

“He’s very **sinister**,” I said softly. “I’ve never seen anybody like him before. He’s tall with dark hair, and a long pale face. His eyebrows are thick and dark. He’s got small eyes and a wide mouth with thin lips. He’s elegantly dressed,” I continued, “but not like a real gentleman. I don’t know how to explain it. There’s something artificial about him, like an actor in the theatre.”

As I described the stranger, Mrs. Grose’s eyes opened wide in fear and she became pale.

“Is he handsome?” she asked.

“Yes, he is,” I said. “Why do you ask? Do you know him?”

She nodded. “It’s Peter Quint. He was Lord Henry’s assistant for years,” she said. “Quint was here with Lord Henry last year. Then when Lord Henry left, Quint stayed here with us and **supervised** some changes that Lord Henry wanted in the house.”

“And what happened to him?” I asked with curiosity.

“He’s gone too,” Mrs. Grose answered.

“Gone where?” I asked.

I will never forget the expression on her face. “Mr. Quint is dead,” she said.

CHAPTER 4

TWO FIGURES AT THE LAKE

Mrs. Grose and I were both shocked by our conversation. After the servants went to bed, we sat and had a cup of hot chocolate in the kitchen.

“I heard a voice while I was staring at Quint,” I told Mrs. Grose, “but I don’t know if I imagined it or if it was real. It said, ‘He hasn’t come for you. He’s come for somebody else.’ It’s strange but I’m **convinced** – I don’t know why – that Miles was the one Quint wanted to see. The children have never mentioned him to me or talked about the time when he lived here. Flora may be too young to remember, but Miles ... ”

“Oh! Please don’t talk to Miles about him,” Mrs. Grose interrupted with a worried look. “He isn’t responsible for this. Quint liked to play with him, they spent a lot of time together, but I didn’t like it because ...”

She stopped speaking and there was an angry look on her face.

“Did you think that Quint was **evil**?” I asked.

“Yes. He was evil, that’s what I thought,” Mrs. Grose answered. “Quint spent a lot of time with the previous governess, Miss Jessel, and the children, especially Miles. Miss Jessel loved Quint **passionately**, but he just laughed at her and finally he ended their relationship. Miss Jessel was very unhappy, but he didn’t care. Then one cold winter morning, somebody from the next village found Quint dead on the road. He had a **wound** on his head. He had apparently got drunk in the village, fallen on the ice on his way home and hit his head on the ground. At least, that was the official version. But there were also stories about his life before he came here, people said bad things ... I don’t want to repeat them, they were horrible.”

“Why didn’t you tell Lord Henry about this?” I asked.

Mrs. Grose started to cry. “You know that Lord Henry doesn’t like to be disturbed,” she answered. “I was afraid to say anything. I’m still afraid to talk about it. Lord Henry liked and trusted Quint; he wouldn’t believe me.”

The next incident happened one sunny afternoon when I was outside with Flora and Miles in the gardens. I suggested a walk to the lake because it was such a lovely day. Miles wanted to finish reading his book, so he stayed at home, and Flora and I went to the lake.

We were having a lovely time. I sat near the lake, sewing, while Flora played on the grass. Suddenly, I felt that we were not alone, that somebody was watching us. I don’t know where the feeling came from, but it got stronger and stronger. Finally,