

THE TRAVELLING JEKYLL & HYDE SHOW©

a dark tale
by Russell Davis

based on various ideas and some of the story contained in
The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde
by Robert Louis Stevenson

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Perusal Copy

characters:

NIGEL ENTWICKLE
a narrator of tall tales

PENNY TWINKLING
an actress

CHANTAL BABOOT
a foreign actress

LADY PEGGY DILL
another actress

setting:

A travelling troupe.

time:

Some time ago.

A curtain, or banner, hangs between two poles about ten feet apart. On this banner are painted the words: "The Travelling Jekyll & Hyde Show."

Stage right is a large trunk which stands upright. It has elegant brass trim and the name "Dr. Henry Jekyll" painted on it. Also an address: "#6 South Sea Bubble Road, London, United Kingdom."

Stage left is a second trunk which lies flat on the ground. It is the same as the first, except its brass trim is torn off, or bent, and side panels are beaten and dented. Also, "Dr. Henry Jekyll" has been crossed out. Instead the name "Edward Hyde" has been boldly and sloppily painted. There is a new address: "A Deep & Dark Kingdom, All Across the Universe."

Also onstage are a stool, a chair and an empty bucket.

NIGEL ENTWICKLE *steps out from behind the banner. He wears a top hat, vest, baggy woolen trousers and carries a cane. He also holds the large hand of a mannequin attached to a short stick, or dowel. He comes downstage.*

The sound of flapping.

NIGEL *stops. He looks down at his shoes. The sole of one shoe has come loose.*

He bends down. He takes a string out of his pocket. He ties the sole to the shoe.

NIGEL *(to audience)* The old string. Must have worn itself off.

NIGEL *straightens himself out.*

NIGEL I suppose you think this is an easy life. A grown man like myself. Travelling from place to place. Telling stories.

Pause. He regards the large mannequin hand he holds.

NIGEL This is actually part of a costume. This hand. I found this hand backstage, discarded. We have careless actors back there. Very careless the actors these days.

The sound of female voices, tittering, behind the banner.

NIGEL *glares, upstage, at the banner.*

NIGEL Whereas in the old days, in the days of this particular tale, actors were more careful. Actors were men, in fact. Everyone important, in fact, was a man. Our politicians, our doctors, the

NIGEL(contd.)

clergy, leading characters in novels, these were men. And if a woman came along, like Jane Eyre, or Florence Nightingale, Joan of Arc, or the Virgin Mary, it was because of some special occasion, that's all. An exception to the rule. Because the rule was men.

Yes. That's the world I come from.

It was some world we had back then.

And in that world back then we had, O, so long ago, it was right for a man to strike a miscreant, to give 'em a good beating, or bashing, around the ears, be it woman, man or child.

The sound of female voices, tittering, behind the banner.

NIGEL *glares, upstage, at the banner. He goes to the empty bucket near the front of the banner. He picks it up with one hand. He strikes it sharply a couple of times with the cane, while still holding the mannequin hand on the dowel.*

The sound of a metal bucket clanging.

The tittering behind the banner stops.

NIGEL *puts aside the bucket.*

NIGEL

But all that's changed now. We have different actors, more careless, leaving parts of their costumes around, discarded. We have women actors now. Women playing the roles of men. And so I don't want you to get any ideas. That this travelling life of mine is a life of pleasure. Entertaining, seeking to educate, your younger minds of this world. All the minds in here, the very thoughts, what will grow up someday, taking this world over themselves, and pushing it over the very edge. Bringing it, yes, to its final end!

NIGEL *glares at the audience.*

NIGEL

But before you do that. Bring our world to its final end. Before we hand it over like that, there's a story you should hear. For your own good. (*poking at the title on the banner*) A cautionary tale which concerns our kingdom within. What's in our heads. What goes on in there, yes? All kinds of heaven and hell and turmoil wherein men can do battle with themselves...

Enter PENNY TWINKLING from behind the banner. She stands at attention, dressed as a butler. She holds a silver tray and a large, false mustache at the end of a stick.

NIGEL *turns and sees her.*

NIGEL What are you doing, Twinkling?

PENNY Excuse me, sir?

NIGEL Did I give your cue?

PENNY No, sir.

NIGEL Then what are you doing out here? Before I say your cue?

PENNY I just thought, sir, perhaps you not be sneering at these people.

NIGEL Sneering, am I?

PENNY Yes, sir. About the final end. I'm not sure it's appropriate to taunt and sneer about the final end, sir, of this world. Feels aggressive. Waving that hand about.

NIGEL Waving a hand?

PENNY Well, yes, Dr. Jekyll's hand there, sir.

NIGEL This discarded hand? What lies around backstage?

PENNY Yes, sir. To wave a disembodied hand like that might put them off. They're only young 'uns, see? Nothing but young people out there, very pleasant in the faces, they are. Fresh.

Pause.

NIGEL Are you done, Twinkling?

PENNY Yes, sir.

NIGEL You can come back out again, Twinkling, when I say your cue.

PENNY Yes, sir.

NIGEL If I sneer at these people, Twinkling, if I wave this big, discarded hand, it's because now is exactly when I should wave and sneer. When there's still some time to knock and bang some bleeding sense into them. Do you suppose I should just leave them alone to make a muck of everything out here?

PENNY No, sir.

NIGEL Good. Then get back out.

PENNY Yes, sir.

Exit PENNY back behind the banner.

NIGEL *(to audience)* That was Penny Twinkling. She plays the butler in our story. And also the police. Which come at the end. She never knows her cue.

PENNY *(head popping up from behind the banner)* Deep and dark.

NIGEL What?

PENNY That's my cue. Deep and dark. And then there's a doorbell.

NIGEL Right. Well, stay back there till you hear it then.

PENNY One very deep. And dark day. **(sound of doorbell)**

NIGEL That's enough, Twinkling. I will say those words when the time is come.

PENNY *(disappearing behind the banner)* Yes, sir.

NIGEL *(to audience)* Good, then. Now. Our story. About a large man who had big hands. Dr. Henry Jekyll. Who had a way of making people think about what made a person's good side. And what makes a person bad. And he decided, this doctor, that it made no sense a person's good side interfering with his bad, and a person's bad side making his good side feel bad, heh, heh. So what he did, this doctor, is he split these sides apart. He invented a drug, in his laboratory, which could do that. Split his good from his bad. So they wouldn't bother each other anymore! They could be free!

NIGEL regards the mannequin hand. He decides it interferes with his "acting." He goes to the banner. He passes the hand behind the banner.

NIGEL

If I taunt, or sneer, by the way, that's just my character. My way. What I do with people. It's my job anyway, the narrator. I get to sneer. Taunt any of you if I catch you not listening.

Good, then.

My name is Nigel Entwickle. And the actors that are behind this curtain to tell you the tale of Dr. Jekyll, their names are Lady Peggy Dill, Penny Twinkling, and also a foreign woman we have in our midst named Chantal Baboots.

The sound of 'La Marseillaise' being hummed behind the banner.

Three moustaches at the end of sticks pop up from behind the banner. The moustaches go marching.

NIGEL

That's right. All of them is a woman back there.

The sound of giggling. *A moustache at the end of a stick flies out from behind the banner. Enter CHANTAL BABOOT chasing it. She disappears back behind the banner.*

The sound of 'La Marseillaise' again. *The moustaches go marching.*

NIGEL picks up the empty bucket onstage. He goes behind the banner. The bucket marches with the moustaches.

The sound of a bucket bopping someone on the head.

Enter NIGEL again. He puts aside the bucket.

NIGEL

Yes, as I said. It's not an easy life, this. A man like myself. Travelling from place to place. Telling these stories.

NIGEL turns to the banner.

NIGEL All right, ladies. I've made my excuses. Prepared the way. The people out here understand our limitations. I've explained what we're missing, so it's time now for you to come out.

Enter LADY PEGGY DILL from around one side of the banner. She wears a suit of men's clothing which is much too large for her. She holds a pair of large mannequin hands which peer out at the end of the long sleeves of her large jacket. One of the mannequin hands has a finger pointing and the other waves. In these hands she's trying to hold a large book.

LADY PEGGY You have my hat, I believe.

NIGEL What?

LADY PEGGY Dr. Jekyll's hat. And that's his cane.

NIGEL Ah, yes. Here you go, then. Dr. Jekyll's hat. And his cane.

NIGEL takes the top hat off and puts it on LADY PEGGY. He hands over the cane. LADY PEGGY reaches for it, but loses one of her hands.

NIGEL & LADY PEGGY look at the hand on the ground.

NIGEL I believe you dropped one of your hands.

LADY PEGGY Yes?

NIGEL Would you like it back?

LADY PEGGY Would you mind?

NIGEL picks up the hand. He attaches the cane to it and gives it to LADY PEGGY.

The book slips out of LADY PEGGY's other hand. The top hat falls off her head.

NIGEL picks them up.