

5 Dangerous friends

8 I didn't call him because I didn't want to wake up everyone in the house. Instead I went quickly downstairs and into the garden. He didn't say anything when he saw me. He just came up to me and let me take him back inside. When we got to his room, I put my hands on his shoulders and looked at him very seriously.

'Miles, you must tell me the truth now. Why did you go out?'

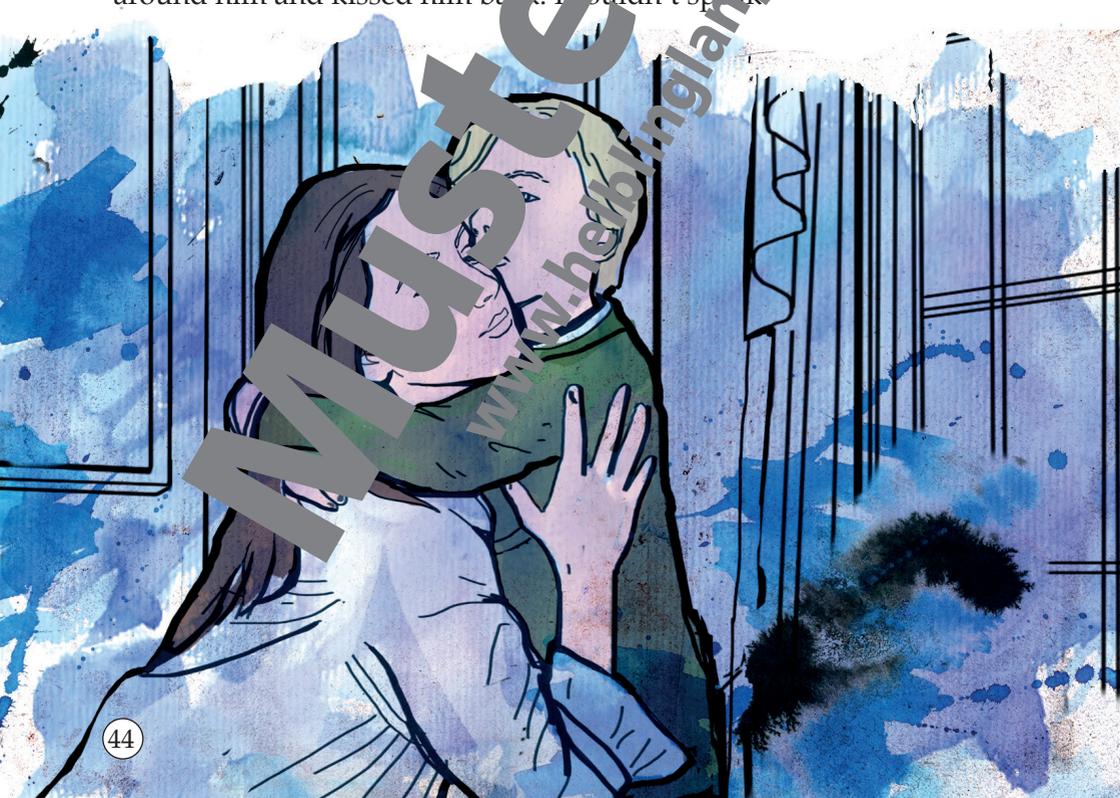
He smiled at me and at that moment in the moonlight he looked like a little fairy prince.

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

I nodded.

'Well,' he said sweetly, 'I wanted to show you that I could be a BAD boy sometimes!'

Then he moved forward and kissed me. I was so surprised by both his answer and his kiss that I almost started to cry. I put my arms around him and kissed him back. I couldn't speak.



'I didn't take my clothes off when I came to bed,' he explained pulling himself free of my arms. 'I sat and read until midnight. Then I went downstairs. You see, when I'm bad, I'm VERY bad!'

'And how did you plan to wake me up?' I asked.

'I told Flora to get up and look out of the window, and we went on as sweetly as before. The noise woke you up. You tried to know what she was looking at. So you looked and you saw me.'

'Catching cold in the night air!' I said, trying to be angry.

He laughed. 'Yes,' he replied, 'I WAS bad, wasn't I?'

I could see that he was proud of himself. I didn't know what to say to him, so I kissed him again and left the room.

I had to wait until the evening of the following day before I could speak to Mrs Grose. I was so glad that I could share my worries and secrets with her. Talking to her always made me feel better. She listened patiently to everything I told her. She didn't have much imagination herself. She only saw how beautiful, how sweet and how clever the children were.

The sun was still warm, so I invited her to sit with me for a while in the garden. The children were walking up and down the lawn not far from us. Miles was telling a story to Flora. Mrs Grose was watching them as she listened to me. There was a happy smile on her face. I started to describe the night events to her, but she wasn't very interested. She didn't seem to understand the seriousness of the situation. She only gave me her full attention when I said, 'But the truth is in the last thing that Miles said to me.'

'What was that?' she asked.

'"You don't know how bad I CAN be!"' I looked at the housekeeper triumphantly. 'Miles knows very well how bad he can be, of course. And the teacher at his school knows too.'

'But you said that the headmaster's letter was silly!' said Mrs Grose a little angrily. 'Have you changed your opinion of the child?'



‘No, I haven’t,’ I replied. ‘I’m just beginning to understand what is happening here at Bly.’

‘And what IS happening?’

‘I’m sure that the four of them – Miles, Flora, Miss Jessel and Quint – meet very often. Look at the children now! They look very sweet and innocent, don’t they? But they’re deceiving us all the time. Miles isn’t reading a fairy story to Flora. He’s talking about THEM! Those two ghosts!’

The children were walking up and down the lawn. I could see from Mrs Grose’s expression that she found my story difficult to believe.

‘When I first met the children,’ I went on, ‘I thought that they were very unusual. I couldn’t explain why, but now I can. Those children aren’t like ordinary children. They’re too beautiful and too good. But they’re deceiving us. They’re just playing a game. They haven’t been good – they’ve only been absent.’

Mrs Grose didn’t say anything. She just stared at me.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Does Mrs Grose believe in a governess?

If Miles and Flora are playing a game, why are they playing it?

What are ‘ordinary children’ like?

🗣️ Share your ideas with the class.

Glossary

- **deceiving us:** tricking us by behaving in a dishonest way

'I know it seems mad, but it's true.' I replied. 'They don't belong to us. They're not mine – they're not ours. They're his and they're hers! Quint's and that woman's?'

'Yes! They want to possess • the children.'

This was almost too much for Mrs Grose.

'But why?' she asked looking back at the children. 'Why do they want those poor little things?'

'Because they want to continue their evil ways with them!'

'Evil ways!' Mrs Grose's face turned pale. 'What evil ways?'

'During those months that they were away with the children,' I explained, 'they filled the children with evil. They want to continue their evil work because it will bring them back to this world.'

'Oh, dear!' exclaimed Mrs Grose. 'What horrible people! But what can they do now?'

'Do?' I almost shouted.

The children heard me and stopped. They smiled at us, waved their hands and went on walking.

'They can destroy the children. They don't know how yet, but they're trying hard. At times, sometimes, they appear in strange places – on the top of the tower, on the other side of the lake, outside windows. But soon they will succeed and...'

'...the children will be taken to their...'

'...and will die doing it!'

Glossary

- **possess:** control
- **whispered:** said something quietly so that other people couldn't hear

Mrs Grose stood up and walked a short distance away from me.

'So we have to stop them,' I said. 'Before they hurt the children.'

My friend didn't say anything for a long time. She stood looking at the garden. I knew that she was thinking hard about what to do. Finally she said, 'Their uncle must do something to stop them. He must take the children away.'

'And who's going to tell him?' I asked.

She turned and looked at me. 'You are, miss.'

'But he told me never to get in touch with him about anything.'

Mrs Grose followed the children with her eyes for a few moments. Then she came back to her chair and sat down. Taking my arm she said, 'But you must MAKE him come. He should be here. He should help us.'

We looked at each other.

She knew my thoughts.

'If I write he'll laugh at me. He won't respect me anymore. He'll think that I'm just trying to attract his attention.' Women understand each other.

'I CAN'T write to him,' I said.

'And if YOU write to him about anything...'

She thought of me now.

'...I'll leave my room immediately.'

