Lost and Found

by JordannaMorgan

Summary

Skinner helps Jekyll find something he's been missing.

Notes

Title: Lost and Found
Author: Jordanna Morgan
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Rating/Warnings: G.
Characters: Skinner (POV) and Jekyll.
Setting: Sometime after the film.
Summary: Skinner helps Jekyll find something he's been missing.
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Notes: I have always had a strange penchant for writing late-night conversations in the X-Men movieverse, and this habit has apparently crossed over into LXG as well. The subject of mirrors was the original crux of the story, but it expanded in several directions during the writing process.

I was just about to pour myself a bit of a nightcap when I heard a hesitant tapping on my cabin door.

My first idea was that there must have been something wrong. The Nautilus is always quiet as a tomb late at night, and while I might’ve done my share of poking about in other people’s rooms—not that I’ll admit it to anyone else, mind—nobody had ever come calling on me. Hardly surprising, when all I ever heard when I did grace them with my presence was "shut up, Skinner" and "be quiet, Skinner". It’s a hard thing to get no respect from one’s mates.
But where was I? …Oh, yes. The knock at the door.

As I went to answer it, I threw on my coat over my nightshirt. Seeing as I never expected company, I had already taken off my greasepaint for the night; whoever was outside would just have to deal with that. The lot of them ought to have been used to it by then, after all.

Standing in the corridor, with some sort of notepad clutched to his chest like a life preserver, was Doctor Jekyll. I noticed his twitch when he saw me without my face on, so to speak—but then he smiled nervously and bowed his head, like the gentleman he fancied he was.

"Good evening, Mister Skinner." The man spoke in that bloody quiet voice of his, making me lean out a bit to hear him clearly. "I'm sorry to disturb you, but… but I seem to have misplaced my fountain pen, and—"

An indignant feeling shot through me, and I folded my arms. "And you were wondering if by any chance I might have pinched it, is that it?"

"Oh, no!" Jekyll answered, wide-eyed, and if possible hugging his pad more tightly. "I—I'm sure it must have simply rolled under the bed, or something. I didn't want to disturb anyone about helping me to move furniture at this hour, but I saw your light under the door, and I thought—I thought you might have a pen I could borrow, just until morning."

He sounded so earnest and surprised that I was quite put to the blush. When I was so quick to assume that others thought the worst of me, how poorly did I really think of myself, deep down?

Pushing that disquieting question out of my head, I uncrossed my arms and cleared my throat. "Oh… well, I don't do much writing, myself."

"I see. Then I'm sorry to have disturbed you." With another polite nod, Jekyll started to turn away.

"Wait," I said. "I think Nemo keeps paper and such in all the cabins. Let's see what's in the desk."

Leaving the door open, I went to the desk and opened the top drawer, where I'd stashed a few… little items I'd picked up here and there. (Nothing anyone would miss. Honestly.) Beneath a handful of exotic-looking coins and a brass bosun's whistle, I finally found the stationery and the pen. This I gave to Jekyll, who had taken a few steps into the room and was looking it over with interest, although I knew for a fact that it was almost identical to his own cabin. I'd been there—quite unbeknownst to him, of course.

Taking the pen, he half-whispered a meek little "Thank you," and turned to leave.

I'm not quite sure what made me want to keep him there a few minutes more. Perhaps it was curiosity about that pad of paper he was clutching as though it were the Crown Jewels. At any rate, I found myself asking, "Care to have a drink?"

Jekyll paused, and turned back to me slowly, with a sort of uncomfortable grin. "I—I really don't suppose I should. But…"

"There's a good man." Sitting on the edge of the desk, I leaned down to reach into the bottom drawer, and took out the brandy flask and glasses I'd been keeping tucked away there. Jekyll watched me, and smiled in an amused kind of half-disapproval.

Seems the man does everything only halfway. One would rather think the other half belonged to Hyde—but then, Hyde never does anything halfway, does he?

I poured a glass, then motioned with the flask for him to sit in the desk chair. He did so, laying his
notepad face-down on the desk, and took his glass of brandy. I wasn’t wearing my gloves, and he hesitated before he plucked it out of my invisible hand, but only a little.

"And what shall we drink to?" I asked, once I had filled my own glass. "To roaming about the bloody ship in the dead of night?"

Jekyll shook his head. "I suggest we drink to your lost-and-found department," he replied with a faint smile, and nodded toward the top desk drawer—which was still half-open, my collection of oddments peeking out of it.

I scowled, for all he couldn’t see it, and pushed the drawer shut. He simply smiled.

"Alright then," I said, and raised my glass. "To Mister Rodney Skinner’s Lost and Found—may its goods ever go unlooked for."

Jekyll chuckled quietly and chimed his glass against mine. As we drank, he quickly glanced away from me, pretending to be interested in the décor—and I remembered to button up the collar of my coat. Even for a doctor, I take it the sight of brandy going down an invisible gullet isn’t pretty. On further thought, I set down my glass, took out my can of greasepaint, and proceeded to present a face for him to talk to. His gaze still wandered round the room as I did so.

"I… noticed you haven’t a mirror in this room," he said, with an affected lightness in his tone.

The remark made me pause, and I replied matter-of-factly, "I asked Nemo to take it away."

Considering who I was talking to, I suppose I was too matter-of-fact, and perhaps should have spoken a bit more gently. Jekyll fidgeted guiltily and dropped his gaze to his lap. "I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to pry."

Finished with my makeup, I shrugged and picked up my brandy glass. "No need to apologize. I’m sure it’s no surprise that mirrors and I don’t get on all that well." I smiled grimly. "They’re more of a reminder than I care for."

"Yes, of course." Jekyll took a gulp of his brandy, then sat fondling the glass and staring past me for a long moment. He had that pale look he gets when Hyde is nagging at him, and I started to worry a bit.

"I… do understand that," he said at last. He glanced quickly up at me, then away again, and added quietly, "The truth is, it’s been many years since… since I’ve seen my own reflection, either."

This surprised me, and I didn’t know what to make of it. Fortunately he could read my expression now, and seeing my confusion, he explained on his own—albeit in nearly a whisper.

"You see, when I look into a mirror… the reflection I see is Edward’s."

It was a repulsive thought, and I fought back a grimace. Jekyll surely had more to fear from mirrors than I, if Hyde was always lurking in the glass, waiting to mock and terrify him. From the little I’d seen of Hyde then, I could imagine it… and for a moment, I almost thought I could understand Jekyll’s private hell.

There was an irony about it, too; mirrors held a brutal honesty for us both. Jekyll saw the beast inside him, and I saw the nothing a part of me feared was inside me.

Jekyll went on, a bit distantly. "I suppose that’s the reason why I always dress the part of a gentleman. It’s the one feeble effort I can make to assure myself that I look well." He paused, then sighed and shook his head. "Edward is laughing at me, of course. He says I’m not a gentleman."
"You tell him from me to shut up," I replied, more hotly than I intended. "And that you’re more a gentleman than any dozen lords I’ve run across in my day."

At that, Jekyll actually smiled. "I won’t bother to repeat Edward’s answer to that—but mine is to thank you, Mister Skinner. It means… more than I would have expected."

"From a thief, you mean."

"To be honest… yes." Some of the color came back into Jekyll’s pale face. "I’m afraid none of us has given you the credit you deserve."

I was feeling a pleasant warmth from the brandy by then, and I shrugged, smiling at Jekyll. "Well, you can make it up to me by showing me what’s on this pad you’ve been so secretive about." And I reached across the desk to pick up his notepad, in spite of his attempt to protest.

The pad gave me a second surprise. It wasn’t a notepad at all, but a sketchpad—and on it, there was an ink drawing of Mina. It was beautiful, a true piece of art, so delicate and detailed that it almost seemed alive.

Astounded, I looked up at Jekyll, who was now quite red in the face with embarrassment.

"You did this?"

Very slowly, Jekyll nodded. He reached out as if to take back the pad, but instead he merely touched the corner of the page, almost caressing it. "Yes."

He treated it so reverently that I actually felt guilty for looking, but I still couldn’t put it down. I studied the portrait of Mina a bit more. He’d captured that regal bearing of hers, and the strength of her presence—but there was something else in it, a softness and gentleness I never saw when I looked at the real Mina. Only a man who was really in love with her would see those things.

"Well, well." Smiling at Jekyll, I raised my glass. "Best of luck to you."

He looked at me quizzically—and a bit suspiciously. "I thought you had designs on Mina."

"Oh, that’s just old Rodney having a bit of fun," I chuckled, shaking my head. "As it happens, I think Nemo and I are the only two men on the ship who aren’t under her spell. Sawyer’s the worst off, but he’s not for her. You and Mina, on the other hand…” I grinned. "It occurs to me I like that idea, Doctor."

Smiling weakly, and still blushing, Jekyll did take back the sketchpad this time, clutching it close. "A man can dream, at least."

"He can at that." I nodded to the pad. "And you’ve got quite the gift for putting your dreams on paper. It’s a lovely piece of work. All your own, too, isn’t it? I mean—I saw nothing of old Edward in that." I faltered. "Seems to me the creativity is all on your side."

Jekyll’s face darkened slightly. "No. Edward can be very creative, in his own twisted ways. I shan’t tell you his terrible means of entertaining himself, in London, in Paris…"

"But—that’s changed now," I suggested uncertainly.

"Sometimes I don’t know." Jekyll took a deep drink of his brandy, draining the glass. "Edward is curious, and more patient than you might think. The League gives me cause to release him, and he wants to see how much freedom I dare give him. If ever I should trust him too much—" he stumbled and paused, then shook his head sorrowfully.
"You see now why my… dreams… can never be anything more."

"I’m not so sure about that." I picked up the flask and leaned over to refill Jekyll’s glass. "If any woman can tame old Eddie, it’s Mina." At his sudden chuckle, I grinned and added, "I suppose the bugger’s laughing at me now."

"Oh, he’s laughing," Jekyll nodded, with a smile of real amusement. "But not for the reason you think. To be honest, I believe you’ve risen steadily in his esteem the entire time we’ve been talking."

"That’s cheery to know." I was feeling rather humourous. "If he likes me, the next time he’s out, maybe he won’t kill me for some of the things I’ve said about him tonight."

"Well, he still might—but at least he’d do it with a bit more respect." Jekyll’s sly grin betrayed the jest.

I laughed. "I always did say I wanted to be murdered respectfully."

The comedy was a bit morbid, but I was glad enough to humour Jekyll. Perhaps it was the brandy, but there was a sparkle in his eyes that I’d never seen before, and he had stopped cringing and stammering. For once I saw something of the real man beneath all of his fear and self-pity, and I was finding that I liked him.

This chap, the real Henry Jekyll, was charming and self-assured. More than that, he had the intelligence and good humour to laugh at himself. Living so long in his own personal nightmare, he’d forgotten how, but as I watched him, he was remembering again—even though it meant laughing at Hyde, too, because Hyde was a part of him.

If he could do that, he wasn’t at all the coward he thought himself to be.

"Edward assures me you’ve nothing to fear from him," Jekyll spoke up after a pause. "In fact…" He halted, apparently listening to his alter ego’s thoughts, and blushed in a very scandalized way before finishing in a lower voice. "He seems to think it would be more fun to share your head than mine."

At the time, I was in too comical a mood to think about how horrid that idea was, and I tossed off a flippant reply without a thought. "He’d find there’s no room for him in my head. It gets busy up there."

"Somehow, I entirely believe that." Jekyll smiled at me, with something uncomfortably close to admiration. "If only I’d had the sort of character I feel you must have deep down, then… perhaps…"

He never finished that unsettling fragment of a thought. After a long stretch of silence, he took one last sip of brandy, then set the half-empty glass on the desk and stood up. "Well… I didn’t mean to keep you up so long. I’ll turn in now. Thank you for the drink, and the pen."

"Any time," I replied, and found that I meant it.

Jekyll took his sketchpad, hugging it close again, and made his way to the door. I followed him—and as he turned to say good-night, he offered me his hand. Surprised, I shook it, and he met my invisible grip with a firm and steady one.

"Tomorrow I’ll come round and help you look for that pen of yours, if you like," I said.
"I would, very much." Jekyll smiled solemnly. "But I think you’ve already helped me find a good deal more than that."

When he was gone, I wandered back to the desk and sat down, my head full of thoughts. His unfinished brandy was still sitting there, and I picked it up. I raised it to eye level, turning it in the light, to see my own painted face reflected in the glass.

Somehow, that reflection didn’t feel quite so empty anymore.

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