

# Dorian Gray

London had its own share of monsters before Dracula came visiting. One of them, Dorian Gray, is best known from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by Oscar Wilde. The subject of an exquisite portrait by artist Basil Hallward, Gray said he would offer his soul if only the portrait would age instead of him. His wish was granted, with the bonus that the Picture took on the image of his sins as well, leaving Gray apparently innocent in the eyes of all who met him. Encouraged by his friend Lord Henry Watton, Gray lived a life of hedonism and depravity, leaving a trail of ruined lives behind him (including one Adrian Singleton, who is probably not related to the Alfred Singleton mentioned in the Dracula Dossier. Probably), and culminating in the murder of Basil Hallward. Finally, fearing that the Picture might be evidence of his crime, Gray stabbed it with a dagger, before being found "withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage," with the blade in his own heart, and the Picture restored to its original appearance.

Such was the account set down by Wilde, who may have received it from a Henry Watton shocked at the circumstances of Gray's death, and perhaps beginning to believe his semi-confession to Hallward's murder - or Wilde may have put it together himself from the rumours that swirled in the circles he, Watton, and Gray all moved in.

Then again... it was only from the rings on the body's fingers that it was identified as Gray. Of the only two people besides himself who had seen the Picture, one was dead and the other had not seen it for eighteen years. To fake his death with another murder, and have a duplicate portrait made to stand in for the Picture? Not too hard, all things considered.

**Independent:** An independent Dorian Gray is a spoiler. He could be spoiling things for the Agents, Edom, the Conspiracy, or anyone else, but his only real agenda is the pursuit of pleasure, and his most likely role is to throw a spanner into someone's works while doing so.

**Edom:** If Gray is in Edom's custody, they most likely have him under lock and key, trying to figure out the properties of the Picture. Or they've given up and just have him under lock and key.

**Conspiracy:** Dracula most likely uses Gray as an *homme fatal*, tasked with seducing targets for blackmail, manipulation or elimination. He may be sent after the Agents, or he may be how the Conspiracy finally caught up with "Hopkins." Gray isn't the most reliable of minions, and Dracula most likely keeps the Picture hidden away to ensure his compliance. The flip side of this is that Gray will probably be willing to turn on the Conspiracy if he can be convinced the Agents can help him get it back (which will take some good roleplaying and a hefty spend of Interpersonal Abilities); however the flip side of *that* is that he'll turn on the Agents just as quickly if he thinks Dracula might catch wind of the betrayal.

## Powers and Statistics

Exactly what the Picture grants Dorian Gray isn't tested much in the novel - he doesn't age over the course of it, but that those events cover less time than a human lifespan - also he never receives the kind of physical harm that would show whether the Picture suffers it in his stead. The package below splits several differences to provide enough immortality for him to still be walking the Earth, while keeping him a social and moral threat rather than too much of a physical one - the Director should feel even freer than usual to change things.

**Immortality:** As long as the Picture endures, Gray is immortal; most importantly, the image on the canvas ages in his stead (by now it resembles a skeleton with a few lumps of desiccated flesh clinging to its bones). Gray can't be killed by poison or injury, but still takes normal damage from them; his **Health** recovers at a rate of 2 points per day. Any injury that would have been lethal appears on the Picture as Gray heals.

**False Innocence:** Dorian Gray's eternal youth is not just physical. He *feels* young, and most people - even those as jaded and cynical as the average Agent - will be reluctant to believe him anything but an innocent (this effect isn't strong enough to personally overcome directly witnessing him do something shady). For Agents, this means that **Bullshit Detector** or the use of any other Interpersonal Abilities to detect motives won't work (though after a while, that will in itself serve as a clue that something is off about him).

**Investigative Abilities:** Human Terrain 5

**General Abilities:** Aberrance 10, Hand to Hand 2, Health 10, Shooting 4

**Hit Threshold:** 4

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** -2 (attracts the notice of others)

**Damage Modifier:** -2 (normal human)

**Free Powers:** None

**Other Powers:** Mesmerism (via a Damned lens), Seduction (as Mesmerism)

**Banes:** Destroying the Picture instantly kills Gray

**Blocks:** None

**Compulsions:** None

**Dreads:** Allowing anyone else to see the Picture requires an Aberrance test as if it were a Dread

**Requirements:** Normal human needs

## The Art of Basil Hallward

Readers employing their **Notice** or **Art History** Abilities will recall that Basil Hallward is one of the possible clear names suggested for Francis Aytown, although any attempt to connect the two has to get round the fact that the Wilde Account was published four years before the events of the 1894 operation, and thus Basil Hallward had been dead for at least that long. A few possibilities might be:

- It's a red herring. There were two Basil Hallwards in the London art scene at the time, and Aytown used a pseudonym to avoid confusion with the other's work.
- As above, but the Hallward of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was an uncle or cousin of Aytown, implying that their talent for strange art could be carried in their family's blood.
- The "1894" operation actually took place ten years earlier, and the idea of releasing the redacted version to cover it wasn't hit on for some time. This time discrepancy has helped keep the secret as those looking into Dracula's potential reality focus on the wrong decade and miss details that might otherwise have corroborated the novel.
- Hallward wasn't killed by Gray, but in fear for his life, fled and changed his name, returning to London only after Gray's apparent death. Henry Watton, and Wilde if he received the account from Watton, mistakenly assumed that Gray had killed him.
- As above, but Wilde received the account from Hallward himself, and added the murder because Hallward wished the life associated with such terrible events dead and gone.

Based on the facts related in the Wilde Account, it's entirely possible that it was some quality of Hallward's own, not Gray's wildly expressed desire, that was responsible for the strange properties of the Picture. Especially if he *is* the same man as Francis Aytown, who successfully painted Dracula. If so, other paintings of his might also display unusual powers, and be a part of a campaign even if Dorian Gray himself is not.

Those that are Minor Items are simply well-crafted pieces, of interest to collectors with an occult bent. Offering one can be used to buy a favour or introduction, or traded for one of the items in the Director's Handbook. Fraudulent pieces might be good for that too, but with more chance of backfiring. Some possibilities for pictures as Major Items include:

- A portrait that summons a shade of the subject, able to answer the Agents' questions on matters known to the subject (perhaps limited to what they knew at the time the picture was painted, though given the nature of the Picture of Dorian Gray, it's perfectly feasible for it not to be). This is a great way to allow the Agents a conversation with one of the original 1894 group.

A "shade" needn't be of someone who's dead, either. If any of the 1894 team were vampirised, being able to interrogate a portrait of them is a major security weakness for whichever of Edom or the Conspiracy the vampire serves.

- A portrait that, when unobserved, changed (or still changes?) to reflect the subject's current age, location, and circumstances. Since the subject is likely to be long dead now, the painting is an exact scene of their death, which can provide a clue at the very least.

In a fully Damned mode campaign, perhaps the painting is even now reflecting its subject's sojourn in Heaven or Hell. An image of Heaven becomes a Symbol (in the Sources of Stability sense) for any Agent who realises what they're looking at. An image of Hell becomes a Dread for any vampire or minion as they recoil from the fate that awaits them - some minions may turn from their service to Dracula in the face of the painting.

If the subject has become a vampire, the magic of the painting may still be working. As above, this is a major security weakness for whomever is employing the vampire. Naturally, the Director should endeavour to have at least one occasion where the Agents see the picture showing the vampire standing right behind them.

- A portrait that resonates with the subject's soul and psyche, allowing communion between the subject and those who look upon the picture. Since if the subject is still around they are probably a vampire, looking upon the picture is very dangerous: the subject can focus mental attacks through it. On the plus side, there's pretty good reason to suspect that staking such a portrait would destroy a vampiric subject. The Agents can certainly do that, or attempt to coerce the vampire, counting on its fear of the possibility.
- A portrait that traps the ghost of its subject. Using necromancy - or perhaps the Spirit Board (*DH*, p. 279 - it may be possible to interrogate the ghost in the same manner as the shades described above. However, it may also be possible for the ghost to possess anyone who tries, or even anyone who looks at the portrait at all (as the Possession power, with an Aberrance of 10).

If the subject has become a vampire, the portrait holds the soul that was lost the moment they were turned. Such a subject will try to possess a viewer and then go after their own vampirised body, hell-bent on destroying it. While such a ghost might count as an ally, they would be unlikely to pay much attention to other considerations the Agents might have, such as the fate of the person they're possessing.

- According to the Wilde Account, *the Picture* was only one of many that Hallward painted of Dorian Gray. When Gray destroyed it, apparently killing himself, fragments of his soul could have become trapped in the others. Each can attempt to possess a viewer, as above, but is only likely to try with a viewer similar to Gray himself: young, male, and handsome. (If a successful possession also grants back Gray's Powers, then this is a way to get him - or several of him - back while keeping his fate the same as in the Wilde Account).
- A landscape - perhaps Whitby (*DH*, p. 177), Ring (*DH*, p. 172), the Dolingen Tomb (*DH*, p. 227), or even Castle Dracula itself (*DH*, p. 207) - that changes to show the current condition of the place, and events taking place there.
- A landscape of one of the above places that serves as a window to (and from) it. In the case of Castle Dracula, this may allow Agents to get there while bypassing the gauntlet of Romania - of course this also means they bypass any possibly backup, and have no chance to scout the area first.
- A still life that radiates its sense of serenity into the room it's displayed in, allowing said room to function as a Haven (*NBA*, p. 92), even if circumstances might otherwise be too fraught for it.

- Perhaps it's not the painter that's special, but the paint, mixed from pigments from sources tainted by telluric energies. Such paintings might be subtly alive, displaying slight movements or signs of excitement in painted faces when vampires are nearby. Or subtly vampiric, drawing a point of **Health** from anyone who sleeps near them. In such a case, it might be worth finding out where Hallward obtained his paints, and whether there's anything sinister about that supplier (and whether they sold similarly tainted paint to anyone else).

**Connections:** Basil Hallward's art might hang on the walls of the Art Forecaster (*DH*, p. 103), Hungarian (*DH*, p. 94), Madman, (*DH*, p. 121), Psychic (*DH*, p. 96), Sculptor (*DH*, p. 100), "Van Sloan" (*DH*, p. 87), or any Legacy.