

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Characters:

1. Dr. Jekyll
2. Mr. Hyde
3. Mr. Utterson
4. Dr. Lanyon



That evening, Mr Utterson came home to his bachelor house in sombre spirits and sat down to dinner without relish. It was his custom every Sunday to sit close by the fire when this meal was over, with a volume of some dry divinity on his reading-desk, until the clock of the neighbouring church rang out the hour of twelve, when he would go soberly and gratefully to bed.



On this night, however, as soon as the cloth was taken away, he took up a candle and went into his business-room. There he opened his safe and took from the most private part of it a document endorsed on the envelope as Dr Jekyll's will, and sat down with a clouded brow to study its contents.

The will was holograph for Mr Utterson, though he took charge of it now that it was made, he had refused to lend the least assistance in the making of it; it provided not only that, in case of the decease of Henry Jekyll, M.D., D.C.L., L.L.D., F.R.S., etc., all his possessions were to pass into the hands of his "friend and benefactor Edward Hyde", but that in case of Dr Jekyll's "disappearance or unexplained absence for any period exceeding three calendar months", Edward Hyde should step into the said Henry Jekyll's shoes without further delay and free from any burden or obligation, beyond the payment of a few small sums to the members of the doctor's household.





This document had long been the lawyer's eyesore. It offended him both as a lawyer and as a lover of the sane and customary sides Of life, to whom the fanciful was the immodest. It was the part Of Mr Utterson's as a lawyer to keep it safe, even if he did not like what it said. Know that he knew what the wicked man Mr Hyde was, he felt sure this paper would bring trouble someday. And hitherto it was his ignorance of Mr Hyde that had swelled his indignation; now, by a sudden turn, it was his knowledge.



It was already bad enough when the name was but a name of which he could learn no more. It was worse when it began to be clothed upon with detestable attributes; and out of the shifting, insubstantial mists that had so long baffled his eye, there leaped up the sudden, definite presentment of a fiend. thought it was madness," he said, as he replaced the obnoxious paper in the safe, "and now I begin to fear it is disgrace.

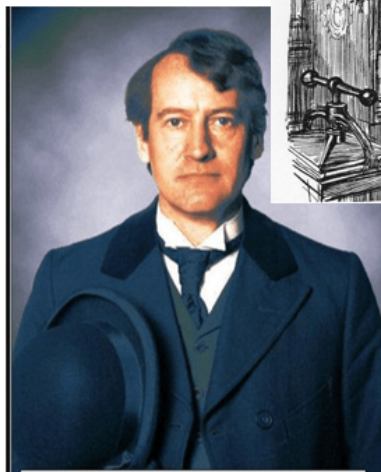
With that he blew out his candle, put on a great-coat and set forth in the direction of Cavendish Square, that citadel of medicine, where his friend, the great Dr Lanyon, had his house and received his crowding patients.

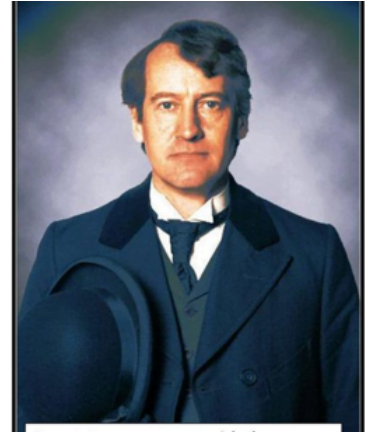
"If anyone knows Mr. Hyde, it will be Lanyon," he had thought.

The solemn butler knew and welcomed him; he was subjected to no stage of delay, but ushered direct from the door to the dining-room where Dr Lanyon sat alone over his coffee.



This was a hearty, healthy, dapper, red-faced gentleman, with a shock of hair prematurely white, and a boisterous and decided manner. At sight of Mr Utterson, he sprang up from his chair and welcomed him with both hands. The geniality, as was the way of the man, was somewhat theatrical to the eye; but it reposed on genuine feeling. For these two were old friends, old mates both at school and college, both thorough respecters of themselves and Of each other, and, what does not always follow, men who thoroughly enjoyed each other's company.



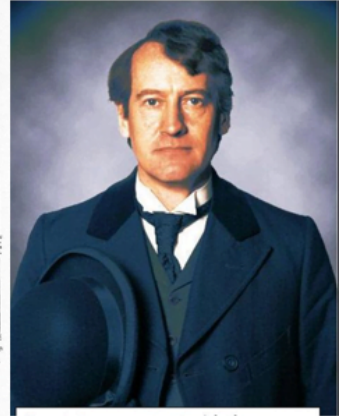


After a little rambling talk, the lawyer led up to the subject which so disagreeably pre Occupied his mind. "I suppose, Lanyon," said he "you and I must be the two oldest friends that Henry Jekyll has?"

"I wish the friends were younger," chuckled Dr Lanyon, "but I suppose we are. And what of that? I see little of him now."



"Indeed?" said Utterson, "I thought you had a bond of common interest." had," was the reply, "but it is more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind; and though of course I continue to take an interest in him for old time's sake.



This little spirit of temper was somewhat of a relief to Mr Utterson, "They have only differed on some point of science," he thought; and being a man of no scientific passions (except in the matter of conveyancing), he even added, "It is nothing worse than that!" He gave his friend a few seconds to recover his composure and then approached the question he had come to put, "Did you ever come across a protégé of his—one Hyde?" he asked.



"Hyde?" repeated Lanyon "no. Never heard of him. Since my time."

That was the amount of information that the lawyer carried back with him to the great, dark bed on which he tossed to and fro until the small hours of the morning began to grow large. It was a night of little ease to his toiling mind, toiling in mere darkness and besieged by questions.