

# DORIAN AND BASIL ~ SIDE 2

BASIL: It is simply disgraceful of your servant hiding your portrait like that.

DORIAN: My servant has nothing to do with it. I did it myself. The light was too strong on the portrait.

BASIL: Too strong! Surely not. It is an admirable place for it. Let me see it.

*BASIL walks toward the portrait, DORIAN sprints between BASIL and the painting.*

DORIAN: No! No, you must not look at it. I don't wish you to.

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

DORIAN: *(angrily)* If you try to look at it, Basil, on my word of honor 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 if you touch this screen, everything is over between us.

BASIL: Dorian!

DORIAN: Don't! I mean it, Basil.

BASIL: *(coldly)* I won't look at it today if you don't want me to. But 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. I shall probably have to give it another coat of varnish before that, so I must see it someday. Why not today?

DORIAN: *(frightened)* Exhibit it?

BASIL: Yes. Georges Petit is going to collect all my best pictures for a special exhibition in the Rue de Sèze, which will open the first week in October. The portrait will only be away a month. If you keep it always behind a screen, you can't care much about it.

DORIAN: You told me a month ago that you would never exhibit it. You assured me that nothing in the world would induce you to send it to any exhibition. You told Harry exactly the same thing. Why the sudden change? Do you have a secret, Basil? *(moving close to him)* Let me know yours, and I shall tell you mine. What was your reason for refusing to exhibit my picture, Basil?

BASIL: Dorian, if I told you, you would certainly laugh at me. If you wish me never to look at your picture again, I am content. If you wish the best work I have ever done to be hidden from the world, I am satisfied. Your friendship is more important to me than any fame or reputation.

DORIAN: Tell me, Basil. I think I have a right to know.

BASIL: Let us sit down, Dorian.

*DORIAN motions to the couch, they sit down.*

BASIL: Answer me one question. Have you noticed in the picture something curious? Something that probably at first did not strike you, but that revealed itself to you suddenly?

*DORIAN is shocked at the question. He is speechless.*

DORIAN: I saw something in it. Something that seemed to me very... curious.

BASIL: Show me.

DORIAN: (*shaking his head*) No. It is too much.

BASIL: But if you won't show it to me, will you at least sit for me again so I may paint a different portrait?

DORIAN: No, Basil, I'm afraid I will never sit for you again.

BASIL: Never?

DORIAN: There is something fatal about a portrait. It has a life of its own.

BASIL: Tell me, what is it?

DORIAN: I can't, Basil.

BASIL: Then I could create a new one—

DORIAN: No, Basil.

BASIL: It would have even more depth, a much wiser picture

DORIAN: No.

BASIL: --that has experienced tragedy in love—

DORIAN: No, Basil, I said no! (*a beat*) Now will you please go. I have things I must attend to.

BASIL: (*leaving, sadly*) I am sorry you won't let me look at the picture once again. I quite understand what you feel about it.

DORIAN: Goodbye Basil.