



Strange case of

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

by Robert Louis Stevenson



1. Story of the door

Mr Utterson the lawyer was a man of a rugged countenance that was never lighted by a smile; cold and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, dreary and yet somehow lovable.

At friendly meetings, and when the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beamed from his eye. He had an approved tolerance for others; sometimes wondering, almost with envy, at the high pressure of spirits involved in their misdeeds; and in any extremity inclined to help rather than to reprove.

It was frequently his fortune to be the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of downgoing men.

Mr Utterson was undemonstrative at best, and his friends were those of his own blood or those whom he had known the longest; his affections, like ivy, were the growth of time.

Hence, no doubt the bond that united him to Mr Richard Enfield, his distant kinsman, the well-known man about town. The two men put the greatest store in their Sunday walks and counted them the chief jewel of each week.

It chanced on one of these rambles that their way led them down a small and quiet

street in a busy quarter of London. The street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighbourhood, like a fire in a forest; and with its freshly painted shutters and well-polished brasses pleased the eye of the passenger.

On the left hand going east the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point a sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained.

Mr Enfield and the lawyer were on the other side of the street; but when they came abreast of the entry, the former lifted up his cane and pointed.

“Did you ever remark that door?” he asked. “It is connected in my mind with a very odd story.”

“Indeed?” said Mr Utterson, “and what was that?”

“I was coming home about three o’clock of a black winter morning,” resumed Mr Enfield, “and my way lay through a part of town where there was literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church, till at last I got into

that state of mind when a man longs for the sight of a policeman.

All at once, I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumping along at a good walk, and the other a girl of maybe eight or ten who was running as hard as she was able down a cross street.

Well, sir, the two ran into one another at the corner; and then came the horrible part of the thing; for the man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. It wasn't like a man; it was like some damned Juggernaut.

I took to my heels, collared my gentleman, and brought him back to where there was already quite a group about the screaming child. He was perfectly cool and made no resistance, but gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running.

Pretty soon, the doctor, for whom she had been sent, put in his appearance. Well, the child was not much the worse, more frightened.

But the doctor was what struck me. He was the usual cut and dry apothecary, of no particular age and colour, with a strong Edinburgh accent and about as emotional as a bagpipe. Well, sir, he was like the rest of us; every time he looked at my prisoner, he turned sick and white with desire to kill him.

I knew what was in his mind, just as

he knew what was in mine; and killing being out of the question, we did the next best. We told the man we could and would make such a scandal out of this as should make his name stink from one end of London to the other. If he had any friends or any credit, we undertook that he should lose them.

'If you choose to make capital out of this accident,' said he, 'I am naturally helpless. No gentleman but wishes to avoid a scene. Name your figure.'

Well, we screwed him up to a hundred pounds for the child's family. The next thing was to get the money; and where do you think he carried us but to that place with the door? He whipped out a key, went in, and presently came back with the matter of ten pounds in gold and a cheque for the balance on Coutts's, signed with a name that I can't mention, though it's one of the points of my story, but it was a name at least very well known and often printed. The signature was good for more than that if it was only genuine.

I took the liberty of pointing out to my gentleman that a man does not, in real life, walk into a cellar door at four in the morning and come out with another man's cheque for close upon a hundred pounds. 'Set your mind at rest,' says he, 'I will stay with you till the banks open and cash the cheque myself.'

We passed the rest of the night in my chambers; and next day I gave in the cheque myself, and said I had every

reason to believe it was a forgery. Not a bit of it. The cheque was genuine.

My man was a fellow that nobody could have to do with, a really damnable man; and the person that drew the cheque is the very pink of the proprieties, celebrated too, and one of your fellows who do what they call good. Blackmail I suppose; an honest man paying through the nose for some of the capers of his youth. *Blackmail House* is what I call the place with the door, in consequence.”

“And you don’t know if the drawer of the cheque lives there?” Mr Utterson asked.

“A likely place, isn’t it?” returned Mr Enfield. “But I happen to have noticed his address; he lives in some square or other.”

“And you never asked about the place with the door?”

“No, sir,” was the reply. “But I have studied the place for myself. It seems scarcely a house. There is no other door, and nobody goes in or out of that one but, once in a great while, the gentleman of my adventure. The buildings are so packed together about the court, that it’s hard to say where one ends and another begins.”

“There’s one point I want to ask,” said Mr Utterson. “I want to ask the name of that man who walked over the child.”

“I can’t see what harm it would do,” said Mr Enfield. “It was a man of the name of Hyde.”

“Hm,” said Mr Utterson. “What sort of a man is he to see?”

“He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn’t specify the point. He’s an extraordinary looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way.”

“You are sure he used a key?” Mr Utterson inquired.

“My dear sir...” began Enfield.

“Yes, I know,” said Utterson; “I know it must seem strange. The fact is, if I do not ask you the name of the other party, it is because I know it already. You see, Richard, your tale has gone home. If you have been inexact in any point you had better correct it.”

“I have been pedantically exact,” returned the other. “The fellow had a key; and what’s more, he has it still. I saw him use it not a week ago.”

Mr Utterson sighed deeply but said never a word; and the young man presently resumed. “I am ashamed of my long tongue. Let us make a bargain never to refer to this again.”

“With all my heart,” said the lawyer. “I shake hands on that, Richard.”