



Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

by Robert Louis Stevenson



3. Dr Jekyll was quite at ease

A fortnight later the doctor gave one of his pleasant dinners to some five or six old cronies, all intelligent, reputable men and all judges of good wine; and Mr Utterson so contrived that he remained behind after the others had departed. This was no new arrangement, but a thing that had befallen many scores of times. Where Utterson was liked, he was liked well. Hosts loved to detain the lawyer; they liked to sit a while in his unobtrusive company and to this rule, Dr Jekyll was no exception. As he now sat on the opposite side of the fire, a large, well-made, smooth-faced man of fifty, with every mark of kindness, you could see by his looks that he cherished for Mr Utterson a sincere and warm affection.

"I have been wanting to speak to you, Jekyll," began the latter. "You know that will of yours?"

A close observer might have gathered that the topic was distasteful; but the doctor carried it off gaily. "My poor Utterson," said he, "I never saw a man so distressed as you were by my will; unless it were that hide-bound pedant, Lanyon, at what he called my scientific heresies. O, I know he's an excellent fellow, and I always mean to see more of him; but an ignorant, blatant pedant. I was never more disappointed in any man than Lanyon."

"You know I never approved of it," pursued Utterson, ruthlessly disregarding the fresh topic.

"My will? Yes, certainly, I know that," said the doctor, a trifle sharply. "You have told me so."

"Well, I tell you so again," continued the lawyer. "I have been learning something of young Hyde."

The large handsome face of Dr Jekyll grew pale to the very lips, and there came a blackness about his eyes. "I do not care to hear more," said he. "This is a matter I thought we had agreed to drop."

"What I heard was abominable," said Utterson.

"You do not understand my position," returned the doctor, with a certain incoherency of manner. "I am painfully situated, Utterson; my position is a very strange one. It is one of those affairs that cannot be mended by talking."

"Jekyll," said Utterson, "you know me: I am a man to be trusted. Make a clean breast of this in confidence; and I make no doubt I can get you out of it."

"This is very good of you, Utterson" said the doctor. "I believe you fully; I would trust you before any man alive, but indeed it isn't what you fancy; it is not as bad as

that; and just to put your good heart at rest, I will tell you one thing: the moment I choose, I can be rid of Mr Hyde. I give you my hand upon that. This is a private matter, and I beg of you to let it sleep.”

Uttersson reflected a little, looking in the fire. “I have no doubt you are perfectly right,” he said at last, getting to his feet.

“Since we have touched upon this business for the last time I hope,” continued the doctor, “there is one point I should like you to understand. I have really a very great interest in poor Hyde. I know you have seen him; he told me so; and I fear he was rude. If I am taken away I wish you to promise me that you will bear with him and get his rights for him. It would be a weight off my mind if you would promise.”

“I can’t pretend that I shall ever like him,” said the lawyer.

“I don’t ask that,” pleaded Jekyll, “I only ask for justice; I only ask you to help him for my sake, when I am no longer here.”

Uttersson heaved an irrepressible sigh. “I promise.”