

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

The Strange Case of
Dr Jekyll
and
Mr Hyde

Retold by
Rosemary Border



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CONTENTS

STORY INTRODUCTION	i
1 The mysterious door	1
2 In search of Mr Hyde	7
3 The Carew murder	14
4 Doctor Jekyll receives a letter	19
5 The death of a friend	26
6 The face at the window	32
7 The last night	36
8 Doctor Lanyon's letter	49
9 Doctor Jekyll's confession	55
GLOSSARY	72
ACTIVITIES: Before Reading	76
ACTIVITIES: While Reading	77
ACTIVITIES: After Reading	80
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	84
ABOUT THE BOOKWORMS LIBRARY	85



❧ 1 ❧

The mysterious door

Mr Utterson the lawyer was a quiet, serious man. He was shy with strangers and afraid of showing his feelings. Among friends, however, his eyes shone with kindness and goodness. And, although this goodness never found its way into his conversation, it showed itself in his way of life. He did not allow himself many enjoyable things in life. He ate and drank simply and, although he enjoyed the theatre, he had not been to a play for twenty years. However, he was gentler towards other men's weaknesses, and was always ready to help rather than blame them. As a lawyer, he was often the last good person that evil-doers met on their way to prison, or worse. These people often carried with them memories of his politeness and fairness.

Mr Utterson's best friend was a distant cousin

called Richard Enfield, who was well known as a fun-loving 'man about town'. Nobody could understand why they were friends, as they were different from each other in every way. They often took long walks together, however, marching through the streets of London in companionable silence.

One of these walks used to take them down a narrow side-street in a busy part of London. It was a clean, busy, friendly street with bright little shops and shiny door-knockers. Near the end of this street, however, stood a dark, mysterious, windowless building. The door had neither bell nor knocker and looked dusty and uncared for. Dirty children played fearlessly on the doorstep, and nobody ever opened the door to drive them away.

One day, as Mr Enfield and his friend passed the building, Mr Enfield pointed to it.

'Have you ever noticed that place?' he asked. 'It reminds me of a very strange story.'

'Really?' said Mr Utterson. 'Tell me.'

'Well,' began Enfield, 'I was coming home about three o'clock on a black winter morning, when suddenly I saw two people. The first was a short man who was walking along the street, and the second was a little girl who was running as fast as she could. Well, the two bumped into each other and the child fell down. Then a terrible thing happened. The man calmly walked all over the child's body with his heavy boots, and left her screaming on

the ground. It was an inhuman thing to do. I ran after the man, caught him and fetched him back. There was already a small crowd around the screaming child. The man was perfectly cool, but he gave me a very evil look, which made me feel sick in my stomach. The child's family then arrived, and also a doctor. The child had been sent to fetch the doctor for a sick neighbour, and was on her way home again.

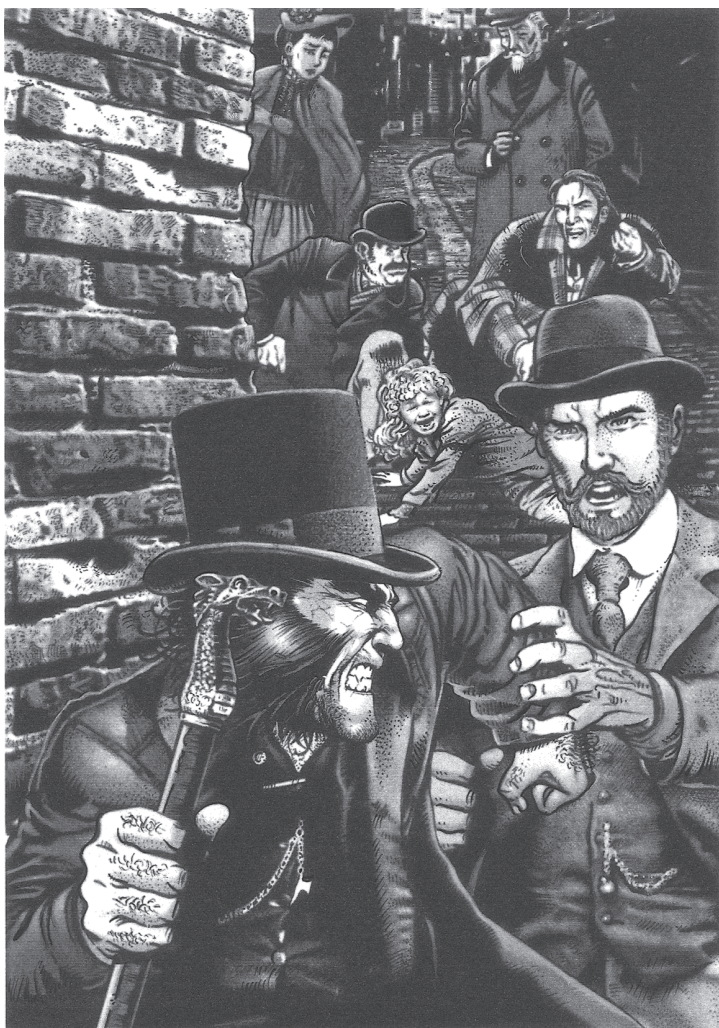
“The child is more frightened than hurt,” said the doctor – and that, you would think, was the end of the story. But, you see, I had taken a violent dislike to the short man. So had the child's family – that was only natural. But the doctor, who seemed a quiet, kindly man, was also looking at our prisoner with murder in his eyes.

‘The doctor and I understood each other perfectly. Together we shouted at the man, and told him we would tell this story all over London so that his name would be hated.

‘He looked back at us with a proud, black look. “Name your price,” he said.

‘We made him agree to a hundred pounds for the child's family. With another black look, the man led us to that door over there. He took out a key and let himself into the building. Presently he came out and handed us ten pounds in gold and a cheque for ninety pounds from Coutts's Bank. The name on the cheque was a well-known one.

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde



'I ran after the man, caught him and fetched him back.'

“See here,” said the doctor doubtfully, “it isn’t usual for a man to walk into an empty house at four in the morning and come out with another man’s cheque for nearly a hundred pounds.”

“Don’t worry,” said the man with an ugly look, “I’ll stay with you until the banks open, and change the cheque myself.”

‘So we all went off, the doctor and the prisoner and myself, and spent the rest of the night at my house. In the morning we went together to the bank. Sure enough, the cheque was good, and the money was passed to the child’s family.’

‘Well, well,’ said Mr Utterson.

‘Yes,’ said Enfield, ‘it’s a strange story. My prisoner was clearly a hard, cruel man. But the man whose name was on the cheque was well known all over London for his kind and generous acts. Why would a man like that give his cheque to a criminal?’

‘And you don’t know if the writer of the cheque lives in that building?’ asked Mr Utterson.

‘I don’t like to ask,’ said his friend. ‘In my experience, it’s not a good idea to ask too many questions, in case the answers are ugly, violent ones. But I’ve studied the place a little. It doesn’t seem like a house. There’s no other door, and the only person who uses that door is the man I’ve just described to you. There are three windows on the side of the house, which look down onto a small courtyard.’

The windows are shut, but they're always clean. There's a chimney too, which is usually smoking. So somebody must live there.'

The two men continued on their walk. Then Utterson broke the silence.

'Enfield,' he said, 'you're right about not asking too many questions. However, I want to ask the name of the man who walked over the child.'

'Very well,' said Enfield. 'He told us his name was Hyde.'

'What does he look like?'

'He's not easy to describe, although I remember him perfectly. He's a strange-looking man. He's short, but has a strong, heavy body. There's something wrong with his appearance, something ugly and displeasing – no, something hateful. I disliked him at once.'

Mr Utterson thought deeply. 'Are you sure he used a key?' he asked.

'What do you mean?' asked Enfield in surprise.

'I know it must seem strange,' said his friend. 'But you see, if I don't ask you the name on the cheque, it's because I know it already . . .'

'Well, why didn't you tell me?' said his friend rather crossly. 'Anyway, he did have a key, and he still has it. I saw him use it only a week ago.'

Mr Utterson looked at him thoughtfully, but said nothing more.