



## **David John Preece**

Adapted from the novel by Oscar Wilde

Cover illustration by Eugène Dété

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**BIG DOG PUBLISHING**

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The Picture of Dorian Gray

3

**The Picture of Dorian Gray** was first performed Sept. 28, 1996-Feb. 22, 1997, at the Knightsbridge Theatre, Pasadena, CA: Joseph P. Stachura, director; Damian Montano, music composer.

**DORIAN GRAY:** Baylen Thomas

**LORD HENRY WOTTON:** Joseph P. Stachura

**BASIL HALLWARD:** Paul Duff

**MRS. VANE:** Janet Fontaine

**SIBYL VANE:** Amanda Karr

**JAMES VANE:** Ted J. Humphrey

**LADY AGATHA:** Margaret McCarley

**LORD FERMOR/MR. ISAACS/VICTOR:** Robert Craig,  
James Rice (alternate)

**ALAN CAMPBELL:** John Serge

**PROSTITUTE/YOUNG WOMAN:** Caitlin McKenna

*"A polished, impressive adaptation of Oscar Wilde's novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray. Uses intense physical theatrical elements and clever immersive techniques to create a genuine atmosphere and experience."*

*—LA Weekly*

## The Picture of Dorian Gray

**CLASSIC/HORROR.** In a Faustian pact, the young, handsome Dorian Gray trades his soul in exchange for eternal youth and beauty. Pursuing beauty and pleasure above all else, Dorian descends into a life of debauchery that eventually leads to acts of blackmail, suicide, and murder. As years go by, Dorian's physical appearance remains unchanged; however, Dorian's portrait not only ages but depicts his loathsome, corrupt soul. Tortured by a guilty conscience and wanting to absolve himself, Dorian tries to destroy the portrait, leading to the discovery of a hideous corpse.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 90-120 minutes.



Oscar Wilde, 1889.

## About the Story

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde (1854-1900) was an Irish author who wrote plays, poems, essays, and the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. An impeccably dressed dandy, Wilde was known as a lively conversationalist with a sharp wit. Wilde married Constance Lloyd on May 29, 1884 and had two sons, Cyril and Vyvyan Holland. Wilde also had several romantic relationships with men, which eventually led to his imprisonment from 1895-1897. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was first published as a serial novella in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in 1890. Wilde revised the story and published it as a novel in 1891 in which he added a preface arguing the importance of "art for art's sake." Considered one of England's finest playwrights, Wilde is best known for his play *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Wilde died from meningitis in 1900. Buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, Wilde's epitaph reads:

"And alien tears will fill for him  
Pity's long-broken urn,  
For his mourners will be outcast men,  
And outcasts always mourn."

## Characters

(6 M, 4 F, 2 flexible, extras)

**DORIAN GRAY:** 18-20, a handsome, wealthy gentleman who devotes himself to pursuing pleasure above all else; male.

**LORD HENRY WOTTON:** 30s, an aristocratic dandy famous for his wit; corrupts Dorian with his hedonistic philosophies; male.

**BASIL HALLWARD:** 30s, an artist who paints Dorian Gray's portrait and considers the portrait his masterpiece; a friend of Lord Henry Wotton; male.

**SIBYL VANE:** 18-20, a beautiful, talented actress from a poor family who falls in love with Dorian Gray; plays the role of Juliet; female.

**JAMES VANE:** 16-18, Sibyl's overly protective brother; concerned about Sibyl's relationship with Dorian; wears coarse, ill-fitting clothes; male.

**MRS. VANE:** Mid-40s, Sibyl's mother, a faded, tired-looking actress; works with Sibyl at a tawdry theatre; approves of the Dorian romantic interest in Sibyl; female.

**MRS./MR. ISAACS:** 50-60s, owner of the theatre where Mrs. Vane and Sibyl work; flexible.

**ALAN CAMPBELL:** Mid-30s, a promising doctor who was once Dorian's friend but who has since cut ties with him; a victim of Dorian's blackmail; male.

**LORD FERMOR:** 50s, Lord Henry Wotton's wealthy uncle; male.

**LADY AGATHA:** 50s, Lord Henry Wotton's wealthy aunt; female.

**VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Dorian's servant; flexible.

**BARMAID:** 30s, serves drinks in a dilapidated pub; once beautiful but now haggard-looking; female.

**EXTRAS:** As Theatergoers, Aristocrats, Revelers, and Pub Customers.

## Setting

London, early 1890s.

## Sets

The sets may be as simple or elaborate as your budget allows. If desired, the stage may be dark and consist of just a few set pieces for each setting.

**Basil Hallward's studio.** The room is decorated in rich, dark colors, preferably in shades of burgundy. There is a divan and armchair. At CS there is a large upright easel with a canvas resting on it. There is a platform near it for the subject.

**Lord Fermor/Lady Agatha's sitting room.** The room is richly decorated with three armchairs. Other miscellaneous furniture may be added, if desired.

**Theatre.** The exterior depicts a small, shabby theatre entrance. Inside there are seats for the audience. The dressing room is a small, shabby room with an armchair and a dressing table with mirror.

**Dorian Gray's home.** A backdrop depicts the exterior of the home. In the sitting room, there is an armchair, a cabinet with a lock, a window with curtains, and stairs that lead to the attic, where there is a small table. The bedroom has three large mirrors in the background.

**Dilapidated pub.** A backdrop may be used to depict the sordid interior. There are small tables and chairs.

## Synopsis of Scenes

### ACT I

**Scene 1:** Basil Hallward's studio, London.

**Scene 2:** Lord Fermor and Lady Agatha's sitting room, the next evening.

**Scene 3:** Theatre dressing room; the next day.

**Scene 4:** Outside the theatre, evening.

**Scene 5:** Dorian Gray's sitting room, late morning.

**Scene 6:** Dorian Gray's bedroom, later that evening.

### Intermission

### ACT II

**Scene 1:** Outside Dorian Gray's home, late evening, 18 years later.

**Scene 2:** Dorian Gray's sitting room, the next morning.

**Scene 3:** Lord Fermor and Lady Agatha's sitting room, the next evening.

**Scene 4:** A dilapidated pub, late evening.

**Scene 5:** Dorian Gray's sitting room, several days later, morning.

## Props

### L

Large upright easel	Framed portrait of Dorian Gray that depicts him with a hint of cruelty
Original portrait of Dorian Gray	Screen to cover portrait
Sheet music	Key
Hat and gloves, for Lord Henry	Evening clothing, for Dorian
Palette knife	Suitcase, for Basil
Newspaper	Pocket watch, for Basil
Money	Overcoat, for Dorian
Bouquet of red roses	Overcoat, for Basil
Pocket watch, for Dorian	Fake blood
Assorted men's clothing	Lamp
Sewing items	Cup of coffee
Shirt for mending	Cloth napkin
Makeup	Letter
Duffle bag	Paper
Knife	Fountain pen
Duffle bag	Pistol
Pocket watch, Lord Henry	Coins
Opera glasses	Portrait of Dorian Gray depicted as loathsome, evil looking
Dressing gown, for Dorian Gray	

**NOTE:** Different portraits of Dorian Gray may be used during the course of the play, or the portrait may remain unseen by the audience until the end.

## Special Effects

Waltz

Haunting waltz (something similar to a Tchaikovsky's or a Schumann's waltz)

Knock at the door

Fog

Doorbell

Gunshot

Urgent music

**Note:** As the play progresses, Dorian's youthful, handsome looks remain unchanged; however, all other characters show signs of aging.

## The Preface

*The artist is the creator of beautiful things. To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim. The critic is he who can translate into another manner or a new material his impression of beautiful things.*

*The highest as the lowest form of criticism is a mode of autobiography. Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming. This is a fault.*

*Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things are the cultivated. For these there is hope. They are the elect to whom beautiful things mean only beauty.*

*There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.*

*The nineteenth century dislike of realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass.*

*The nineteenth century dislike of romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass. The moral life of man forms part of the subject-matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium. No artist desires to prove anything. Even things that are true can be proved. No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style. No artist is ever morbid. The artist can express everything. Thought and language are to the artist instruments of an art. Vice and virtue are to the artist materials for an art. From the point of view of form, the type of all the arts is the art of the musician. From the point of view of feeling, the actor's craft is the type. All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their peril. It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors. Diversity of opinion about a work of art shows that the work is new, complex, and vital. When critics disagree, the artist is in accord with himself. We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it. The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely.*

*All art is quite useless.*

**—Oscar Wilde,  
Preface, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1891**

“If it were I  
who was to be always young,  
and the picture that was to grow old!  
For that...  
I would give everything.”

—Dorian Gray

## Prologue

*(AT RISE: Basil Hallward's studio, early 1890s. In the darkness, a haunting waltz is heard. As the intensity of the music builds, the audience sees a bare, dark stage with a spotlight focused on a blank canvas that is resting on a large easel. Slowly, colors appear on the canvas and evolve into the youthful portrait of Dorian Gray. After a couple of moments, the music fades as the lights dim.)*

## ACT I

### Scene 1

*(AT RISE: Basil Hallward's studio. At CS there is a large, upright easel with a canvas resting on it. Standing at the easel, Basil Hallward paints the final touches on a portrait. Off to one side, Lord Henry Wotton is sitting on a divan, admiring the painting.)*

LORD HENRY: It is your best work, Basil. The best work you've ever done.

BASIL: I don't think I will send it anywhere. *(Stands back and looks at the portrait.)* No, I won't send it anywhere.

LORD HENRY: Not send it anywhere? My dear fellow, why?

BASIL: I know you will laugh at me, but I really can't exhibit it. I have too much of myself in it.

LORD HENRY: *(Laughs.)* Really, Basil. I didn't know you were so vain. *(Approaches the painting.)* There is no resemblance between you and this young Adonis. No, Basil, don't flatter yourself. You don't look at all like him.

*(Basil stops painting and turns to Lord Henry.)*

BASIL: I know I don't. As a matter of fact, I should be sorry to look like him.

LORD HENRY: Why is that?

BASIL: Because...there is too much importance placed on an individual's beauty and intelligence. It is better not to be too different.

LORD HENRY: *(Indicating portrait.)* Dorian Gray? Is that his name?

*(Basil resumes painting.)*

BASIL: Yes, but I didn't want to tell you.

LORD HENRY: Why not?

BASIL: Because I like him, Henry. And with other people that I like, I don't tell their names. It is like giving them up...and I don't want to. I want to protect them in secrecy.

LORD HENRY: You don't have to worry, my dear Basil.

BASIL: So? That hasn't stopped you before.

LORD HENRY: You're right. It hasn't.

BASIL: I know it sounds naive of me, but I want to believe that you are thoroughly ashamed of your lack of virtue. I also want to believe that your cynicism is simply a pose.

LORD HENRY: Virtue is simply a pose and the most irritating pose I know. Now, Basil, I want you to tell me the reason why you won't exhibit Dorian Gray's picture. I want the real reason.

BASIL: I've told you already.

LORD HENRY: No, you said that there was too much of yourself in it, which is childish.

BASIL: Harry, every portrait that is painted is a portrait of the artist rather than the sitter.

LORD HENRY: If you would only tell me the truth—

BASIL: I will not exhibit the picture because I'm afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul.

LORD HENRY: And what is that?

BASIL: About two months ago, I went to a party at Lord Brandon's. After I had been in the room about ten minutes, I suddenly became conscious of someone looking at me. I turned around and saw Dorian Gray for the first time. Our eyes met, and I can only tell you that a curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew that I had come face to face with someone who, if I allowed him to, would take over my whole life, my soul, my very art itself. As I tried to get out the door, I ran into Lady Brandon. (*As Lady Brandon.*) "You're not going so soon, Mr. Hallward?" she screamed in that way of hers.

LORD HENRY: Yes, she's a regular peacock in everything, except beauty.

BASIL: Anyway, I couldn't get rid of her. Suddenly, I found myself face to face with the young man whose personality had so strangely stirred me. I know it was reckless of me, but I had to find who he was. And so I asked Lady Brandon to introduce me.

LORD HENRY: And how did Lady Brandon describe this wonderful young man? She usually treats her guests exactly as an auctioneer treats goods. She either explains them entirely away, or tells one everything about them except what one wants to know.

BASIL: You're rather hard on her, Harry!

LORD HENRY: Come now, my dear fellow, how could anyone admire her? But tell me...what did she say about Mr. Dorian Gray?

BASIL: Oh, something like... *(As Lady Brandon.)* ..."Charming boy. I quite forget what he does. Afraid he doesn't do anything. *(Remembers.)* Oh, yes, plays the piano, or is it the violin, dear Mr. Gray?" Both of us started to laugh at that one, and we became best friends at once.

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

BASIL: You don't understand what friendship is, Harry, or what animosity is, for that matter.

LORD HENRY: You simplify things. I choose my friends for their good looks, my acquaintances for their good characters, and my enemies for their good intellect. A man can't be too careful of his enemies. *(Slight pause.)* Tell me more of Dorian Gray. How often do you see him?

BASIL: Every day. He is my art now.

LORD HENRY: I must see him.

BASIL: You might see nothing in him; whereas, I see everything.

LORD HENRY: Is he fond of you?

BASIL: Now and then, he is horribly thoughtless and seems to take delight in giving me pain.

LORD HENRY: Remember, genius lasts longer than beauty. (*Approaches and comforts Basil.*) Someday, you will look at your friend, and he will seem to you to be a little distorted. You will bitterly reproach him in your own heart and seriously think that he has behaved very badly to you. The next time he calls, you will be cold and indifferent. It will be a great pity, for it will alter you. (*Realizes.*) I've just remembered...

BASIL: What?

LORD HENRY: The name. My aunt, Lady Agatha, told me she'd discovered a wonderful young man who's going to help her in the East End and that his name is Dorian Gray. I wish I had known it was your friend.

BASIL: I'm very glad you didn't, Harry.

LORD HENRY: Why?

BASIL: I don't want you to meet him.

LORD HENRY: You don't want me to meet him?

BASIL: No.

(*Offstage, piano waltz music is heard.*)

LORD HENRY: Who is playing that beautiful music? (*Basil looks away.*) He's here, isn't he? You will have to introduce me now.

BASIL: No.

LORD HENRY: Why not?

(*Waltz music stops.*)

BASIL: Dorian Gray is my dearest friend. He has a simple and beautiful nature. Don't try to influence him. Your influence would be bad. The world is full of marvelous people of whom you can take your pick from. Don't take away from me the one person who gives my art whatever charm it possesses. My life as an artist depends upon him. Please, Harry, I trust you.

LORD HENRY: What nonsense!

*(Dorian Gray enters, carrying piano sheet music.)*

DORIAN: *(To Basil, indicating sheet music.)* You must lend me these. They're perfectly charming. *(Sees Lord Henry.)* I beg your pardon, Basil, I didn't know you had anyone with you.

BASIL: *(Introducing.)* This is Lord Henry Wotton, Dorian, an old Oxford friend of mine.

*(Lord Henry gently pushes past Basil and approaches Dorian.)*

LORD HENRY: *(To Dorian.)* He's just been telling me what a fine model you are. *(Extends his hand to Dorian, and they shake hands.)* You're on my aunt's preferred list of people.

DORIAN: Lady Agatha Wotten? I'm afraid I'll be taken off of her preferred list.

LORD HENRY: But why?

DORIAN: I promised to go to a club in Whitechapel with her last Tuesday. Do you know, I forgot all about it! I don't know what she will say to me, and I'm too frightened to call. I'm very sorry.

LORD HENRY: *(Puts his arm around Dorian as if to comfort him.)* Oh, don't worry. I'll make peace with my aunt.

DORIAN: I would appreciate that, sir.

LORD HENRY: Please call me Harry.

DORIAN: Yes, Harry.

*(Lord Henry sits on the divan. As Basil mixes his paints and gets his brushes ready, he watches on with contempt.)*

BASIL: Harry, I want to finish this picture today. Would you think it awfully rude of me if I asked you to go away?

*(Lord Henry looks over at Dorian and smiles.)*

LORD HENRY: Do you want me to go, Dorian?

DORIAN: Please don't go. I don't think I can bear to sit through one of Basil's sulky moods.

LORD HENRY: You don't really mind, Basil, do you? You've often told me you like your models to have someone to talk to.

BASIL: If Dorian wishes it, of course you must stay.

*(Lord Henry rises from the divan and picks up his hat and gloves.)*

LORD HENRY: You are very inviting, Basil, but I'm afraid I must go.

DORIAN: Basil, if Lord Henry goes, I shall go, too. Ask him to stay. I insist up on it.

BASIL: Stay, Henry, to oblige Dorian...and oblige me.

LORD HENRY: If you insist.

BASIL: And you, Dorian, get upon the platform and don't move about too much or pay any attention to what he says. He's such a bad influence over all of his friends except for me.

DORIAN: *(To Lord Henry.)* Are you really as bad as Basil says you are?

LORD HENRY: There is no such thing as a good influence, Dorian.

BASIL: *(Concentrating on his painting.)* Just turn your head a little more to the right, Dorian. *(Dorian turns his head.)* That's it.

LORD HENRY: Yet, 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, the world would forget all of its past maladies and return to the Hellenic ideal. *(Rises from the divan.)* You must know that, Dorian. You must have had passions that have made you afraid, thoughts that filled you with terror, dreams whose mere memory might stain your cheek with shame.

*(Brief silence as Basil works on the painting.)*

DORIAN: Basil, I'm getting very weary standing up here.

BASIL: Just a few more...

DORIAN: It's stifling here. I must get some air.

BASIL: *(Stops painting.)* Dorian, I am so sorry. When I am painting, I can't think of anything else. *(Dorian steps off of the platform.)* I don't know what Harry has been saying to you, but you shouldn't believe a word of it.

DORIAN: *(Looking at Lord Henry.)* They weren't compliments.

*(Basil resumes painting.)*

LORD HENRY: *(To Dorian.)* You know it is the truth.

DORIAN: Maybe I don't want to believe it. *(Exits through the French doors into the garden.)*

LORD HENRY: *(To Basil.)* It is terribly hot in your studio, Basil. I'll just go out in the garden with Dorian and get some air.

BASIL: Don't—

*(Basil grabs Lord Henry's arm.)*

LORD HENRY: Yes?

BASIL: Don't keep him out too long.

*(Lights fade on Basil as Lord Henry exits through the French doors. Lord Henry stops to watch Dorian, who is standing in deep thought. Lord Henry quietly approaches Dorian.)*

LORD HENRY: Basil is right. You know more than you think you know, just as you know less than you want to know. *(Startled and disturbed, Dorian turns away. Takes Dorian's arm.)* Come, let's go into the shade. You must not let yourself become sunburnt. It would be unbecoming.

DORIAN: (*Resists Lord Henry's grasp.*) Why should it possibly matter?

LORD HENRY: It should matter everything to you.

DORIAN: Why?

LORD HENRY: Because you have marvelous youth, and youth is the one thing worth having.

DORIAN: Well, I don't feel that.

LORD HENRY: No, you don't feel it now. But someday, 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...you will feel it terribly. When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it, and then you will suddenly discover that there are no triumphs left for you. The memories of your past will make you more bitter than defeats. Every month as it wanes brings you nearer to something dreadful. Realize the youth while you have it. With your looks and youth, there is nothing you cannot do. The world belongs to you for a season. Take it!

(*Basil appears at the door and motions Dorian to come inside.*)

BASIL: Dorian, please...I am waiting.

(*Basil returns to painting. As Dorian turns to go in, Lord Henry grabs his arm.*)

LORD HENRY: You are glad to have met me, Dorian?

(*Dorian looks at Lord Henry and removes his arm from his grasp.*)

DORIAN: Yes, but I wonder if I will always be.

LORD HENRY: "Always"! That is a dreadful word! It makes me shudder when I hear it.

*(They enter the studio. Dorian steps on the platform and resumes his pose. Basil continues to feverishly paint. After several moments, Basil stops painting.)*

BASIL: It is quite finished.

*(Biting the end of his paintbrush, Basil stands back and looks at Dorian for several moments and then at the painting. Lord Henry approaches and examines the portrait.)*

LORD HENRY: Congratulations! It is the finest portrait of modern times! Dorian, come over and look at yourself!

*(Dorian steps down from the platform and hesitantly approaches the portrait. When Dorian sees the portrait, he is pleased, as if he recognizes his likeness for the first time. He stands in front of it, motionless, with curiosity and wonder. Suddenly, he backs away as if he has been struck. Basil goes to him.)*

BASIL: Dorian! What is it? Don't you like it?

LORD HENRY: Of course, he likes it. *(To Basil.)* I will give you anything you want for it. I must have it.

BASIL: It is not my property, Harry.

LORD HENRY: Whose property is it?

BASIL: Dorian's, of course.

LORD HENRY: *(To Dorian.)* You're a very lucky fellow.

DORIAN: You think so?

LORD HENRY: You don't?! No.

DORIAN: *(Still staring at the painting.)* I think it sad...so sad. I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain young. It will never be older than this particular day of June. If it was only the other way. If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! 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!

LORD HENRY: Would you? *(Laughs.)* I don't think you would care for such an arrangement, Basil. It would destroy your work.

BASIL: I would object very strongly, Harry.

*(Dorian turns and looks at Basil.)*

DORIAN: I thought you would, Basil. You like your art better than your friends. I am no more to you than a green bronze figure, am I?

BASIL: *(Shocked.)* Dorian!

DORIAN: It's the truth. When one loses one's good looks, one loses everything. Your picture has taught me that. *(To Lord Henry.)* You're right. Youth is the only thing worth having. *(To himself.)* When I find that I am growing old, I shall kill myself.

BASIL: Don't talk like that. I have never had such a friend as you, and I shall never have such another.

DORIAN: I am jealous of everything whose beauty does not die...like that portrait you have painted of me. Why should I keep what I must lose? Every moment it takes something from me. If only it could all change. Why did you paint it? So that one day people will laugh at me?

BASIL: This is your doing, Harry.

LORD HENRY: No, you give me too much credit. This is the real Dorian Gray.

BASIL: It is not.

LORD HENRY: If it is not, what have I to do with it?

BASIL: You should have gone away when I asked you to.

LORD HENRY: But you asked me to stay, didn't you?

BASIL: *(Upset.)* 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 have ever done. *(Approaches the portrait.)* I will destroy it. It is nothing but canvas and color. I will not let it come across our three lives and mar them.

*(Basil goes to his painting table, picks up a palette knife, and is about to slash the portrait when he is stopped by Dorian. Dorian grabs the knife from Basil's hand and tosses it on the floor.)*

DORIAN: Don't, Basil, don't! It would be murder!

BASIL: I'm glad you appreciate my work at last, Dorian. I never thought you would.

DORIAN: Appreciate it? I am in love with it, Basil. It is part of me.

BASIL: Well, as soon as you are dry, you shall be varnished, framed, and sent home. Then you can do what you like with yourself. *(Slight pause.)* Do you want some tea, Dorian? What about you, Harry, or do you object to simple pleasures?

LORD HENRY: I adore simple pleasures. But I don't like scenes, except on the stage. I just wish you two wouldn't fight over this painting. You'd do much better to let me have it, Basil.

BASIL: It was Dorian's before it existed.

LORD HENRY: Very well, then. *(Slight pause.)* Let's go to the theatre tonight. There's sure to be something playing somewhere.

DORIAN: *(To Lord Henry.)* I should like to come to the theatre with you.

LORD HENRY: Then you shall. And what about you, Basil? Won't you come?

BASIL: Apparently, there's no room for me now.

LORD HENRY: Well, then, you and I will go alone, Dorian.

DORIAN: I should like that.

*(As he cleans his paintbrushes, Basil watches Dorian and Lord Henry.)*

BASIL: *(Indicating portrait.)* And I shall stay with the real Dorian.

*(Dorian approaches the portrait.)*

DORIAN: *(Indicating portrait.)* Am I really like that?

BASIL: Yes, you are. At least, you are like it in appearance, though it will never alter.

LORD HENRY: *(To Dorian.)* Shall we go?

*(Dorian and Lord Henry start to exit. Basil reaches out and grasps Dorian by the arm.)*

BASIL: *(To Dorian.)* Don't go to the theatre tonight. Please stay and dine with me.

DORIAN: I can't. I've promised to go to the theatre.

BASIL: He won't like you any better for keeping promises. He always breaks his own. *(Dorian laughs and shakes his head no.)* Please don't go.

*(Dorian hesitates and then looks over at Lord Henry, who looks at them with an amused smile.)*

DORIAN: I'm going, Basil.

BASIL: *(Releases Dorian.)* Very well. Goodbye, Dorian. Goodbye, Harry. *(Dorian approaches Lord Henry, who is waiting. To Lord Henry as they exit.)* Remember what I asked you...when we were in the garden this morning?

LORD HENRY: *(Looks back at Basil.)* I have forgotten it.

*(Lord Henry and Dorian exit. As the lights fade to black, Basil sits on the divan, a look of pain on his face.)*

## Scene 2

*(AT RISE: Lord Fermor's sitting room, the next evening. The stage is dark. Waltz music is faintly heard. Lights up on Lord Fermor sitting in an armchair, engaged in a conversation with his nephew, Lord Henry.)*

LORD FERMOR: What brings you here?

LORD HENRY: I want to get something out of you.

LORD FERMOR: Money, I suppose. Young people nowadays imagine that money is everything.

LORD HENRY: Yes, and when they grow older, they know it. But I don't want money.

LORD FERMOR: You don't?

LORD HENRY: No. What I want is some information.

LORD FERMOR: Well, I can tell you anything that is in the social registry, Harry.

LORD HENRY: *(Looking around to make sure they are alone.)*

Mr. Dorian Gray isn't in the registry, Uncle George.

LORD FERMOR: Mr. Dorian Gray? Who is he?

LORD HENRY: That's what I want to know. He's Lord Kelso's grandson and his mother was a Devereux...Lady Margaret Devereux. What do you know about her?

LORD FERMOR: Kelso's grandson? *(Remembers.)* Of course, I remember who Margaret Devereux was. She was an extraordinarily beautiful girl who made all the men frantic by running away with a penniless fellow, a mere nobody. I believe he was a foot soldier or something of that kind. Anyway, the poor chap was killed in a duel at a spa a few months after the marriage. There was an ugly story floating around that Kelso had something to do with it like paying some brute to insult him in public. The thing was hushed up. Later, Kelso brought his daughter back to live with him, but she never spoke to him again. The girl died within a year. *(Slight pause.)* So she left a son, did she? I had

forgotten about that. What sort of a person is he? If he's like his mother, he must be a good-looking chap.

LORD HENRY: Yes. He's very good-looking.

LORD FERMOR: I hope he will fall into proper hands. He should have some money from Kelso and from his mother.

LORD HENRY: I believe he is doing all right.

LORD FERMOR: By the way, what is this rumor I hear about your brother wanting to marry an American? Aren't English girls good enough for him?

LORD HENRY: It is rather fashionable to marry an American these days, Uncle George.

LORD FERMOR: Who are her people? Does she have any?

LORD HENRY: American girls are as clever at concealing their parents as English women are at concealing their past. *(Rises to exit.)*

LORD FERMOR: They're pork packers, I suppose.

LORD HENRY: Who? American girls?

LORD FERMOR: No, her parents.

LORD HENRY: I'm told that pork-packing is the most lucrative profession in America...after politics.

LORD FERMOR: Is that so? *(Slight pause.)* Why can't these American women stay in their own county? They are always telling us that it is a paradise for women.

LORD HENRY: It is. That is the reason why, like Eve, they are so excessively anxious to get out. Well, I should be going or I will be late for lunch. Thanks for giving me the information. I always like to know everything about my new friends, and nothing about my old ones.

LORD FERMOR: Where are you lunching?

LORD HENRY: At Aunt Agatha's. Mr. Gray will be there.

LORD FERMOR: Humph! Tell your Aunt Agatha not to bother me anymore with her charity appeals. I'm sick and tired of writing checks for her silly fads.

LORD HENRY: All right, Uncle George, I'll tell her...even though it won't do any good.

*(Lights dim as Lord Fermor picks up the newspaper and exits. Lady Agatha enters, sits, and chatters away with Dorian.)*

LADY AGATHA: *(To Dorian.)* Did I ever tell you the time that Lord Merriman and I— *(Lord Henry enters. Turns and sees Lord Henry.)* You're late as usual, Harry. I was just telling Dorian about your poor brother. Do you think he will really marry this American?

LORD HENRY: I believe she has made up her mind to propose to him.

LADY AGATHA: Propose?! Really? I am told, on excellent authority, that her father keeps a dry-goods store. A dry-goods store. *(To Dorian.)* Can you believe it?

DORIAN: What are "dry goods"?

LORD HENRY: American novels.

LADY AGATHA: *(To Dorian, chuckles.)* Don't listen to him. He never means what he says. *(To Lord Henry.)* Really! Our girls have no chance nowadays. It is most unfair. Though I must confess that most of them are extremely pretty...even though they are Americans. And they dress well, too. They get all their dresses in Paris. I wish I could afford to do the same.

LORD HENRY: They say that when good Americans die, they go to Paris.

LADY AGATHA: Really! And where do bad Americans go when they die?

LORD HENRY: America.

LADY AGATHA: They do not, do they? *(Dorian approaches Lord Henry. To Lord Henry and Dorian.)* Well, if you'll excuse me, I'll go and see what's keeping lunch. *(Exits.)*

DORIAN: *(To Lord Henry.)* Lady Agatha is very nice.

LORD HENRY: But she is consuming.

DORIAN: By the way, who was the woman I saw you talking with at the theatre?

LORD HENRY: She is my wife.

DORIAN: Your wife?

LORD HENRY: You look surprised.

DORIAN: I...I am. It didn't occur to me that you were married. You don't act as if you are.

LORD HENRY: And how is one supposed to act?

DORIAN: I don't know.

LORD HENRY: (*Looks at Dorian, shakes his head.*) 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 because I am too much in love.

(*Pause.*)

LORD HENRY: Who are you in love with?

DORIAN: An actress.

LORD HENRY: That's a rather commonplace debut.

DORIAN: You wouldn't say so if you saw her.

LORD HENRY: Who is she?

DORIAN: Her name is Sibyl Vane.

LORD HENRY: Never heard of her.

DORIAN: No one has. People will someday, however. She is a genius.

LORD HENRY: How long have you known her?

DORIAN: About a week.

LORD HENRY: A week? That isn't love, Dorian. It's either infatuation or delirium. And where did you meet her?

DORIAN: It wouldn't have happened if I had not met you.

LORD HENRY: Me? And why's that?

DORIAN: Because you have filled me with wild desire to know everything about life...to breathe in the exquisite poison that's in the air...and to devour the sensational passions of the forbidden fruit. You told me about the search for beauty being the real secret of life. (*Slight pause.*) And then one night, after you left me, I went out and wandered about, soon losing my way in the labyrinth of grimy streets and black, grassless squares. (*Note: As Dorian*

*tells the story, dim lights go up behind them with swirling fog to indicate a flashback. The dark, back streets of London are populated with faceless, dark figures wandering about. Amongst them is Mrs. Isaacs, trying to induce passersby to enter the theatre.)* I passed by an absurd little theatre, with gaudy playbills. The proprietress was standing at the entrance.

*(Lord Henry stands and watches on as Dorian approaches Mrs. Isaacs.)*

MRS. ISAACS: *(To Dorian, with an air of servility.)* Have a box, my lord?

*(Dorian gives Mrs. Isaacs some money and is led into the theatre.)*

DORIAN: *(To Lord Henry.)* I don't know why I did, it but I paid a whole guinea for the stage box and went inside. But had I not, I would have missed the greatest romance of my life.

LORD HENRY: *(Trying to hold back laughter.)* You should not say "the greatest romance of your life" because it is the first romance. You will be in love again, and you will always be in love with love. A grand passion is the privilege of people who have nothing to do.

DORIAN: I wonder if I am shallow...

LORD HENRY: My dear boy, the people who love once in their lives are the ones who are shallow. What they call loyalty, and their fidelity, I call either the lethargy of custom, or their lack of imagination. But don't let me interrupt you. Go on with your story...

*(Flashback continues. Mrs. Isaacs leads Dorian to a private box located above a crowd of rowdy Theatergoers. Onstage "Romeo and Juliet" is being performed. In the midst of the harsh, wretched environment, a soft light is cast on Sibyl Vane, who is playing Juliet.*

*Dorian takes his seat and becomes mesmerized by Sibyl's performance.)*

DORIAN: *(To Lord Henry.)* As I sat down in this horrid private box, guess what play they were performing?

LORD HENRY: What? "Idiot Boy"? Or was it, "The Dumb but Innocent"?

DORIAN: No, "Romeo and Juliet."

LORD HENRY: Same thing.

DORIAN: For the most part, the performers were as grotesque as the scenery. But Juliet! She was the loveliest thing I have ever seen in my life.

*(Onstage, Sibyl as Juliet performs from Act II, Scene 2 of "Romeo and Juliet.")*

SIBYL: *(As Juliet.)*

"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,  
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!  
What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other word 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 thy name, which is no part of thee,  
Take all myself."

*(Dorian watches Sibyl for a moment and then returns to Lord Henry.)*

DORIAN: *(To Lord Henry.)* You told me once that pathos left you unmoved, but that beauty could fill your eyes with tears. I tell you, I could hardly see this girl for the mist of tears that came over me. And her voice! I have never heard such a beautiful voice. *(Slight pause.)* 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. *(Slight pause.)* Harry, I do love her, and she is everything to me in my life. Night after night, I go see her.

LORD HENRY: I have also loved many actresses. Beneath their painted faces and their dyed hair, sometimes they can be charming.

*(Lights dim on Sibyl and Theatergoers.)*

DORIAN: Now you make me wish that I hadn't told you about Sibyl Vane.

LORD HENRY: You couldn't have helped telling me, Dorian.

DORIAN: Yes, you have a curious influence over me. What if I committed a crime? Would I come and confess it to you?

LORD HENRY: People like you don't commit crimes. Now, tell me...what are your actual intentions with this Sibyl Vane?

DORIAN: Harry! What do you mean by asking me such a question? Sibyl Vane is sacred to me.

LORD HENRY: It's only the sacred things that are worth touching, Dorian. *(Sees that Dorian is irritated.)* Why are you annoyed? When one is in love, one always begins by deceiving oneself and always ends by deceiving others. That is what the world calls romance. I suppose you have met her?

DORIAN: Yes, of course. On the third night, I threw her some flowers, and she looked at me. The proprietress came around to the box after the performance and invited me backstage to meet her. She seemed set on taking me round, so I said yes. *(As the Theatergoers exit, Mrs. Isaacs takes Dorian backstage to meet Sibyl, who is holding a bouquet of red roses. To Sibyl.)* I...I just wanted you to know what a beautiful performance you gave this evening.

SIBYL: *(Curtsy.)* Thank you, my lord. *(Looks up from the curtsy position.)* They tell me you have been coming here every night, my lord.

DORIAN: *(Helping Sibyl up.)* Yes, but please don't call me lord, for I am not anything of the kind.

SIBYL: You look more like a prince. I must call you, Prince Charming.

*(Lights fade backstage as Dorian kisses Sibyl's hand. Lights up on Dorian as he approaches Lord Henry.)*

LORD HENRY: Upon my word, Dorian, she knows how to pay compliments.

DORIAN: No, you don't understand. She regarded me merely as a person in a play. She knows nothing of life and lives with her mother—a faded, tired woman who plays Lady Capulet.

LORD HENRY: *(Looks down, examining his rings.)* I know that look too well. It depresses me.

DORIAN: The proprietress wanted to tell me Sibyl's history, but I said it did not interest me. Sibyl is the only thing I care about. What is it to me where she came from? It doesn't matter. Every night, she is more marvelous. I love her, and I must make her love me.

LORD HENRY: And what do you propose to do?

DORIAN: I want you and Basil to come with me some night and see her act.

LORD HENRY: Aren't you afraid of what we might think of her?

DORIAN: Not at all. You'll see what I mean. Then we must get Sibyl out of the proprietress's hands. Sibyl is under contract with her for two years and eight months, but I will buy her contract out. When it is all settled, I will take her to a West End theatre and bring her out properly. She will make the world as mad as she has made me.

LORD HENRY: I don't think that's possible, my dear boy.

DORIAN: Yes, she will. She has more than art in her—she has personality, a unique one. You have often told me that it is personalities, not principles, that move the age.

LORD HENRY: Did I say that? Well, what about tomorrow night?

DORIAN: All right. I will meet you at the Bristol at half-past six and then we will pick up Basil. We must be there when the curtain rises.

LORD HENRY: Half-past six! What an hour!

DORIAN: Poor Basil. I haven't seen him for a week. It is rather horrid of me, as he sent me my portrait in the most wonderful frame, which he specially designed. Perhaps you better write to him. I don't want to see him alone. He says things that annoy me, and he's perpetually giving me good advice.

LORD HENRY: People are very fond of giving away what they need most themselves.

DORIAN: Oh, but I like Basil...even though he does have common tendencies, if you know what I mean.

LORD HENRY: Basil puts everything that is charming in him into his work. The consequences are that he has nothing left but his prejudices, his principles, and his commonsense. 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.

DORIAN: Do you think that is so, Harry? *(Slight pause.)* I suppose it is...if you say so. *(Looks at his pocket watch.)* Oh, dear. I should be off. Juliet is waiting. *(Slight pause.)* Give your aunt my regards. *(Turns to exit. Calls.)* Don't forget about tomorrow. *(Exits.)*

LORD HENRY: *(Calls.)* I won't. *(Slight pause. To himself.)* What a waste!

*(Lady Agatha enters and looks about.)*

LADY AGATHA: Where is Dorian?

LORD HENRY: He's gathering his harvest while it is still spring.

LADY AGATHA: What did you say?

LORD HENRY: Oh, he had an appointment and had to leave. He asked me to give you his regards.

LADY AGATHA: With his beautiful face and his beautiful soul, he is a thing to wonder at.

LORD HENRY: *(To himself.)* Soul and body...body and soul...how mysterious they are!

LADY AGATHA: *(Puzzled.)* What are you talking about? *(Slight pause.)* Now, Harry, do you really think that your brother will marry that American?

*(As lights fade, Lord Henry turns and looks at Lady Agatha.)*

### Scene 3

(AT RISE: *Theatres dressing room, the next day. In a small, shabby dressing room, Mrs. Vane is sitting in an armchair, mending and packing men's clothes. Mrs. Vane coaches Sibyl as she rehearses her role as Ophelia in "Hamlet," Act IV, Scene 5.*)

SIBYL: (*As Ophelia, sings.*)

"By Gis, and by Saint Charity,  
Alack, and fie by shame!  
Young men will do't if they come to't,  
By Cock, they are to blame.

"Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me,  
You promis'd me to wed.'"  
"'So would I 'a' done, by yonder sun,  
And thou hadst not come to my bed.'"

(*Slight pause. Recites.*) "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies, that's for thoughts."

(*Slight pause, recites.*) "There's fennel for you, and columbines. There's rue for you, and here's some for me; we may call it herb of grace a' Sundays. You may wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy. I would give you some violets, but they wither'd all when my father died. They say a' made a good end— (*Sings.*) "For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy." (*Breaks character, laughs.*) Mother, Mother...I am so happy. Can't you see that I am? And you must be happy, too.

MRS. VANE: Happy?! I am only happy when I see you act. You must not think of anything but your acting. Mrs. Isaacs has been very good to us, and we owe her money.

SIBYL: Money! What does money matter? Love is more than money!

MRS. VANE: Mrs. Isaacs has advanced us 50 pounds to pay off our debts and to get a proper outfit for James. Fifty pounds is a lot of money, Sibyl. You must not forget that Mrs. Isaacs has been very generous.

*(Sibyl goes to the dressing table.)*

SIBYL: I don't like her.

MRS. VANE: I don't know how we'd manage without her.

SIBYL: We don't need her anymore.

MRS. VANE: We don't?

SIBYL: Someone else has come into our lives, and I'm in love with him.

MRS. VANE: *(Laughs.)* Love?! You don't even know his name!

SIBYL: Of course, I do: Prince Charming.

MRS. VANE: You foolish child!

SIBYL: *(Looks in the mirror as she applies makeup.)* Then why does he love me so much? I know why I love him. I love him because he's like what love should be. But what does he see in me? Even though I know I am not worthy of him, I don't feel humble. I feel proud...terribly proud. *(Slight pause.)* Did you love my father as I love Prince Charming? *(Mrs. Vane stops sewing and tries to hide the painful look on her face with her hand. Seeing this, Sibyl rushes to Mrs. Vane and puts her arms around her neck.)* I am sorry, Mother. I know it pains you to talk about him. But it only pains you because you loved him so much...as much as I love Prince Charming. I want to be as happy as you were when you were in love with father.

MRS. VANE: *(Pushing Sibyl away.)* You're too young to think about falling in love. You know nothing about him, not even his name. Oh, this could not have happened at a worse time with your brother going away to Australia. With all that I have to think about, you have no consideration for me.

SIBYL: (*Kisses her mother's cheek.*) Ah, Mother, let me be happy.

MRS. VANE: As I said before, if he is rich—

SIBYL: What does being rich have to do with anything? I am talking about love.

MRS. VANE: You can love a rich man just as easy as you can a poor one.

SIBYL: Oh, Mother.

*(Sibyl kisses Mrs. Vane on the cheek. James Vane enters.)*

JAMES: Save some of those kisses for me, Sibyl. (*Sibyl rushes over to him and hugs and kisses him on the cheek.*) Come out with me after rehearsal. I want to spend some time with you alone, for I shall never see this horrid London again if I can help it.

*(Mrs. Vane stands and puts the shirt that she has mended into the duffle bag.)*

MRS. VANE: You shouldn't talk like that.

JAMES: Why not? I mean it.

MRS. VANE: It hurts me. When you come back from Australia, you'll be somebody. There's nothing like a society out there or anything that resembles one. So when you have made your fortune, you must come back and take your position here in London.

JAMES: Society! I don't want anything like that. I want to make some money and take you and Sibyl away from the stage. I hate it.

*(Mrs. Isaacs knocks on the dressing room door.)*

MRS. ISAACS: Excuse me. Miss Sibyl, we need you onstage for a brief rehearsal.

SIBYL: Yes, Mrs. Isaacs. (*To James.*) I won't be too long.

*(Sibyl exits with Mrs. Isaacs.)*

JAMES: *(To Mrs. Vane.)* All I say to you is...watch over Sibyl and don't let any harm come to her.

*(Mrs. Vane stops mending and looks up at him.)*

MRS. VANE: At times, you talk very strangely. Of course, I'll watch over her.

JAMES: Then what about that gentleman who comes every night to the theatre and goes back to talk with her? What about him?

*(Mrs. Vane goes to the dressing table and looks at herself in the mirror.)*

MRS. VANE: You are talking about things you don't understand. In the acting profession, we are accustomed to receiving a great deal of gratifying attention. When I was a young actress, I used to receive many bouquets from gentlemen. As for Sibyl, I've no way of knowing whether her present attachment is serious or not. All I know is that the young man in question is a perfect gentleman. He's always most polite to me. Besides, he has the appearance of being rich, and the flowers that he sends are lovely.

JAMES: But you don't even know his name.

*(Mrs. Vane turns around and looks down.)*

MRS. VANE: No. He has not revealed his name. But he's probably a member of the aristocracy.

*(James approaches.)*

JAMES: *(Shaking her.)* Just watch over her, Mother! You watch over her!

*(Mrs. Vane hurries away. Sibyl enters. Sibyl tries to reach out and touch James's hand, but he yanks it away.)*

SIBYL: What's wrong?

JAMES: You have a new friend. Who is he? Why haven't you told me about him? He means you no good.

SIBYL: James! You must not say anything against him! I love him.

JAMES: Why, you don't even know his name. Who is he? I have a right to know.

SIBYL: He is called Prince Charming. If only you saw him, you would think him the most wonderful person in the world and would like him very much. I wish you could come to the theatre tonight. He is going to be there, and we are doing "Romeo and Juliet." *(Dreamily.)* Oh, to be in love and to be Juliet. I am afraid I may frighten the other actors to death. To be in love is to surpass oneself.

JAMES: He wants to enslave you.

SIBYL: I shudder at the thought of being free.

JAMES: *(Holding her by the shoulders, sternly.)* I want you to beware of him.

SIBYL: Beware of him? *(Slight pause.)* To see him is to worship him; to know him is to trust him.

JAMES: *(Shaking her.)* You are mad! What has he done to you?

SIBYL: *(Laughs.)* Dear Jim, someday you will be in love yourself. Then you will know what it is. *(Takes his arm.)* I am happier than I have ever been. Life has been hard for us both...terribly hard and difficult. You are going to a new world, and I have found one, too. Loves makes people good.

*(James takes a knife out of his duffle bag and turns to Sibyl.)*

JAMES: *(Threateningly.)* If he ever does you any wrong, I shall kill him. I swear I will!

SIBYL: Give me that knife, James. (*Reluctantly, James hands the knife to Sibyl.*) You don't mean that.

JAMES: Believe me, if this man wrongs you, I shall hunt him down and kill him like a dog! I swear to it!

(*Lights fade as James grabs his duffle bag and storms out of the room.*)

**(END OF FREEVIEW)**