

NOTE: There are internal cuts in this scene for audition purposes. Please refer to this edited scene rather than the full script.

HARRY

Basil, before I go, explain to me why you won't exhibit Dorian Gray's picture.

BASIL

I told you...

HARRY

I want the real reason.

BASIL

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

HARRY

*(Laughing)* And what is that?

BASIL

Oh, I am afraid you will hardly understand it. The story is simply this. Two months ago I went to a crush at Lady Brandon's.

*Music begins while, across the stage, the party at Lady Brandon's begins to unfold in a stylized pantomime. BASIL continues to tell the story to HARRY, but he crosses to join the enactment of the party.*

BASIL (Cont.)

You know we poor artists have to show ourselves in society from time to time, just to remind the public that we are not savages. Well, after I had been in the room about ten minutes talking to huge, overdressed dowagers and tedious Academicians, I suddenly became conscious that someone was looking at me. *(DORIAN GRAY appears from within the crowd)* I turned halfway round and saw Dorian for the first time. When our eyes met, I grew pale. I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole soul, my very art itself. Then...I don't know how to explain it to you...something seemed to tell me that I was on the verge of a terrible crisis in my life. I knew that if I spoke to Dorian I would become absolutely devoted to him. I grew afraid and turned to quit the room. I struggled to the door where, of course, I stumbled against Lady Brandon.

LADY BRANDON

You are not going to run away so soon, Mr. Hallward?

BASIL

You know her curiously shrill voice?

HARRY

Yes, she is a peacock in everything but beauty.

BASIL

I could not get rid of her. She brought me up to Royalties, and people with Stars and Garters, and elderly ladies with gigantic tiaras and parrot noses. Suddenly I found myself face to face with the young man who had so strangely stirred me. We were quite close, almost touching. Our eyes met again. I asked Lady Brandon to introduce me to him. Perhaps it was reckless, but it was simply inevitable. Dorian told me afterwards that he, too, felt that we were destined to know each other.

*The party dissolves as BASIL crosses back to his studio.*

HARRY

Tell me more. How often do you see him?

BASIL

Every day. Of course sometimes it's only for a few minutes, but a few minutes with somebody one worships mean a great deal.

HARRY

But you don't really worship him?

BASIL

*(A sheepish confession)* I do.

HARRY

Basil, this is extraordinary! But why won't you exhibit his portrait?

BASIL

Because, without intending it, I have put into it all the extraordinary romance of which, of course, I've never dared to speak to him. He knows nothing about it. But the world might guess it and my heart shall never be put under their microscope. There is too much of myself in the thing, Harry - too much of myself. For that reason the world shall never see my portrait of Dorian Gray.