**The Picture of Dorian Gray - Act I**

**by Oscar Wilde, Adapted by Mark Nixon**

[[*MUSIC: SOFT NOTES FROM A RHODES ELECTRIC PIANO.*]]

**DAVID AULT:** Hello, everyone! I know that you’re dying to get to The Picture of Dorian Gray, but first, before we start all of that, I just want to let you know about our sponsor for this mini season.

Hemlock Creek Productions is a post-production audio studio based in Chicago, Illinois. Founded by audio editor and sound designer Marisa Ewing, Hemlock Creek Productions is Marisa’s response to a growing need for remote audio editing services. While based in the United States, Hemlock Creek Productions has worked with clients and vocal talent across multiple countries and languages. They’ve provided their expert editing services on a variety of projects, including podcasts, films, and video games.

In addition to providing editing services, Hemlock Creek Productions also strives to work on projects that highlight diversity, both in the stories being told and the people that tell them. As a queer and black owned business, they believe diversity is a strength and look forward to working on projects that reflect the same values.

Hemlock Creek Productions will also be releasing its first original podcast, “Liars & Leeches” in 2023. Follow the story of Tonya in this supernatural horror podcast, as she grieves a sudden familial loss. But soon, her grief will bring someone–or some*thing*–into her life in ways she could have never anticipated. That’s “Liars & Leeches,” available on all good podcast apps in 2023.

But to learn more about Hemlock Creek Productions, please visit [www.hemlockcreekprod.com](http://www.hemlockcreekprod.com), or follow us on social media on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/hemcreekprod) and [instagram](https://www.instagram.com/hemcreekprod/) at @hemcreekprod.

So, there we go! And now, it is time for Dorian Gray.

[[*MUSIC: ENDS.*]]

**MARK NIXON:** Shadows at the Door is a podcast designed to scare and delight you. We are, at times, explicit and produced for an adult audience. To see if this episode is for you, consult our show notes for a list of content warnings.

[[*MUSIC: SHADOWS AT THE DOOR THEME, DORIAN GRAY EDITION: SHORT, CHOPPY STRING NOTES AND A RUNNING PLUCKED BASS NOTES. AS MARK BEGINS SPEAKING AGAIN, IT SHIFTS BACK TO THE STANDARD SHADOWS AT THE DOOR GUITAR INTRO LINE WITH LOW, SUSTAINED STRINGS UNDER IT.*]]

Welcome to our miniseries of The Picture of Dorian Gray; I’m Mark Nixon.

These highly anticipated episodes come as part of a \*full month\* of Dorian Gray content here at Shadows at the Door—and rather appropriately during Pride month. Yes, as a queer ran podcast, we’re delighted to bring you a story so laced with homoerotic subtext, it caused quite the scandal upon its initial release in 1890. Now this story is the only novel ever written by its author, Oscar Wilde, and has come to be regarded as a classic of gothic literature.

For the month ahead, you have a three act production of the story itself, a discussion episode, and to wrap things up: a drunk retelling.

So listeners, it now brings me great pleasure to ask you to join me by the fire, pour yourself some tea, and we shall begin…

[[*MUSIC: ENDS.*]]

[Timestamp: 3:55]

[[*MUSIC: GENTLE PIANO THEME. AFTER A FEW BARS, STRINGS COME IN WITH SUSTAINED NOTES.*]]

INT: BASIL’S STUDIO.

[SFX: BIRDS ARE CHIRPING IN THE BACKGROUND. FAINT SOUNDS OF A PAINTBRUSH ON CANVAS CAN BE HEARD.]

**BASIL:** [LONG INHALE.] Hm.

[SFX: LORD HENRY OPENS A CIGARETTE CASE, STRIKES A MATCH, AND LIGHTS HIS CIGARETTE.]

**HENRY:** [ENJOYS HIS CIGARETTE COOLY THEN REASSURES BASIL, BUT NOT IN A KIND WAY.] It is your best work, Basil. The best thing you have ever done… [DECIDING FOR HIM.] You must certainly send it next year to the Grosvenor. The Academy is too large and too vulgar. Whenever I have gone there, there have been either so many people that I have not been able to see the pictures, which was dreadful, or so many pictures that I have not been able to see the people, which was worse! [SHORT, HUMOURLESS LAUGH.] Yes, the Grosvenor is really the only place.

[[*MUSIC: TRAILS OFF TO NOTHING AS HENRY IS SPEAKING.*]]

**BASIL:** [THOUGHTFUL.] I don’t think I shall send it anywhere… [DECISIVELY.] No, I won’t.

[SFX: CLOTH RUSTLES AS HENRY SITS UPRIGHT.]

**HENRY:** [SPUTTERS IN DISMAY.] Not send it anywhere? My dear fellow, why? Have you any reason? What odd chaps you painters are! You do anything in the world to gain a reputation. As soon as you have one, you seem to want to throw it away! It is silly of you, for there is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is *not* being talked about. A portrait like this would set you far above all the young men in England. And make the old men quite jealous, if old men are ever capable of any emotion…

**BASIL:** I know you will laugh at me [SIGH.] but I really can’t exhibit it. I put too much of myself into it.

[SFX: THE CHAIR CREAKS AS HENRY SITS BACK AND LAUGHS FOR FAR TOO LONG AT HOW RIDICULOUS BASIL IS BEING.]

**BASIL:** Yes, I knew you would.

**HENRY:** [STILL HALF LAUGHING.] Too much of yourself in it! Upon my word, Basil, I didn't know you were so vain; and I really can't see any resemblance between you, with your rugged strong face and your coal-black hair, and this young Adonis, who looks as if he was made out of ivory and rose-leaves. Why, my dear Basil, he is a Narcissus, and you—well, of course you have an intellectual expression and all that. But beauty, real beauty, ends where an intellectual expression begins. Intellect is, in itself, a mode of exaggeration and destroys the harmony of any face. Look at the successful men in any of the learned professions. How perfectly hideous they are! Except, of course, in the Church. But then in the Church they don't think. A bishop keeps on saying at the age of eighty what he was told to say when he was a boy of eighteen, and as a natural consequence he always looks absolutely delightful. Your mysterious young friend—whose name you have never told me but whose picture [WITH A LURID TONE TO INDICATE WHAT KIND OF FASCINATION.] really fascinates me—never thinks. I feel quite sure of that. He is some brainless, beautiful creature who should be always here in winter when we have no flowers to look at, and always here in summer when we want something to chill our intelligence. [COLDLY.] Don’t flatter yourself, Basil. You are not in the least like him.

**BASIL:** [TRYING HARD TO CONVEY HIS MISSED MEANING.] You don’t understand me, Harry. Of course I’m not *like* him! I know that perfectly well. Indeed, I should be sorry to look like him. You shrug your shoulders? I am telling you the truth. [PAUSE, THEN SLIGHTLY MORE EAGER TO MAKE HIS POINT.] There is… th-there is a… fatality about all the physical and intellectual distinction. The sort of fatality that seems to dog through history the faltering steps of kings. It is better not to be different from one's fellows. The ugly and the stupid have the best of it in this world. They can sit at their ease and gape at the play. If they know nothing of victory, they are at least spared the knowledge of defeat. They live as we all should live—undisturbed, indifferent, and without disquiet. They neither bring ruin upon others, nor ever receive it from alien hands. Your rank and wealth, Harry; my brains, such as they are; my art, whatever it may be worth; Dorian Gray's good looks— [CLOTH RUSTLES AS HENRY GETS UP, THEN WITH FOOTSTEPS ON THE HARD FLOOR, APPROACHES BASIL.] we shall all suffer for what the gods have given us, and suffer terribly…

**HENRY:** [WRY.] Dorian Gray? Is that his name?

**BASIL:** Yes. [ANNOYED SIGH.] I didn’t intend to tell you.

**HENRY:** [AGGRESSIVELY.] But why not?

**BASIL:** [SIGH.] Oh, I can't explain… When I like people immensely, I never tell their names to anyone. It is like surrendering a part of them. I have grown to love secrecy. It seems to be the one thing that can make modern life mysterious or marvellous to us. The commonest thing is delightful if one only hides it. When I leave town now, I never tell my people where I am going. If I did, I would lose all my pleasure. It is a silly habit, I dare say, but somehow it seems to bring a great deal of romance into one's life. I suppose you think me awfully foolish about it?

**HENRY:** [EARNEST.] Not at all! Not at all, my dear Basil. You seem to forget that I am married and the one charm of marriage is that it makes a life of deception absolutely necessary for both parties. I never know where my wife is, and my wife never knows what I am doing. When we meet—we do meet occasionally, when we dine out together, or go down to the Duke's—we tell each other the most absurd stories with the most serious faces. My wife is very good at it—much better, in fact, than I am. She never gets confused over her dates, and I always do. But when she does find me out, she makes no row at all. I sometimes wish she would, but she merely laughs at me.

**BASIL:** [ANNOYED.] I hate the way you talk about your married life, Harry. [DEEP SIGH.] I believe that you are really a very good husband, but that you are thoroughly ashamed of your own virtues. You are an extraordinary fellow. You never *say* a moral thing, you never *do* a wrong thing. Your cynicism is simply a pose.

**HENRY:** [AMUSED.] Being natural is simply a pose, and the most irritating pose I know.

[SFX: BASIL WALKS TO THE FRENCH DOORS WITH THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS ON HARD FLOOR.]

**BASIL:** Come. Join me in the garden. It’s such a lovely day and your smoke does cloud the room so.

**HENRY:** [AFTER A MOMENTARY PAUSE.] No. [HENRY MAKES A FEW ANNOYED SOUNDS AS HE CHECKS HIS POCKET WATCH.] I am afraid I must be going, Basil. Oh! Before I go, I insist on your answering a question I put to you some time ago…

**BASIL:** [RELUCTANTLY.] What is that?

**HENRY:** You know quite well.

**BASIL:** I do not, Harry.

**HENRY:** Well, I will tell you what it is. [WRY.] I want you to explain to me why you won’t exhibit Dorian Gray’s picture. [SERIOUS NOW.] I want the real reason.

**BASIL:** I told you the real reason.

**HENRY:** No, you did not. You said it was because there was too much of yourself in it. Now, that is childish.

**BASIL:** Harry… Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself. The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul…

**HENRY:** [TWO SINGLE, DRY LAUGHS.] And what is that?

**BASIL:** I will tell you…

**HENRY:** [AFTER A LONG PAUSE.] …I am in all expectation, Basil.

**BASIL:** [WITH A SIGH] Oh, th-there is really very little to tell! And I am afraid you will hardly understand it. Perhaps you will hardly believe it.

**HENRY:** [AMUSED NOISE.] I am quite sure I shall understand it. [LESS INTENSE.] And as for believing things, I can believe anything, provided that it is quite incredible.

[[*MUSIC: AS BASIL BEGINS DESCRIBING PAST EVENTS, STACCATO STRINGS BEGIN TO DANCE IN THE BACKGROUND, EVENTUALLY ADDING LONGER, BUT STILL SEPARATED, STRING NOTES WITH THE APPEARANCE OF DORIAN.*]]

**BASIL:** [AUDIBLE INHALE.] The story is [SIGH.], well, simply this. Two months ago, I went to a crush at Lady Brandon’s—You know we poor artists have to show ourselves in society from time to time, just to remind the public that we are not savages—Well, after I had been in the room about ten minutes, talking to huge overdressed dowagers and tedious academicians, I suddenly became conscious that someone was looking at me. I turned half-way round and saw Dorian Gray for the first time. [SLOWLY LOSING HIMSELF TO THE MEMORY.] When our eyes met, I felt that I was growing pale. A curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself. [PAUSE, THEN GROWING MORE EMOTIONAL.] I did not want any external influence in my life. You know yourself, Harry, how independent I am by nature. I have always been my own master; well, had at least always been so, till I met Dorian Gray. Then—but I don't know how to explain it to you. [GROWING BREATHLESS.] Something seemed to tell me that I was on the verge of a terrible crisis in my life. I had a strange feeling that fate had in store for me exquisite joys… and exquisite sorrows. I grew afraid and turned to quit the room. It was not conscience that made me do so: it was a sort of cowardice. I take no credit to myself for trying to escape.

[[*MUSIC: THE MUSIC SLOWS AS BASIL MENTIONS “EXQUISITE SORROWS” UNTIL IT DIES WITH THE WORD “COWARDICE.”*]]

**HENRY:** Conscience and cowardice are really the same things, Basil. Conscience is the trade name of the firm. That is all.

**BASIL:** I don't believe that, Harry, and I don't believe you do either. However, whatever was my motive—and it may have been pride, for I used to be *very* proud—I certainly struggled to the door. There, of course, I-I stumbled against Lady Brandon. [IN A VERY UNFLATTERING IMPRESSION.]

’You are not going to run away so soon, Mr. Hallward?' she screamed out. You know her curiously shrill voice?

**HENRY:** [WITH AN ALMOST LAUGH.] Yes. She is a peacock in everything *but* beauty…

**BASIL:** I could not get rid of her. She spoke of me as her dearest friend. I had only met her once before. I believe some pictures of mine had made a great success at the time, at least had been chattered about in the penny newspapers, which is the nineteenth-century standard of immortality. Suddenly I found myself face to face with the young man whose personality had so strangely stirred me. [HESITANTLY.] We were quite close, almost touching. Our eyes met again. It was reckless of me, but I asked Lady Brandon to introduce me to him. Perhaps it was not so reckless, after all. It was simply inevitable. We would have spoken to each other without any introduction. I am sure of that. Dorian told me so afterwards. He, too, felt that we were destined to know each other…

**HENRY:** And how did she introduce this wonderful young man?

**BASIL:** Oh, something like, [THE IMPRESSION RETURNS.] 'Charming boy—dear–poor dear mother and I absolutely inseparable. Quite forget what he does—afraid he—doesn't do anything—oh, yes, plays the piano—or is it the violin? Dear Mr. Gray?' [SLIGHT LAUGH AS HE SPEAKS.] Neither of us could help laughing. And we became friends at once.

**HENRY:** Laughter is not at all a bad beginning for a friendship and it is far the best ending for one.

**BASIL:** [QUIETLY EARNEST.] You don't understand what friendship is, Harry! [BOLDER] Or what enmity is, for that matter. You like everyone! Well, that is to say, you are indifferent to everyone.

**HENRY:** [FEIGNING OFFENCE.] How horribly unjust of you! Yes, *horribly* unjust of you. I make a great difference between people. I choose my friends for their good looks, my acquaintances for their good characters, and my enemies for their good intellects. A man cannot be too careful in the choice of his enemies. I have not got one who is a fool. They are all men of some intellectual power, and consequently they all appreciate me. Is that very vain of me? I think it *is* rather vain…

**BASIL:** I should think that it was, Harry. But according to your category, I must be merely an acquaintance!

**HENRY:** My dear old Basil, you are much more than an acquaintance.

**BASIL:** [DRYLY.] And much less than a friend. A sort of brother, I suppose?

**HENRY:** Oh, brothers! I don't care for brothers. My elder brother won't die, and my younger brothers seem never to do anything else.

**BASIL:** [CHASTISING AND TRYING NOT TO LAUGH.] Harry!

**HENRY:** My dear fellow, I am not *quite* serious, but I can't help detesting my relations. I suppose it comes from the fact that none of us can stand other people having the same faults as ourselves…

**BASIL:** I don’t agree with that and I feel sure you don’t, either!

**HENRY:** [HUGE SIGH.] So… Tell me more about Mr. Dorian Gray. How often do you see him?

**BASIL:** [SIGHING.] Every Day.

**HENRY:** [IMPRESSED AND COY.] Oh…

**BASIL:** I couldn’t be happy if I didn’t see him every day. [PAUSE.] He is absolutely necessary to me.

**HENRY:** How extraordinary… I thought you would never care for anything but your art.

**BASIL:** [GRAVE.] He *is* all my art to me now! [SIGH.] He’s much more to me than a model or a sitter. I won't tell you that I am dissatisfied with what I have done of him, or that his beauty is such that art cannot express it. There is nothing that art cannot express, and I know that the work I have done, since I met Dorian Gray, is good work. Is the best work of my life! I see things differently, I *think* of them differently. I can now recreate a life in a way that was hidden from me before. If only you knew what Dorian Gray is to me! You remember that landscape of mine, for which Agnew offered me such a huge price but which I would not part with? It is one of the best things I have ever done. And why is it so? Because, while I was painting it, Dorian Gray sat beside me. [LONG PAUSES INTERSPERSED AS ONLY PART OF BASIL’S BRAIN IS ENGAGED IN THE CONVERSATION.] Some subtle influence passed from him to me, and for the first time in my life I saw in the plain woodland the wonder I had always looked for and always missed.

**HENRY:** Basil… I *must* see Dorian Gray.

**BASIL:** [FORCEFUL, TORMENTED SIGH.] He is to me simply a motive in art. You might see nothing in him. I see everything in him. He is never more present in my work than when no image of him is there.

**HENRY:** Then *why* won’t you exhibit his portrait?

**BASIL:** Because, without intending it, I have put into it some expression of all this curious artistic idolatry, of which, of course, I have never cared to speak to him. He knows nothing about it. He shall never know anything about it. But the world might guess it, and I will not bare my soul to their shallow prying eyes. [LONG, SHAKY BREATH.] My heart shall never be put under their microscope. [SO DISTRAUGHT HE’S STRUGGLING TO GET THE WORDS OUT.] There is too much of myself in the thing, Harry—too much of myself!

**HENRY:** Oh, poets are not so scrupulous as you are. I think you are wrong, Basil, but I won't argue with you. It is only the intellectually lost who ever argue. Tell me, is Dorian Gray very fond of you?

**BASIL:** He likes me. Oh, I know he likes me. Of-of course I flatter him dreadfully. I find a strange pleasure in saying things to him that I know I shall be sorry for having said. As a rule, he is charming to me, and we sit in the studio and talk of a thousand things. Now and then, however, he is horribly thoughtless and seems to take a real delight in giving me pain. Then, I feel, Harry, that I’ve given away my whole soul to someone who treats it as if it were a flower to put in a coat, a bit of decoration to charm his vanity, an ornament for a summer's day.

**HENRY:** Days in summer, Basil, are apt to linger. Perhaps you will tire sooner than he will.

**BASIL:** [OVER THE LAST OF HENRY’S WORDS TO CUT HIM OFF.] Harry, don't talk like that. As long as I live, the personality of Dorian Gray will dominate me. You can't feel what I feel. You change too often.

**HENRY:** [WITH A LAUGH.] Ah, my dear Basil, that is exactly why I can feel it. [NOW SPEAKING WITH A CIGARETTE IN HIS MOUTH AS HE STRIKES A MATCH AND LIGHTS IT.] Those who are faithful know only the trivial side of love: it is the faithless who know love's tragedies. [HE ENJOYS THE CIGARETTE FOR A FEW SECONDS.]

**BASIL:** Nonetheless, I don’t want you to meet him.

**HENRY:** [WITH A QUIET LAUGH.] You *don’t* want me to meet him?

**BASIL:** [FLATLY.] No.

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS ON A HARD FLOOR APPROACH AND A METAL LATCH IS LIFTED TO OPEN A ,METAL GATE LETTING PARKER THE BUTLER DRAW NEARER TO THE TWO MEN.]

**PARKER:** Mr. Dorian Gray has arrived, sir.

**HENRY:** [LAUGH OF PERVERSE DELIGHT.]

**BASIL:** [RESIGNED SIGH, THEN UNDER HIS BREATH.] He’s early!

**HENRY:** [AUDIBLY SMILING.] You must introduce me now!

**BASIL:** [RESIGNED, TO PARKER.] Bring Mr. Gray through, Parker.

**PARKER:** Very good, sir.

[SFX: PARKER WALKS AWAY AND THE DOORIS CLOSED.]

**BASIL:** [SPEAKING QUICKLY, URGENTLY TRYING TO HEAD OFF DISASTER.] Harry, Dorian Gray is my dearest friend, he has a simple and a beautiful nature. *Don't* spoil him. *Don't* try to influence him. Your influence [QUICKLY THINKS OF A DELICATE WAY TO SAY THIS AND GIVES UP.] would be bad. The world is wide and has many marvellous people in it. Don't take away from me the one person who gives to my art whatever charm it possesses. My life as an artist depends on him. [COLLECTS HIMSELF.] Mind, Harry, I trust you.

**HENRY:** [LAUGHING.] What nonsense you talk!

[SFX: THE GATE OPENS AGAIN AND PARKER ARRIVES WITH MORE FOOTSTEPS.]

**PARKER:** Mr, Dorian Gray, sir.

[SFX: MORE FOOTSTEPS AS PARKER LEAVES AND DORIAN APPROACHES.]

**BASIL:** [WARM, LOUD, SLIGHTLY PANICKED.] Dorian! Delightfully early, you must be keen to sit for me!

**DORIAN:** Oh, I am tired of sitting, Basil! I don't want a life-sized portrait of myself, I— [SUDDENLY SHY] Oh, I beg your pardon, Basil, but I didn't realise you had anyone with you.

**BASIL:** Yes. This is Lord Henry Wotton, Dorian, an old Oxford friend of mine. I’ve just been telling him what a capital sitter you were, and now you have spoiled everything.

**HENRY:** [PUTTING ON EVERY OUNCE OF CHARM.] You have not spoiled my pleasure in meeting *you*, Mr. Gray!

[SFX: CLOTH RUSTLES AS THEY SHAKE HANDS.]

**HENRY:** Our friend Basil here has just been telling me *everything* about you. He is quite devoted, I must say.

**DORIAN:** Basil is too kind…

**HENRY:** Oh, nonsense! And looking at you now, I can see he has not been kind enough!

**DORIAN:** Ah… [EMBARRASSED AND CHARMED LAUGH.]

**BASIL:** [A DELIBERATE COUGH TO REDIRECT THINGS.] Harry, I want to finish this picture today. Would you think it awfully rude of me if I asked you to… Well… go away?

**HENRY:** [CHOOSING TO CAUSE PROBLEMS ON PURPOSE.] Should I ‘go away’ Dorian?

**DORIAN:** Oh, please don’t, Lord Henry. I see that Basil is in one of his sulky moods and I can't *bear* him when he sulks.

**HENRY:** You don't really mind, Basil, do you? You have often told me that you liked your sitters to have someone to chat to and the poor lad is so *very* tired of sitting, after all.

**BASIL:** [FORCING HIMSELF TO SAY IT.] If Dorian wishes it, of course you must stay. Dorian's whims are laws to everybody except himself.

[SFX: FAINT BRUSHSTROKES AS BASIL BEGINS PAINTING.]

**HENRY:** You are very pressing, Basil, but I’m afraid I must go. I have promised to meet a man at the Orleans. Good-bye, Mr. Gray. Come and see me some afternoon in Curzon Street. I am nearly always at home at five o'clock. Write to me when you are coming. [FOOTSTEPS AS HENRY STARTS TO WALK AWAY.] I should be sorry to miss you.

**DORIAN:** Basil. If Lord Henry Wotton goes, I shall go, too. You never open your lips while you are painting and it is horribly dull, standing on a platform and trying to look pleasant. [DESPITE HIS WORDS, HIS TONE IS VERY FLAT AND DOESN’T PRESS.] Ask him to stay. I insist upon it.

**BASIL:** [WHILE PAINTING.] Stay, Harry, to oblige Dorian, and to oblige me. It *is* quite true I never talk when I am working. I never listen either. It must be dreadfully tedious for my unfortunate sitters. I beg you to stay. [REGAINING ENOUGH CONFIDENCE TO BE ASSERTIVE.] I-I don't think there will be any difficulty about your friend. [FOOTSTEPS AS HENRY RETURNS.] Sit down again, Harry.

**HENRY:** Very well…

**BASIL:** And now, Dorian, get up on the platform and don't move about too much or pay any attention to what Lord Henry says. He’s a *very* bad influence over all his friends [PAUSE.] with the single exception of myself. Now, step up here, Dorian. There we are.

[SFX: DORIAN SIGHS CONTENTEDLY AS HE WALKS ONTO THE DAIS AND FINDS HIS POSITION WITH A CREAK OF WOOD.]

**BASIL:** Excellent.

[SFX: BASIL RESUMES PAINTING AND HUMS ONCE TO HIMSELF THOUGHTFULLY. AS DORIAN AND HENRY TALK, OCCASIONAL FOOTSTEPS CAN BE HEARD AS HENRY PACES.]

**DORIAN:** …Have you really a very bad influence, Lord Henry? As Basil says?

**HENRY:** There is no such thing as a good influence, Mr. Gray. All influence is immoral—immoral from the scientific point of view.

**DORIAN:** Why?

**HENRY:** Because to influence a person is to give him one's own soul. [BASIL HUMS TO HIMSELF AGAIN.] He does not think his natural thoughts, or burn with his natural passions. His virtues are not real to him. His sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of someone else's music, an actor of a part that has not been written for *him*. The aim of life is self-development. To realise one's nature perfectly—that is what each of us is here for. People are afraid of themselves, nowadays. They have forgotten the highest of all duties, the duty that one owes to one's self.

**BASIL:** [FROM A SLIGHT DISTANCE.] Just turn your head a little more to the right, Dorian, like a good boy.

[[*MUSIC: SOFT PIANO BEGINS BEHIND HENRY’S WORDS.*]]

**HENRY:** And yet… [SEDUCTIVE AND LOWERED TO AVOID BASIL’S NOTICE.] I believe that if one man were to live out his life fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream—I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that we would forget all the maladies of the past. But the bravest man amongst us is afraid of himself. The mutilation of the savage has its tragic survival in the self denial that mars our lives. We are punished for our refusals. Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind and poisons us. The body sins once and has done with its sin, for action is a mode of purification. Nothing remains then but the recollection of a pleasure or the luxury of a regret. The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful. It has been said that the great events of the world take place in the brain. It is in the brain, and the brain only, that the great sins of the world take place also. You, Mr. Gray, you yourself, with your rose-red youth and your rose-white boyhood, [DORIAN’S BREATHING BEGINS TO GET LOUD AND FAST.] you have had passions that have made you afraid, thoughts that have filled you with terror, day-dreams and sleeping dreams whose mere memory might stain your cheek with shame—

[[*MUSIC: THROUGH HENRY’S LAST SENTENCE, THE PIANO IS AUGMENTED WITH LONG STRING NOTES SIMILAR TO THOSE FROM BASIL’S EARLIER DESCRIPTION OF DORIAN, BUT WITHOUT THE SPACE BETWEEN THEM. THE STRINGS REPLACE THE PIANO ENTIRELY AS DORIAN BEGINS SPEAKING.*]]

**DORIAN:** [OVERWHELMED, SHAKING, AND BREATHLESS.] Stop! [SHAKY INHALE.] Stop, you bewilder me! I-I don't know what to say. The-there is some answer to you, but I cannot find it. Do-don't speak! Let me think. Or-or, rather, let me try *not* to think. [HE TAKES A FEW MINUTES TO BREATHE IRREGULARLY, TRYING TO COMPOSE HIMSELF.] Basil, I’m tired of standing. [FIRMER, OVERPOWERING THE SHAKINESS.] Yes, I must go out and sit in the garden. The air is stifling here.

[SFX: THE DAIS CREAKS AS DORIAN MOVES.]

**BASIL:** [MOSTLY OBLIVIOUS TO DORIAN’S STATE.] My dear fellow, I-I’m-I’m so sorry! When I am painting, I can't think of anything else. But you never sat better. You were perfectly still. And I have caught the effect I wanted—the half-parted lips and the bright look in your eyes. I don't know what Harry has been saying to you, but he has certainly made you have the most wonderful expression. I suppose he has been paying you compliments. You mustn't believe a word that he says.

[[*MUSIC: OVER THE COURSE OF BASIL’S WORDS, THE MUSIC DIES AWAY TO NOTHING.*]]

**DORIAN:** [SWALLOWS, HIS VOICE STILL SHAKY.] He has certainly not been paying me any compliments. Perhaps that is why I don't believe anything he has told me.

**HENRY:** [DISMISSIVE.] You know you believe it all. I will go out to the garden with you. It is horribly hot in the studio.

**DORIAN:** [STILL SHAKY.] Certainly, Lord Henry. I shall meet you there.

[SFX: DORIAN’S FOOTSTEPS FADE AWAY AS HE WALKS TO THE GARDEN.]

**HENRY:** Basil, let us have something iced to drink. Something with strawberries in it!

**BASIL:** Certainly, Harry. Just touch the bell, and when Parker comes I will tell him what you want. I’ve got to work up this background, so I will join you later on. Don't keep Dorian too long. I have never been in better form for painting than I am today. This is going to be my masterpiece! It *is* my masterpiece as it stands.

[SFX: A CALL BELL DINGS AS HENRY RINGS FOR PARKER. HIS FOOTSTEPS FADE INTO THE DISTANCE AS BASIL RESUMES PAINTING.]

EXT: GARDEN.

[SFX: BIRDSONG FILLS THE GARDEN AND DISTANT SOUNDS OF LONDON, SUCH AS PASSING HORSE AND CARRIAGES, OCCASIONALLY DISTURB THE ILLUSION OF ISOLATION.]

**DORIAN:** [TAKES A NUMBER OF DEEP, CALMING BREATHS. THEN, SPEAKING TO HIMSELF.] Keep calm. Just… Smell the flowers. [LONG INHALE.]

**HENRY:** [NOT LOUD, BUT EXTREMELY OUT OF NOWHERE.] You’re quite right to do that.

**DORIAN:** [STARTLED INHALE.] Lord Henry! [FAKE LAUGH.] I didn’t hear your approach!

**HENRY:** Hm. Yes, nothing can cure the soul but the senses, just as nothing can cure the senses but the soul.

**DORIAN:** [ANXIOUS LAUGH, STILL VERY SHAKY.]

**HENRY:** Come. Join me in the shade. Look, Parker has brought out the drinks and if you stay any longer in this glare, you will be quite spoiled and Basil will never paint you again. [MORE SOFTLY, IN TONE AND VOLUME.] You really must not allow yourself to become sunburnt. It would be… Unbecoming.

[SFX: GRASS RUSTLES AS THEY WALK TO THE SHADE.]

**DORIAN:** [NERVOUS.] What can it matter?

**HENRY:** It should matter *everything* to you, Mr. Gray.

**DORIAN:** Why?

[[*MUSIC: LONG STRING NOTES RESUME BEHIND HENRY’S WORDS.*]]

**HENRY:** [PRURIENTLY ADMIRING.] Because you have the most marvellous youth. And youth is the one thing worth having.

**DORIAN:** I don't feel that, Lord Henry.

**HENRY:** No, you don't feel it *now*. Some day, when you are old and wrinkled and ugly, when thought has seared your forehead with its lines and passion branded your lips with its hideous fires, you *will* feel it, and you will feel it terribly. [PAUSE.] Now, wherever you go, you charm the world. Will it always be so? You have a wonderfully beautiful face, Mr. Gray. Oh, don't frown. You have. And beauty is a form of genius—is higher, indeed, *than* genius, as it needs no explanation. It is of the great facts of the world, like sunlight or spring-time or the reflection in dark waters of that silver shell we call the moon. It cannot be questioned. It has its divine right of sovereignty. It makes princes of those who have it. You smile? Ah! [TRAILING OFF INTO A SUGGESTIVE CHUCKLE.]

**DORIAN:** [NERVOUS LAUGH.]

**HENRY:** [WITH THE LOWERED, INTIMATE VOICE OF SOMEONE SITTING VERY CLOSE.] People say sometimes that beauty is only superficial. That may be so, but at least it is not so superficial as thought is. To me, beauty is the wonder of wonders. It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. [PAUSES TO LOOK, THEN SPEAKS BREATHILY.] *Yes*, Mr. Gray, the gods have been good to you. But what the gods give, they quickly take away. You have only a few years in which to live *really*, perfectly and fully. [[*MUSIC: HIGHER STRING NOTES LAYER ON TOP OF THE EXISTING MELODY, THEN THE PIANO CREEPS IN AS WELL.*]] When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it and then you will suddenly discover that there are no triumphs left for you. Or have to content yourself with those mean triumphs that the memory of your past will make more bitter than defeats. [[*MUSIC: WITH THOSE LAST WORDS, DISSONANCE CREEPS INTO THE STRING HARMONIES.*]] Every month as it wanes brings you nearer to something dreadful. Time is jealous of you, Dorian. You will become sallow, hollow-cheeked and dull-eyed. [[*MUSIC: THE STRINGS FADE INTO A DULL, OFF-KEY NOTE BEFORE REGAINING SOME OF THE ENERGY BUT REMAINING OFF-KEY.*]] You will suffer horribly… Ah! [URGENTLY.] Realise your youth while you have it! Don't squander the gold of your days, listening to the tedious, trying to improve the hopeless failure, or giving away your life to the ignorant, the common, and the vulgar. These are the sickly aims, the false ideals, of our age. Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations. Be afraid of nothing… The moment I met you I saw that you were quite unconscious of what you really are, of what you really might be.The pulse of joy that beats in us at twenty becomes sluggish. Our limbs fail, our senses rot. We degenerate into hideous puppets [DORIAN’S BREATHING BECOMES AUDIBLE PANTING, SHAKEN AND DISTRAUGHT.], haunted by the memory of the passions of which we were too much afraid, and the exquisite temptations that we had not the courage to yield to. Youth! Youth! There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth!

**DORIAN:** [CONTINUES PANTING. HE TRIES TO CATCH HIS BREATH AND HAS A COUPLE FALSE STARTS AT ACTUAL WORDS, BUT NEVER MANAGES TO SAY ANYTHING.]

**BASIL:** [FROM INSIDE THE STUDIO.] Gentlemen! [PROUD.] I’m finished. Come in! The light is quite perfect. You can bring your drinks.

**DORIAN:** [SHAKEN AND HESITANT.] W-we should— [HE SWALLOWS HARD.]

**HENRY:** [CUTTING HIM OFF WITH A STATEMENT OF ABSOLUTE FACT.] You are glad to have met me, Mr Gray.

**DORIAN:** Yes, I am glad *now*. I wonder shall I always be glad?

**HENRY:** [BACK TO HENRY’S NORMAL LACK OF CARE OR SERIOUSNESS.] Always! That is a dreadful word. It makes me shudder when I hear it. Women are so fond of using it. They spoil every romance by trying to make it last forever. It is a meaningless word, too. The only difference between a caprice and a lifelong passion is that the caprice lasts a little longer. And yes, we *should* join Basil.

[SFX: GRASS RUSTLES AS THEY WALK.]

INT: BASIL’S STUDIO.

[SFX: DORIAN AND HENRY ENTER WITH FOOTSTEPS ON HARD FLOOR. BIRDS CAN STILL BE HEARD IN THE BACKGROUND, BUT MORE DISTANTLY.]

**BASIL:** [EXCITED.] Ah, finally! Come! Come look! It’s quite finished.

[SFX: HENRY APPROACHES WITH A FEW LAST FOOTSTEPS.]

**HENRY:** [HENRY ONLY TAKES A MOMENT TO EXAMINE IT, THEN PRONOUNCES HIS JUDGEMENT OF ITS MERITS WITH VERY LITTLE ENTHUSIASM.] My dear fellow, I congratulate you most warmly. It is the finest portrait of modern times. Mr. Gray, come over and look at yourself.

[SFX: DORIAN APPROACHES.]

**BASIL:** Yes! Come and see for yourself. And you have sat splendidly today. I am awfully obliged to you.

**HENRY:** Well, that is entirely due to me, isn’t it, Mr. Gray?

[SFX: DORIAN SEES THE PAINTING AND TAKES SEVERAL SHAKING BREATHS AS HE TAKES THE LAST FEW STEPS TO APPROACH IT.]

**HENRY:** Uh, Mr. Gray?

[SFX: WITH A DEEP BREATH FROM DORIAN, THE REST OF THE STUDIO FADES AWAY AND DORIAN’S BREATH BEGINS TO ECHO AS IF HE IS IN A CONTAINED CHAMBER. AS HE TAKES IN THE PICTURE, HIS BREATHING BEGINS TO SPEED UP.]

[[*MUSIC: LOW PLUCKED STRINGS FORM A FOUNDATION WITH HIGHER PLUCKED STRINGS ACCENTING. THESE ARE MUCH MORE SPACED OUT THAN PREVIOUS MUSICAL SECTIONS.*]]

**BASIL:** [MUFFLED, AS IF HEARD THROUGH A SOLID, CLOSED DOOR.] Don’t you like it?

**DORIAN:** [HIS BREATHING SPEEDS UP AS HE CONTINUES TO ADMIRE THE PICTURE.]

**BASIL:** [QUIETER, TO HENRY.] I don’t understand why he doesn’t answer.

**HENRY:** [ALSO MUFFLED.] Of course he likes it!

[[*MUSIC: CUTS OFF WITH THE SOUND OF A SINGLE PLUCKED STRING.*]]

[SFX: THE ‘BUBBLE’ POPS AND THE SOUNDS OF BIRDS RETURN. DORIAN IS STILL BREATHING HEAVILY, THOUGH IT IS LESS NOTICEABLE.]

**HENRY:** [NO LONGER MUFFLED.] Who wouldn't like it? It is one of the greatest things in modern art. I will give you anything you like to ask for it. I must have it.

**BASIL:** It is not *my* property, Harry.

**HENRY:** Whose property is it?

**BASIL:** Dorian’s, of course.

**HENRY:** He is a lucky fellow.

**DORIAN:** [QUIETLY, TO HIMSELF.] How sad it is….

**BASIL:** What’s that, Dorian?

**DORIAN:** [GAINING BOTH VOLUME AND CONFIDENCE, THOUGH STILL A BIT BREATHLESS.] I said how sad it is! I shall grow old and horrible and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young! It will never be older than this particular day of June. [A QUICK BREATH.] If it were only the other way! If it were *I* who was always to be young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that—[A HALF LAUGH.] for that—I would give *everything*! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my *soul* for that!

[[*MUSIC: AS DORIAN SEIZES UPON THE IDEA OF THE PICTURE GROWING OLD, THE STACCATO STRINGS WITH INTERSPERSED LONG NOTES RETURN.*]]

**HENRY:** You would hardly care for such an arrangement, Basil. [LAUGHING.] It-It would be rather hard lines on your work!

**BASIL:** I should object very strongly, Harry…

**DORIAN:** [THE MOST FORCEFULLY HE’S ADDRESSED ANYONE SO FAR.] I believe you would, Basil. You like your art better than your friends. I am no more to you than a green bronze figure. Hardly as much, I dare say.

**BASIL:** [HURT] Dorian…

**DORIAN:** How long will you like me? Till I have my first wrinkle, I suppose. I know, now, that when one loses one's good looks, whatever they may be, one loses everything. Your picture has taught me that. Lord Henry Wotton is perfectly right. Youth is the only thing worth having. When I find that I am growing old, I shall kill myself.

**BASIL:** [DISTRAUGHT.] Dorian! Dorian! Don't talk like that. I have never had such a friend as you, and I shall never have such another. You are not jealous of material things, are you? You, who are finer than any of them!

**DORIAN:** [ANGRY.] I am jealous of *everything* whose beauty does not die. I am jealous of the portrait you have painted of *me*. Why should *it* keep what I must lose? Every moment that passes *takes* something from me and *gives* something to it. [NOW IN TEARS.] Oh, if it were only the other way! If the picture could change, and I could always be what I am now! Why did you paint it? It will mock me someday—mock me horribly! [ANGRY BREATHING.]

[[*MUSIC: TRAILS OFF WITH DORIAN’S LAST SENTENCE.*]]

**BASIL:** This is *your* doing, Henry.

**HENRY:** This is the *real* Dorian Gray. That is all.

**BASIL:** No… [ANGRY AND HEARTBROKEN.] No, Harry! I can't quarrel with my two best friends at once! But between you both, you have made me hate the finest piece of work I’ve ever done. And I will destroy it. What is it but canvas and colour? I will not let it come across our three lives and mar them.

**DORIAN:** [SUDDEN PANIC.] Don’t! Basil, don’t! I-it would be murder!

**BASIL:** [BITTER.] I am glad you appreciate my work at last, Dorian. I never thought you would.

**DORIAN:** [AN ABRUPT CHANGE FROM HIS EARLIER ANGER TO A BREATHLESS AWE.] Appreciate it? Basil, I am in love with it. It is a part of myself. I feel that!

**BASIL:** [HAS NOT MOVED BEYOND HIS EARLIER ANGER.] Well, as soon as you are dry, you shall be varnished and framed and sent home. Then you can do what you like with yourself.

**HENRY:** [APART FROM THE STRONG EMOTIONS OF THE OTHERS.] What absurd fellows you both are… I much prefer such scenes on the stage… Speaking of which: Dorian, let us go to the theatre tonight. There is sure to be something on somewhere.

**BASIL:** [MUTTERING.] It is such a bore putting on one's dress-clothes. And, when one has them on, they’re so horrid.

**HENRY:** Yes. The costume of the nineteenth century is detestable. It is so sombre, so depressing. *Sin* is the only real colour-element left in modern life.

**BASIL:** You really must not say things like that before Dorian, Harry.

**HENRY:** [WRY.] Before which Dorian? The one wiping tears from his eyes. Or the one in the picture?

**BASIL:** Either.

**DORIAN:** [HE’S RETURNED TO HIS BASELINE DESIRE TO BE THE CENTRE OF ATTENTION AND SLIGHTLY UNCERTAIN TONE.] I should like to come to the theatre with you, Lord Henry. In fact, I feel I must come. And you *will* promise to talk to me all the time? No one speaks so wonderfully as you do.

**HENRY:** Ah! I have talked quite enough for today! But yes, come you shall; and you will come, too, Basil, won't you?

**BASIL:** I can't, really. I would sooner not. I have a lot of work to do.

**HENRY:** Well, then. You and I will go alone, Mr. Gray.

**DORIAN:** I should like that awfully.

**HENRY:** Come, Mr. Gray, my hansom is outside, and I can drop you at your own place. Good-bye, Basil. It has been a *most* interesting afternoon!

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS ON THE HARD FLOOR AS HENRY AND DORIAN BEGIN TO LEAVE.]

**BASIL:** [FORLORN.] Goodbye, Dorian.

**DORIAN:** Goodbye, Basil.

**BASIL:** [RAISING VOICE AS THEY LEAVE.] And Harry?

**HENRY:** [SHOUTING BACK FROM A DISTANCE.] Yes, Basil?

**BASIL:** Remember what I said earlier! What I asked of you!

**HENRY:** My dear Basil, I have already forgotten it!

**BASIL:** [ALMOST DESPERATE.] Well, I trust you!

**HENRY:** [LAUGHING AS HE FINALLY DISAPPEARS.] I wish I could trust myself!

[SFX: THE DOOR CLOSES BEHIND HENRY.]

**BASIL:** [SAD.] I shall stay with the real Dorian…

INT: HENRY’S LIBRARY.

[SFX: A FIRE CRACKLES. A GRANDFATHER CLOCK TICKS.]

**DORIAN:** [A BORED, ANNOYED SIGH.]

[SFX: THE GRANDFATHER CLOCK STRIKES 19:00. FOOTSTEPS ON HARD FLOOR APPROACH.]

**DORIAN:** [MUTTERING TO HIMSELF.] Ah, at last!

[SFX: THE DOOR OPENS.]

**DORIAN:** [ALMOST TO HIMSELF TO GAIN THE CONFIDENCE TO SAY IT.] How late you are, Harry!

**VICTORIA:** [LIGHTHEARTED TEASING.] I am afraid it is not Harry, Mr. Gray…

**DORIAN:** Hm? [SPUTTERING WITH CONFUSION AND EMBARRASSMENT.] I-I beg your pardon. I thought you were—

**VICTORIA:** [MATTER OF FACT BUT NOT AGGRESSIVE.] You thought it was my husband. It is only his wife. You must let me introduce myself. I know *you* quite well by your photographs. [ALMOST DISAPPROVING.] I think my husband has got seventeen of them…

**DORIAN:** [LOOKING FOR AN EXIT TO THIS CONVERSATION.] Not seventeen, Lady Henry?

**VICTORIA:** Well, eighteen, then. And I saw you with him the other night at the opera…

**DORIAN:** Ah, yes.

**VICTORIA:** Hm. I like Wagner's music better than anybody's. [SHOWING SOME HUMOUR.] It is so loud that one can talk the whole time without other people hearing what one says. That is a great advantage, don't you think, Mr. Gray?

**DORIAN:** Ah, I am afraid I don't think so, Lady Henry. I never talk during music—at least, during good music. If one hears bad music, it is one's duty to drown it in conversation.

**VICTORIA:** Ah, that is one of Harry's views, isn't it, Mr. Gray? I always hear Harry's views from his friends. It is the only way I get to know them! But you must not think I don't like good music. [LOSING HERSELF A LITTLE, RATHER THAN JUST TOYING WITH DORIAN.] I adore it, but I *am* afraid of it. It makes me too romantic. I have simply worshipped pianists—two at a time, sometimes, Harry tells me. I don't know what it is about them. Perhaps it is that they are foreigners. They all are, aren't they? Even those that are born in England become foreigners after a time. It is so clever of them, and such a compliment to art. Makes it quite cosmopolitan, doesn't it? You know, all these weeks of spending time with Harry and you’ve never been to any of my parties, have you, Mr. Gray? You *must* come. I can't afford orchids, but I spare no expense in foreigners. [BASHFUL LAUGH FROM DORIAN.] They make one's rooms look so picturesque…

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS ON HARD FLOOR APPROACH.]

**VICTORIA:** But here is Harry! [A BRIEF PAUSE AS SHE SHIFTS HER ATTENTION.] Harry, I came in to look for you, to ask you something—I forget what it was—and I found Mr. Gray here. We’ve had such a pleasant chat about music. We have quite the same ideas. [CORRECTING HERSELF ONCE HER BRAIN CATCHES UP TO HER WORDS.] No; I think our ideas are quite different. But he has been most pleasant. I am so glad I've seen him. No wonder you’ve been spending so much time with him lately.

**HENRY:** [NOT SOUNDING PARTICULARLY CHARMED.] I am charmed, my love, quite charmed.

[SFX: THEY SIMULTANEOUSLY AND PERFORMATIVELY KISS EACH OTHER ON THE CHEEK WITH A ‘MWAH’ SOUND.]

**HENRY:** So sorry I am late, Dorian. I went to look after a piece of old brocade in Wardour Street and had to bargain for hours for it. [BREATHY LAUGH FROM DORIAN.] Nowadays people know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

**DORIAN:** [TEASING.] Is that strictly true, Harry?

**HENRY:** [DISMISSIVE.] It was truth Dorian, as all good lies are. Besides, a gentleman should always be late on principle…The principle being that punctuality is the thief of time.

**DORIAN:** [DISAPPROVING.] Hm.

[AFTER A MOMENT THAT DIDN’T QUITE HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO BE AWKWARD BUT WAS HEADED THERE.]

**VICTORIA:** [A SUDDEN FAKE LAUGH FOR A CONVERSATIONAL EMERGENCY EXIT.] I am afraid I must be going. [FAKE HAPPY SIGH.] I have promised to drive with the duchess. Good-bye, Mr. Gray. Good-bye, Harry. You are dining out, I suppose? So am I. Perhaps I shall see you at Lady Thornbury’s…

[SFX: AS SHE TURNS TO LEAVE, HER FOOTSTEPS BEGIN ON THE HARD FLOOR AND A DOOR CREAKS AS IT IS OPENED AND CLOSED BEHIND HER.]

**HENRY:** I dare say, my dear, I dare say… Ugh.

**DORIAN:** [NERVOUS LAUGH.]

[SFX: HENRY SIGHS, TAKES OUT HIS CIGARETTE CASE, AND LIGHTS A MATCH.]

**HENRY:** [HOLDING THE CIGARETTE IN HIS MOUTH TO LIGHT IT.] Never marry a woman with straw-coloured hair, Dorian... [TAKES A FEW PUFFS.]

**DORIAN:** And why is that, Harry?

**HENRY:** [REMOVES CIGARETTE AND BLOWS SMOKE.] Because they are so sentimental.

**DORIAN:** But I *like* sentimental people…

**HENRY:** [NOISE OF DISREGARD.] Never marry at all, Dorian. Men marry because they are tired; women, because they are curious: both are disappointed.

**DORIAN:** I don't think I *am* likely to marry, Harry. I am too much in love. That is one of your aphorisms. I am putting it into practice, as I do everything that you say…

**HENRY:** [FOR ONCE, AT A MOMENTARY LOSS FOR WORDS. THEN SOMEWHAT QUIETER THAN USUAL.] With *whom* are you in love?

[[*MUSIC: SOFT PIANO.*]]

**DORIAN:** [BLUSHING.] With an actress…

**HENRY:** That is a rather commonplace debut.

**DORIAN:** You would not say so if you saw her, Harry.

**HENRY:** Who is she?

**DORIAN:** Her name is Sybil Vane.

**HENRY:** [UNIMPRESSED.] Never heard of her.

**DORIAN:** No one has. But people will someday, however. She is a genius.

**HENRY:** [WITH A LAUGH.] My dear boy, no *woman* is a genius. Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly. Women represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as men represent the triumph of mind over morals.

**DORIAN:** [TAKEN ABACK.] Harry, how can you?

**HENRY:** My dear Dorian, it is quite true. I am analysing women at present, so I ought to know. The subject is not so abstruse as I thought it was. I find that, ultimately, there are only two kinds of women: the plain and the coloured. The plain women are very useful. If you want to gain a reputation for respectability, you have merely to take them down to supper. The other women are very charming. They commit one mistake, however. They paint in order to try and look young. Our grandmothers painted in order to try and talk brilliantly. Rouge and esprit used to go together. That is all over now. As long as a woman can look ten years younger than her own daughter, she is perfectly satisfied. As for conversation, there are only five women in London worth talking to, and two of these can't be admitted into decent society. [COLDLY.] However, tell me about your genius. How long have you known her?

[[*MUSIC: WITH HENRY’S LAST FEW SENTENCES, THE PIANO TRAILS OFF TO NOTHING.*]]

**DORIAN:** [SULLEN.] About three weeks.

**HENRY:** And where did you come across her?

**DORIAN:** I will tell you, Harry, but you mustn't be unsympathetic about it. After all, it never would have happened if I had not met you. You filled me with a wild desire to know e-everything about life! For *days* after I met you, something seemed to throb in my veins. As I lounged in the park, or strolled down Piccadilly, I used to look at every one who passed me and wonder, with a mad curiosity, what sort of lives they led. Some of them fascinated me. Others filled me with terror. There was an exquisite poison in the air. I had a passion for sensations… Well, one evening about seven o'clock, I determined to go out in search of some adventure. I felt that this grey monstrous London of ours, with its myriads of people, its sordid sinners, and its splendid sins, as you once phrased it, must have something in store for me. I fancied a thousand things. The mere danger gave me a sense of delight. I remembered what you had said to me on that wonderful evening when we first dined together, about the search for beauty being the real secret of life. I don't know what I expected, but I went out and wandered eastward, soon losing my way in a labyrinth of grimy streets and black grassless squares. About half-past eight I passed by an absurd little theatre, with great flaring gas-jets and gaudy play-bills. A hideous man, in the most amazing waistcoat I ever beheld in my life, was standing at the entrance, smoking a vile cigar. He had greasy ringlets, and an enormous diamond blazed in the centre of a soiled shirt. [GLEEFULLY MOCKS THE COCKNEY ACCENT, MAKING HIS VOICE AS RASPY AS POSSIBLE.] ’Have a box, my Lord?' [REPRESSED CHUCKLE.] he said, when he saw me, and he took off his hat with an air of gorgeous servility. There was something about him, Harry, that amused me. He was such a monster. You will laugh at me, I know, but I really went in and paid a whole guinea for the stage-box. To the present day, I can't make out why I did so; and yet if I hadn't—my dear Harry, if I hadn't—I should have missed the greatest romance of my life. [HENRY BEGINS LAUGHING, AND DORIAN HATES IT.] I see you are laughing. It is horrid of you!

**HARRY:** [SUPPRESSING LAUGHTER.] I am not laughing, Dorian; at least I am not laughing at *you*. But you should not say the greatest romance of your life. You should say the *first* romance of your life. You will always be loved and you will always be in love with love. A [FRENCH PRONUNCIATION.] grande passion is the privilege of people who have nothing to do. That is the one use of the idle classes of a country. Don't be afraid. There are exquisite things in store for you. This is merely the beginning.

**DORIAN:** [SICK AND TIRED OF HENRY PATRONISING HIM.] Do you think my nature so shallow?

**HARRY:** [CALMLY.] No; I think your nature so deep.

**DORIAN:** [WILLING TO GIVE HIM A CHANCE.] How do you mean?

**HARRY:** My dear boy, the people who love only once in their lives are really the shallow people. What they call their loyalty and their fidelity, I call either the lethargy of custom or their lack of imagination. Faithfulness is to the emotional life what consistency is to the life of the intellect— simply a confession of failure. Faithfulness: I must analyse it some day. The passion for property is in it. There are many things that we would throw away if we were not afraid that others might pick them up. But I don't want to interrupt you. Go on with your story…

**DORIAN:** Well, I found myself seated in a horrid little private box, with a vulgar drop-scene staring me in the face… [BACKGROUND SOUNDS OF HENRY’S LIBRARY FADE AWAY.] I looked out from behind the curtain and surveyed the house. It was a tawdry affair, all Cupids and cornucopias, like a third-rate wedding-cake. The gallery and pit were fairly full, but the two rows of dingy stalls were quite empty and there was hardly a person in what I suppose they called the dress-circle. Women went about with oranges and ginger-beer, and there was a terrible consumption of nuts going on. It was all very depressing. I began to wonder what on earth I should do when I caught sight of the play-bill. And you would never guess it, Harry, but it was *Romeo and Juliet*! I must admit that I was rather annoyed at the idea of seeing Shakespeare done in such a wretched hole of a place. Still, I felt interested, in a sort of way. At any rate, I determined to wait for the first act. There was a dreadful orchestra that nearly drove me away, but at last the drop-scene was drawn up and the play began. Romeo was a stout elderly gentleman, with corked eyebrows, a husky tragedy voice, and a figure like a beer-barrel. Mercutio was almost as bad. They were both as grotesque as the scenery, and that looked as if it had come out of a country-booth. But *Juliet*! [SIGHS WITH INFATUATION.] Harry, imagine a girl, hardly seventeen years of age, with a little, flowerlike face, a small Greek head with plaited coils of dark-brown hair, eyes that were violet wells of passion, lips that were like the petals of a rose. She was the loveliest thing I had ever seen in my life. You said to me once that pathos left you unmoved, but that beauty, mere beauty, could fill your eyes with tears. I tell you, Harry, I could hardly see this girl for the mist of tears that came across me.

**SIBYL:** [PERFORMING ON THE STAGE WITH A SLIGHT ECHO. SHE IS INCREDIBLE. FULL OF PASSION]

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?

Deny thy father and refuse thy name.

Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love

and I’ll no longer be a Capulet.

‘Tis but thy name that is my enemy:

Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.

What’s Montague? It is nor hand nor foot

Nor arm nor face nor any other part

Belonging to a man. O be some other name.

**DORIAN:** [COMING IN OVER SIBYL, STARTING WITH “THOU ART THYSELF.”] And her voice—I never heard such a voice. You know how a voice can stir one. *Your* voice and the voice of Sibyl Vane are two things that I shall never forget. When I close my eyes, I hear them, and each of them says something different. I don't know which to follow.

**SIBYL:** [DORIAN PAUSES TO LET THIS FINISH WITHOUT TALKING OVER IT.]

What’s in a name? That which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet;

So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call’d,

Retain that dear perfection which he owes

Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,

And for that name, which is no part of thee,

Take all myself.

[SFX: AS DORIAN BEGINS SPEAKING AGAIN, THE SOUNDS OF HENRY’S LIBRARY FADE BACK IN, WITH THE CRACKLING FIRE AND TICKING CLOCK.]

**DORIAN:** [ALMOST ANGRY.] Why should I not love her? Harry, I *do* love her. She is everything to me in life. [SPEEDING UP.] Night after night I go to see her play. One evening she is Rosalind and the next evening she is Imogen. I have seen her die in the gloom of an Italian tomb, sucking the poison from her lover's lips. I have watched her wandering through the forest of Arden, disguised as a pretty boy in hose and doublet and dainty cap. She has been mad, and has come into the presence of a guilty king, and given him rue to wear and bitter herbs to taste of. She has been innocent, and the black hands of jealousy have crushed her reedlike throat. I have seen her in every age and in every costume. [CATCHES HIS BREATH.] Ordinary women never appeal to one's imagination. They are limited to their century. No glamour ever transfigures them. One knows their minds as easily as one knows their bonnets. One can always find them. There is no mystery in any of them! They ride in the park in the morning and chatter at tea-parties in the afternoon. They have their stereotyped smile and their fashionable manner. They are quite obvious. But an *actress*! How different an actress is, Harry! Why didn't you tell me that the only thing worth loving is an actress?

**HENRY:** [WITH MAYBE A QUARTER OF A LAUGH.] Because I have loved so many of them, Dorian.

**DORIAN:** [TUTS.] I wish now I had not told you about Sibyl Vane.

**HENRY:** [FIRM.] You could not have helped telling me, Dorian. All through your life you will tell me everything you do.

**DORIAN:** [DEFLATED.] Yes, Harry, I believe that is true. I cannot help telling you things. You have a curious influence over me. If I ever did a crime, I would come and confess it to you. You would understand me.

**HENRY:** [WITH A SIGH.] People like you—the wilful sunbeams of life—don't commit crimes, Dorian. But I am much obliged for the compliment, all the same. Now, tell me, like a good boy, [LURIDLY LOOKING FOR GOSSIP.] what are your actual relations with Sibyl Vane?

**DORIAN:** [SHOCKED.] Harry! Sibyl Vane is sacred!

**HENRY:** Oh, it is only the sacred things that are worth touching, Dorian. Why should you be annoyed? I suppose she will belong to you some day. When one is in love, one always begins by deceiving one's self, and one always ends by deceiving others. That is what the world calls a romance. You *know* her, at any rate, I suppose?

**DORIAN:** Of course I know her. On the first night I was at the theatre, the horrid old man came round to the box after the performance was over and offered to take me behind the scenes and introduce me to her. Oh, she was so shy and so gentle. There is something of a child about her. Her eyes opened wide in exquisite wonder when I told her what I thought of her performance, and she seemed quite unconscious of her power. I think we were both rather nervous. The old man stood grinning at the doorway of the dusty greenroom, making elaborate speeches about us both, while we stood looking at each other like children. He would insist on calling me [AGAIN AFFECTING A MOCKING COCKNEY ACCENT.] 'My Lord,' so I had to assure Sibyl that I was not anything of the kind. She said quite simply to me that I looked more like a prince and that she must call me Prince Charming.

**HENRY:** Miss Sibyl knows how to pay compliments…

**DORIAN:** Oh you don’t understand her, Harry! From her little head to her little feet, she is absolutely and entirely divine. Every night of my life I go to see her act, and every night she is more marvellous.

**HENRY:** Huh… That is the reason, I suppose, that you never dine with me now. I thought that you must have some curious romance on hand. You have; but it is not quite what I expected.

**DORIAN:** My dear Harry, we either lunch or sup together every day and I have been to the opera with you several times!

**HENRY:** You always come dreadfully late.

**DORIAN:** [WITH A HALF LAUGH.] Coming from you!

**HENRY:** [LAUGHS.]

**DORIAN:** I can't help going to see Sibyl play! Even if it is only for a single act. I get hungry for her presence and when I think of the wonderful soul that is hidden away in that little ivory body, I am filled with awe.

**HENRY:** You can dine with me tonight, can’t you Dorian?

**DORIAN:** I’m afraid not. Tonight she is Imogen.

**HENRY:** [ALMOST ANNOYED.] And when is she Sibyl Vane?

**DORIAN:** Never.

**HENRY:** I congratulate you.

**DORIAN:** How horrid you are! She is all the great heroines of the world in one. She is more than an individual. You laugh, but I tell you, she has genius. I love her, and I must make her love me. You, who know all the secrets of life, tell me how to charm Sibyl Vane to love me! I want to make Romeo jealous. I want the dead lovers of the world to hear our laughter and grow sad! I want a breath of our passion to stir their dust into consciousness, to wake their ashes into pain. My God, Harry, how I worship her! [COUGHS AWKWARDLY AS HE REALISES HE GOT A BIT CARRIED AWAY.]

[[*MUSIC: LONG STRING NOTES COME IN AS DORIAN DEMANDS THAT HENRY HELP HIM CHARM SIBYL.*]]

**HENRY:** [CHUCKLING.] And what do you propose to do?

**DORIAN:** I want you and Basil to come with me some night and see her act. I have not the slightest fear of the result. You are certain to acknowledge her genius. Then we must get her out of the old man’s hands. I shall have to pay him something, of course. When all that is settled, I shall take a West End theatre and bring her out properly. She will make the world as mad as she has made me.

**HENRY:** That would be impossible, my dear boy.

**DORIAN:** Yes, she will. She has not merely art, but she has personality also and you have often told me that it is personalities, not principles, that move the age.

**HENRY:** [HUMOURING HIM BUT ALSO A BIT AMUSED.] Well, what night shall we go?

**DORIAN:** Tomorrow! She is Juliet tomorrow.

**HENRY:** All right. The Bristol at eight o'clock; and I will get Basil.

[[*MUSIC: A LIGHT PIANO LINE IS ADDED OVER THE LONG STRINGS.*]]

**DORIAN:** Not eight, Harry, please. Half past six. We *must* be there before the curtain rises. You *must* see her in the first act, where she meets Romeo.

**HENRY:** Half past six! What an hour! It will be like having a meat tea, or reading an English novel. It must be seven. No gentleman dines before seven. Shall you see Basil between this and then? Or shall I write to him?

**DORIAN:** Dear Basil! I have not laid eyes on him for a week. It is rather horrid of me, as he has

sent me my portrait in the most wonderful frame, specially designed by himself, and, though I am a little jealous of the picture for being a whole month younger than I am, I must admit that I delight in it. Perhaps you had better write to him. I don't want to see him alone. He says things that annoy me… He gives me good advice.

[[*MUSIC: FADES AWAY TO NOTHING AS DORIAN IS SPEAKING.*]]

**HENRY:** People are very fond of giving away what they need most themselves. It is what I call the depth of generosity.

**DORIAN:** Oh, Basil is the best of fellows, but he seems to me to be just a bit of a Philistine. Since I have known you, Harry, I have discovered that.

**HENRY:** Basil, my dear boy, puts everything that is charming in him into his work. The consequence is that he has nothing left for life but his prejudices, his principles, and his common sense. The only artists I have ever known who are personally delightful are *bad* artists. Good artists exist simply in what they make, and consequently are perfectly uninteresting in what they are. A great poet, a really great poet, is the most unpoetical of all creatures. But inferior poets are absolutely fascinating. The worse their rhymes are, the more picturesque they look. The mere fact of having published a book of second-rate sonnets makes a man quite irresistible. He lives the poetry that he cannot write. The others write the poetry that they dare not realise.

**DORIAN:** I wonder is that really so, Harry? It must be, if you say it. And now I am off. Imogen is waiting for me. *Don't* forget about tomorrow. Good-bye, Henry.

**HENRY:** I shan’t forget, Dorian. Good bye!

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS ON HARD FLOOR ARE HEARD AS DORIAN LEAVES, OPENING AND CLOSING THE DOOR BEHIND HIMSELF. A FEW OTHER FOOTSTEPS ARE HEARD AS HENRY WALKS TO A NEARBY TABLE TO POUR HIMSELF A WHISKEY.]

**HENRY:** [SUBTLE CHUCKLE TO HIMSELF.] Dorian Gray in love. How fascinating… [TAKES A SWALLOW THEN MAKES AN AGGRESSIVE NOISE OF PLEASURE.]

EXT: A PARK IN LONDON.

[SFX: LOTS OF DUCKS QUACK IN THE BACKGROUND, WITH OCCASIONAL BIRD CHIRPS AND THE BUZZING OF INSECTS. THERE ARE SOFT FOOTSTEPS ON THE PARK PATH AS SIBYL AND JAMES WALK.]

**SIBYL:** Oh, Jim! I can’t contain myself any longer, I am so happy!

**JAMES:** [LAUGHS.] I can see that, Sibyl. Settle down!

**SIBYL:** I can’t!

**JAMES:** And why’s that?

**SIBYL:** I’m in love!

**JAMES:** Oh come on. You’re far too young to think of falling in love! [TEASING AS HE REALISES HER PLOY.] Oh, this is why you insisted on the walk— So mother can’t hear?

**SIBYL:** Perhaps! Well, yes. [SLIGHT LAUGH.]

**JAMES:** That explains it. Only posh people go to the park…

[SFX: THE DUCKS FADE OFF INTO THE DISTANCE AND OTHER BIRDS BECOME MORE NOTICEABLE.]

**SIBYL:** Nonsense!

**JAMES:** [AMUSED NOISE OF DISAGREEMENT.] So mother doesn’t know everything, then?

**SIBYL:** She knows some details, but not all. You know how she is, the moment I tell her everything, she will simply worry about the theatre—

**JAMES:** [INTERRUPTING.] Well yes—

**SIBYL:** [INTERRUPTING.] And she has already reminded me once today about Mr. Isaac and his generosity.

**JAMES:** Well, he has been considerate…

**SIBYL:** I know! [AFTER A MOMENT.] But he’s not a gentleman, Jim. I hate the way he looks at me… And I perform on his stage near every night! It is not exactly charity! Besides, love is more important than money!

[SFX: A CARRIAGE GOES PAST NEAR THEM.]

**JAMES:** [EXASPERATED.] Ugh, now you really are showing your age. Once I leave London, I really don’t know how you and mother will manage if you fall out of his favour.

**SIBYL:** We don't need him any more, Jim. Prince Charming rules life for us now.

**JAMES:** [STIFLING A LAUGH.] You what? Prince Charming?

**SIBYL:** [IGNORING HIS TEASING.] That’s what I call him.

**JAMES:** [UNDER HIS BREATH.] Christ. [NORMAL.] Ok but what’s his actual name?

**SIBYL:** I don’t know! He comes to—

**JAMES:** You don’t know!?

[SFX: THEY’VE NOW ENTERED A MORE POPULATED AREA OF THE PARK WHERE PEOPLE ARE TALKING AND CHILDREN YELLING IN THE BACKGROUND.]

**SIBYL:** He hasn’t yet revealed his real name. I think it’s quite romantic of him. He is a member of the aristocracy, I think.

**JAMES:** You think?

**SIBYL:** Yes, practically a prince, after all! What more do you want?

**JAMES:** He w– [SOFTER.] He will want to enslave you.

**SIBYL:** Then I don’t want to be free!

**JAMES:** Sibyl! [SIGH.] I want you to beware of him.

**SIBYL:** [QUIET.] To know him is to trust him.

**JAMES:** Sibyl! You are mad about him.

**SIBYL:** You dear old Jim, you talk as if you were a hundred. Someday you’ll be in love yourself, then you will know what it is. [SHE PAUSES BOTH FOR HIS RESPONSE AND TO LET A LOUD CARRIAGE PASS.] Oh, don’t look so sulky! Surely you should be glad to think that, though you are going away, you leave me happier than I have ever been before. Life has been hard for us both, terribly hard and difficult. But it will be different now. You are going to a new world and I have found one here! Ah, a bench. Let's sit down and see the smart people go by.

[SFX: A DOG BARKS.]

**SIBYL:** [PLAYFUL.] Wipe that look off of your face. You are such a grumpy bear! I know his soul, Jim. He has come to visit me every night after my performances—

**JAMES:** You what? W-without a chaperone?

**SIBYL:** [COYLY.] At first, mother was there… Then she was not..

**JAMES:** Sibyl! You foolish girl! Do you even know— [HE TAKES A BREATH TO COLLECT HIMSELF.] Do you even know his intentions?

**SIBYL:** [DISTRESSED.] Stop Jim! You mustn’t say anything against him. I love him.

**JAMES:** Yet you don’t even know his name!

**SIBYL:** He is Prince Charming. Don't you like the name?

**JAMES:** Oh–

**SIBYL:** If you only saw him, you would think he was the most wonderful person in the world! [SPEAKING MORE QUICKLY, EXCITED.] Some day you will meet him—when you come back from Australia. You will like him so much! Everybody likes him, and I–I love him!

**JAMES:** You’ve said…

**SIBYL:** I wish you could come to the theatre tonight. He is going to be there and I am to play Juliet. Fancy, Jim, to be in love and play Juliet! To have him sitting there! To play for his delight! To be in love is to surpass one's self. Poor dreadful Mr. Isaacs will be shouting 'genius' to his loafers at the bar! And it is all his, his only, Prince Charming, my wonderful lover, my god of graces.

**JAMES:** Well, he had better be so wonderful. If he harms you in any way…I shall kill him.

**SIBYL:** You are foolish, Jim, how can you say such horrible things? You don't know what you are talking about. You are… jealous and unkind—I just wish you would fall in love. Love makes people good and what you said was wicked.

**JAMES:** [A LITTLE HURT.] I know what I am about. Mother is no help to you. She doesn't understand how to look after you. [FRUSTRATED.] I wish now that I was not going to Australia at all! I have a great mind to pack the whole thing in. I would, if my articles hadn't been signed.

**SIBYL:** Oh, don't be so serious, Jim. You are like one of the heroes of those silly melodramas Mother used to be so fond of acting in. I’m not going to quarrel with you. [PAUSE.] And I know you would never harm anyone I love, would you?

**JAMES:** [SULLEN] Not as long as you love him, I suppose

**SIBYL:** Good. Because I shall love him forever.

**JAMES:** [SCEPTICAL.] Huh. And him?

**SIBYL:** Forever, too!

**JAMES:** He better.

**SIBYL:** [A NOT-QUITE GENUINE LAUGH.]

**JAMES:** [TRYING TO BRIGHTEN THE MOOD AGAIN.] Anyway, I had hoped you would save all your hugs and kisses for me!

**SIBYL:** Ah, but you don’t like being kissed! [LAUGH]

**JAMES:** [GOOD NATURED LAUGH]

INT: A COCKTAIL BAR.

[SFX: SOUNDS OF CONVERSATION FILL THE BACKGROUND, ALONG WITH CLINKING DISHES, GLASSES, AND SILVERWARE.]

**HENRY:** [TAPES A SIP OF CHAMPAGNE] Ah.

**BASIL:** How do you find the champagne, Harry?

**HENRY:** Hm… It is not a revelation, nor is it offensive… Oh, you really must have some Basil. I find that alcohol, if taken in sufficient quantities, can produce all the effects of drunkenness.

**BASIL:** [SHORT CHUCKLE.] No. I’m keeping a clear head for Dorian.

**HENRY:** [QUIET LAUGHTER.] So tell me Basil, have you heard *the news*?

**BASIL:** No… What is it? Nothing about politics, I hope. There is hardly a single person in the House of Commons worth painting. Although…

**HENRY:** [LOUDLY, TO INTERRUPT BASIL’S THOUGHT PROCESS.] Dorian Gray is engaged to be married.

**BASIL:** No. Impossible.

**HENRY:** [WATCHING BASIL’S REACTION WITH METAPHORICAL POPCORN.] It is perfectly true. He left my house but yesterday and some hours afterward, I received a telegram telling me just that.

**BASIL:** Well… [LONG, FRUSTRATED SIGH.] To whom?

**HENRY:** [NONCHALANTLY.] Oh, to some little actress or other…

**BASIL:** No, Dorian is far too sensible.

**HENRY:** Dorian is far too wise not to do foolish things now and then, my dear Basil.

**BASIL:** Marriage is hardly a thing that one can do now and then, Harry.

**HENRY:** [CHUCKLE.] Except in America! [THEN SERIOUSLY.] But I didn't say he was married. I said he was *engaged* to be married. There is a great difference. I have a distinct remembrance of being married, but I have no recollection at all of being engaged. I am inclined to think that I never *was* engaged.

**BASIL:** But think of Dorian's birth and position and wealth. It would be absurd for him to marry so much beneath him…

**HENRY:** Tell him that, Basil and he is sure to marry her– In fact, here he is now…

[SFX: DORIAN APPROACHES WITH FOOTSTEPS ON THE HARD FLOOR.]

**DORIAN:** My dear Harry, my dear Basil, you *must* congratulate me!

**BASIL:** [SOUNDING A LITTLE HURT.] So it’s true, Dorian? You’re engaged?

**DORIAN:** [SHORT LAUGH.] It is true, yes. I have never been so happy! Oh, of course, it is sudden—all really delightful things are. And yet it seems to me to be the one thing I have been looking for all my life.

**BASIL:** [SIGH.] I hope you will always be very happy, Dorian. But I don't quite forgive you for not having let *me* know of your engagement. You let *Harry* know…

**HENRY:** [WITH A JOVIAL LAUGH.] And I don't forgive you for being late for dinner!

[SFX: A CHAIR IS PULLED OUT FROM THE TABLE, DRAGGED ACROSS THE WOODEN FLOOR.]

**DORIAN:** [SITS DOWN WITH A NOISE.] There is not much to tell. What happened was simply this: after I left you yesterday evening, Harry, I dressed, had some dinner at that little Italian restaurant in Rupert Street you introduced me to, and went down at eight o'clock to the theatre. Sibyl was playing Rosalind. Of course, the scenery was dreadful and the Orlando absurd. But Sibyl! [HAPPY SIGH.] You should have seen her! When she came on in her boy's clothes, she was perfectly wonderful. She had never seemed to be more exquisite. As for her acting—well, you shall see her tonight. She is simply a born artist. I sat in the dingy box absolutely enthralled. I forgot that I was in London and in the nineteenth century. I was away with my love in a forest that no man had ever seen. After the performance was over, I went behind and spoke to her. As we were sitting together, suddenly there came into her eyes a look that I had never seen there before. [SHORT LAUGHS FROM HENRY ARE PEPPERED BETWEEN DORIAN’S SENTENCES.] My lips moved towards hers. We-we kissed each other. I can't describe to you what I felt at that moment. It-it seemed to me that all my life had been narrowed to one perfect point of rose-coloured joy. She trembled all over and shook like a white narcissus. Then she flung herself on her knees and kissed my hands.

**HENRY:** [DEVILISH SHORT LAUGH.]

**DORIAN:** [IN A LOWERED VOICE.] I feel that I should not tell you all of this, but I can't help it. Of course, our engagement is a dead secret. She has not even told her own mother. I don't know what *my* guardians will say. Lord Radley is sure to be furious. I don't care. I shall be of age in less than a year, and then I can do what I like. I have been right, Basil, haven't I, to take my love out of poetry and to find my wife in Shakespeare's plays? Lips that Shakespeare taught to speak have whispered their secret in my ear. I have had the arms of Rosalind around me and kissed Juliet on the mouth.

**BASIL:** [QUIETLY.] Perhaps you are right…

**HENRY:** At what particular point did you mention the word marriage, Dorian? And what did she say in answer?

**DORIAN:** [DEFENSIVELY.] My dear Harry, I did not treat it as a business transaction and I did not make any formal proposal. I told her that I loved her and she said she was not worthy to be my wife. Not worthy! Why, the whole world is nothing to me compared with her.

**HENRY:** Oh, women are wonderfully practical, much more practical than we are. In situations of that kind we often forget to say anything about marriage, and *they* always remind us.

**BASIL:** [ANGRY.] Don't, Harry. You have annoyed Dorian. He is not like other men. He would never bring misery upon any one. His nature is too fine for that.

**HENRY:** Dorian is never annoyed with me, are you Dorian?

**DORIAN:** [LAUGHS.] You are quite incorrigible, Harry; but I don't mind. It is impossible to be angry with you.

**BASIL:** [DEFEATED.] Ugh.

**DORIAN:** When you both see Sibyl Vane, you will feel that the man who could wrong her would be a beast, a beast without a heart. I cannot understand how any one can wish to shame the thing he loves. I love her. I want to place her on a pedestal of gold and to see the world worship the woman who is mine. Her trust makes me faithful, her belief makes me good. When I am with her, I regret all that you have taught me, Harry. I become different from what you have known me to be. I am changed, and the mere touch of Sibyl Vane's hand makes me forget you and all your wrong, fascinating, poisonous, delightful theories.

**BASIL:** [IMPRESSED NOISE.]

**HENRY:** And which theories are these?

**DORIAN:** Oh, your theories about life, your theories about love, your theories about pleasure. All your theories, in fact, Harry.

**HENRY:** [LOWER AND DARKER THAN USUAL. NOT ANGRY, BUT BROOKING NO ARGUMENT.] Pleasure is the only thing worth having a theory about.

**DORIAN:** I know what pleasure is. It is to adore someone.

**HENRY:** Eh, that is certainly better than being adored. Being adored is a nuisance. Women treat us just as humanity treats its gods. They worship us and are always bothering us to do something for them.

**DORIAN:** They create love in our natures. They have a right to demand it back.

**BASIL:** Yes, quite true.

**HENRY:** Nothing is ever ‘quite true'.

**DORIAN:** This is. You must admit, Harry, that women give to men the very gold of their lives.

**HENRY:** [PROBABLY ROLLING HIS EYES.] Ugh… Possibly, but they invariably want it back in such very small change. That is the worry. Women, as some witty Frenchman once put it, inspire us with the desire to do masterpieces and always prevent us from carrying them out.

**DORIAN:** [SHOCKED LAUGH.] Harry, you are *dreadful*! I don't know why I like you so much.

**HENRY:** You will always like me, Dorian. [PULLS A CIGARETTE OUT OF A CASE.] I represent to you all the sins [PUTS THE CIGARETTE IN HIS MOUTH AND STRIKES A MATCH. HE LIGHTS THE CIGARETTE WITH A PUFF.] you have never had the courage to commit.

**DORIAN:** What nonsense you talk, Harry! No, there is no time for cigarettes. Come now, let us go down to the theatre. When Sibyl comes on to the stage, you will have a new ideal of life. She will represent something to you that you have never known.

**HENRY:** [VERY APATHETIC ABOUT IT.] I have known everything, but I am always ready for a new emotion.

**BASIL:** [TUTS.]

**HENRY:** I am afraid, however, that, for me at any rate, there is no such thing. Still, your wonderful girl may thrill me. I love acting. It is so much more real than life.

[SFX: CHAIRS SCRAPE ACROSS THE FLOOR AS THE MEN STAND.]

**BASIL:** Come now, Harry, we’ll be late if we stand listening to your every passing thought all evening…

[SFX: THE SOUNDS OF THE BAR FADE AWAY.]

INT: THE THEATRE.

[SFX: THE AUDIENCE CLAPS AS A SCENE ENDS. THERE IS SOME BACKGROUND CHATTER FROM THE CROWD AND THE CREAKING OF WOOD AND RUSTLING OF CLOTH FROM WITHIN THE BOX SHARED BY DORIAN, HENRY, AND BASIL.]

**DORIAN:** Ugh, Harry, keep still!

**HENRY:** Oh, this seat is ghastly. Simply ghastly. What a place to find one’s divinity in…

**DORIAN:** When she acts, you will forget everything. Even these common rough people, with their coarse faces and brutal gestures, become quite different when she is on the stage.

**HENRY:** Looking at them one could only hope they become different…

**BASIL:** Don't pay any attention to him, Dorian. I understand what you mean [MORE CLOTH RUSTLES AS HENRY SHIFTS SOME MORE.] and I believe in this girl. Any one you love must be marvellous, and any girl who has the effect you describe must be fine and noble.

**DORIAN:** Thank you, Basil. I knew that you would understand me. Harry is so cynical, he terrifies me. You’ve made it through the first few scenes, I admit it is quite dreadful, but once the curtain rises again, you will see the girl to whom I am going to give all my life, to whom I have given everything that is good in me… Ah the curtain rises!

**BASIL:** Oh yes!

[SFX: THE AUDIENCE CLASPS]

**DORIAN:** [WITH HIS VOICE RAISED OVER THE APPLAUSE.] There she is!

**BASIL:** [ALSO OVER THE CROWD.] Oh Dorian, she is beautiful!

**HENRY:** [LEERING AND LOUD.] Charming! Quite charming…

[SFX: THE APPLAUSE AND AUDIENCE MURMURS DIE.]

**SIBYL:** [ON THE DISTANT STAGE. HER PERFORMANCE IS AWFUL. FLAT, JOYLESS, AND AWKWARD, NOTHING LIKE THE EARLIER PERFORMANCE. THE BEST THAT CAN BE SAID IS THAT SHE PROJECTS WELL ENOUGH THAT IT CAN BE HEARD CLEARLY.] Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much, Which mannerly devotion shows in this; For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch, And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

**HENRY:** [DRY.] Oh, dear…

**BASIL:** [WINCING FOR DORIAN.] Oh…

**DORIAN:** I don’t… I don’t understand.

**ACTOR:** [ALSO ON STAGE. THROUGH THE REST OF THE SCENE, SIBYL AND THE ACTOR ARE BEHIND THE CONVERSATION IN THE BOX.] Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

**SIBYL:** [STILL VERY BAD.] Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

[SFX: SOUNDS FROM THE BOX INDICATE THAT HENRY IS RESTLESS AGAIN. THE AUDIENCE BEGINS TO CHAT AMONGST THEMSELVES.]

**HENRY:** She is quite beautiful, Dorian, but she can't act. Let us go.

**ACTOR:** O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do; They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

**DORIAN:** [HUMILIATED, BITTER, AND QUIET.] I am going to see the play through. I am awfully sorry that I have made you waste an evening, Harry. [DEEP SIGH.] I apologise to both of you.

**BASIL:** My dear Dorian, I should think Miss Vane was ill. We will come some other night, yes?

**SIBYL:** Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

**DORIAN:** I wish she were ill! She has transformed entirely. I don’t know who this wretched actress is before us.

**ACTOR:** Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take. Thus from my lips, by yours, my sin is purged.

**BASIL:** Don't talk like that about any one you love, Dorian. Love is a more wonderful thing than art…

**HENRY:** [SLIGHTLY LOWERED VOICE] Good heavens, my dear boy, don't look so tragic! The secret of remaining young is never to have an emotion that is unbecoming. Come to the club with Basil and myself. We will smoke cigarettes and drink to the beauty of Sibyl Vane. She *is* beautiful. What more can you want?

**SIBYL:** Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

**ACTOR:** Sin from thy lips? O trespass sweetly urged! Give me my sin again.

**DORIAN:** Go away, Harry! I want to be alone. [BEGINNING TO CRY.] Basil, you must go too.

**BASIL:** Dorian—

**DORIAN:** Can’t you see that my heart is breaking?

**SIBYL:** You kiss by the book.

**HENRY:** [FOR ONCE, HE SOUNDS SENSITIVE AND CARING.] Let us go, Basil. Come now…

INT: GREEN ROOM BACKSTAGE.

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS ECHO UP A WOODEN STAIRCASE AND A DOOR IS OPENED ROUGHLY. SIBYL SPEAKS AFTER A FEW MORE FOOTSTEPS ACROSS THE FLOOR.]

**SIBYL:** How badly I acted tonight Dorian!

**DORIAN:** [NOT QUITE VIOLENTLY SPOKEN.] Horribly! Horribly! It was dreadful. Are you ill?

**SIBYL:** Dorian…

**DORIAN:** You have no idea what it was. You have no idea what I suffered!

**SIBYL:** Dorian! You should have understood. But you understand now, don't you?

**DORIAN:** Understand what?

**SIBYL:** [SMILING.] Why I was so bad tonight. Why I shall always be bad. Why I shall never act well again.

**DORIAN:** You *are* ill, I suppose. When you are ill, you shouldn't act. You make yourself ridiculous. My friends were bored. *I* was bored.

**SIBYL:** [NOT REALLY LISTENING TO HIM.] Dorian, before I knew you, acting was the one reality of my life. It was only in the theatre that I lived. I thought that it was all true. I was Rosalind one night and Portia the other. The joy of Beatrice was my joy, and the sorrows of Cordelia were mine also. I believed in everything. The common people who acted with me seemed to me to be godlike. The painted scenes were my world. I knew nothing but shadows and I thought them real. You came—oh, my beautiful love!—and you freed my soul from prison. You taught me what reality really is. Tonight, for the first time in my life, I saw through the hollowness, the sham, the silliness of the empty pageant in which I had always played. Tonight, for the first time, I became conscious that the Romeo was hideous, and old, and painted, that the moonlight in the orchard was false, that the scenery was vulgar, and that the words I had to speak were unreal, were not my words, were not what I wanted to say. You had brought me something higher, something of which all art is but a reflection. You had made me understand what love really is. My love! Prince Charming! Prince of life! I’ve grown sick of shadows. You are more to me than all art can ever be.

**DORIAN:** Sibyl—

**SIBYL:** When I came on tonight, I could not understand how it was that everything had gone from me. I thought that I was going to be wonderful. I found that I could do nothing. Suddenly it dawned on my soul what it all meant. The knowledge was exquisite to me. I heard them hissing, and I smiled. What could they know of love such as ours? Take me away, Dorian—take me away with you, where we can be quite alone. I hate the stage. I might mimic a passion that I do not feel, but I cannot mimic one that burns me like fire. Oh, Dorian, you understand now what it signifies? Even if I could do it, it would be profanation for me to play at being in love. You have made me see that.

**DORIAN:** [QUIET.] Sibyl. You have killed my love.

**SIBYL:** [LAUGHING IN DISBELIEF AS SHE SPEAKS.] What?

[[*MUSIC: VERY LOW, PLUCKED STRINGS NOTES. EVENTUALLY OCCASIONAL HIGH PLUCKED NOTES ALSO SOUND.*]]

**DORIAN:** Yes. [FIRMER] Yes. you have killed my love. You used to stir my imagination. Now you don't even stir my curiosity. You simply produce no effect. I loved you because you were marvellous, because you had genius and intellect, because you realised the dreams of great poets and gave shape and substance to the shadows of art. You have thrown it all away. You are shallow and stupid. My God! How mad I was to love you! What a fool I have been! You are nothing to me now. I will never see you again. I will never think of you. I will never mention your name. You don't know what you were to me, once. Why, once… Oh, I can't bear to think of it! [[*MUSIC: A HIGH PITCHED RINGING NOTES JOIN IN, BUT ARE DISSONANT.*]] I wish I had never laid eyes upon you! You have spoiled the romance of my life. How little you can know of love, if you say it mars your art! Without your art, you are nothing. I would have made you famous, splendid, magnificent. The world would have worshipped you and you would have borne my name. What are you now? A third-rate actress with a pretty face!

**SIBYL:** [TREMBLING.] You are not serious Dorian? You’re acting!

**DORIAN:** I would leave the acting to you, were you not so bad at it!

**SIBYL:** [DESPERATE] Dorian! Dorian! [SHE GRABS HIM WITH A RUSTLE OF CLOTH.]

**DORIAN:** Let go of me!

[SFX: THEY STRUGGLE.]

**SIBYL:** Dorian, please no!

**DORIAN:** [CONTINUING TO STRUGGLE TO BE FREE OF HER.] Let… [HE PUSHES HER AND SHE FALLS TO THE FLOOR WITH A THUD.] GO!

[[*MUSIC: THE MUSIC DIES OUT.*]]

**SIBYL:** [CRYING QUIETLY TO HERSELF.] Dorian, Dorian, don’t leave me!

**DORIAN:** [CATCHING HIS BREATH.]

**SIBYL:** [LOUDER, CRYING MORE OBVIOUSLY.] I am so sorry I didn't act well. I was thinking of you all the time. [SHE TRIES TO SUBDUE HER CRYING, AS IF TO PROVE SOMETHING TO HIM.] But I will try—indeed, I will try. It came so suddenly across me, my love for you. I think I should never have known it if you had not kissed me—if we had not kissed each other. Kiss me again, my love. No, don’t go away from me. I can't bear it. Oh, don't go away from me. My brother ... No; never mind. He didn't mean it. He was in jest.... But you, can't you forgive me for tonight? I will work so hard and try to improve. Don't be cruel to me, because I love you better than anything in the world. After all, it is only once that I have not pleased you. But you are quite right, Dorian. I should have shown myself more of an artist. It was foolish of me, and yet I couldn't help it. Oh, don't leave me, don't leave me! [OVER THE LAST FEW SENTENCES, HER CRYING HAS PICKED BACK UP AND WITH THIS SHE DISSOLVES INTO HYSTERICS.]

[[*MUSIC: SHORT, LOW STRING NOTES PEPPERED WITH EVEN LOWER PLUCKED NOTES.*]]

**DORIAN:** [WATCHING THIS AWFUL DISPLAY. QUIET. COLD] I am going. I have no wish to be unkind, but I can't see you again. You have disappointed me.

**SIBYL:** [CONTINUES WAILING.]

[SFX: FOOTSTEPS CROSS THE FLOOR AND HE LEAVES, SHUTTING THE DOOR BEHIND HIM.]

**SIBYL:** [TRIES AND FAILS TO GET HER CRYING UNDER CONTROL ENOUGH TO CALL OUT TO HIM.]

[[*MUSIC: ENDS.*]]

INT: DORIAN GRAY’S HOME.

[SFX:RAIN FALLS AS A DOOR IS OPENED AND FOOTSTEPS ECHO ON A HARD FLOOR.]

**DORIAN:** [ECHOING IN A FOYER. THE FOOTSTEPS CONTINUE AS DORIAN WALKS AROUND.] Home at long last… Hm, a little dark. [SLIGHT RUMBLE OF THUNDER.] Is it that… Victor? [BEAT THEN STILL WITH A RAISED VOICE.] Victor are you still awake? [FULL CRACK OF THUNDER.] I had hoped for tea! I’ve had the most dreadful night, you see… [AFTER A MOMENT.] Victor? [SIGHS.] Well one would suppose even valets need to sleep… [NOT AS LOUD, HAVING GIVEN UP ON VICTOR ACTUALLY HEARING HIM.] Well, Victor, perhaps I can navigate my own home without your expertise. If I could only find the matches…

[SFX: AFTER A MOMENT OF FUMBLING AROUND WITH A DRAWER, DORIAN PULLS OUT AND STRIKES A MATCH.]

**DORIAN:** [TO SELF WHILE HE CONCENTRATES ON LIGHTING THE CANDELABRA] I know it was said this is a true antique… But what is the point of a candelabra… If not for lighting your way? There we are… [SATISFIED NOISE.] Ah, and there *I* am.

[[*MUSIC: BACK TO THE LOW, PLUCKED NOTES WITH OCCASIONAL HIGHER NOTES.*]]

**DORIAN:** [NOTICING SOMETHING, DORIAN WALKS OVER TO THE PAINTING WITH ECHOING FOOTSTEPS ON THE HARD FLOOR.] Hm…

**DORIAN:** [UNDER HIS BREATH.] Hm. What? [HE WETS HIS LIPS.] No… no, perhaps my eyes… [SLIGHT LAUGH.] Yet it remains, still. Basil did not paint me with such a horrid expression on my face…? And… No… He did not. He *would* not. And despite the fact: these lips, twisted in some [PAUSES, UNSURE OF THE RIGHT WORD.] cruel grimace [[*MUSIC: SHORT, HIGH BOWED STRING NOTES COME IN AND OUT, SLIGHTLY DISSONANT.*]] and the intensity of the eyes… [LOUDER, ALMOST NORMAL VOLUME.] Someone has altered it! This is not a mere fancy, this is the truth: it is horribly apparent!

[SFX: DORIAN BREATHES FURIOUSLY AS HE STORMS OUT OF THE ROOM, FOOTSTEPS ECHOING QUICKLY.]

**DORIAN:** [RAISED, ANGRY VOICE.] I say, Victor! Victor! Have you allowed any visitors? Basil, perhaps? [LOUDER.] Victor! Answer me! Or I shall—

[SFX: A WHOOSH OF EERIE SOUND ALMOST DROWNS OUT THE RAIN FOR A MOMENT.]

**DORIAN’S PORTRAIT:** [A LOW, CRUEL, MOCKING LAUGH. IT IS UNMISTAKABLY DORIAN. IT IS BREATHY, AS IF NOT QUITE ABLE TO MAKE FULL USE OF VOCAL CORDS.]

[SFX: DORIAN TAKES A STEP BACK AND KNOCKS SOMETHING OVER WITH A LOUD CLANG.]

**DORIAN:** [FRANTIC.] What? [AFTER THE LAUGH STOPS, HE TAKES A MOMENT TO LOUDLY CATCH HIS BREATH.] Surely… I did not hear such a thing?

[SFX: ANOTHER WOOSH.]

**DORIAN’S PORTRAIT:** [THE LAUGHS RETURNS, SHORTER THIS TIME, BUT LESS BREATHY.]

[[*MUSIC: INSTEAD OF LONG STRING NOTES, EACH NOTE IS BROKEN INTO A STRING OF RAPIDLY BOWED NOTES. MORE AND MORE LAYERS OF NOTES ARE ADDED AS DORIAN SPEAKS.*]]

**DORIAN:** [WHISPERED] Dear Lord… What did I just hear? [LOUDER] No! Do not ask the question or you shall hear it once more! [QUICK BREATH.] The painting… It has changed but it has not been altered! How did… Oh… Oh… My wish… My mad wish! That I myself might remain young, and the portrait grow old; that my own beauty might be untarnished, and the face on the canvas bear the burden of his passions and my sins; that the painted image might be seared with the lines of suffering and thought, and that I might keep all the delicate bloom and loveliness of my boyhood. Surely my wish has not been fulfilled? Such things are impossible…. And… And yet… [TO THE PAINTING, A LOUD, ANGRY WHISPER.] Do not look at me in such a way! [THEN QUIETER AFTER A FEW BREATHS.] And cruel!? But I have not been cruel, it was the girl’s fault! She had been shallow and unworthy and— Oh Lord… The way she cried… Why was I burdened with such a soul as hers? [A CALMING BREATH] I shall make amends. Yes, indeed, I shall resist temptation — ee gads I shall resist Lord Henry himself! [SHORT LAUGH.] I shall go back to Sibyl, apologise, marry her, and try to love her again. Yes. That is my duty. I-I see that now. I shall live a beautiful and pure life and you! You shall change that horrible expression and be as you once were! If not… I shall never look at you again. I shall not learn to loathe my own soul! [ANOTHER DEEP BREATH.] I shall cover you for now and rest. In the morning, I shall put everything right. Sibyl Vane… I shall love you again.

INT: DORIAN GRAY’S HOME.

[SFX: THE RAIN HAS STOPPED AND BIRDS ARE CHIRPING. HENRY KNOCKS FOUR TIMES ON THE DOOR.]

**HENRY:** [MUFFLED, THROUGH THE DOOR.] My dear boy, I must see you. Let me in at once. I can't bear your shutting yourself up like this.

[SFX: ANOTHER FOUR HEAVY KNOCKS ON THE DOOR.]

**HENRY:** [A VERY ‘MOM’ VOICE.] Dorian!

**DORIAN:** Fine, yes, Harry, I’m here.

[SFX: BEDSPRINGS CREAK AND BEDDING RUSTLES AS DORIAN GETS OUT OF BED. HIS FOOTSTEPS THUD ON THE FLOOR AS HE GOES TO OPEN THE DOOR AND LET HENRY IN.]

**HENRY:** Finally. [NOTHING IN HIS TONE EXPRESSES ACTUAL SORROW.] I am so sorry for it all, Dorian, but you must not think too much about it.

**DORIAN:** [SLIGHTLY COLDER TO HENRY THAN USUAL.] Do you mean about Sibyl Vane?

**HENRY:** Yes, of course. It is dreadful, from one point of view, but it was not your fault. Tell me, did you go behind and see her, after the play was over?

**DORIAN:** I did.

**HENRY:** Hm… I felt sure you had. Did you make a scene with her?

**DORIAN:** [UNABLE TO MAINTAIN THE COLDNESS.] I was brutal, Harry—perfectly brutal. But it is all right now. I am not sorry for anything that has happened. It has taught me to know myself better.

**HENRY:** Ah, Dorian, I am *so* glad you take it in that way! I was afraid I would find you plunged in remorse and tearing that nice curly hair of yours.

**DORIAN:** I have got through all that. I am perfectly happy now. I know what conscience is, to begin with. It is *not* what you told me it was. It is the divinest thing in us. Don't sneer at it, Harry—at least not before me. I want to be *good*. I can't bear the idea of my soul being hideous.

**HENRY:** A very charming artistic basis for ethics, Dorian! I congratulate you on it. But how are you going to begin?

**DORIAN:** By marrying Sibyl Vane.

**HENRY:** [DRAWS OUT THE WORDS AS HE REALISES DORIAN IS MISSING CONTEXT.] But my dear boy… [UNUSUALLY HESITANT.] Did you not read the letter I sent this morning?

**DORIAN:** No. I have not read it yet, Harry. I was afraid there might be something in it that I wouldn't like. You cut life to pieces with your epigrams and besides I have not long risen from bed—

[SFX: HENRY’S FOOTSTEPS ECHO ON THE HARD FLOOR AS HE DRAWS CLOSER TO DORIAN.]

**HENRY:** [INTERRUPTING BUT GENTLE.] Dorian. My letter—now, don’t be frightened—was to tell you that [PAUSE.] Sibyl Vane is dead.

AFTERWARD

[[*MUSIC: SOFT GUITAR NOTES WITH LOW, SUSTAINED STRINGS.*]]

**DAVID AULT:** You've been listening to a Shadows at the Door production. Dorian Gray was played by Jake Benson. Lord Henry Watton was played by David Ault. Basil Hallward was played by Karim Kronfli. Sibyl Vane was played by Ilana Charnelle. James Vayne was played by Andy Cresswell. Lady Watton was played by Erika Sanderson. The Butler was played by Mark Nixon. And Romeo was played by Alasdair Stuart. The Story was written by Oscar Wilde and adapted by Mark Nixon. The original score was composed and performed by Nico Vetessee. The production was by Mark Nixon. And the copyright is held by Shadows at the Door Publishing.

Join us next week for Act II…

[[*MUSIC: ENDS.*]]

**SIBYL:** And I know you would *never* harm anyone I love, would you?

**JAMES:** Not as long as you love him, I suppose.

**SIBYL:** Good! [BLOWS A RASPBERRY AT HIM.]

CAST

Dorian Gray Jake Benson

*A handsome, narcissistic young man in his early 20s. Softly spoken, enunciates well with a soft, masculine voice. Clearly of good upbringing. RP[[1]](#footnote-0) accent.*

The Painting Jake Benson

Lord Henry Watton David Ault

*An imperious aristocrat and a decadent dandy who espouses a philosophy of self-indulgent hedonism. He believes every word he says is witty and intelligent–the problem is that he is right. He is impeccably well spoken, speaking with a low and forever confident voice. Every word is deliberate and cuts like a knife. RP accent.*

Basil Hallward Karim Kronfli

*A deeply moral man, repressing his desires but unable to hide his infatuation with Dorian. A true romantic, not entirely at home in the same circles as Henry. Speaks as a gentleman would and although he is prone to more emotional outbursts, his speech is always clear. RP accent.*

Lady Victoria Watton Erika Sanderson

*An eccentric and slightly nervous woman in her mid 40s. She can hold her own in most company except that of her husband, who she often feels has the upper hand. RP accent.*

Sibyl Vane Ilana Charnelle

*A poor, beautiful actress in her late teenage years. Sibyl is excitable and good natured, but equally naive. Falling in love becomes her very identity. A slightly working class, southern English accent, less prominent when acting.*

James Vane Andy Cresswell

*A young, working class sailor. Being vulnerable does not come easy to him and it is easier to show his care for Sibyl with aggression than with tenderness. Southern, working class English accent.*

Actor Alasdair Stuart

*A young southern actor performing alongside Sibyl on stage.*

TRANSCRIPT BY: [EMORY COLVIN](https://twitter.com/nuclearalchemy) (TIPS: [ko-fi.com/emoryc](https://ko-fi.com/emoryc))

1. “Received Pronunciation,” also known as the “Queen’s English,” “BBC English,” or “Oxford English.” [See the British Library for more explanation.](https://www.bl.uk/british-accents-and-dialects/articles/received-pronunciation) [↑](#footnote-ref-0)