about the evil at Bly. I described to her what happened in Miles's room.

I put my hands on Miles's shoulders, kindly but firmly, and stared into his eyes.

'You must tell me. What were you doing out there?'

His beautiful eyes and white teeth were bright in the moonlight

'If I tell you why, will you understand?'

My heart was in my mouth. At last. Now he would tell me the truth. I waited.

At last he said, 'I wanted you to think I was bad!'

After that he kissed me, and I nearly cried.

'I see. But how could you be sure of me seeing you?'

'I told Flora to look out of the window. "When she sees Flora at the window, she'll want to look out too," I thought.'

It was hard for me to give Mrs Grose an accurate picture of that night, but I went on trying.

'Well, Miss!' cried Mrs Grose. 'You have changed your opinion about young Master Miles!'

‘No, I haven’t. I just believe I understand better now. The four of them - Miles, Flora, Quint and Miss Jessel - are very close and meet all the time. The children never tell us about them, but look at them now. I’m sure that’s what they are talking about.’

Mrs Grose watched the children as I went on. Talking about it helped me to understand.

‘To us they seem beautiful and good - but it’s all a game!’ I turned and looked at her. ‘They don’t belong to us, they belong to them’

‘To Quint and that woman?’ Mrs Grose said.

‘Yes. Those two want to fill them with evil - that’s why they’ve come back.’

Mrs Grose thought about this for a while. I could see that she was remembering other terrible times. At last she said, ‘But what can they do now?’

‘Do? They can destroy them. They don’t know how yet - but they’re trying hard. Now we only see them in strange places or high places - on top of the tower, across the lake, outside the window - but they want to get closer. If they have enough time, they will do it.’

Mrs Grose stood up to go into the house. ‘Their uncle must stop this. He must take them away. You must write to him and ask him.’

‘But how?’ I asked. ‘What can I say? Shall I say that Bly is full of evil, and that Quint and Miss Jessel have corrupted the children?’

‘Yes, if it’s true . . .’

‘Mrs Grose, you know that the master doesn’t want any worries.’

She sat down and put a hand on my arm. ‘We need him here!’ she said.

I stood up now. I could never ask him, I knew that. And she could see it in my face.

Things went on like this for a month. In the house, in the garden, on the lake, the children went on playing their game. I couldn’t talk to them about Quint or Miss Jessel. Instead we talked about me. Soon they knew all about my life, my friends and my family.

For weeks I saw nothing unusual inside or outside the house. Often I thought that something was waiting to happen, but nothing did.

Summer ended and autumn came; the skies were grey and dead leaves fell onto the grass at Bly. Sometimes, when everything was still and quiet, I felt sure that Quint and Jessel were near, but I never saw them.

Sometimes when I was with the children I was sure that Miles and Flora could see - and were happy to see - their ghostly visitors, but I could not see them. Perhaps, when I could not see them, they were saying or showing things to the children - things that were too terrible for me to hear or see. At these times the children often asked me about their uncle; he was not dangerous to talk about.

‘When will he come to see us? Can't we write to him?’ they asked.

I agreed, and they wrote to him, but of course I never posted their letters. They were beautiful letters, and I kept them. I have them all to this day. Those were difficult days - but soon, and suddenly, things changed.

One Sunday morning we were walking to church. Miles was with me, and Flora and Mrs Grose were in front of us.

Suddenly Miles spoke to me.

‘When am I going back to school?’

I could not think of anything to say. He went on.

‘You can't say that I haven't been good here.’

‘No, I can't say that,’ I answered.

‘Then when am I going?’ he asked.

‘Were you happy at your last school?’ I asked.

‘I'm happy anywhere!’ he answered. ‘But it's not that. I want to see more of life!’

We were nearly at the church. I walked faster; I wanted to get into the church before we could talk any more about school. But before we got there Miles said:

‘I want to be with people like me!’

'There aren't many people like you, Miles,' I laughed coldly. Everyone was inside the church now, and we were alone outside.

'Does my uncle know what I'm like?'

'I don't think he is very interested, Miles.'

'Can't we make him understand?'

'How?'

'By asking him to come to Bly'

'But who will ask him?'

'I will,' said Miles, as he disappeared into the church alone.

Chapter 5

The Schoolroom



I didn't follow Miles into church, but sat outside, thinking.

Why did they expel him from school? I was afraid to learn the truth. And now Miles knew that I was afraid, he could use my fear to get more freedom. He was right. The correct thing to do was to talk to his uncle - but I couldn't do it. Miles was winning.

I walked round the church, trying to decide what to do. Then the idea came to me that I could leave Bly, the children, everything. Nearly everyone was at church; I could go back to the house, take my things and go.

I walked back to the house, meeting nobody on the way. But then I saw that my idea was not so clever. I had little time, and no carriage to take my things. Unhappily, I sat at the bottom of the stairs - but then I remembered Miss Jessel's ghost sitting in the same place.

I got up and went to the schoolroom. When I opened the door I had a new shock. There at the table, with her head in her hands, was Miss Jessel. She didn't move at first - then she stood up and looked at me.

She was beautiful, very unhappy, and terribly evil. I thought for a moment that I was wrong to come into her room - to surprise her at her table. I opened my mouth and shouted, 'You terrible woman!' - but then there was only sunlight in the room, and I knew that I had to stay at Bly.

After the others came back from church, I had a moment alone with Mrs Grose, and told her about my strange experience.

I found Miss Jessel in the schoolroom . . . ' I began.

'I believe she is . . .' it was hard for me to go on, '... one of the lost souls. She wants Flora. I've decided to send for their uncle.'

'Oh Miss, please do,' my friend said firmly.

'I will. It's the only thing to do. If Miles thinks that I'm afraid to talk to his uncle, he will soon discover that he's wrong. If his uncle asks why I have done nothing about a new school for Miles, I'll tell him that I can't, because they expelled him from the old one . . .'

'But we don't know why!' said Mrs Grose.

'Mrs Grose, is Miles stupid? Is he untidy? Is he ill? No, it was because he's evil. And that's because his uncle left them here with those people.'

'But the Master didn't know what they were like,' said Mrs Grose. And that's my fault.'

I looked at her, and said, 'I'll write tonight.'

That night I sat in my room, with Flora asleep beside me, trying to begin my letter. Outside it was raining and a strong wind was blowing. In the end I took a candle and went to Miles's room. I stopped outside the door, and was surprised when Miles said, 'Come in!'



'How did you know that I was there?' I asked him.

'I heard you! You make a lot of noise.'

'So you weren't asleep?'

'No. I was thinking.'

'What were you thinking about, Miles?'

'Oh, you know.'

I was silent for a moment. Then I said, 'Of course you can go back to school. But do you know, Miles, you've never talked to me about your old school, nor about anything that happened at Bly before. Don't you like your life here?'

His face was a little red and he looked tired. 'No, I don't. I want my uncle to come.'

'If he does, he'll take you away,' I said.

'That's what I want,' said Miles. 'You'll have to tell him such a lot of things.'

'And what about you? He'll ask you things too.'

'What things?'

'I don't know. But he can't send you back to your old school.'

'I want to go somewhere new,' Miles said happily. I imagined him leaving for a new school - and coming back to Bly three months later, with another letter. The idea was too awful. I took him in my arms.

'Dear Miles! Don't you want to tell me anything?'

He knew what I meant, but he said quietly, 'Leave me alone.'

I knew that he wanted me to go, but I didn't want to leave him - or to lose him. When I stood up, I put my hand on his shoulder and said, 'I've just begun a letter to your uncle.'

'Well, then, finish it!' Miles answered.

I waited a minute. 'What happened before you went away to school?'

He didn't speak for a moment, but went on looking at me. 'What happened?'

At last it seemed that perhaps - just perhaps - Miles would tell me what really happened. I fell on my knees beside his bed.

'Dear Miles, I want to help you! That's all,' I knew I was saying too much. 'Can't you help me to save you?'

That was it. Immediately there was a strong cold wind, and the room shook. Miles gave a great cry - was he afraid or excited? I jumped to my feet. The room was still and dark, and the windows were closed.

'The candle's gone out!' I cried.

'I blew it out!' said Miles in the moonlight.

Chapter 6

The Lake

The next day, after lessons, Mrs Grose came to me and asked quietly, 'Have you written, Miss?'

'Yes, I've written,' I told her, and it was true - but the letter in its envelope was still in my pocket.

That morning Miles and Flora were both wonderful. They tried hard at their lessons and did everything to please me. When I looked at Miles, I couldn't stop thinking about his last school. Why did they expel him? That was still a mystery.

In the afternoon, after dinner, Miles came and found me. 'Would you like me to play to you?' he asked. Those were his words - but I thought he was really saying, 'You see - if you leave me alone, I will come to you.'

How could I say no? We went hand in hand to the schoolroom. I sat down by the schoolroom fire, and was soon comfortable. Miles sat down at the old piano and played.

I lost all sense of time. Was I asleep - or not? I didn't know. But suddenly I was asking myself, 'Where is Flora?' When I asked Miles, he played for a moment longer, and then said, 'Why, my dear, I have no idea!' and began to laugh and sing.

I went to my room, but Flora was not there. I looked into some other rooms upstairs, but I found nobody. She was not with Mrs Grose either; Mrs Grose couldn't believe that she wasn't with me. We then spent some time looking for Flora together, trying to stay calm, but we couldn't find her anywhere. I began to feel very afraid.

'Perhaps she is upstairs,' my friend said.

'No, I'm sure that she has gone out, Mrs Grose,' I answered. 'What - without a hat?' Mrs Grose said, staring at me.

'That woman is always without one,' I replied. 'I'm sure she is with her - and we must find them.'

I was ready to go, but Mrs Grose stood still. 'And where's join to go with the young master?' she asked.

‘Oh, he’s with Quint - in the schoolroom,’ I replied. ‘It was a clever little plan. Miles played to me while Flora went away.’

‘And you will leave him there with Quint?’ she asked.

‘Yes - it doesn’t matter now.’

Mrs Grose took my hand, ‘Is that because of your letter?’ she said hopefully.

I took the letter from my pocket and put it on the table in the hall. ‘Luke will take it,’ I said. Luke was one of the men servants at Bly.

Now I was on the steps. ‘What about your hat?’ asked Mrs Grose. It was a cold, grey afternoon.

‘Flora has no hat, and I can’t stop for mine,’ I said. ‘Will you come with me - or stay here?’

‘With them?’ the poor woman said, and she ran to join me. We ran at once across the garden.



I felt sure that Flora was not near home, and I knew that the lake was her favourite place to visit. Mrs Grose was very puzzled when she saw where I was going.

‘You’re going to the lake, Miss? Do you think she’s gone in—?’

‘Perhaps, although the water isn’t very deep. But I imagine she’s gone back to the place where I saw Miss Jessel - and Flora pretended not to see her. I always felt that she wanted to go back there alone. And now her brother has helped her to do it.’

‘Do you think the children really talk of them?’

‘They say things that, if we heard them, would horrify us,’ I answered.

‘And if she is there—?’

‘Yes?’

‘Then Miss Jessel is too?’

‘I’m sure. You will see.’

When we got to the lake, we could not see Flora. On the opposite side of the lake there was a grassy bank, with trees behind it. Suddenly I knew where Flora was.

‘She has crossed the lake in the boat, and has hidden it over there!’

I pointed to a possible place.

‘But if the boat is there, then where is Flora?’ Mrs Grose asked in a worried voice.

‘That's what we must find out. We’ll have to walk round the lake.’

After ten minutes we arrived at the grassy bank and discovered the boat. To take the boat across the lake was an incredible thing for a little girl to do, but Flora did not surprise me anymore.

We opened a gate in a garden wall, and there was Flora, standing in front of us, smiling. She waited while we walked towards her; and nobody said anything. Then Mrs Grose put her arms round Flora. I looked at Flora, and she looked at me, and then she spoke.



‘Where’s Miles?’ she asked.

Now I had to speak - to say that name.

‘I’ll tell you if you tell me—’

‘Tell you what?’ Flora asked.

Mrs Grose stared at me.

‘Where, my dear, is Miss Jessel?’

Chapter 7

Flora

For the first time I spoke the name 'Miss Jessel' in front of Flora. I had a sense of a glass window breaking and Flora gave me a quick, shocked look. At the same moment Mrs Grose gave a loud cry and a few seconds later I took her arm and cried myself: 'She's there, she's there!'

Miss Jessel was standing in front of us on the opposite bank, in the same place as once before. In a strange way, I felt calm and happy to see her. She was there - so I was not mad. Cruel as she was, I wanted to thank her for that, and I felt sure that she would understand. She was there for poor scared Mrs Grose and most of all she was there for Flora.

Then I looked at Flora and I had a new shock. Flora wasn't looking at Miss Jessel, but at me. I was sure that she could see Miss Jessel, but her eyes and her face said that the evil person there was me.

'She's there, you little unhappy thing - there, there, there, you know it!' I cried. 'You can see her as well as you can see me.'

The way that Flora looked at me was horrifying, but this was not my only problem. Now Mrs Grose was staring at me angrily.

'What a terrible thing, to be sure, Miss! Where do you see anything?'

I pushed her towards the lake and pointed across it at Miss Jessel.

'You don't see her there? - you mean to say you don't now - now? Only look, dearest woman, look!'

She looked, and I think she wanted to see, to help me, but she could see nothing. Miss Jessel was winning, and I was losing.

Mrs Grose joined Flora again.

'She isn't there, my dear, and nobody's there. You never see anything, do you, Flora? It's all a mistake, and we'll go home as fast as we can.'

Flora stood next to Mrs Grose, holding her dress. While I looked at her, my beautiful Flora changed. She stopped being a little angel; suddenly she was hard and ugly.

'I don't know what you mean,' she said to me. 'I see nobody. I see nothing. I never have. I think you're cruel. I don't like you.'

She put her arms round Mrs Grose and hid her face in the housekeeper's skirt. 'Take me away, take me away - oh, take me away from her!'

'From me?'

'From you - from you!' Flora cried.

Flora's words seemed to come from Miss Jessel who was still there on the other bank, unmoving.

'I've done my best, but I've lost you. Goodbye.' I shook my head at Flora sadly.

To Mrs Grose I said, 'Go, go!' and my good friend left as quickly as she could, taking Flora with her through the gate and back to the house.

What happened next? I do not remember. I know that I found myself some time later on the ground with tears on my face, and that it was nearly dark. I got up and looked at the lake, and then I walked back to the house.

I did not see Flora at the house. She spent the night with Mrs Grose. When I went to my room, I saw that Flora's things were not there.

I will always remember that evening at Bly. It was like no other. Strange things were happening but that night for me had a sweet sadness. After I had my tea, I felt cold and sat by the schoolroom fire, thinking. Miles came to the door, stopped and looked at me for a moment. Then he came and sat at the other side of the fire.

We sat there not speaking or moving, but I felt that he wanted to be with me.

Early next morning Mrs Grose came to me with more bad news. After a very difficult night, with little sleep, Flora was ill.

'She'll never speak to me again,' I said to Mrs Grose.

'Oh, Miss,' said Mrs Grose, 'I think she never will. She asks me every three minutes, "Do you think she's coming?"'

'I see,' I answered. 'Has she said anything to you about Miss Jessel?'

'Not a word, Miss.'

‘Well, it’s all very clever,’ I said. ‘Now Flora has something to tell her uncle - and then I will have to leave Bly. That’s what she wants.’

‘That’s right,’ said Mrs Grose. ‘She doesn’t ever want to see you again.’

‘So why have you come now? To ask me to leave quickly?’ I asked.

‘Well, I have a better idea,’ I went on, not giving her time to answer. ‘I nearly left on Sunday, it’s true. But it’s you who must leave now. And you must take Flora with you.’



‘But where in the world—?’ asked Mrs Grose.

‘Away from here,’ I said. Away from them. Away most of all now from me. Take her to London - to her uncle. Leave me here with Miles.’

‘What are you going to do?’

‘I want to try with Miles. But Flora and Miles must not see each other before she goes. They haven’t met since yesterday, have they?’

‘No, Miss. She has always been with me, or one of the servants.’

‘You see, I think Miles wants to speak to me about Quint. Last night he sat with me for two hours.’

‘And did he speak?’ asked Mrs Grose.

‘No. I waited and waited, but he said nothing. I think I must give him a little more time - a day or two. Perhaps nothing will happen, but you can talk to their uncle, and that will help me too.’

She put out her hand to me.

‘I’ll go. I’ll go today. She must leave Bly.’ She looked at me with heavy eyes.

‘Your idea’s the right one. I will go. I myself—’

‘Yes?’

‘I can’t stay here.’

‘You mean you have seen—?’

She shook her head. ‘No, but I’ve heard—’

‘Heard?’

‘From Flora. Terrible things - you can’t imagine. I don’t know where she learnt the words.’

She began to cry.

Oh, thank goodness!’ I cried.

‘Thank goodness?’

‘You see, I am right about it all.’

‘Yes, Miss, you are. I believe you now. She’s a terrible child.’ She looked at me thoughtfully. ‘But I must go back to her. And I hope that away from Bly, away from them, she will be different.’

She was still my friend, then. She could not see Miss Jessel, but she thought that I was right. I felt stronger because of her help.

‘My letter to her uncle will arrive in London before you do,’ I said.

‘No, Miss, it won’t,’ said my friend. ‘Your letter didn’t leave the house.’

‘Why, what happened to it?’

‘I don’t know. Master Miles—’

‘Did he take it?’ I asked her.

‘When I came back with Miss Flora yesterday, it wasn’t on the table in the hall. Later I asked Luke, but he didn’t see or take the letter.’ She stopped for a moment, then went on. ‘Now I understand what happened at the young master’s school. He stole letters!’

‘Well, he won’t learn very much from my short letter!’ I said. ‘I just asked to speak to the Master. But leave us, Mrs Grose. I need to see Miles. If he tells me everything, I can save him. And if I can save him—’

‘You can save yourself?’

My dear friend kissed me and said goodbye.

‘I’ll save you without his help!’ she said as she went.

Chapter 8

The End



When all their travelling bags were ready, Miles and I said goodbye to Mrs Grose and Flora, and they got into their carriage and left. Without them, I felt really alone and scared at Bly. To give myself something to do, I walked up and down through the whole house, and gave orders to the servants. I pretended to be busy, but I had a sick heart. Nobody at the house knew the real story about Flora, but everyone knew that things were different between Miles and me. He didn't come to the schoolroom that morning for his lessons; he had his breakfast early and then went off by himself. Miles wanted freedom, and now he had it.

We had our meal that evening in the downstairs dining room. While I waited for Miles, I remembered the time I saw Quint outside the window. Things were so different now - much more difficult. Could Quint really destroy Miles? Was I strong enough to save him? Could the clever boy perhaps save himself? All these thoughts were running through my head when Miles arrived.

Before he sat down at the table, he looked for a time at the food on it. Then he said to me, 'Is she really very ill?' 'Flora?' I answered. 'She is ill, but she will be better soon. I'm sure. London will be good for her. Bly was bad for her, in my opinion.'

'Was Bly suddenly bad for her, then?' he asked, puzzled.

'No - little by little,' I said. 'But going away will change that.'

'I see,' said Miles.

We soon finished our meal; neither of us was very hungry. Then Miles got up and went to the window - the same window which once showed me Quint's awful white face on that earlier occasion. Miles stood looking out the window, with his hands in his pockets, and his back to me. Then, when the servant left

the room with the plates, he turned to me again and said, 'Well - so we're alone!'

'Of course there are the others too,' I said.

'But they aren't so important, are they?'

When he said this, Miles turned back to the window and rested his head on the glass. I sat down on the sofa to wait, but went on looking at him. Something strange and incredible was happening. There were often times when the children did things together, and I couldn't do or see what they did. I imagined a door, with the children on one side, and me on the other. But now I thought that Miles and I were on the same side of the door, and he couldn't open it. He was looking through the window for something, but for the first time, he couldn't see it, and that gave me hope.

I knew that Miles was worried. But when he turned round he smiled and said to me happily, 'Well, I'm glad Bly is good for me!'

'You have seen a lot of Bly today,' I said. 'I hope you enjoyed your walk.'

'Oh yes - I've walked for miles. I've never been so free. But do you like being alone, without me?'

'Not very much - but I enjoy being with you when I can. That's why I'm staying here.'

Miles looked at me.

'You're staying here for that?'

'Yes. I'm staying because I am your friend. And I will stay until your uncle decides what to do with you. That needn't surprise you.' My voice shook.

'Don't you remember the night of the storm, Miles, when I came and sat on your bed? I said I would do anything in the world for you.'

'Yes, you did - because you wanted me to do something for you.'

'That's true,' I agreed. 'But, you know, you didn't do it.'

'Oh, yes,' he said quietly. 'You wanted me to tell you something.'

'That's right. Tell me now, Miles.'

'Ah, is that why you've stayed?'

‘Yes - it is. Just for that.’

Miles waited for a long time. Then he said, ‘Do you mean now - here?’

‘It’s the best place and time,’ I said. Miles looked around him, worried. Was he afraid of me? I asked him gently, ‘Do you want to go out again?’

‘Yes, I do - very much.’ He smiled at me bravely. His face reddened. We were both waiting, afraid. At last Miles said, ‘I’ll tell you everything. I mean, I’ll tell you anything you like. You’ll stay here with me, and we’ll both be all right, and I will tell you - I will. But not now.’

‘Why not now?’

He turned towards the window again and was very quiet. Then it came to me. He looked like he had something important to say to someone outside. He turned back to me again.

‘I have to see Luke,’ he said.

I was sorry to hear him tell me such a lie, but I said: ‘Go to Luke, then, and I’ll wait. But first tell me one little thing. Did you take my letter from the table in the hall yesterday afternoon?’

While I was waiting for his answer, I suddenly jumped to my feet and put my arms around him. I kept Miles with his back to the window - because there on the other side of the glass was Peter Quint. He looked like a guard in front of a prison. Now his evil white face with its red whiskers was close to the glass, and he was staring through it. I decided immediately that I had to stop Miles from seeing Quint. I was fighting Quint for Miles.

Miles’s face was as white as Quint’s. Quietly he said, ‘Yes, I took it.’

I held him near me. His heart was beating fast. Quint - now like a wild animal - was still at the window.

‘What did you take it for?’ I asked.

‘To open it and see what you said about me.’

My eyes were on Miles’s face. He was uncomfortable. He couldn’t see Quint. When I looked back at the window, Quint wasn’t there. He wasn’t there because I was winning. I was so happy.

‘And you found nothing?’ I said laughing.

'Nothing,' he said with sadness.

I kissed his head.

'Was that the problem you had at school?'

At school?' Miles asked.

'Did you take letters? Or other things? Is that why you can't go back?'

Miles was thinking about something else. At last he said, 'No, I didn't steal. I said things.'

'Who did you say them to?'

'Only to a few. To the boys that I liked.'

Was he innocent after all? It was a terrible thought. For if he was innocent then what was I?

'And did they say those things to others?'

His worried face looked at the window again. There was nothing there now.

'Oh yes, they spoke to other boys that they liked - and then the teachers heard.'

'But Miles,' I said. 'The teachers didn't tell me what you said.'

Miles looked ill, then looked up at me. 'It was too bad to write, you see.'

I had to be strong again. 'What were these things, Miles?' I asked.

Miles turned away, and I jumped to his side again with a cry. Quint's cruel white face was back at the window, and he was fighting. He didn't want Miles to answer. Miles knew somebody was there - but he couldn't see them.

'No more, no more, no more!' I shouted at Quint, and I held Miles very near to me.

'Is Miss Jessel at the window?' asked Miles.

I had to tell him the truth.

'No, it's not Miss Jessel! But it's come to the window for the last time!'

Miles was looking everywhere madly and seeing nothing.

'Is he there?'

I was winning, but I had to hear him say it.

‘Who do you mean by "he"?’

‘Peter Quint - you devil!’ He looked round the room desperately. ‘Where?’

‘What does he matter now? I have you, and he has lost you for ever,’ I said.

Miles turned to the window again, gave the cry of a dying animal, and fell. I caught him in my arms and held him there with great love and happiness, but after a time I began to feel what I truly held.

We were alone, Miles and I, and his little heart, free now, was still and silent.