

# The Marble Finger

by Edith Nesbit

## *Part 1: Happy Times*

Although every word of this story is true, I do not expect people to believe it.

When and Laura and I married we had very little money. I used to write in those days, and Laura used to paint, but neither of us earned much. To save money, we moved to the country.

We rented a small cottage, about two miles from a small village. It was a long,



low building covered with ivy, with a lovely rose garden. We loved it.

A woman from the village, Mrs Dorman did our housework for us. She was an excellent cook and gardener. She also knew all the local stories. We loved to listen to her strange tales of 'things that walked' in the fields at night.

### **Tears**

For three months we were very happy. Then one October evening, I went out to smoke my pipe with our only neighbour — a very nice young Irish doctor called Kelly.

When I came home she was lying on the window seat. Her face was wet with tears.

'Darling, what's the matter?' I cried, taking her in my arms.

'It's Mrs Dorman!'

'What has she done?'

'She says she must go before the end of the month. She says that her niece is ill but I don't believe that's the real reason.'

'What do you mean?'

'I think someone has been telling stories about us to her.'

'Never mind,' I said. 'We can find someone else.'

'No, I don't think we can,' she said. Tears were still coming down her face. 'These village people follow each other. If one won't do a thing, the others won't either.'

'I'll speak to Mrs Dorman when she comes back,' I said to calm her. 'Perhaps she wants more money. Don't worry. Everything will be all right. Let's walk up to the church.'

### **Wicked men**

The church was large and lonely but we loved to visit it, especially on bright nights. To get there we followed 'the cemetery walk'. This was a long path through a dark wood. It was once used to carry dead bodies to the church.

Inside the church was dark and gloomy. On each side of the aisle there was a grey marble statue of a knight.

'Mrs Dorman says that they should not be here,' Laura told me.

'She says that they were wicked men.'

'Why are there statues of them?'

'She says they bought their place in the church with stolen gold.'

Looking at their hard faces this story was easy to believe.



*End of Part One*

### **Quick Check: True or False**

1. According to the narrator, the story is true.
2. The young couple bought a beautiful cottage.
3. Mrs Dorman works for the young couple.
4. Laura is upset about Doctor Kelly.
5. The narrator promises to talk to Mrs Dorman.
6. The cemetery walk leads to the village church.
7. There are two statues in the church.
8. Mrs Dorman does not like the statues.

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***What do you think will happen on Halloween?***

***Why is Mrs Dorman scared of the statues?***