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

**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 [hemlockcreekprod.com](http://www.hemlockcreekprod.com), or follow them 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 PLAYING THE MELODY. IT STOPS AS DAVID BEGINS INTRODUCING THE RECAP, THEN SIMILAR CHOPPY STRINGS BEGIN AGAIN, BUT WITHOUT THE MELODY. GRADUALLY, HIGH NOTES JOIN THEM.*]]

**DAVID:** Previously, on The Picture of Dorian Gray:

**HENRY:** My dear fellow, I congratulate you most warmly. It is the finest portrait of modern times. Tell me, how often do you see Dorian Gray?

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

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

**BASIL:** Harry! *Don’t* spoil him.

**HENRY:** You have a wonderfully beautiful face, Mr. Gray. Oh, don't frown. You have. Ah! [URGENTLY.] Realise your youth while you have it! Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you!

**DORIAN:** [UNSTEADILY.] 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*!

**DORIAN:** [THE BACKGROUND IS NOISY WITH PEOPLE TALKING.] 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.

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

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

**SIBYL:** Dorian… You had made me understand what love really is.

**DORIAN:** I will never see you again. I will never think of you. I will never mention your name.

**SIBYL:** 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!

**SIBYL:** [CRYING.] Oh, don’t leave me, don’t leave me!

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

**DORIAN:** [RAISED, ANGRY VOICE.] Victor! Answer me! Or I shall—

**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 my wish has not been fulfilled? Such things are impossible…. And… And yet…

[[*MUSIC: ENDS.*]]

**DAVID AULT:** And now, the continuation…

[Timestamp: 5:03]

[[*MUSIC: SLOW, SAD STRINGS WITH OCCASIONAL PIANO PHRASES.*]]

EXT: DORIAN’S LIBRARY.

[SFX: BIRDS CHIRP IN THE BACKGROUND AS DORIAN PICKS UP A KNIFE WITH A SLIGHT CLATTER AGAINST THE PLATE.]

**DORIAN:** [WITH SATISFACTION.] Hm… Hm… Lovely.

[SFX: DORIAN PUTS THE KNIFE DOWN.]

**DORIAN:** Now is it the cream or the jam, first? I can never remember…

[SFX: PURPOSEFUL FOOTSTEPS ECHO ON THE HARD FLOOR. A DOOR OPENS AS BASIL ENTERS BRISKLY WITH A RESUMPTION OF FOOTSTEPS, NO LONGER ECHOING.]

**DORIAN:** [PLEASANTLY SURPRISED.] Basil!

**BASIL:** [A LITTLE OUT OF BREATH] Dorian!

**DORIAN:** Oh, do excuse me you’ve caught me having breakfast.

**BASIL:** [STILL A LITTLE OUT OF BREATH.] Dorian, I’m glad I’ve found you.

**DORIAN:** Well a man can often be found at the breakfast table when it is breakfast time, Basil.

**BASIL:** [DISCONCERTED] …Yes. Um… Quite right.

**DORIAN:** Victor let you in I suppose?

**BASIL:** [TRYING TO GET TO THE POINT] He did, yes. I called last night in fact but Victor said you were out with Lord Henry for the entire day. But I knew that would be impossible after what I’d read in The Globe about poor Sybil. I can’t tell you how heart-broken I am about the whole thing. And suicide, no less! I dare to know what you must suffer. [TRIES TO HIDE HIS HURT FEELINGS] I wish… [CLEARLY UPSET.] I wish you’d telegraphed me, Dorian. I passed a dreadful evening, half afraid that one tragedy had followed another—

[[*MUSIC: PERCUSSIVE STRING NOTES.*]]

**DORIAN:** [ALMOST LAUGHING.] Basil—

**BASIL:** [INTERRUPTING.] But where were you? Really? Did you go down and see the girl’s mother?

**DORIAN:** [BEMUSED.] Why ever would I do that?

**BASIL:** [SHOCKED.] W-what? I thought you’d want to—

**DORIAN:** No, I was in fact with Harry. He brought me the news, consoled me and then we went to this charming club of his as a matter of fact; they have the most exotic women there, let me tell you, they do-the things that they can do–

**BASIL:** [SLOW, AGAST, NOT BELIEVING WHAT HE’S HEARING.] You went to a *club*? [LONG PAUSE.] You went to the A Club before Sibyl Vane has even the quiet of a grave to sleep in? Why, man, there are horrors in store for that little white body of hers!

[SFX: DORIAN STANDS ABRUPTLY, SCRAPING THE CHAIR LEGS ACROSS THE FLOOR.]

**DORIAN:** [*NOW* HE’S UPSET.] Stop, Basil! I won’t hear it! You must not tell me about unpleasant things. What is done is done. What is past is past.

**BASIL:** You call yesterday the past?

**DORIAN:** It was the evening *before* yesterday if you must know, but what has the actual lapse of time got to do with it? It is only shallow people who require years to get rid of an emotion. A man who is master of himself can end a sorrow as easily as he can invent a pleasure. I don’t *want* to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them.

**BASIL:** Dorian, this is horrible! Something has changed you completely. You look exactly the same wonderful boy who, day after day, used to come down to my studio to sit for his picture. But… You were simple, natural, and affectionate then. You were the most unspoiled creature in the whole world. Now… Now, I don’t know what has come over you. You talk as if you had no heart, no pity in you. [ANNOYED INHALE.] It is all Harry’s influence. I see that.

**DORIAN:** I owe a great deal to Harry, Basil. More than I owe to you. You only taught me to be vain.

[[*MUSIC: STOPS AT “MORE THAN I OWE TO YOU.”*]]

**BASIL:** Well, I am punished for that, Dorian—or shall be some day.

**DORIAN:** I don’t know what you mean, Basil! I don’t know what you want. What *do* you want?

**BASIL:** I… I want the Dorian Gray I used to paint.

**DORIAN:** [SCOFFS, BUT THEN SPEAKS QUIETLY.] You are too late for that, Basil.

**BASIL:** [A SAD SIGH.] Is that really true?

**DORIAN:** You have not realised how I have developed. I was a schoolboy when you knew me. I am a man now. I have new passions, new thoughts, new ideas. I am different, but… You must not like me less, dear Basil. I am changed, but you must always be my friend. Of course, I am very fond of Harry. But I know that you are better than he is. You are not stronger—you are too much afraid of life—but you are better. And how happy we used to be together! Don’t leave me, Basil, and don’t quarrel with me. I am what I am. There is nothing more to be said. [SIGH] Come, sit, have breakfast with me.

**BASIL:** No… Thank you, I’ve eaten. [THINKS FOR A MOMENT.] I won’t speak to you again about this horrible thing, after today. I only trust your name won’t be mentioned in connection with it. The inquest is to take place this afternoon. Have they summoned you?

**DORIAN:** [DISINTERESTED.] No, they don’t know who I am. Or at least they don’t know my name.

**BASIL:** Surely she did?

**DORIAN:** Only my Christian name, and that I am quite sure she never mentioned to any one. She told me once that they were all rather curious to learn who I was, and that she invariably told them my name was Prince Charming. It *was* pretty of her. You must do me a drawing of Sibyl, Basil. I should like to have something more of her than the memory of a few kisses and some broken pathetic words.

**BASIL:** I will try and do something, Dorian. If it would please you. But you must come and sit for me yourself again. I can’t get on without you.

**Dorian:** I can never sit to you again, Basil. It is impossible.

**BASIL:** Nonsense! Do you mean to say you don’t like what I did of you? Where is it? Is this it, here? Why have you pulled the screen in front of it?

**DORIAN:** [WARNING.] Basil…

**BASIL:** Let me look at it. It is the best thing I have ever done. Do take the screen away, Dorian. It is simply disgraceful of your servant hiding my work like that. I felt the room looked different as I came in—

**DORIAN:** Basil! [ANNOYED SIGH.] My servant has nothing to do with it. *I* did it. I’m quite capable of arranging my own rooms.

**BASIL:** But why?

**DORIAN:** The light was too strong on the portrait.

**BASIL:** Too strong! Surely not, my dear fellow? It is an admirable place for it. Let me see it.

[SFX: BASIL WALKS OVER TO THE PICTURE.]

**DORIAN:** [ALMOST FIERCE] Basil! You must not look at it. I do not wish you to!

[[*MUSIC: VERY HIGH, SQUEAKY NOTES COME IN FRANTICALLY OVER THEIR WORDS. EVENTUALLY WITH THE LOW, SHORT STRING NOTES JOINING IN.*]]

**BASIL:** Not look at my own work! You are not serious. Why shouldn’t I look at it?

**DORIAN:** If you try to look at it, Basil, on my word of honour I will *never* speak to you again as long as I live. I am quite serious. I don’t offer any explanation, and you are not to ask for any. But, remember, if you touch this screen, everything is over between us.

**BASIL:** Dorian…

**DORIAN:** Don’t speak!

**BASIL:** [QUIET.] W–Of course I won’t look at it if you don’t want me to. [STRONGER.] But, really… It seems rather absurd that I shouldn’t see my own work, especially as I am going to exhibit it in Paris in the autumn…

**DORIAN:** Exhibit it? You want to *exhibit* it!? You told me a month ago that you would never do such a thing! [SUDDEN INHALE.] In fact! Ah ha! Harry said if I ever wanted a strange quarter of an hour, to ask you to why you wouldn’t exhibit your picture. He said you told him and it was a revelation!

[SFX: DORIAN TAKES A FEW STEPS FORWARD, STANDING *VERY* CLOSE TO BASIL.]

**DORIAN:** [LOW, SUGGESTIVE VOICE.] What was your reason for refusing to exhibit my picture, hm? [TEASING, ALMOST SEDUCTIVE.] We have each of us a secret, it seems. Let me know yours, and I shall tell you mine…

[[*MUSIC: ENDS.*]]

**BASIL:** [SWALLOWS AS HE TRIES TO STEADY HIS BREATHING.] Dorian, if I told you, you might like me less than you do.

**DORIAN:** [ALMOST A WHISPER] No, Basil, you *must* tell me. I think I have a right to know.

**BASIL:** If you wish me never to look at your picture again, I am content. [OFFERING FALSE CHEER.] I have always you to look at!

**DORIAN:** [STILL LOW.] No Basil, what is it, hm? [INTENSELY.] Was there something hidden? Something… Curious? Something of which… You dare not speak?

[[*MUSIC: AS DORIAN SPEAKS, SOFT PIANO NOTES COME IN WITH SUSTAINED STRINGS IN THE BACKGROUND.*]]

**BASIL:** You… You saw that?

**DORIAN:** [BREATHLESS.] I saw something in it. But you tell me… Tell me what I saw.

**BASIL:** [FRANTIC.] Dorian, I-I-I Need some space.

**DORIAN:** [CLOSE TO HIS NORMAL VOICE.] But of course…

[SFX: DORIAN TAKES A FEW STEPS BACK.]

**BASIL:** Thank you. [STEADIES HIMSELF.] Dorian, from the moment I met you, your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I was dominated, soul, brain, and power, by you. You became to me the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose memory haunts us artists like an exquisite dream. I worshipped you. I grew jealous of every one to whom you spoke. I wanted to have you all by myself. I was only happy when I was with you. When you were away from me, you were still present in my art, of course. I never let you know anything about this. It would have been impossible. You would not have understood it. I hardly understood it myself.

**DORIAN:** I see…

**BASIL:** But I knew that as I painted you, every flake and film of colour seemed to reveal my secret. I grew afraid that others would know of my idolatry. I felt, Dorian, that I had told too much, that I had put too much of myself into it. Then it was that I resolved never to allow the picture to be exhibited. Yes, I told Harry and he laughed at me, but I didn’t mind. Well, after a few days the thing left my studio, and as soon as I had got rid of the intolerable fascination of its presence, it seemed to me that I had been foolish in imagining that I had seen anything in it, more than that you were extremely good-looking and that I could paint. And so when I got this offer from Paris, I determined to make your portrait the principal thing in my exhibition. It never occurred to me that you would refuse. I see now that you were right. The picture cannot be shown. [SIGH.] You must not be angry with me, Dorian, for what I have told you.

[[*MUSIC: DIES OUT WITH BASIL’S ADMITTANCE THAT THE PICTURE CANNOT BE SHOWN.*]]

**DORIAN:** What have you told me? Simply that you felt that you admired me too much. And *that* is not even a compliment.

**BASIL:** It was not intended as a compliment. It was a–it was a confession. Now that I have made it, something seems to have gone out of me. Perhaps one should never put one’s worship into words.

**DORIAN:** [ANNOYED.] It was a very disappointing confession…

**BASIL:** Why, what did you expect? You didn’t see anything else in the picture, did you? There was nothing else to see.

**DORIAN:** I can’t explain it to you, Basil. And I must never sit for you again. There is something fatal about a portrait. It has a life of its own. You mustn’t talk about worship. It is foolish. You and I are friends, Basil, and we must always remain so.

**BASIL:** Yes… Yes, you’re right, of course. Well then, good-bye, Dorian. [FOOTSTEPS ON HARD FLOOR AS BASIL BEGINS WALKING AWAY.] I am sorry you won’t let me look at the picture once again. But that can’t be helped. I quite understand what you feel about it.

[SFX: A DOOR OPENS WITH A CREAK.]

**DORIAN:** Goodbye, sweet Basil, I’ll come have tea with you soon.

**BASIL:** Please do.

[SFX: BASIL CLOSES THE DOOR BEHIND HIM. HIS FOOTSTEPS ECHO FROM A DISTANCE AS HE LEAVES.]

**DORIAN:** [TO HIMSELF.] Poor Basil, you really have no idea do you? Well, I cannot permit the risk of discovery again.

[SFX: DORIAN WALKS OUT OF THE ROOM.]

**DORIAN:** [SHOUTING INTO AN ECHOING PART OF THE HOUSE.] Victor! Victor, come here at once! And bring me the keys to the attic.

INT: GIN BAR.

[[*MUSIC: CHOPPY STRING NOTES WITH INTERSPERSED LONGER NOTES. FADES OUT INTO THE BACKGROUND OF THE SCENE.*]]

[SFX: PEOPLE ARE TALKING WITH A PIANO PLAYING IN THE BACKGROUND. OCCASIONALLY DISHES AND TABLEWARE ARE HEARD. DORIAN’S FOOTSTEPS APPROACH.]

**DORIAN:** [PANTING A BIT.] I am so sorry, Harry,

**HENRY:** You’ve a healthy habit of making me wait, Dorian. Though of course I was late as well, just slightly less late than you!

[SFX: DORIAN PULLS OUT HIS CHAIR, STILL CATCHING HIS BREATH. HE SITS WITH A LOUD SIGH.]

**DORIAN:** [STILL OUT OF BREATH.] Yes, one day we shall be on time and it will cause the most outrageous scandal!

**HENRY:** Only the dull would consider such a thing scandalous, Dorian. A man who arrives on time tells the world he has nothing better to do! *That* is the scandal.

**DORIAN:** [AMUSED NOISE.] But really it is *entirely* your fault. That book you gave me so fascinated me that I forgot how the time was going.

**HENRY:** Yes, I thought you would like it.

**DORIAN:** I didn’t say I liked it, Harry. I said it fascinated me. There is a great difference.

**HENRY:** I’m pleased to see you have discovered that! And I’m glad it has taken your mind off things.

[SFX: THE PIANIST FINISHES THE SONG. THE CROWD APPLAUDS.]

**DORIAN:** My mind has been little place else, despite Basil’s best intentions…

**HENRY:** Our friend has been to see you, has he? Well yes, it was in all the morning papers after all…

**DORIAN:** Quite so. Do we have gin ordered?

**HENRY:** No, I’ll wave the girl.

**DORIAN:** Thank you. [EXCITED] Oh, but the book, Harry! Oh my, this *book*. The hero, the wonderful young Parisian in whom the romantic and the scientific temperaments are so strangely blended, has become to me a kind of prefiguring version of myself! And, indeed, the whole book seems to contain the story of my own life, written before I have lived it! [EXCITED HALF LAUGH.] I must buy more copies, placing a one in each room of my home!

[SFX: A CLANG OF GLASS AND A WOMAN LAUGHS UPROARIOUSLY IN THE BACKGROUND.]

**HENRY:** [CHUCKLE.] Exactly. I knew these pages would have to fall into your hands sooner or later, it was apparent to me shortly after our introduction.

**DORIAN:** [SHORT EXHALE.] I’m *so* grateful, Harry.

**HENRY:** And what of Basil? You spoke of his mood. I suppose he was *very theatrical* about recent events?

[SFX: THE PIANIST BEGINS PLAYING AGAIN.]

**DORIAN:** He was terribly upset about the news of Sybil, yes, and upset further at my own lack of despair.

**HENRY:** Ah, my dear boy, it has been *two days*!

**DORIAN:** Much as I said! The roses are not less lovely for all that has happened and the birds sing just as happily in my garden.

**HENRY:** Quite right. The one charm of the past is that it is the past.

**DORIAN:** Hm… Although… I confess: though it is not my fault that this thing has passed, like you said, it *has* prevented my doing what was right. To love her again. [PAUSE.] I remember your saying once that there is a fatality about good resolutions—that they are always made too late. Mine certainly were.

**HENRY:** Good resolutions are useless attempts to interfere with scientific laws. Their origin is pure vanity. Their result is absolutely nil. They give us, now and then, some of those luxurious sterile emotions that have a certain charm for the weak. That is all that can be said for them. They are simply cheques that men draw on a bank where they have no account. You must get this thought out of your mind.

**DORIAN:** Yes, you’re right, of course.

**HENRY:** In the present case, what is it that has really happened? Someone has killed herself for love of you. I wish that *I* had ever had such an experience. It would have made me in love with love for the rest of my life. The people who have adored me—there have not been very many, but there have been some—have always insisted on living on, long after I had ceased to care for them, or they to care for me.

**DORIAN:** [LAUGHING IN DISBELIEF.] Harry!

**HENRY:** Women never know when the curtain has fallen. They always want a sixth act, and as soon as the interest of the play is entirely over, they propose to continue it. You are more fortunate than I am. I assure you, Dorian, that not one of the women I have known would have done for me what Sibyl Vane did for you.

**DORIAN:** [CHEERED.] Hm… Again, you have made sense of the world to me, Harry. [SIGH.] But we will not talk again of what has happened. It has been a marvellous experience, that is all. I wonder if life has still in store for me anything as marvellous.

**HENRY:** Life has everything in store for you, Dorian. There is nothing that you, with your extraordinary good looks, will not be able to do.

**DORIAN:** You really think so?

**HENRY:** I know it. The coming years will be very good to you indeed…

[SFX: THE BAR FADES OUT.]

[[*MUSIC: SOFT PIANO NOTES OVER SUSTAINED STRINGS. FADES INTO NOTHING WITH A COUPLE OF BASS NOTES.*]]

EXT: STREETS OF LONDON.

[SFX: SLIGHT WIND CAN BE HEARD IN THE BACKGROUND. A DOG BARKS CLOSE BY. DORIANS FOOTSTEPS ON THE COBBLESTONE ARE HEARD AS HE WALKS.]

**BASIL:** [SHOUTING IN THE DISTANCE.] Dorian! Dorian!

**DORIAN:** Hm?

**BASIL:** [STILL IN THE DISTANCE] Hello there! Dorian!

**DORIAN:** [QUIET ANNOYED SIGH.]

[SFX: BASIL APPROACHES WITH FAST FOOTSTEPS.]

**BASIL:** [VERY OUT OF BREATH.] Dorian!

**DORIAN:** [DOING HIS BEST TO ACT PLEASANTLY SURPRISED.] Basil!

**BASIL:** [STILL TRYING TO CATCH HIS BREATH.] What an ex-extraordinary piece of luck! I have been waiting for you in your library ever since nine o’clock. Finally, I took pity on your tired servant and told him to go to bed, as he let me out. [FINALLY HE CATCHES HIS BREATH.] I am off to Paris by the midnight train, and I particularly wanted to see you before I left. I thought it was–I thought it was you, or rather your fur coat, as you passed me. But I wasn’t quite sure. Didn’t you recognise me?

[SFX: A HORSE TROTS DOWN THE ROAD. THEY CONTINUE WALKING.]

**DORIAN:** In this fog, my dear Basil? Why, I can’t even recognise Grosvenor Square. I believe my house is somewhere about here, but I don’t feel at all certain about it. I am sorry you are going away, as I have not seen you for ages. But I suppose you’ll be back soon?

**BASIL:** Uh, no, I am going to be out of England for six months. I intend to take a studio in Paris and shut myself up till I have finished a great picture I have in my head. [LONG INHALE.] However… [LONG EXHALE.] It wasn’t about myself I wanted to talk. Ah, here we are at your door. Let me come in for a moment. I have something to say to you.

**DORIAN:** I shall be charmed. But won’t you miss your train?

**BASIL:** Uh, let me check my pocket watch. [HE PULLS IT FROM HIS POCKET WITH A JANGLE OF THE CHAIN.] Ah, I have heaps of time. The train doesn’t go till twelve-fifteen, and it is only just eleven. In fact, I was on my way to the club to look for you, when I met you. You see, I shan’t have any delay about luggage, as I have sent on my heavy things. All I have with me is in this bag, and I can easily get to Victoria in twenty minutes.

[SFX: A PIGEON IS STARTLED AND FLIES AWAY. DORIAN UNLOCKS HIS DOOR AND OPENS IT.]

**DORIAN:** What a way for a fashionable painter to travel! A Gladstone bag and an ulster! Come in, or the fog will get into the house. And mind you don’t talk about anything serious. Nothing is serious nowadays. At least nothing should be.

[SFX: THEY ENTER THE HOUSE AND DORIAN CLOSES THE DOOR BEHIND THEM. THE OUTSIDE NOISE IS REPLACED BY THE SOUNDS OF A FIRE BURNING AND THEIR FOOTSTEPS ECHO THROUGH THE ENTRY AS THEY WALK TO THE LIBRARY, OPENING THE DOOR. THE SOUND OF THE FIRE GROWS LOUDER AND DORIAN CLOSES THE DOOR. A CLOCK TICKS.]

**BASIL:** [THIS ROOM ECHOES.] You see your servant made me quite at home, Dorian. He gave me everything I wanted, including your best gold-tipped cigarettes. He is a most hospitable creature. I like him much better than the Frenchman you used to have. What has become of the Frenchman, by the by?

**DORIAN:** I believe he married Lady Radley’s maid… But—do you know?—he was not at all a bad servant. I never liked him, but I had nothing to complain about. Have another brandy-and-soda?

[SFX: CHAIRS SCRAPE ON THE FLOOR AS THEY SIT.]

**BASIL:** Thanks, but I won’t have anything more. And now, my dear fellow, I want to speak to you seriously. Don’t frown like that. You make it so much more difficult for me.

**DORIAN:** [PETULANTLY.] Ugh… What is it all about? I hope it is not about myself. I am tired of myself tonight. I should like to be somebody else.

**BASIL:** It is about yourself and I must say it to you. I shall only keep you half an hour.

**DORIAN:** [THIS IS AN ETERNITY.] Half an hour?

[SFX: DORIAN PULLS OUT A CIGARETTE FROM A CASE AND LIGHTS IT, THEN SITS DOWN.]

**BASIL:** It is not much to ask of you, Dorian, and it is entirely for your own sake that I am speaking. I think it right that you should know that the most dreadful things are being said against you in London.

**DORIAN:** [INHALES CIGARETTE AND EXHALES.] I don’t wish to know anything about them. I love scandals about other people, but scandals about myself don’t interest me. They have not got the charm of novelty.

**BASIL:** They must interest you, Dorian. Every gentleman is interested in his good name.

**DORIAN:** [NOISE OF ANNOYANCE, VERY JUVENILE.]

**BASIL:** Mind you, *I* don’t believe these rumours at all. At least, I can’t believe them when I see you. Sin is a thing that writes itself across a man’s face. It cannot be concealed. People talk sometimes of secret vices, but there are no such things. If a wretched man has a vice, it shows itself in the lines of his mouth, the droop of his eyelids, the moulding of his hands, even. Somebody—I-I won’t mention his name, but you know him—came to me last year to have his portrait done. I had never seen him before, and had never heard anything about him at the time, though I have heard a good deal since. He offered an extravagant price. I refused him. There was something in the shape of his fingers that I hated. I know now that I was quite right in what I fancied about him. His life is dreadful. But you, Dorian, with your pure, bright, innocent face, and your marvellous untroubled youth—I can’t believe anything against you. And yet in the years since I’ve painted you, I see you very seldom, and you never come down to the studio now, and when I am away from you, and I hear all these hideous things that people are whispering about you, [DORIAN EXHALES IN EXASPERATION.] I don’t know what to say. Why is it, Dorian, that a man like the Duke of Berwick leaves the room of a club when you enter?

**DORIAN:** Well, I couldn’t possibly–

**BASIL:** [TALKING OVER HIM, CONCERNED.] Why is it that so many gentlemen in London will neither go to your house or invite you to theirs? You used to be a friend of Lord Staveley. I met him at dinner last week. Your name happened to come up in conversation, in connection with the miniatures you have lent to the exhibition at the Dudley. Staveley curled his lip and said that you might have the most artistic tastes, but that you were a man whom no pure-minded girl should be allowed to know, and whom no chaste woman should sit in the same room with. I reminded him that I was a friend of yours, and asked him what he meant. He told me… He told me right out before everybody. It was horrible! Why is your friendship so fatal to young men? There was that wretched boy in the Guards who committed suicide. You were his great friend. There was Sir Henry Ashton, who had to leave England with a tarnished name. You and he were inseparable. What about Adrian Singleton and *his* dreadful end? What about Lord Kent’s only son and *his* career? I met his father yesterday in St. James’s Street. He seemed broken with shame and sorrow. And what about the young Duke of Perth? What sort of life has he got now? What gentleman would associate with him?

**DORIAN:** [FIRM.] Stop, Basil, you are talking about things of which you know *nothing*. [DISGUSTED.] I know how people chatter in England. The middle classes air their moral prejudices over their gross dinner-tables to pretend they are in high society. And what sort of lives do these people, who pose as being moral, lead themselves? My dear fellow, you forget that we are in the native land of the hypocrite.

**BASIL:** Dorian. that is not the question. England is bad enough I know, and English society is all wrong. That is the reason why I want you to be fine. You have not been fine. One has a right to judge of a man by the effect he has over his friends. Yours seem to lose all sense of honour, of goodness, of purity. You have filled them with a madness for pleasure. They have gone down into the depths. *You* led them there. Yes, *you* led them there, and yet you can smile, as you are smiling now. And there is worse behind. I know you and Harry are inseparable. Surely for that reason, if for none other, you should not have made his sister’s name a by-word.

**DORIAN:** Take care, Basil. You go too far.

**BASIL:** No, I must speak, and you must listen. [BASIL GETS UP AND STARTS PACING. HE TAKES A DEEP BREATH BEFORE BEGINNING AGAIN.] There are… [PAUSE.] other stories—stories that you have been seen creeping at dawn out of dreadful houses and slinking in disguise into the foulest dens in London. Are they true? Can they be true? When I first heard them, I laughed. I hear them now… [SAD.] And they make me shudder. I want you to have a clean name and a fair record. I want you to get rid of the dreadful people you associate with. Don’t shrug your shoulders like that. Don’t be so indifferent. [PLEADING] You have a wonderful influence. Let it be for good, not for evil.

**DORIAN:** [SCOFFS.]

**BASIL:** They say that you corrupt every one with whom you become intimate, and that it is quite sufficient for you to enter a house and for shame of some kind to follow after. I don’t know whether it is so or not. How should I know? But it is said of you. I am told things that it seems impossible to doubt. Lord Gloucester was one of my greatest friends at Oxford. He showed me a letter that his wife had written to him when she was dying alone in her villa at Mentone. Your name was implicated in the most terrible confession I ever read! I told him that it was absurd—that I knew you thoroughly and that you were incapable of anything of the kind! [PAUSES, THEN SLOWER.] But, know you? I wonder do I know you? Before I could answer that, I should have to see your soul.

[[*MUSIC: AS BASIL WONDERS IF HE ACTUALLY KNOWS DORIAN, SOFT PIANO BEGINS TO PLAY.*]]

**DORIAN:** [ALARMED.] To see my soul?

**BASIL:** [SIGH.] Yes, but only God can do that…

**DORIAN:** [A VICIOUS, BITTER AND MOCKING LAUGH THEN, STILL HALF LAUGHING.] Why, you shall see it yourself tonight! [MANIC, STRANGELY PROUD.] Come, Basil! It is your own handiwork. Why shouldn’t you look at it? You can tell the whole world all about it afterwards, if you choose! Nobody would believe you. Come, I tell you. You have chattered enough about corruption. Now you shall look on it face to face!

**BASIL:** [UTTERLY CONFUSED.] What?

**DORIAN:** I shall show you my soul. You shall see the thing that you fancy only God can see.

[SFX: DORIAN GETS UP WITH A SCRAPE OF HIS CHAIR ON THE FLOOR.]

**BASIL:** [DEADLY SERIOUS. LOW.] This is blasphemy, Dorian. You must not say things like that. They are horrible, and they don’t mean anything.

**DORIAN:** [ALMOST LAUGHING.] You think so? Come now, let me show you!

[SFX: DORIAN BEGINS TO WALK ACROSS THE ROOM. HE GRABS BASIL WITH A RUSTLE OF CLOTH.]

**BASIL:** [FRIGHTENED.] Don’t touch me!

[SFX: AFTER AN UNBEARABLY LONG PAUSE, DORIAN STARTS WALKING AGAIN.]

**DORIAN:** [CALM, WITH CONTEMPT.] Come upstairs, Basil. I keep a diary of my life from day to day, and it never leaves the room in which it is written. I shall show it to you if you come with me.

**BASIL:** [CONFUSED AND UPSET.] I shall come with you, Dorian. All I want is a plain answer to my question.

[[*MUSIC: ENDS.*]]

**DORIAN:** That shall be given to you upstairs. Follow me. [THE SOUND OF THE FIRE CUTS OUT. THOUGH THE TICKING OF THE CLOCK CONTINUES.] All will be revealed…

INT: OUTSIDE OF DORIAN’S ATTIC.

[[*MUSIC: LOW, SUSTAINED VIOLIN.*]]

[SFX: THEY WALK UP THE ATTIC STAIRS. WOODEN FLOORS AND PANELS CREATE A REVERB. AS THEY APPROACH, AN EERIE WHOOSH IS HEARD.]

**DORIAN:** [LOW.] You insist on knowing, Basil?

**BASIL:** [SWALLOWS.] Yes.

[[*MUSIC: HIGH VIOLIN NOTES SCRAPE ACROSS THE TOP OF THE EXISTING NOTES HERE AND THERE.*]]

**DORIAN:** I’m delighted. You are the one man in the world who is entitled to know everything about me. You have had more to do with my life than you think. Here, hold my lantern. [DORIAN HANDS OVER THE LANTERN WITH A SLIGHT METAL CLATTER.]

**BASIL:** Hm.

[[*MUSIC: IS JOINED BY A DISCORDANT NOT QUITE NOTE, NOT QUITE EERIE WHOOSH SOUND EFFECT. AS THE SCENE CONTINUES, THIS BECOMES THE DOMINANT SOUND AND THE VIOLINS ALL BUT DISAPPEAR.*]]

[SFX: DORIAN UNLOCKS AND OPENS THE DOOR. IT IS VERY HEAVY AND CREAKS LOUDLY. THEY ENTER, SLOWLY.]

**BASIL:** The room looks as if it has not been lived in for years…

**DORIAN:** Never mind that. [SHIVERS FROM COLD.] Shut the door behind you, and watch your step, I smashed a mirror not but yesterday.

[SFX: DORIAN WALKS FORWARD AND LIGHTS A CANDLE. BASIL CLOSES THE DOOR.]

**DORIAN:** [HIS VOICE NOW COLD AND CRUEL.] So you think that it is only God who sees the soul, Basil? Draw that curtain back, and you will see mine.

**BASIL:** [ALMOST ANNOYED.] You are mad, Dorian, or playing a part…

**DORIAN:** [ALSO ANNOYED] The curtains, Basil…

**BASIL:** Wait… Is that my painting?

**DORIAN:** [ANNOYED.] Very well, I’ll open them myself.

[SFX: DORIAN QUICKLY WALKS TO THE CURTAINS AND OPENS THEM.]

**BASIL:** [A EXCLAMATION OF SUDDEN SHOCK AND DISGUST.]

**BASIL:** Christ! [A FEW PANTS OF FEAR AND SHOCK AS HE TAKES SEVERAL STEPS AWAY FROM THE PAINTING. THEN, PANTING.] What… What… What *is* this?

**DORIAN:** Can’t you see your own work, Basil?

**BASIL:** [FEARFUL.] I… I don’t believe it’s my picture.

**DORIAN:** Oh, it is… Can’t you see your ideal in it?

**BASIL:** My ideal? There was nothing evil in it, nothing shameful. You were to me such an ideal as I shall never meet again. This is the face of a satyr!

**DORIAN:** [HARSHLY.] It is the face of my soul.

**BASIL:** [FIRM, REMORSEFUL.] No. No! It has the eyes of a devil.

**DORIAN:** Each of us has heaven and hell in him, Basil

**BASIL:** No! The thing is impossible. [DESPERATELY.] The room is damp. Mildew has got into the canvas. The paints I used had some wretched mineral poison in them. I-I tell you, the thing is impossible!

**DORIAN:** [SCOFFS.] ‘Impossible.’ [SIGH] Years ago, when I was a boy, you met me, flattered me, and you taught me to be vain. One day you introduced me to a friend of yours, who explained to me the wonder of youth, and you finished a portrait of me that revealed to me the wonder of beauty. In a mad moment that, even now, I don’t know whether I regret or not, I made a wish. Perhaps you would call it a prayer...

**BASIL:** I remember. [IN REALISATION.] My God! If it is true… *This* is what you’ve done with your life? Why, you must be worse even than those who talk against you say! [WALKS BACK TO THE PAINTING, SETTING DOWN THE LANTERN.] Oh god… It is as if something is eating it away… [TO DORIAN, BUT FINDING SOME STRENGTH AS HE ATTEMPTS TO BARGAIN WITH GOD.] Pray, Dorian, pray. What is it that one was taught to say in one’s boyhood? ‘Lead us not into temptation. Forgive us our sins. Wash away our iniquities.’ Let us say that together. The prayer of your pride has been answered. The prayer of your repentance will be answered also. I worshipped you too much. I am punished for it. You worshipped yourself too much. We are both punished.

**DORIAN:** It is too late, Basil.

**BASIL:** Never!

**DORIAN:** Those sort of words mean nothing to me now.

**BASIL:** No! Don’t say that! My God! Don’t you see that accursed thing leering at us?

**DORIAN:** [STERNLY.] Basil…

[SFX: DORIAN TAKES A STEP..]

**BASIL:** No…

**THE PAINTING:** [VOICE LOW AND DISTORTED.] Do it.

[SFX: DORIAN PICKS UP A PIECE OF THE BROKEN MIRROR.]

**BASIL:** [PANICKING] We must kneel down and try…

**THE PAINTING:** [REPEATING, ECHOING, REVERBERATING QUICKLY IN AN OVERWHELMING ONSLAUGHT.] Do it…

**BASIL:** If we cannot remember a prayer, isn’t there a verse somewhere—[HE IS CUT OFF WITH A GURGLE AS HE IS ABRUPTLY STABBED IN THE NECK. HE CHOKES FOR A MOMENT.]

**DORIAN:** [GRUNTS AS HE STABS BASIL IN THE NECK, THEN INHALES QUICKLY AS HE WITHDRAWS THE MIRROR SHARD.]

[SFX: BASIL IS CHOKING ON HIS OWN BLOOD. DORIAN PANTS AS HE PACES. THERE IS A LOUD THUD AS BASIL COLLAPSES TO THE FLOOR. SUDDENLY, EVERYTHING IS SILENT EXCEPT DRIPPING BLOOD. WITH A SLIGHT LAUGH AND A SNIFF, DORIAN WALKS OVER TO THE WINDOW AND OPENS IT WITH A GRUNT. HE BREATHES DEEPLY OF THE FRESH AIR AS A BIT OF WIND AND SOME FROGS ARE HEARD IN THE NIGHT.]

DORIAN: [AS IF NONE OF THAT HAD JUST HAPPENED AND HE’S JUST COMMENTING ON THE WEATHER.] Well, at least the wind is clearing the fog…

[SFX: THE WIND AND FROGS FADE TO NOTHING.]

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. Basil Hallward was played by Karim Kronfli. And Lord Henry Watton was played by David Ault. 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. Copyright held by Shadows at the Door Publishing.

Join us next week for Act III…

[[*MUSIC: ENDS.*]]

**THE PAINTING:** [GRADUALLY GETTING HIGHER AND MORE RASPY.] Do it! Do it! Do it! Do it! Do it! Do it!

**JAKE BENSON:** And one just for the nerds…

**THE PAINTING:** [IN EMPEROR PALPATINE’S VOICE FROM STAR WARS: REVENGE OF THE SITH.] Do it!

**JAKE:** [LAUGHS.]

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-1) 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.*

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-1)