

# The Picture of Dorian Gray

OSCAR WILDE

# THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

## Chapter 1

### *The Masterpiece*

The light summer wind blew through the open windows and the rich scent of summer flowers filled the room. Lord Henry was lying down lazily on a divan. In the center of the room there was a portrait of a handsome young man. The artist Basil Hallward was sitting in front of the portrait.

'It's your best work Basil. The best portrait that you've ever painted,' said Lord Henry lazily. 'You must send it to the Grosvenor Gallery next year.'



*It is the best painting you have ever made.*

‘I won’t send it anywhere,’ said Basil calmly.

Lord Henry was surprised. He lifted his eyebrows and looked through the portrait. ‘Why not my dear friend Basil? ‘Do you have any reasons? What strange people you artists are,’ said Lord Henry. ‘You do everything to be famous but then you aren’t happy when you are famous.’

‘I know you’ll laugh at me,’ replied Basil. ‘I can’t exhibit this portrait in an art gallery because I’ve put too much of myself into it.’

Lord Henry stretched out his legs on the divan, laughing at Basil’s words. ‘The man doesn’t look like you at all. He has a very beautiful face –well, of course you have an intellectual expression on your face but you don’t look like the man in the portrait.’

‘You don’t understand me Harry,’ answered the artist. (Basil always called him Harry.)

‘Of course I’m not like him. I know that. In fact, I don’t want to look beautiful. Honestly! Beautiful people always have troubles. Dorian Gray will suffer because of his beautiful face.

‘Dorian Gray? Is that his name?’ asked Lord Henry, standing up and walking across the room.

‘Arrggh yes, I let his name slip out. I didn’t want to tell you his name.’

‘Why not?’

‘Oh, it may sound stupid to you,’ said Basil. ‘When I like people very much, I never tell their names to anybody. You may think I’m foolish for thinking like that.’

‘No, not at all my dear Basil,’ answered Lord Henry. ‘You know I am used to strange mysterious things. It is quite common in my marriage. I like the mysterious parts of my marriage. I never know where my wife is and my wife never knows what I’m doing. When we meet –we do meet sometimes- we tell each other the craziest stories in a serious way. My wife is very good at it.’

‘I hate the way you talk about your marriage,’ said Basil, walking towards the door. ‘I believe that you are a very good husband, Harry, but you never show your true feelings.’

The two friends went to the garden together. There were many white daisies and beautiful tall trees with large leaves in the garden. The sun was shining on them. The cool summer wind was blowing slowly, shaking the large leaves on the trees. Lord Henry and Basil sat on a long bamboo seat under the shadow of a tall tree.

Lord Henry looked at his watch. ‘I’m afraid I must be going, Basil,’ he said quietly. ‘Before I go, you must answer my question.’

‘What question, Harry?’

‘Why don’t you want to exhibit Dorian Gray’s portrait? I want the real reason.’

‘I told you the real reason.’

‘No, you didn’t.’

‘If an artist paints a portrait with his feelings, it’s a portrait of himself, not of the sitter. I’ve shown the secret of my feelings in this portrait. That’s my reason.’

Lord Henry laughed.

‘I know you don’t understand me.’

Lord Henry smiled in a friendly way, picking a daisy and looking at it closely.

‘Two months ago I went to a party at Lady Brandon’s house,’ said Basil at last. ‘Lady Brandon introduced me to Dorian Gray. I was talking to some people when I realized that someone was looking at me. I turned and saw Dorian Gray for the first time. We both looked at each other and I felt a sudden fear. You know how independent I am by nature, Harry. I was always my own master till I met Dorian Gray. I don’t know how to explain it to you. I had a strong feeling that Dorian Gray would change my life forever.’

‘And how did Lady Brandon describe this wonderful young man?’ asked Lord Henry, pulling the daisy to bits with his long fingers. ‘I know Lady Brandon treats her

guests as an auctioneer treats his goods.’

‘Poor Lady Brandon! You’re too hard on her, Harry,’ said Basil.

‘Tell me Basil, what did she say about Mr Dorian Gray?’

‘Oh, something like, ‘Charming Boy.’ We talked and laughed about something with Dorian Gray. Then we become friends at once,’ said Basil.

‘Laughter is not a bad way to begin a friendship,’ said the young Lord, pulling another daisy.

Basil shook his head. ‘You don’t understand what friendship is, Harry,’ Basil said calmly.

‘That’s not fair, Basil,’ shouted Lord Henry. ‘Now, tell me more about Mr Dorian Gray. How often do you see him?’ said the young lord.

‘Every day. If I don’t see him every day, I’m very unhappy. I need to see him.’

‘I thought you only cared about your art.’

‘He’s all my art now,’ replied the artist seriously. ‘The work I’ve done, since I met Dorian Gray, is good work. Actually it’s the best work of my life. I see art in a different way because of him. When Dorian Gray is with me, I paint the best pictures.’

‘Basil, this is extraordinary. I must meet Dorian Gray.’

‘Harry,’ he said excitedly. ‘Dorian Gray is my motivation for art. You may see nothing in him but I see everything. Dorian Gray doesn’t know anything about my feelings and thoughts. And people must never see the portrait of Dorian Gray.’

‘Tell me Basil. Does Dorian Gray care about you?’

‘He likes me,’ said the artist after a short pause. ‘He’s very friendly towards me but sometimes he hurts my feelings with his unkind words. He seems to enjoy hurting me, Harry. I feel like I have given away my whole soul to him. But he thinks my soul is a summer flower. A flower that he can forget about tomorrow.’

‘Summer days are very long Basil,’ said Lord Henry. ‘Perhaps, you will become tired sooner than he will.’

‘Don’t talk like that, Harry. Dorian Gray will always be very important in my life. You can’t feel what I feel. We are very different. Your feelings change too quickly. Mine don’t.’

‘Ah, my dear Basil, I can feel it, believe me,’ said Lord Henry sadly. ‘I’ve just remembered something Basil,’ said Lord Henry suddenly.

‘Remembered what Harry?’

‘I think I heard the name of Dorian Gray before. My aunt, Lady Agatha, mentioned his name. I am even more curious now. I must meet this Dorian Gray.’

'I don't want you to meet him, Harry.'

'Why not, Basil? Why don't you want me to meet him?'

Before the artist answered his question, the butler came.

'Mr Dorian Gray is here, sir,' said the butler.

'Now, you must introduce me to him,' said Lord Henry, laughing aloud.

'Dorian Gray is my dearest friend. He has a simple and beautiful nature. Please don't try to affect him with your clever words. Don't take away him from me. I need him in my life,' said Basil worriedly.

'I don't know what you are talking about, Basil. I really don't.'

They walked back to the house arm in arm.