



Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

by Robert Louis Stevenson



8. The last night

Mr Utterson was sitting by his fireside one evening after dinner, when he was surprised to receive a visit from Poole.

“Bless me, Poole, what brings you here?” he cried; “is the doctor ill?”

“Mr Utterson,” said the man, “there is something wrong.”

“Take a seat and tell me plainly what you want.”

“You know the doctor’s ways, sir,” replied Poole, “and how he shuts himself up. Well, he’s shut up again in the cabinet; and I don’t like it, sir. I’m afraid.”

“Now, my good man,” said the lawyer, “be explicit. What are you afraid of?”

“I’ve been afraid for about a week and I can bear it no more.”

The man’s appearance amply bore out his words; his manner was altered for the worse; and except for the moment when he had first announced his terror, he had not once looked the lawyer in the face.

“I think there’s been foul play,” said Poole, hoarsely.

“Foul play!” cried the lawyer, a good deal frightened.

“What foul play! What does the man mean?”

“I daren’t say, sir,” was the answer; “but will you come along with me and see for yourself?”

Mr Utterson’s only answer was to rise and get his hat and greatcoat; but he observed with wonder the greatness of the relief that appeared upon the butler’s face.

It was a wild, cold, seasonable night of March, with a pale moon, lying on her back as though the wind had tilted her. The wind made talking difficult, it seemed to have swept the streets unusually bare of passengers. Mr Utterson thought he had never seen that part of London so deserted. There was borne upon his mind a crushing anticipation of calamity.

“Well, sir,” Poole said, “here we are, and God grant there be nothing wrong.”

Thereupon the servant knocked in a very guarded manner; the door was opened on the chain.

“It’s all right,” said Poole. “Open the door.”

The hall, when they entered it, was brightly lighted up; the fire was built high; and about the hearth the whole of the servants stood huddled together like a flock of sheep.

At the sight of Mr Utterson, the housemaid broke into hysterical whimpering; and the cook, crying out "Bless God! It's Mr Utterson!" ran forward as if to take him in her arms.

"What? Are you all here?" said the lawyer peevishly. "Very irregular; your master would be far from pleased."

"They're all afraid," said Poole.

And then he begged Mr Utterson to follow him, and led the way to the back garden. "Now, sir," said he, "you come as gently as you can. I want you to hear, and I don't want you to be heard. And see here, sir, if by any chance he was to ask you in, don't go."

Mr Utterson's nerves gave a jerk that nearly threw him from his balance; but he recollected his courage and followed the butler into the laboratory building to the foot of the stair. Here Poole motioned him to stand on one side and listen; while he himself mounted the steps and knocked with a somewhat uncertain hand on the red baize of the cabinet door.

"Mr Utterson, sir, asking to see you," he called.

A voice answered from within: "Tell him I cannot see anyone," it said complainingly.

"Thank you, sir," said Poole, with a note of something like triumph in his voice and he led Mr Utterson back across the yard and into the kitchen.

"Sir," he said, looking Mr Utterson in the eyes, "was that my master's voice?"

"It seems much changed," replied the lawyer, very pale.

"Changed? I think so," said the butler. "Have I been twenty years in this man's house, to be deceived about his voice? No, sir; master's made away with; he was made away with eight days ago, when we heard him cry out upon the name of God; and who's in there instead of him, and why it stays there, is a thing that cries to Heaven, Mr Utterson!"

"This is a very strange tale, Poole," said Mr Utterson. "Supposing Dr Jekyll to have been, well, murdered what could induce the murderer to stay? That won't hold water; it doesn't commend itself to reason."

"Well, Mr Utterson, you are a hard man to satisfy, but I'll do it," said Poole. "All this last week him, or it, whatever it is that lives in that cabinet, has been crying night and day for some sort of medicine and cannot get it to his mind. It was sometimes the master's way to write his orders on a sheet of paper and throw it on the stair. We've had nothing else this week back; nothing but papers, and a closed door, and the very meals left there to be smuggled in when nobody was looking. Every day there have been orders and complaints, and I have been sent flying to all the wholesale chemists in town. Every time I brought the stuff back, there would be another paper telling me to return it, because it was not pure, and another

order to a different firm. This drug is wanted bitter bad, sir, whatever for."

"Have you any of these papers?" asked Mr Utterson.

Poole felt in his pocket and handed out a crumpled note, which the lawyer carefully examined. Its contents ran thus: *"Dr Jekyll presents his compliments to Messrs Maw. He assures them that their last sample is impure and quite useless for his present purpose. Dr J once purchased a somewhat large quantity from Messrs M. He now begs them to search with most sedulous care, and should any of the same quality be left, forward it to him at once. Expense is no consideration. The importance of this to Dr J can hardly be exaggerated."*

So far the letter had run composedly enough, but here with a sudden splutter of the pen, the writer's emotion had broken loose. *"For God's sake,"* he added, *"find me some of the old."*

"This is a strange note," said Mr Utterson. "This is unquestionably the doctor's hand?"

"I thought it looked like it," said the servant rather sulkily; and then, with another voice, "But what matters hand of write?" he said. "I've seen him!"

"Seen him?" repeated Mr Utterson. "Well?"

"I came suddenly into the theatre from the garden. It seems he had slipped out

to look for this drug or whatever it is; for the cabinet door was open, and there he was at the far end of the room digging among the crates. He looked up when I came in, gave a kind of cry, and whipped upstairs into the cabinet. It was but for one minute that I saw him, but the hair stood upon my head like quills. Sir, if that was my master, why had he a mask upon his face? If it was my master, why did he cry out like a rat, and run from me?"

"These are all very strange circumstances," said Mr Utterson, "but I think I begin to see daylight. Your master, Poole, is plainly seized with one of those maladies that both torture and deform the sufferer; hence the alteration of his voice, the mask, the avoidance of his friends; his eagerness to find this drug, by means of which the poor soul retains some hope of ultimate recovery."

"Sir," said the butler, turning to a sort of mottled pallor, "that thing was not my master, and there's the truth. My master is a tall, fine build of a man, and this was more of a dwarf. Do you think I do not know my master after twenty years? No, sir, that thing in the mask was never Dr Jekyll. God knows what it was, but it was never Dr Jekyll; and it is my belief that there was murder done."

"Poole," replied the lawyer, "if you say that, it will become my duty to make certain. Much as I desire to spare your master's feelings, much as I am puzzled by this note which seems to prove him to be still alive, I shall consider it my duty to break in that door."

"Ah, Mr Utterson, that's talking!" cried the butler.

"And now," resumed Utterson: "Who is going to do it?"

"Why, you and me, sir. There is an axe in the theatre and you might take the kitchen poker for yourself."

The lawyer took that weighty instrument into his hand, and balanced it. "You and I are about to place ourselves in a position of some peril," he said. "It is well that we should be frank. This masked figure that you saw, did you recognise it?"

"If you mean, was it Mr Hyde?" came the answer. "Why yes, I think it was! It was the same bigness; and it had the same quick, light way with it; and then who else could have got in by the laboratory door? At the time of the murder he had still the key with him. There was something queer about that gentleman - something that gave a man a turn. You felt in your marrow kind of cold and thin."

"I felt something of what you describe," said Mr Utterson.

"Well, when that masked thing like a monkey jumped from among the chemicals and whipped into the cabinet, it went down my spine like ice," said Poole. "I give you my bible-word it was Mr Hyde!"

"Ay," said the lawyer. "My fears incline to the same point. Evil, I fear was sure to come of that connection. I believe poor Harry is killed; and I believe his murderer

is still lurking in his victim's room. Well, let our name be vengeance. Call Bradshaw."

The footman came at the summons, very white and nervous.

"Put yourself together, Bradshaw," said the lawyer. "Poole, here, and I are going to force our way into the cabinet. If all is well, my shoulders are broad enough to bear the blame. Meanwhile, lest anything should really be amiss, or any malefactor seek to escape by the back, you and the boy must go round the corner with a pair of good sticks and take your post at the laboratory door. We give you ten minutes, to get to your stations. And now, Poole, let us get to ours." And taking the poker under his arm, led the way into the yard and to the shelter of the theatre, where they sat down silently to wait.

The stillness was only broken by the sounds of a footfall moving to and fro along the cabinet floor.

"It will walk all day, sir," whispered Poole; "and the better part of the night. Only when a new sample comes from the chemist, there's a bit of a break. Mr Utterson, tell me, is that the doctor's foot?"

The steps fell lightly and oddly, with a certain swing, different indeed from the heavy creaking tread of Henry Jekyll.

Now the ten minutes drew to an end. Poole disinterred the axe from under a stack of packing straw; the candle was set upon the nearest table to light them

to the attack; and they drew near with bated breath to where that foot was still going up and down, up and down, in the quiet of the night.

“Jekyll,” cried Utterson, with a loud voice, “I demand to see you.” He paused a moment, but there came no reply. “I give you fair warning, our suspicions are aroused, and I must and shall see you,” he resumed; “if not by fair means, then by foul - if not of your consent, then by brute force!”

“Utterson,” said the voice, “for God’s sake, have mercy!”

“Ah, that’s not Jekyll’s voice, it’s Hyde’s!” cried Utterson. “Down with the door, Poole!”

Poole swung the axe over his shoulder; the blow shook the building, and the red baize door leaped against the lock and hinges. A dismal screech, as of mere animal terror, rang from the cabinet. Up went the axe again, and again the panels crashed and the frame bounded; four times the blow fell; but the wood was tough and the fittings were of excellent workmanship. It was not until the fifth, that the lock burst and the wreck of the door fell inwards on the carpet.

The besiegers stood back a little and peered in. Right in the middle there lay the body of a man sorely contorted and still twitching. They drew near on tiptoe, turned it on its back and beheld the face of Edward Hyde. He was dressed in clothes far too large for him, clothes of the

doctor’s bigness; the cords of his face still moved with a semblance of life, but life was quite gone: and by the crushed phial in the hand and the strong smell of kernels that hung upon the air, Utterson knew that he was looking on the body of a self-destroyer.

“We have come too late,” he said sternly, “whether to save or punish. Hyde is gone to his account; and it only remains for us to find the body of your master.”

The far greater proportion of the building was occupied by the theatre. There were besides a few dark closets and a spacious cellar. All these they now thoroughly examined. Each was empty and had stood long unopened. No where was there any trace of Henry Jekyll dead or alive.

“He may have fled,” said Utterson, and he turned to examine the door in the by-street. It was locked; and lying near by on the flags, they found the key, already stained with rust.

“It is broken, sir, much as if a man had stamped on it.”

The two men looked at each other with a scare. They mounted the stair in silence, and still with an occasional awestruck glance at the dead body, proceeded more thoroughly to examine the contents of the cabinet. At one table, there were traces of white salt laid on glass saucers, as though for an experiment in which the unhappy man had been prevented.

"That is the same drug that I was always bringing him," said Poole.

The searchers came to the cheval-glass.

"This glass has seen some strange things, sir," whispered Poole.

"And surely none stranger than itself," echoed the lawyer in the same tones. "For what did Jekyll want with it?" he said.

Next they turned to the business table. On the desk, among the neat array of papers, a large envelope was uppermost, and bore, in the doctor's hand, the name of Mr Utterson. The lawyer unsealed it, and several enclosures fell to the floor.

The first was a will, drawn in the same eccentric terms as the one which he had returned six months before, to serve as a testament in case of death and as a deed of gift in case of disappearance; but in place of the name of Edward Hyde, the lawyer, with indescribable amazement read the name of Gabriel John Utterson. He looked at Poole, and then back at the paper, and last of all at the dead malefactor stretched upon the carpet.

"My head goes round," he said. "He has been all these days in possession; he had no cause to like me; he must have raged to see himself displaced; and he has not destroyed this document."

He caught up the next paper; a brief note in the doctor's hand and dated at the top. "O Poole!" the lawyer cried, "he was alive and here this day. He cannot have been

disposed of in so short a space; he must be still alive, he must have fled!"

He brought the paper to his eyes and read: "*My dear Utterson. When this shall fall into your hands, I shall have disappeared, under what circumstances I have not the penetration to foresee, but my instinct and all the circumstances of my nameless situation tell me that the end is sure and must be early. Go then, and read the narrative which Lanyon warned me he was to place in your hands. If you care to hear more, turn to the confession of your unworthy and unhappy friend, HENRY JEKYLL.*"

"There was a third enclosure?" asked Utterson.

"Here, sir," said Poole, and gave into his hands a considerable packet sealed in several places.

The lawyer put it in his pocket. "I would say nothing of this paper. If your master has fled or is dead, we may at least save his credit. It is now ten; I must go home and read these documents in quiet; but I shall be back before midnight, when we shall send for the police."

They went out, locking the door of the theatre behind them; and Utterson, once more leaving the servants gathered about the fire in the hall, trudged back to his office to read the two narratives in which this mystery was now to be explained.