

Cast:

FLORA
MILES
GOVERNESS
GROSE
QUINT
JESSEL

(The action takes place in and around Bly a country-house in the East of England, in the middle of the last century. The line 'The ceremony of innocence is drowned' is taken from a poem by W. B. Yeats. The songs, 'Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son' and 'Lavender's Blue' are traditional nursery rhymes. The Latin words used in Act One, Scene 6, are schoolboy's rhyming grammatical rules)

ACT ONE

Prologue

(The Prologue is discovered in front of a drop curtain.)

It is a curious story. I have it written in faded ink - a woman's hand, governess to two children - long ago. Untried, innocent, she had gone first to see their guardian in London; a young man, bold, offhand and gay, the children's only relative. The children were in the country with an old housekeeper. There had been a governess, but she had gone. The boy, of course, was at school, but there was the girl, and the holidays, now begun. This then would be her task. But there was one condition: he was so much engaged; affairs, travel, friends, visits, always something, no time at all for the poor little things. She was to do everything, be responsible for everything, not to worry him at all, no, not to write, but to be silent, and do her best. She was full of doubts. But she was carried away: that he, so gallant and handsome, so deep in the busy world, should need her help. At last "I will", she said.

(The lights fade and the drop curtain rises in darkness.)

Theme

Scene 1 - The Journey

(The lights go up on the interior of a coach. The Governess is in travelling dress.)

GOVERNESS

Nearly there.
Very soon I shall know,
I shall know what's in store for me.
Who will greet me?
The children ... the children.
Will they be clever?
Will they like me?
Poor babies, no father, no mother.
But I shall love them as I love my own,
All my dear ones left at home,
so far away - and so different.
If things go wrong, what shall I do?
Who can I ask,
with none of my kind to talk to?
Only the old housekeeper,
how will she welcome me?
I must not write to their guardian,
that is the hardest part of all.
Whatever happens, it is I, I must decide.
A strange world for a stranger's sake.
O why did I come?
No! I've said I will do it,
and for him I will.
There's nothing to fear.
What could go wrong?
Be brave, be brave.
We're nearly there.
Very soon I shall know
Very soon I shall know.

(The lights fade.)

Variation I

Scene 2 - The Welcome

(The lights go up on the porch at Bly. Mrs. Grose, with the children dancing about.)

MILES, FLORA
Mrs. Grose!
Will she be nice?
Mrs. Grose!
Will she be cross?
Why doesn't she hurry?
Why isn't she here?
Will she like us?
Shall we like her?

Mrs. GROSE
Quiet, children!
Lord! How you do tease!
Will she be this, will she be that,
a dozen times I do declare.
You'll see soon enough.
Now quietly, do!
(She gives Flora a little good-natured tidying shake, pats Mile's hair into place, smooths down her own apron.)
Miss Flora, your pinafore!
Master Miles, your hair!
Keep still dearie, or you'll wear me out.
Now show me how you bow.
(Miles bows.)
How do you curtsey?
(Flora curtseys.)
Bow!
(Miles bows)
Curtsey!
(Flora curtseys, and they continue

*bowing and curtseying until
Mrs. Grose stops them.)*
Here she is now.

(Enter Governess.)

GOVERNESS

You must be Mrs. Grose?
I'm so happy to see you...
so happy to be here.

Mrs. GROSE

(curtseying)
How do you do, Miss.
Welcome to Bly!

GOVERNESS

This must be Flora?
And Miles?
(Flora curtseys, Miles bows.)
How charming they are,
how beautiful too.
The house and park are so splendid,
far grander than I am used to.
I shall feel like a princess here.
Bly, I begin to love you.

Mrs. GROSE

I'm happy,
so happy that you've come, Miss.
Miss Flora and Master Miles are happy,
so happy that you're here too.
They're good children,
yes, they are, they're good, Miss.
They're lively,
too lively for an ignorant old woman.
They wear me out,
indeed they do.
My poor head isn't bright enough -
the things they think up!
I'm far too old a body for games,
Miss, far too old,
and now they'll do better with
a young thing as lively
as they are themselves.
Master Miles is wonderful at lessons,
and Miss Flora's sharp too.
Yes, they're clever -
they need their own kind,
they're far too clever for me!

GOVERNESS

Bly, I begin to love you.

MILES, FLORA

Come along! Come along! Do!
We want to show you the house.
We want to show you the park.
Don't stay talking here any more.

Mrs. GROSE

They'll do better now,
they'll do better with a young thing.
(Pardon the liberty Miss.)
They'll do better now you're here!
Quiet, children!
Lord! How you do tease.
In a trice they'll be dragging you
all over the park.

GOVERNESS

No, they must show me everything!

For Bly is now my home.

*(The lights fade as the children lead
the Governess off.)*

Variation II

Scene 3 - The Letter

*(The lights fade in again on the porch
at Bly to the side of which more of the
house is now visible, including a low
window)*

Mrs. GROSE

(entering)
Miss! Miss!
a letter for you.
(The Governess comes out of the house.)
Here!
*(the Governess takes the letter and
reads it quietly. Aside.)*
A good young lady, I'll be bound,
and a pretty one too.
Now all will be well,
we were far too long alone!

GOVERNESS

Mrs. Grose!
He's dismissed his school.

Mrs. GROSE

Who?

GOVERNESS

Little Miles.

Mrs. GROSE

Miles?

GOVERNESS

What can it mean -
never go back?

Mrs. GROSE

Never?

GOVERNESS

Never!
O, but for that he must be bad!

Mrs. GROSE

Him bad?

GOVERNESS

An injury to his friends.

Mrs. GROSE

Him an injury - I won't believe it!

GOVERNESS.

Tell me, Mrs Grose,
have you ever known
Miles to be bad?

Mrs. GROSE

A boy is no boy for me
if he is never wild.
But bad, no, no!

GOVERNESS

I cannot think him really bad, not Miles.

Never!

Mrs. GROSE
Never! Not Master Miles.
He can be wild, but not bad.

(The children are seen at the window, quietly playing together)

MILES, FLORA
Lavender's blue, diddle, diddle,
Lavender's green,
When I am King, diddle, diddle,
You shall be Queen.
Call up your men, diddle, diddle,
Set them to work,
Some to the plough, diddle, diddle,
Some to the cart.
Some to make hay, diddle, diddle,
Some to cut corn,
While you and I, diddle, diddle -

GOVERNESS, Mrs. GROSE
See how sweetly he plays,
and with how gentle a look
he turns to his sister.
Yes! The Child is an angel!
it is nonsense - never a word of truth.
it is all a wicked lie.

(The window fades.)

Mrs. GROSE
What shall you do then?

GOVERNESS
I shall do nothing.

Mrs. GROSE
And what shall you say to him?

GOVERNESS
I shall say nothing.

Mrs. GROSE
Bravo! And I'll stand by you.
O miss,
may I take the liberty?

(Mrs Grose kisses her The scene fades.)

Variation III

Scene 4 -The Tower

(The lights fade in again on the house. The tower is now visible. It is evening. Sweet summer. Enter the Governess, strolling.)

GOVERNESS
How beautiful it is.
Each day it seems more beautiful to me.
And my darling children enchant me
more and more.
My first foolish fears
are all vanished now,
are all banished now -
those fluttering fears
when I could not forget the letter -
when I heard a far off cry in the night -

and once a faint footstep passed
my door.
Only one thing I wish,
that I could see him -
and that he could see how well
I do his bidding.
The birds fly home to these great trees,
here too I am at home.
Alone, tranquil, serene.
(Quint becomes visible on the tower)
Ha! 'Tis he!
(He looks steadily at her then turns and vanishes.)
No! No! Who is it?
Who? Who can it be?
Some servant -
no! I know them all.
Who is it who?
Who can it be?
Some curious stranger?
But how did he get in?
Who is it, who?
Some fearful madman
locked away there?
Adventurer? Intruder?
Who is it, who?
Who can it be?

(The scene fades.)

Variation IV

Scene 5 - The Window

(The lights fade in on the interior of the hall at Bly. Flora and Miles ride in on a hobby horse.)

MILES, FLORA
Tom, Tom, the piper's son
Stole a pig and away he run.
Pig was eat and Tom was beat,
Tom ran howling down the street.

MILES
Now I'll steal the pig

FLORA
Go on then, go on!

MILES, FLORA
Tom, Tom, the piper's son!
Stole a pig and away he run -

MILES
Now chase me, chase me.

FLORA
I'll catch you.

MILES, FLORA
Pig was eat and Tom was beat,
Tom ran howling down the street.

FLORA
Let's do it again.

GOVERNESS
(off)
Children! Are you ready?
Run along then.

MILES, FLORA
Tom, Tom, the piper's son.

(They ride out as the Governess comes in.)

GOVERNESS
I'll follow.

MILES, FLORA
(off)
Stole a pig and away he run.

(The Governess looks about for a moment, picks up a pair of gloves and is about to go out when she looks up and sees Quint appear suddenly in the window. They gaze at each other. He disappears. The Governess runs out and looks through the window as Quint had done. Mrs. Grose enters as the Governess rushes back into the room.)

Mrs. GROSE
Ah! My dear!
You look so white and queer.
What's ha happened?

GOVERNESS
I have been frightened.

Mrs. GROSE
What was it?

GOVERNESS
A man looked through the window,
a strange man.
But I saw him before,
on the tower.

Mrs. GROSE
No one from the village?

GOVERNESS
No.

Mrs. GROSE
A gentleman then?

GOVERNESS
No! Indeed no!

Mrs. GROSE
What was he like?

GOVERNESS
His hair was red, close-curling,
a long, pale face, small eyes.
His look was sharp, fixed and strange.
He was tall, clean-shaven, yes,
even handsome.
But a horror!

Mrs. GROSE
Quint! Peter Quint!
Dear God, is there no end
to his dreadful ways?

GOVERNESS
Peter Quint - who is that?
Tell me, Mrs. Grose!
Do you know him then?

Mrs. GROSE
Dear God!

(She weeps.)

GOVERNESS
Mrs. Grose,
what has happened here,
in this house?

Mrs. GROSE
Quint, Peter Quint,
the master's valet.
Left here in charge.
It was not for me to say,
miss, no indeed,
I had only to see to the house.
But I saw things elsewhere I did not like.
When Quint was free with everyone -
With little Master Miles -

GOVERNESS
Miles?

Mrs. GROSE
Hours they spent together.
Yes, miss, he made free with her too -
with lovely Miss Jessel,
governess to those pets,
those angels, those innocent babes -
and she a lady, so far above him.
Dear God! Is there no end!
But he had ways to twist them round
his little finger.
He liked them pretty
I can tell you, miss,
and he had his will, morning and night.

GOVERNESS
But why did you not tell your master?
Write to him?
Send for him to come?

Mrs. GROSE
I dursn't.
He never liked worries.
'Twas not my place.
They were not in my charge.
Quint was too clever
I feared him -
feared what he could do.
No, Mr. Quint,
I did not like your ways!
And then she went.
She couldn't stay, not then.
She went away to die.

GOVERNESS
To die?
And Quint?

Mrs. GROSE
He died too.

GOVERNESS
Died?

Mrs. GROSE
Fell on the icy road -
struck his head, lay
there till morning, dead!

Dear God,
is there no end to his dreadful ways?

GOVERNESS
I know nothing of these things.
Is this sheltered place
the wicked world
where things unspoken of can be?

Mrs. GROSE
Dear God!

GOVERNESS
Only this much I know;
things have been done here
that are not good,
and have left a taste behind them.
That man: impudent, spoiled, depraved.
Mrs. Grose, I am afraid, not for me,
for Miles.
He came to look for Miles,
I'm sure of that,
and he will come again.

Mrs. GROSE
I don't understand.

GOVERNESS
But I see it now,
I must protect the children,
I must guard their quiet,
and their guardian's too.
See that I see, know what I know,
that they may see and know nothing.

Mrs. GROSE
Lord, Miss!
Don't understand a word
of what you say.
But I'll stand by you,
Lord, Miss,
indeed I will.

(The lights fade.)

Variation V

Scene 6 - The Lesson

*(The lights fade in on the schoolroom.
The Governess is hearing Miles his
Latin lesson. Flora is "helping")*

MILES, FLORA
(echoing)
Many nouns it is we find
To the masculine are assigned:
Amnis, axis, caulis, collis,
Clunis, crinis, fascis, follis,
Fustis, ignis, orbis, ensis.
Panis, piscis, postis, mensis,
Torrus, unguis and canalis,
Vectis, vermis, and natalis,
Sanguis, pulvis, cucumis,
Lapis, casses, manes, glis.
Many nouns it is we find
To the masculine are assigned:

GOVERNESS

That's good, Miles,
you've learned that well!
Now say for me -

FLORA
(frisking around)
Can't we stop now?
Let's do history!
Boadicea on her chariot!
Look at me!

GOVERNESS
Don't tease, dear!
We must do Miles' Latin.
Come now!
What else do you remember?
Now think.

MILES
(to himself hesitating)
Malo: I would rather be
Malo: in an apple-tree
Malo: than a naughty boy
Malo: in adversity.

GOVERNESS
Why, Miles, what a funny song!
Did I teach you that?

MILES
No, I found it.
I like it.
Do you?
Malo, Malo, Malo...

(The scene fades.)

Variation VI

Scene 7 - The Lake

*(The lights fade in on the lake in the
park. A sunny morning. Flora and the
Governess wander in, the Governess
with a book, Flora with a doll.)*

FLORA
O rivers and seas and lakes!
Is this lake in my book?

GOVERNESS
No dear, it's far too small.

FLORA
Small? It's huge!
It's a great wide sea!

GOVERNESS
Then you must name it.
Come Flora,
what seas do you know?

FLORA
Adriatic and Aegean,...

GOVERNESS
Yes!

FLORA
... Baltic, Bosnian and the Caspian,...

GOVERNESS

Good!

FLORA

... Black and Red and
White and Yellow,...

GOVERNESS

And?

FLORA

... Medi-medi-terra-nean!

GOVERNESS

Go on!

FLORA

And... and... and... the Dead Sea.

GOVERNESS

And this one?

FLORA

Is the Dead Sea.

GOVERNESS

Oh!

FLORA

How can a sea be dead?

GOVERNESS

They call it dead
because nothing can live in it.

FLORA

Then I wouldn't go in it,
and neither would Miles.
*(They settle down, Flora on the
ground, with her doll, the Governess
on a bench, with her book.)*
Go to sleep, my dolly dear.
Go to sleep.

GOVERNESS

Sing to her dear,
dolly must sleep wherever
you choose.

FLORA

Dolly must sleep
wherever I choose.
(She rocks her doll.)
Today by the dead salt sea,
Tomorrow her waxen lids may close
On the plains of Muscovy.
And now like
a Queen of the East she lies,
With a Turk to guard her bed,
But next,
when her short-lived daylight dies,
She's a shepherdess instead.
But sleep dear dolly, O sleep and when
You are lost in your journeying dream
The sea may change to a palace again,
For nothing shall stay the same...
*(She goes on rustling and patting
the doll, pulling the coverlet on,
arranging reeds over her head.)*
That's right, my darling.
How good you are.
Go to sleep.

*(She turns round deliberately to face
the audience as Miss Jessel appears
at the other side of the lake. The
Governess looks up from her reading
and sees Miss Jessel who disappears.)*

GOVERNESS

(getting up)

Flora! Come along!

We must go now, go,
and find Miles.

MILES

(shouting off)

Hullo! Where are you, you two?

GOVERNESS

There he is!

Go to him! Go to him!

MILES

(off)

Hullo!

(Flora runs out.)

GOVERNESS

Miss Jessel!

It was Miss Jessel!

She returns too, - she too, - she too, -

And Flora saw, I know she saw,

and said nothing.

They are lost! Lost!

I neither save nor shield them.

I keep nothing from them.

O, I am useless, useless.

What can I do?

It is far worse than I dreamed.

They are lost!

Lost! Lost!

*(The scene fades as the Governess
goes out.)*

Variation VII

Scene 8 - At Night

QUINT

(unseen)

Miles!

Miles!

Miles!

*(The lights fade in on the front of
the house and the tower. Quint is on
the tower. Miles in the garden
below him in his night things.)*

MILES

I'm here... O I'm here!

QUINT

I am all things strange and bold,

The riderless horse Snorting,

stamping on the hard sea sand,

The hero-highwayman

plundering the land.

I am King Midas with gold in his hand.

MILES

Gold, O yes, gold!

QUINT

I am the smooth world's double face,
Mercury's heels feathered with mischief
and a God's deceit.
The brittle blandishment of counterfeit.
In me secrets,
and half-formed desires meet.

MILES

Secrets, O secrets!

QUINT

I am the hidden life that stirs
When the candle is out;
Upstairs and down, the footsteps
barely heard.
The unknown gesture, and the soft,
persistent word,
The long sighing light of the
night-winged bird.

MILES

Bird!

QUINT

Miles!

MILES

I'm listening.

QUINT

Miles!

MILES

I'm here.

QUINT

Miles!

Miss JESSEL

(unseen)

Flora!

Flora!

Come!

QUINT

Miles!

*(The lights come up on Flora at the
window and Miss Jessel by the lake.)*

FLORA

I'm here...

O I'm here -

Miss JESSEL

Come!

MILES

I'm listening, I'm here.

QUINT

Miles!

Miss JESSEL

Their dreams and ours

Can never be one,

They will forsake us.

O come to me! Come!

FLORA

Tell me, what shall I see there?

QUINT

(to Miles)

What goes on in your head,
what questions?

Ask, for I answer all.

Miss JESSEL

All those we have wept for together;
Beauty forsaken in the beast's demesne,
The little mermaid weeping on the sill,
Gerda and Psyche seeking
their loves again Pandora,
with her dreadful box, as well.

QUINT

(to Miles)

What goes on in your dreams?

Keep silent!

I know, and answer that too.

Miss JESSEL

Their knowledge and ours

Can never be one,

They will despise us.

O come to me, come!

QUINT, Miss JESSEL

On the paths, in the woods,
on the banks, by the walls,
in the long, lush grass,
or the winter leaves,
fallen leaves, I wait -

On the paths, in the woods,
on the banks, by the walls,
in the long, lush grass

or the winter leaves,

I shall be there, you must not fail.

GOVERNESS

(approaching)

Miles!

Where are you?

Mrs. GROSE

(approaching)

Flora!

Are you there?

Miss JESSEL

Flora!

Come to me! -

FLORA

Yes!

I shall be there -

MILES

I shall never fail -

QUINT

Come!

Miles!

(The Governess appears in the porch.

Mrs. Grose appears in the window.

Quint and Miss Jessel disappear.

The Governess runs to Miles.)

GOVERNESS

Mrs. Grose!
Go to Flora!

Mrs. GROSE

Why, whatever's going on?
Miss Flora out of bed!

GOVERNESS

Miles!
What are you doing here?

(Mrs. Grose takes Flora away.)

MILES

You see, I am bad, I am bad,
aren't I?

*(Miles goes into house followed by
the Governess as the lights fade.)*

ACT II

Variation VIII

Scene 1 - Colloquy and Soliloquy

*(The lights fade in on Quint and
Miss Jessel - nowhere.)*

Miss JESSEL
Why did you call me
from my schoolroom dreams?

QUINT

I call? Not I!
You heard the terrible sound
of the wild swan's wings.

Miss JESSEL

Cruel!
Why did you beckon me to your side?

QUINT

I beckon? No, not I!
Your beating heart to your own
passions lied.

Miss JESSEL

Betrayer! Where were you
when in the abyss I fell?

QUINT

Betrayer? No, not I!
I waited for the sound
of my own last bell.

Miss JESSEL

And now what do you seek?

QUINT

I seek a friend.

Miss JESSEL

She is here!

QUINT

(laughing)
No! - self-deceiver!

Miss JESSEL

Ah! Quint, Quint, do you forget?

QUINT

I seek a friend -
Obedient to follow where I lead,
slick as a juggler's mate
to catch my thought,
proud, curious, agile, he shall feed
my mounting power.
Then to his bright subservience
I'll expound
the desperate passions
of a haunted heart,
and in that hour
"The ceremony
of innocence is drowned"

Miss JESSEL

I too must have a soul to share my woe.
Despised, betrayed,
unwanted she must go
forever to my joyless spirit bound,
"The ceremony
of innocence is drowned"

(The Ghosts come together.)

QUINT, Miss JESSEL

Day by day the bars we break,
break the love that laps them round,
cheat the careful watching eyes,
"The ceremony
of innocence is drowned"

*(The lights slowly fade on the Ghosts
and fade in on the Governess.)*

GOVERNESS

Lost in my labyrinth
I see no truth,
only the foggy walls
of evil press upon me.
Lost in my labyrinth
I see no truth.
O innocence, you have corrupted me,
which way shall I turn?
I know nothing of evil,
yet I feel it, I fear it,
worse - imagine it.
Lost in my labyrinth
which way shall I turn?

(The lights fade.)

Variation IX

Scene 2 - The Bells

*(The lights fade in on the churchyard
with a table-tomb and an indication*

of a church.)

MILES, FLORA

(chanting off)

O sing unto them a new song:

Let the congregation praise him.

O ye works and days:

Bless ye the Lord.

(They walk in like choir boys.)

O ye rivers and seas and lakes:

Bless ye the Lord.

O amnis, axis, caulis, collis,

clunis, crinis, fascis, follis:

Bless ye the Lord.

Praise him and magnify him for ever.

(The children settle themselves on the tomb as the Governess and Mrs. Grose enter.)

Mrs. GROSE

O Miss, a bright morning... to be sure.

GOVERNESS

(absently)

Yes.

MILES, FLORA

O ye tombstones and trees:

Praise him.

Mrs. GROSE

Bright as the Sunday morning bells,
how I love the sound.

GOVERNESS

Yes.

MILES, FLORA

O ye bells and towers:

Praise him.

Mrs. GROSE

And the dear children,
how sweet they are together.

GOVERNESS

Yes.

MILES, FLORA

O ye paths and woods:

Praise him.

O ye frosts and fallen leaves:

Praise him.

O ye dragons and snakes,
worms and feathered fowl:

Rejoice in the Lord.

Mrs. GROSE

Come Miss, don't worry

It will pass I'm sure.

They're so happy with you.

You're so good to them.

We all love you, miss.

MILES, FLORA

O Mrs. Grose, bless ye the Lord:

May she never be confounded.

GOVERNESS

(taking Mrs. Grose aside.)

Dear good Mrs. Grose -

They are not playing,
they are talking horrors.

Mrs. GROSE

Oh! Never!

GOVERNESS

Why are they so charming?

Why so unnaturally good?

I tell you they are not with us,
but with the others.

Mrs. GROSE

With Quint - and that woman?

GOVERNESS

With Quint and that woman.

Mrs. GROSE

But what could they do?

GOVERNESS

Do! They could destroy them.

Mrs. GROSE

Miss! You must write to their uncle.

GOVERNESS

That his house is poisoned,
the children mad -
or that I am?

I was changed not to worry him.

Mrs. GROSE

Yes. He do hate worry.

GOVERNESS

I shall never write to him.

Can you not feel them

round about you?

They are here, there, everywhere.

And the children are with them,

they are not with us.

Mrs. GROSE

Come Miss, don't worry.

It will pass I'm sure.

They're so happy with you,

you're so good to them.

We all love you so.

Never you mind,

well be all right, you'll see.

MILES, FLORA

O ye paths and woods:

Bless ye the Lord.

O ye walls and towers:

Bless ye the Lord.

O ye moon and stars,

windows and lakes:

Praise him and magnify him for ever.

Mrs. GROSE

Come Miss!

It is time we went in.

Come to church, my dear,

it will do you good.

Flora!

Miles!

Come along, dears.

(She takes the children off towards

the church and goes in with Flora.
Miles hangs back and then comes up
to the Governess.)

MILES

Do you like the bells?
I do.
They're not half finished yet.

GOVERNESS

No.

MILES

Then we can talk
and you can tell me when
I'm going back to school.

GOVERNESS

Are you not happy here?

MILES

I'm growing up, you know.
I want my own kind.

GOVERNESS

Yes, you're growing up.

MILES

So much I want to do,
so much I might do...

GOVERNESS

But I trust you, Miles.

MILES

You trust me, my dear,
but you think and think...
of us, and of the others.
Does my uncle think what you think?

(He goes off in to the church.)

Mrs. GROSE, FLORA, MILES

(from the church)

Praise him and magnify him for ever!

GOVERNESS

It was a challenge!
He knows what I know,
and dares me to act.
But who would believe my story?
Mrs. Grose?
No - she's no good.
She has doubts.
I am alone, alone.
I must go away now,
while they are at church;
away from those false little lovely eyes;
away from my fears,
away from the horrors;
away from this poisoned place;
away, away!

(The lights fade as she runs away.)

Variation X

Scene 3 - Miss Jessel

(The light fades in on the

school-room, with desk The
Governess enters immediately.
Miss Jessel is sitting at the desk.)

GOVERNESS

She is here!
Here, in my own room!

Miss JESSEL

Here my tragedy began,
here revenge begins.

GOVERNESS

Nearer and nearer she comes,
from the lake, from the stair.

Miss JESSEL

Ah, here I suffered,
here I must find my peace.

GOVERNESS

From the stair, from the passage.

Miss JESSEL

Peace did I say?
Not peace but the fierce imparting
of my woe.

GOVERNESS

From the passage,
into the very heart of my kingdom.

Miss JESSEL

I shall come closer, closer,
and more often.

GOVERNESS

There she sheds
her ghastly influence.
She shall not!
She shall not!
I won't bear it!

Miss JESSEL

So I shall be waiting,
waiting for the child.

(The Governess braces herself to
speak directly to her.)

GOVERNESS

Why are you here?

Miss JESSEL

(rising)
Alas! Alas!

GOVERNESS

It is mine, mine, the desk.

Miss JESSEL

Alas! Alas!

GOVERNESS

They are mine, mine, the children.
I will never abandon them.

Miss JESSEL

Alas! Alas!
I cannot rest.
I am weary and I cannot rest.

GOVERNESS
Begone!
Begone!
You horrible, terrible woman!

Miss JESSEL
Alas!

(She disappears.)

GOVERNESS
I can't go - I can't.
But I can no longer support it alone.
I must write to him,
write to him now.
(She goes to the desk and writes.)
Sir - dear Sir -
my dear Sir -
I have not forgotten
your charge of silence,
but there are things that you must know,
and I must see you,
must see and tell you, at once.
Forgive me. That is all.

(The scene fades.)

Variation XI

Scene 4 - The Bedroom

(The lights fade in on Miles sitting
restlessly on the edge of his bed,
with his jacket and shoes off. The
room is lit by a candle.)

MILES
Malo: than a naughty boy..
Malo: in...
(The Governess is seen approaching
the room.)
I say, what are you waiting for?

GOVERNESS
(comes in)
Why Miles, not yet in bed?
Not even undressed.

MILES
O I've been sitting,
sitting and thinking.

GOVERNESS
Thinking?
Of what were you thinking?

MILES
Of this queer life,
the life we've been living.

GOVERNESS
What do you mean by that?
What life?

MILES
My dear, you know.
You're always watching.

GOVERNESS
I don't know, Miles,
for you've never told me,
you've told me nothing,

nothing of what happened before I came.
I thought till today
that you were quite happy.

MILES
I am, I am.
I'm always thinking, thinking.

GOVERNESS
Miles, I've just written to your guardian.

MILES
What a lot you'll have to tell him.

GOVERNESS
So will You, Miles.
(Miles changes his position, but does
not answer.)
Miles - dear little Miles,
is there nothing you want to tell me?

(Miles shifts again.)

QUINT
(unseen)
Miles - are you listening?

GOVERNESS
Miles, what happened at school?
What happened here?

(Miles turns away from her.)

QUINT
(unseen)
Miles - I am here.

GOVERNESS
Miles,
if you knew how
I want to help you,
how I want you to help me save you.

QUINT
(unseen)
Miles - I'm waiting, I'm waiting,
waiting, Miles.

(The candle goes out.)

MILES
Ah!

GOVERNESS
Oh, what is it?
What is it?
Why, the candle's out!

MILES
Twas I who blew it,
who blew it, dear!

(The scene fades.)

Variation XII

(In the first production, throughout
this Variation and the following
Scene, Quint appeared as a silhouette)

QUINT
(unseen)

So! She has written.
What has she written?
What has she written?
What has she written?
She has told all she knows.
What does she know?
What does she know?
What does she know?
It is there on the desk,
there on the desk.
Easy to take!
Easy to take!
Easy to take!

Scene 5 - Quint

(Miles is seen hesitating in his room.
He then creeps across the stage to
the desk)

QUINT
(unseen)
Take it!
Take it!
Take it!

(Miles takes the Governess's
letter across to his bedroom.
The lights fade.)

Variation XIII

Scene 6 - The Piano

(Miles is seen sitting at the piano,
playing. The Governess and Mrs.
Grose are hovering about listening
to him. Flora is sitting on the floor,
playing at 'cat 's cradle')

GOVERNESS, Mrs. GROSE
O what a clever boy; why,
he must have practised very hard.

Mrs. GROSE
I never knew a little boy so good.

GOVERNESS
Yes, there is no mistake,
he is clever, they both are.

Mrs. GROSE
They've come on wonderfully
well with you, Miss.

GOVERNESS
My dear,
with such children anything is possible.
(She takes Mrs. Grose aside.)
I've done it!
I've written it!
It's ready for the post.

Mrs. GROSE
That's right, Miss.
I'm sure that's right.

GOVERNESS
(aloud to Miles)

Go on, dear.
Mrs. Grose is enjoying it.
We're all enjoying it.

GOVERNESS, Mrs. GROSE
O what a clever boy!
I never knew a little boy so good.

(The Governess stays by the piano
hanging over Miles. He finishes his
first piece and turns the pages for the
second.)

Mrs. GROSE
(walks over to watch Flora playing.)
And Miss Flora, playing at cat's cradle.
There's a nimble-fingered little girl.

(She settles down near Flora.)

Mrs. GROSE, FLORA
(echoing)
Cradles for cats
Are string and air.
If you let go
there's nothing there.
But if we are neat
and nimble and clever
pussy-cat's cradle will
go on for ever.

FLORA
Mrs. Grose, are you tired?

(During this conversation Miles
begins showing off at the piano.)

Mrs. GROSE
Well, my head do keep nodding.
It's this warm room.

GOVERNESS
(softly)
Ah, Miles!
Miles!

FLORA
Shut your eyes
then and you shall have a cradle,
Mrs. Grose's cradle -

Mrs. GROSE
And Master Miles' playing.

FLORA
(to Mrs. Grose)
Go to sleep!
Go to sleep!

(Flora slips away unnoticed.)

GOVERNESS
(softly)
Ah, Miles!
Miles!
(She stops him suddenly.)
Flora!
Flora!
Mrs. Grose!
Wake up!
She is gone.

Mrs. GROSE
What? Who, Miss?

GOVERNESS
Flora's gone, gone out to her.
Come, we must go and find her!

Mrs. GROSE
Lord, Miss!
But you'll leave the boy?

GOVERNESS
O I don't mind that now,
he's with Quint!
He's found the most divine little
way to keep me quiet while she went.
Come! Come!

(They rush off. Miles plays triumphantly
on as the scene slowly fades.)

Variation XIV

Scene 7 - Flora

(The scene fades in on Flora by
the side of the lake, watching.
The Governess and Mrs. Grose
are heard, calling off-stage.)

Mrs. GROSE, GOVERNESS
(off)
Flora!

(They rush in and see the girl
by the lake.)

Mrs. GROSE
There she is!
(She runs over to Flora.)
Fancy running off like that,
and such a long
way, too, without your hat and coat.
(The Governess slowly walks over
to them.)
You are a naughty girl,
whatever made you leave us all?

GOVERNESS
And where, my pet, is Miss Jessel?

(Miss Jessel appears on the other
side of the lake.)

Miss JESSEL
Flora!

GOVERNESS
Ah! She is there!
Look! She is there!
(Pointing.)
Look! You little unhappy thing!
Look! Mrs. Grose!
She is there!

Miss JESSEL
Flora! Do not fall me!

Mrs. GROSE
Indeed Miss, there's nothing there.

GOVERNESS

Only look, dearest woman,
don't you see, now, now!

Miss JESSEL
Nothing shall they know.

Mrs. GROSE
(to Flora)
She isn't there, little lady,
nobody is there.

GOVERNESS
But look!

FLORA
I can't see anybody, can't see anything,
nobody, nothing, nobody, nothing;
I don't know what you mean.

Mrs. GROSE
(comforting)
There's nobody there. -

Miss JESSEL
We know all things,
they know nothing,
don't betray me.
Silence!
Silence!

Mrs. GROSE
She isn't there.
Why, poor Miss Jessel's
dead and buried,
we know that, love.
It's all a mistake.

FLORA
You're cruel, horrible,
hateful, nasty.
Why did you come here?
I don't know what you mean.
Take me away!
Take me away!
(Pointing at the Governess.)
I don't like her!
I hate her!

GOVERNESS
(with horror)
Me!

Mrs. GROSE
Yes, it's all a mistake,
and we'll get home
as fast as we can.
There, there, dearie,
we'll get home as fast as we can.

GOVERNESS
Yes! Go! Go! Go!

Miss JESSEL.
Ah! Flora, Flora,
do not fail me! Flora!

FLORA
I can't see anybody,
can't see anything,
nobody, nothing.
I don't know what she means.
Cruel, horrible,

hateful, nasty!
We don't want you!
We don't want you!
Take me away, take me away from her!
Hateful, cruel,
nasty, horrible!

(Flora and Mrs. Grose go off
comforting one another. The
Governess watches them go while
Miss Jessel slowly disappears.)

GOVERNESS
Ah! my friend, you have forsaken me!
At last you have forsaken me.
Flora, I have lost you,
she has taught you how to hate me.
Am I then horrible?
No! No!
But I have failed, most miserably failed,
and there is no more innocence in me.
And now she hates me!
Hates me!
Hates me!

(The lights quickly fade.)

Variation XV

Scene 8 - Miles

(The house and grounds. As the lights
fade in Mrs. Grose and Flora appear in
the porch, dressed for travelling, Flora
with doll and little bag. The Governess
walks towards them, Flora deliberately
turns her back.)

GOVERNESS
Mrs. Grose -

Mrs. GROSE
O Miss,
you were quite right,
I must take her away.
Such a night as I have spent -
(She cries.)
No, don't ask me.
What that child has poured out
in her dreams -
things I never knew nor hope to know,
nor dare remember.

GOVERNESS
My dear,
I thought I had lost you,
thought you couldn't believe me,
my dear -

Mrs. GROSE
I must take her away.

GOVERNESS
Yes, go to their uncle.
He knows now that all is not well,
he has had my letter.

Mrs. GROSE
My dear, your letter never went,

it wasn't where you put it.

GOVERNESS
Miles?

Mrs. GROSE
Miles must have taken it.

GOVERNESS
All the same, go,
and I shall stay and face what
I have to face with the boy.
(Mrs. Grose goes quickly to
Flora and takes her off.)
O Miles -
I cannot bear to lose you!
You shall be mine, and I shall save you.

(Miles saunters on.)

MILES
So, my dear, we are alone.

GOVERNESS
Are we alone?

MILES
Oh, I'm afraid so.

GOVERNESS
Do you mind?
Do you mind being left alone?

MILES
Do you?

GOVERNESS
Dearest Miles,
I love to be with you -
what else should I stay for?

MILES
So, my dear,
for me you stay?

GOVERNESS
I stay as your friend,
I stay as your friend.
Miles, there is nothing
I would not do for you, remember -

MILES
Yes, yes.
If I'll do something now
for you.

GOVERNESS
Do tell me what it is then
you have on your mind.

QUINT
(unseen)
Miles!

(Miles looks desperately round,
but cannot see Quint.)

GOVERNESS
I still want you to tell me.

MILES
Now?

GOVERNESS
Yes - it would be best, you know.

QUINT
(unseen)
Beware of her!

(Miles looks about again.)

GOVERNESS
What is it, Miles?
Do you want to go and play?

MILES
Awfully!
I will tell you everything.
I will!

QUINT
(unseen)
No!

MILES
But not now.

GOVERNESS
Miles, did you steal my letter?

QUINT
(appears on the tower)
Miles! I am waiting,
watching for you now.

(The Governess sees Quint and pushes
Miles round so that he cannot see him.)

GOVERNESS
Did you?
Did you?

MILES
No. Yes.
I took it.

(Quint turns away.)

GOVERNESS
Why did you take it?

(Quint descends the tower)

MILES
To see what you said about us.

QUINT
Be silent!

GOVERNESS
Miles, dear little Miles,
who is it you see?
Who do you wait for, watch for?

QUINT
Do not betray our secrets.
Beware, beware of her!

MILES
I don't know what you mean.

GOVERNESS
Who is it, who?

Say - for my sake -
look at me, Miles!

QUINT
Miles, you're mine!
You must be free.

MILES
Is he there, is he there?

GOVERNESS
Is who there, Miles?
Say it!

QUINT
Don't betray us, Miles!

MILES
Nobody, nothing.

GOVERNESS
Who? Who?
Who made you take the letter?
Who do you wait for, watch for?
Only say the name
and he will go for ever, for ever.

QUINT
On the banks, by the walls,
remember Quint.
At the window. on the tower,
when the candle is out,
remember, Quint.
He leads, he watches,
he waits, he waits.

MILES
Peter Quint, you devil.

(He runs into the
Governess's arms.)

GOVERNESS
Ah, Miles, you are saved,
now all will be well.
Together we have destroyed him.

QUINT
Ah Miles, we have failed.
Now I must go.
Farewell.
Farewell, Miles, farewell.

(Quint slowly disappears)

GOVERNESS
Ah! What is it?
What is it?
Miles, speak to me, speak to me.
Why don't you answer?
(She realises that the boy is dead.)
Miles, Miles, Miles!
Ah. ah, don't leave me now!
(She lays him down on the ground.)
Ah! Miles!
Malo, Malo!
Malo than a naughty boy.
Malo, Malo in adversity.
What have we done between us?
Malo, Malo, Malo, Malo, Malo...

The End