

## A Game of Hyde and Seek

One body, two souls: such is *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. At first, it seems nearly impossible to believe Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are together as one character. Comparing their personalities, the former is decent and noble while the latter is corrupt and dangerous. Once “Henry Jekyll’s Full Statement of the Case” comes to light, readers see the true nature of their relationship with each other.

On one hand, a dim white light shines in the form of Jekyll. Growing up in a rich family with many wonderful talents, Jekyll’s future seemed secure. As a child, and even as an adult, he is a well-respected member of his community. A modest and decent person, he gets along well with just about everyone. He spends much of his time entertaining friends whom he cares for deeply and particularly “cherished for Mr. Utterson a sincere and warm affection” (897). He’s also quite intelligent, a man whose ambition causes him to pursue medicine. All the while, however, he maintains a diplomatic facade and struggles to keep his impulses in check. On the other hand, a profound evil in the form of Hyde attempts to blot out the light. According to Mr. Utterson, Mr. Hyde is a grotesque, inhuman creature whose unsettling presence instills in others an intense hatred for him. He gave “an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself... with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somewhat broken voice; all these were points against him, but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him” (895). Most terrifying of all, his very soul seems to carry the mark of the Devil. Apart, these two characters are complete opposites. It is only those times witnessed together that other characters in the novella begin to understand their dynamic.

Once “Henry Jekyll’s Full Statement of the Case” comes to light, Mr. Utterson realizes the true extent to which this monster tormented his friend. As a firsthand account of his experiences, Jekyll begins his statement with an overview of his childhood before delving deep into the machinations of his mind. Claiming his pleasures derive from the lucky circumstances of his youth, Jekyll is ashamed of his feelings and wants more than anything to eliminate them. As a man of medicine, he is willing to try anything to accomplish this goal. Of course, in his pursuits, he has a realization: “with every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth... that man is not truly one, but truly two” (920). Here, Jekyll begins to ponder the possibility of separating the two personalities entirely, leaving his parasitic pleasures behind.

At first, he is reluctant to begin experiments. All too well, he knows the dire consequences that could result from mixing chemicals together into some magical potion. Once he engages in such activities, however, he changes, both physically and mentally. He describes his new character as “natural and human... a livelier image of the spirit... more express and single than the imperfect and divided countenance [he] had been hitherto accustomed to call [his]” (921). Now, he may safely embrace his desires as Mr. Hyde without tarnishing Dr. Jekyll’s good name. His fascination with Hyde as an interchangeable persona continues to intensify as he writes, saying “Think of it— I did not even exist! Let me but escape into my laboratory door, give me but a second or two to mix and swallow the draught that I had always standing ready; and whatever he had done, Edward Hyde would pass away like the stain of breath upon a mirror; and there in his stead, quietly at home, trimming the midnight lamp in his study, a man who could afford to laugh at suspicion, would be Henry Jekyll” (923). He has a divine power beyond science, now in the realm of magic. As ecstatic as he is, however, his situation soon turns grim.

Blind to the amorality of his actions, he traps himself into a dangerous mindset where he can do anything he wants without consequence. So long as he takes the potion, he can truly be himself. One night in particular, however, Jekyll writes that “at the sight that met my eyes, my blood was changed into something exquisitely thin and icy. Yes, I had gone to bed Henry Jekyll, I had awakened Edward Hyde” (924). He has had so many chances to change his ways, yet when he realizes he has to make a choice, it is far too late.

After Carew’s death, the dynamic between Jekyll and Hyde reaches its most unstable. As he puts it, he “mauled the unresisting body, tasting delight from every blow; and it was not till weariness had begun to succeed, that I was suddenly, in the top fit of my delirium, struck through the heart by a cold thrill of terror” (925). He has reached a point he cannot come back from—murder. Ultimately, this moment becomes his downfall as the evil nature of Mr. Hyde becomes more and more aggressive. He starts to realize how much he ruined his own life and closes himself off from the world. What Jekyll fails to understand is that his experiments did not completely separate purity from impurity. His original self, now a weak, conflicted husk, is gone; the manifestation of his dark side has control.

As one entity, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde have a complex connection doomed to end in destruction. As Jekyll feels himself start to fade, he writes out his final lines, saying “God knows; I am careless; this is my true hour of death, and what is to follow concerns another than myself. Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end” (930). He has given up on his experiments and his life, relinquishing control to his desires. Could more have been done to prevent this fate? Certainly. Had Utterson known of his circumstances, perhaps Jekyll’s end could have changed. All in all,

the relationship between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a profound expression of repression and morals, one that continues to influence media today.