



# The Turn of the Screw

## Detailed Content Information



## Content Information – Detailed Breakdown

### Act 1

#### Scene 1

- At the beginning of the first scene, there is a short instance of smoking. The actor will be smoking a herbal cigarette. This should last no longer than two minutes.
- Shortly afterwards, there is reference to the death of two offstage characters in a boating accident: “I only had – have – the one sister. He took her sailing. The husband He hasn’t the least idea how to man the boat. And so they drowned.”
- There is a sexual inference around halfway through the scene: “There are many foxes at Bly. I think you will become fond of them. They keep one company at night. Their noise is quite crashing...when they...find one another.”
- Towards the end of the scene, there is reference to the death of another offstage character: “Miss Jessel died. Not far from Bly.”

#### Scene 2

- Following the transition into the next scene, one of the children names their pet bird “Rip” after “all the people in the churchyard.”
- A short while after, the same child mentions that her “mother and father are in the graveyard.” She adds that her “mother drowned” and describes the funeral: “After it happened, the house was always full of people whispering. I thought it was a birthday party except no one wore pretty dresses...I had to wear black for a very long time.”
- One of the characters implies a sexual relationship between two offstage characters: “A young thing she was. And pretty. Yes...he liked them young and pretty.”
- The closing exchange of the scene contains further reference to the death of an offstage character: “The dead are gone, miss. We’ve no right disturbing them.”

#### Scene 3

- After a transition, one of the characters jokes that Beethoven won’t be able to hear his piano recital: “Being both deaf. And dead.” Another character replies: “Perhaps he can hear us. The dead can do all sorts of things that they couldn’t do when they were alive.”
- Shortly after, a character recites the following poem containing reference to the dead and dead bodies:

“You are gone.  
And who knows where?  
Your soft pale skin  
And long dark hair.

You are gone,  
The angels fled.  
Your flesh is cold,  
Your eyes are dead.

You are gone,  
The angels weep,  
A muddy bank  
Is where you sleep.”

- The characters then sing a music hall song entitled “Adam Caught Eve” which takes the form of an extended sexual innuendo. The song reads:

“Adam caught Eve by the furbelow,  
Adam caught Eve by the furbelow,  
And that’s the oldest catch I know,  
And that’s the oldest catch I know,  
And that’s the oldest catch I know.

Oh ho!  
Did he so?  
Did he so?  
Did he so?  
Did he so?  
Did he so?”

- When questioned about the contents of this song, the two characters look to two empty chairs, as if being spoken to by unseen ghostly figures.
- A short while later, one of the characters recites another poem that makes reference to supernatural forces. The poem entitled ‘Those Who Are Waiting’ reads:

“They wait,  
Those who are outside.  
Those who are wind-torn  
And rain-soaked and muddy.  
Those who daren’t come in.  
They wait,  
Those who have lost,  
Who cannot come back,  
Who will us to follow them,  
Damp and dank and dark their road is.  
Will you house them? The broken-boned.  
Will you restore them?  
The black-hearted.  
Or will you shut the window

And lock the catch against them?"

- There is a brief mention of the possible suicide of an offstage character: "Did Miss Jessel take her own life?"
- The actual cause of her death is then alluded to: "It wasn't by her own hand. Or another's. I believe she wanted to live...I'd say she died of a broken heart."
- Reference is again made to the drowning of two offstage characters.

#### Scene 4

- A short way into the following scene, one of the characters implies that she has picked up a note containing pornographic content, describing its contents as: "filth."
- One of the characters claims that they can see a mysterious, ghost-like figure offstage: "Who is that man? Standing...looking out from the tower?"
- One of the children refers to their former guardian pretending to throw them off of a tower found at their house: "We all used to go up to the tower. He'd be laughing. And pretend to throw us off."
- An object, implied to be of supernatural origin, will suddenly thud against the large window on the back right of the stage following the line: "Surely you know that better than us?"
- After this, there will be a loud noise of chalk scraping against a blackboard from an unseen source.
- Following the line: "one could spend all day in bed, my dear", there will be an extended sequence of paranormal activity. After the stage darkens, a man will appear behind the large window at the back of the stage on the right. The character of the Governess will then go behind the window. As she does this, the curtains will billow, a lamp to the left of the stage will flicker and static will play on the television. Shortly afterwards, once the character of the Governess has returned to the central stage platform, there will be a sequence of flashing strobe light. This will stop, there will be a few moments of darkness and then the lamp will flicker revealing a figure in the chair next to it. Strobing light will briefly resume, before returning back to normal.
- In the exchange following this sequence of events, it will be implied that a formerly unseen character has returned from the dead as a ghost: "Mr Quint is dead. Quint is dead."

#### Act 2

#### Scene 5

- Immediately following the interval, one of the characters sings a song with implied sexual content. The song reads:

"Tomorrow is St Valentine's day,  
All in the morning betime,

And I a maid at your window,  
To be your valentine.  
Then up he rose and donn'd his clothes  
And dupp'd the chamber door,  
Let in the maid,  
that out a maid Never departed more."

- One of the characters then makes reference to the song, describing how it might be about the loss of virginity: "It's about loss. Ladies when they lose their character and lapse into guilt."
- One of the characters, a child, describes how their former guardian told them they would be sent to "Bedlam" if they were "bad."
- This character then makes a sexual innuendo, likening sexual intercourse to "the old bull and the poor cows who look so terrified."
- One of the children insults an adult character, saying: "You can't just interrogate me because it's your time of the month."
- Shortly after this, two characters discuss the implied abuse of two of the children by their former guardian: "Quint was much too free. He was always on walks with Master Miles. From morning till night....Too free with everyone."
- They then describe the death of Quint: "A labourer found Quint's body at dawn. On a winter's morning. Frozen to death. On the village road. A wound to his head."
- Shortly following this exchange, one of the characters sees a ghost just offstage. This will be supported by imagery of water on the television sets on the left, centre and right of the stage.
- The character then performs a lengthy prayer to ward off this ghost. The prayer reads:

"God ... Give me the strength that I might protect them. Divine Lord. Rid them of the evil. It has entered them. Lord. O Lord. I have my purpose. I have my cross. Help me to bear it."

- The following exchange reveals that the two ghosts are the former guardians of the children, who were implied to be having an intense sexual relationship which the children witnessed: "They did things in the daytime that married folk would have been loath to do at night. I saw things...in rooms...in woods...that I should never have seen. And the children saw it too. In the rain, in the cold. They would always find somewhere. Base, they were. Then she was with child."
- It is then implied that the person in question died alongside her infant child: "They found her in a ditch. Swaddling her baby. Dead. Both of them."

## Scene 6

- Following a short transition, a character will read a note implied to have pornographic content. The character will then approach a mirror, examine themselves and unbutton their nightdress slightly. She will then touch her breast over her nightdress before being interrupted by a sudden noise.

- Shortly afterwards, there will be a brief sexual interaction between two of the characters, one of whom is a minor. (Note: while the character is a 12-year-old boy, the actor is in fact 25 years old.) The sequence will begin when the character of Miles switches off the on-stage lamp. After a short period of darkness, the light will go back on. Miles will then say: “They taught us how to count and feel for a person’s heartbeat. Shall I check yours?”. He will then put his hand to the other characters’ left breast, put his head to her chest, remove his hand, kiss her, before placing his hand back on her breast. He is stopped after a few seconds.
- After the line: “oh, but you know. That you might come back, you dear, and that you have!” there will be a sudden loud sound effect of foxes screaming.
- Shortly afterwards, following the line: “Miles...Miles....Uncle said we must be quiet”, a sequence of paranormal activity will occur. The television sets on stage will each begin to play video containing implied nudity and sexual activity. This will include footage of the strap of a nightdress being pulled down, a brief instance of hands grazing a woman’s thigh, close-ups of hands clutching bedding and a close-up of two mouths about to kiss. The televisions will then be turned off in sequence, and the character of the Governess will retreat to the window at the rear of stage. After a moment, a hand will come through the window and feel her left breast, causing her to scream. This will be accompanied by a loud sound effect and a brief total blackout.

### Scene 7

- After a brief blackout, a character will insist that the children are being controlled by the ghosts of their former guardians: “They’re simply being led. Controlled. They’re not mine – or ours. They’re Quint’s and that woman’s.”
- Once the character of the Governess is left alone on stage, the ghost of a woman in a wet dress with wet hair covering her face will be projected onto the curtains. There will be supporting water imagery on the TVs. After a swoosh sound, the ghost will appear to have been sucked into the floor. A loud scratching noise will then play, causing the Governess to then pull back the carpet, revealing the words ‘They are Mine’ carved into the floor. This will be accompanied by a loud sound and a close-up shot of a woman with wet hair on the TV’s eerily whispering “They are mine.”
- During this sequence, a character will make reference to a sexual relationship: “What was it like with him? What must it have been like? That you would lose everything? For that...”
- At the end of this scene, a character will anoint another character in an attempt to ward off spirits.

### Scene 8

- Towards the beginning of the scene, it is heavily implied that the children were physically abused by one of their former guardians. One of the characters asks: “But you must tell me...did it ever go beyond thought, and into a physical act?”. This question is left unanswered.

- A brief segment of the 1989 film 'The Woman in Black' will be shown on the TVs once the two children enter the scene, featuring a shot of a ghost standing amongst some gravestones.
- In the middle of the scene, one of the characters again spies a ghost just offstage following the line "where is Miss Jessel?". Images of a woman in a wet dress will appear on the TVs. This will result in an altercation in which one of the children is roughly handled, and put into a state of great distress, before she is ushered offstage.

### Scene 9

- At the beginning of this scene, papers will be blown off a piano as if by supernatural forces.
- Following the line: "Yes, I did", the lid of the piano will suddenly snap shut accompanied by a loud bang.
- Continuous reference is made to ghosts possibly being in the room throughout the scene.
- A character will imply he has had suicidal thoughts: "Sometimes I wonder, if I were to walk into the lake how long would it be before anyone missed me?"

### Scene 10

- During the following scene, reference is made to a child in great distress, possibly having been traumatised: "She had a fever. Terrible nightmares...She asks me every three minutes if you're coming in. Terrified you'll sit down by her."

### Scene 11

- Early on in the scene, it is revealed that one of the characters spread sexual gossip around his school, causing him to be expelled. He says: "Men and ladies...things I'd seen. A man and lady making sounds from the barnyard. Things that make a boy rather...you know. How boys are."
- Towards the end of the scene, a character will begin an angry outburst consisting of sexually graphic imagery. He will say: "You're a bitch. And a whore...and a...you would open your legs to the whole of the navy if you had the chance...you're so hungry that it's obscene...obscene do you hear me? You should be put down like a dog. Like a hungry bitch!"
- After a brief interlude in which this character smashes a toy farm, the rant will continue: "I'm not your love, you hussy! you whore!...Whore! Bitch! Whore! I see nothing! How many times must I tell you!"
- Following this, the character of Miles will enter a state of nervous collapse. The character of the Governess will attempt to hold him despite his begging protests. Following the line "Miles, you mustn't say that. Don't. That's what he

wants you to say", the Governess will cover Miles' mouth with her hand. Miles will spasm and collapse into the Governess' arms. He will continue to twitch and breath heavily for a time. Once he has stopped, the Governess will kiss him once on the forehead, feel for his heart and learn that he has died. At which point, she will let him down onto the floor and kiss him on the mouth.