



0. STORY of the DOOR - Story Preface

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Charles Raymond Macauley created this illustration for the 1904 edition of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It depicts the aftermath of Hyde's encounter with a small child on his way to enter a strange-looking door.

Robert Louis Stevenson tells much of his Jekyll/Hyde story through the actions of a character called Gabriel Utterson. Well-suited for this role, Utterson is a friend of Dr. Jekyll and, as a lawyer, has represented Jekyll in the past.

One Sunday afternoon, while Utterson and his cousin are strolling through London, they pass by a house with an interesting, apparently neglected door. Someone, unknown to Utterson, has a key to that door. As it happens, that someone has a key to many other things, too.

My name is Gabriel John Utterson. I am a lawyer by trade and I like to think that I am respected among my peers, though I know that some consider me a dry old stick.

The chief jewel of each week for me is a Sunday walk with my amiable young cousin Richard Enfield. Others have wondered at our friendship, for indeed we have little in common.

But affection, like ivy, grows with time and is strongest with those of one's own blood, or with old friends. Nothing would induce either of us to miss these Sunday walks.

It was on one of these rambles that we chanced upon a side street in a busy quarter of London. The street drove a thriving trade on weekends. Even on Sunday, it shone out in contrast to its dingy neighborhood, like a fire in a forest. With its freshly painted shutters, well-polished brass, and air of cleanliness and gaiety, it instantly caught and pleased the eye of the passerby.

Two doors from one corner, the line was broken by the entrance to a courtyard; and just at that point a sinister block of building thrust out into the street. It was two storeys high, with no window to be seen, and nothing but a badly neglected door on the lower floor. It bore the marks of prolonged neglect.

My cousin lifted up his cane and pointed.

"Did you ever notice that door?" he asked. "It is connected in my mind with a very odd story."

"It happened like this," Richard began. "I was on my way home at about three o'clock on a black winter morning, and my way lay through a part of town where there was nothing to be seen but lamps - street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church. Suddenly, I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumping along at a good pace, the other a girl of maybe eight or ten, running hard down a cross street.

"Well, these two ran into one another at the corner, but then came the horrible part. The man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It was awful to see."

"I can imagine," I said.

"I took to my heels," my cousin continued, "collared the gentleman, and brought him back. He was perfectly cool and made no resistance, but he gave me a look so ugly that it brought me out in an

icy sweat.

"Quite a group had gathered round the child by this time - her own family, as it turned out and, pretty soon, the doctor for whom she had been sent. I had taken a loathing to this gentleman at first sight, so had the child's family, which was only natural after what he'd done.

"I never saw such hatred on a circle of faces. And there was one man in the middle, with a kind of black, sneering coolness - frightened, too - but carrying it off, sir, really like Satan. 'Now let's avoid a scene,' the man said. 'Name your price.' The family demanded a hundred pounds, which he agreed to pay. The next thing was to get the money, and where do you think he took us, but to that very door.

"He whipped out a key, went in, and came back with ten pounds in gold and a Coutt's Bank check for the balance signed by someone other than himself - someone rather well known about town."

An uneasy feeling had crept over me. "Do you know the name of the man who walked over the child?"

"His name was Hyde," Richard answered. "Mr. Edward Hyde."

And now a cold chill gripped my heart. "What does he look like?"

"He's not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He looked deformed in some way, though what his deformity might have been, I cannot say. He's an extraordinary looking man, but I can't describe him. And it's not because I can't remember, I can see him at this moment."

"You say the check was not signed by him," I said. "Well then, I believe I know what name was on it, for that door leads into the house of a friend of mine."

My good cousin started at this, then shifted about with embarrassment. "I think you might have warned me," he said with a touch of sullenness. "Now I'm ashamed of my gossiping tongue. Forgive me, Gabriel. Let us make a bargain never to refer to this again."

"With all my heart," I said, and we shook hands on it.

When we parted, my mind was sorely troubled. Hitherto, I had known nothing about Edward Hyde beyond his name. I had not, till now, imagined him a monster.

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Media Stream



Edward Hyde As a Dangerous Man

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