



Strange case of

# Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

by Robert Louis Stevenson



## 9. Dr Lanyon's narrative

On the ninth of January I received by the evening delivery a registered envelope, addressed in the hand of my colleague and old school companion, Henry Jekyll. I was a good deal surprised by this; for we were by no means in the habit of correspondence; I had seen the man, dined with him, indeed, the night before. This is how the letter ran:

*“Dear Lanyon. You are one of my oldest friends; and although we may have differed at times on scientific questions, I cannot remember any break in our affection. There was never a day when, if you had said to me, ‘Jekyll, my life, my honour, my reason, depend upon you,’ I would not have sacrificed my left hand to help you. Lanyon my life, my honour, my reason, are all at your mercy; if you fail me tonight, I am lost. You might suppose, after this preface, that I am going to ask you for something dishonourable to grant. Judge for yourself.*

*“I want you to postpone all other engagements for tonight; and with this letter in your hand for consultation, drive straight to my house. Poole, my butler, has his orders; you will find him waiting your arrival with a locksmith. The door of my cabinet is then to be forced: and you are to go in alone; to open the glazed press (letter E) on the left hand, breaking the lock if it be shut; and to draw out, with*

*all its contents as they stand, the fourth drawer from the top. You may know the right drawer by its contents: some powders, a phial and a paper book. This drawer I beg of you to carry back with you to Cavendish Square exactly as it stands.*

*That is the first part of the service: now for the second. An hour when your servants are in bed is to be preferred for what will then remain to do. At midnight I have to ask you to be alone in your consulting room, to admit with your own hand into the house a man who will present himself in my name, and to place in his hands the drawer that you will have brought with you from my cabinet. Then you will have played your part and earned my gratitude completely.*

*If you insist upon an explanation, you will have understood that these arrangements are of capital importance; and that by the neglect of one of them, fantastic as they must appear, you might have charged your conscience with my death or the shipwreck of my reason.*

*Confident as I am that you will not trifle with this appeal, my heart sinks and my hand trembles at the bare thought of such a possibility. Think of me at this hour, in a strange place, labouring under a blackness of distress that no fancy can exaggerate, and yet well aware that, if you will but punctually serve me, my troubles will*



*roll away like a story that is told. Serve me, my dear Lanyon and save*

*Your friend, HJ*

*PS - I had already sealed this up when a fresh terror struck upon my soul. It is possible that the post-office may fail me, and this letter not come into your hands until tomorrow morning. In that case do my errand when it shall be most convenient for you in the course of the day; and once more expect my messenger at midnight. It may then already be too late; and if that night passes without event, you will know that you have seen the last of Henry Jekyll."*

Upon the reading of this letter, I made sure my colleague was insane; but till that was proved beyond the possibility of doubt, I felt bound to do as he requested.

The less I understood of this farrago, the less I was in a position to judge of its importance; and an appeal so worded could not be set aside without a grave responsibility.

I drove straight to Jekyll's house. The butler was awaiting my arrival. The tradesmen came while we were speaking and we moved in a body to the old surgical theatre, from which Jekyll's private cabinet is entered. The door was very strong, the lock excellent; after two hour's work, the door stood open. The press marked E was unlocked; I took out the drawer and returned with it to Cavendish Square.

Here I proceeded to examine its contents. The powders were neatly enough made up, but not with the nicety of the dispensing chemist; so that it was plain they were of Jekyll's private manufacture: and when I opened one of the wrappers I found what seemed to me a simple crystalline salt of a white colour.

The phial, to which I next turned my attention, might have been about half full of a blood-red liquor, which was highly pungent to the sense of smell and seemed to me to contain phosphorus and some volatile ether. At the other ingredients I could make no guess.

The book was an ordinary version book and contained little but a series of dates. These covered a period of many years, but I observed that the entries ceased nearly a year ago and quite abruptly. Here and there a brief remark, usually no more than a single word: "*double*" occurring perhaps six times in a total of several hundred entries; and once very early in the list and followed by several marks of exclamation, "*total failure!!!*"

All this, though it whetted my curiosity, told me little that was definite. The record of a series of experiments that had led (like too many of Jekyll's investigations) to no end of practical usefulness. How could the presence of these articles in my house affect either the honour, the sanity, or the life of my flighty colleague? If his messenger could go to one place, why could he not go to another? And why was this gentleman to be received by me in secret?



The more I reflected the more convinced I grew that I was dealing with a case of cerebral disease. I dismissed my servants to bed and loaded an old revolver, that I might be found in some posture of self-defence.

Twelve o'clock had scarce rung out over London, ere the knocker sounded very gently on the door. I found a small man crouching against the pillars of the portico.

"Are you come from Dr Jekyll?" I asked. He told me "yes" by a constrained gesture; and when I had bidden him enter, he did with a searching backward glance into the darkness of the square. As I followed him into the consulting room, I kept my hand ready on my weapon. Here, at last, I had a chance of clearly seeing him. I had never set eyes on him before, so much was certain. I was struck with the shocking expression of his face, with his remarkable combination of great muscular activity and great apparent debility of constitution, and - last but not least - with the odd, subjective disturbance caused by his neighbourhood.

This person was dressed in a fashion that would have made an ordinary person laughable; his clothes, although of rich and sober fabric, were enormously too large for him in every measurement, the trousers hanging on his legs and rolled up to keep them from the ground and the waist of the coat below his haunches.

This ludicrous accoutrement was far from moving me to laughter. Rather,

as there was something abnormal and misbegotten in the very essence of the creature that now faced me - something seizing, surprising and revolting - this fresh disparity seemed to fit in and reinforce it.

My visitor was on fire with sombre excitement. "Have you got it?" he cried. "Have you got it?" And so lively was his impatience that he even laid his hand upon my arm conscious at his touch of a certain icy pang along my blood.

"Come, sir," said I. "You forget that I have not yet the pleasure of your acquaintance. Be seated, if you please."

"I beg your pardon, Dr Lanyon," he replied civilly enough. "What you say is very well founded; and my impatience has shown its heels to my politeness. I come here at the instance of your colleague, Dr Henry Jekyll, on a piece of business of some moment; and I understood..."

He paused and put his hand to his throat, and I could see, in spite of his collected manner, that he was wrestling against the approaches of the hysteria. "I understood, a drawer..."

But here I took pity on my visitor's suspense. "There it is, sir," said I, pointing to the drawer.

He sprang to it, paused and laid his hand upon his heart: I could hear his teeth grate with the convulsive action of his jaws; his face was so ghastly to see that I grew alarmed both for his life and reason.



“Compose yourself,” said I.

He turned a dreadful smile to me. At sight of the contents, he uttered one loud sob of such immense relief that I sat petrified.

“Have you a graduated glass?” he asked.

I rose from my place with something of an effort and gave him what he asked.

He thanked me with a smiling nod, measured out a few minims of the red tincture and added one of the powders. The mixture, which was at first of a reddish hue, began, in proportion as the crystals melted, to brighten in colour, to effervesce audibly, and to throw off small fumes of vapour. Suddenly and at the same moment, the ebullition ceased and the compound changed to a dark purple, which faded again to a watery green. My visitor, who had watched these metamorphoses with a keen eye, smiled, set down the glass upon the table, and then turned and looked upon me with an air of scrutiny.

“And now,” said he, “to settle what remains. Will you suffer me to take this glass in my hand and to go forth from your house without further parley? Or has the greed of curiosity too much command of you? You shall be left as you were before, neither richer nor wiser, unless the sense of service rendered to a man in mortal distress may be counted as a kind of riches of the soul. Or, if prefer to choose, a new province of knowledge and new avenues to fame and power shall be laid open to you.”

“Sir,” said I, affecting a coolness that I was far from truly possessing, “you speak enigmas but I have gone too far in the way of inexplicable services to pause before I see the end.”

“It is well,” replied my visitor. “Lanyon, you remember your vows: what follows is under the seal of our profession. And now, you who have so long been bound to the most narrow and material views, you who have denied the virtue of transcendental medicine, you who have derided your superiors - behold!”

He put the glass to his lips and drank at one gulp. A cry followed; he reeled, staggered, clutched at the table and held on, staring with injected eyes, gasping with open mouth; and as I looked there came, I thought, a change - he seemed to swell - his face became suddenly black and the features seemed to melt and alter - and the next moment, I had sprung to my feet and leaped back against the wall, my arms raised to shield me from that prodigy, my mind submerged in terror.

“O God!” I screamed again and again; for there before my eyes - pale and shaken, and groping before him with his hands, like a man restored from death - stood Henry Jekyll!

What he told me in the next hour, I cannot bring my mind to set on paper. I saw what I saw, I heard what I heard, and my soul sickened at it; and yet now when that sight has faded from my eyes, I ask myself if I believe it, and I cannot answer.



My life is shaken to its roots; sleep has left me; the deadliest terror sits by me at all hours of the day and night; and I feel that my days are numbered, and that I must die; and yet I shall die incredulous.

I will say but one thing, Utterson. The creature who crept into my house that night was, on Jekyll's own confession, known by the name of Hyde and hunted for in every corner of the land as the murderer of Carew.

HASTIE LANYON