



THE WOLF OF DORIAN GRAY

A Werewolf Spawned by the Evil of Man

BRIAN S. FERENCE

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DEDICATION

My thanks go out to my beautiful wife Rachel, the love of my life, who supports me in everything that I do. I wrote this book as an experiment, an exercise in thought, a journey of imagination, and an exploration of conscious. I have long held a fascination with werewolves and have always had the goal to publish a book. Enjoy this compelling tale of love, lust, and the werewolf spawned by the evil of man.

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PROLOGUE

James approached the crumbling stone wall of the vast country estate. He'd have to move quickly to avoid detection from the other men tramping through the dense woods nearby. His short stocky figure was capable of small bursts of speed, but his legs were more used to the deck of a ship than tearing through the thorny shrubs and tangled tree roots of the forest floor. Timing his move, he vaulted the wall and sprinted across the open ground and into the waiting cover of the trees. He sank down behind a hawthorn bush that provided some concealment while he caught his heaving breath and listened intently. There was almost no sound at all. Strange, this area should be teeming with quail and other animals. Why were there so many men in the forest? Ah, they must be beaters for a hunting party nearby. The beaters were likely in search of the fat speckled quail that would be hiding among the dense undergrowth and in the surrounding fields.

James was hunting for a very different form of prey. He checked the five-shot Webley revolver in his

coat, making sure it was fully loaded. It was an inexpensive sidearm, but it had served him well over the years. The last time he faced his quarry it escaped unscathed. That was a mistake he would correct today—or die trying.

The men moved off towards the fields, so James quietly advanced to the edge of the trees to get a closer look at the light-brown country house. The architecture was in the Palladian style, with symmetrical pillars in the front and circular arches over the large windows. There were multiple wings attached to the central house, and they too were adorned with pediments and porticos.

He was about ten meters away but, with the low fog on the ground, it was difficult to see clearly. As he stood behind a thick oak tree, he leaned outward and peered into the windows of the building. The first and second rooms proved empty and he quickly moved on. The third contained a large gathering, with all sorts of people moving about inside, but his target could not be seen there. At the last window on the side of the house, he was shocked to see the very face he had been searching for looking directly back at him. He leaped backward and turned sideways to conceal his broad shoulders behind the tree. He desperately hoped that he hadn't been seen. Maybe

the eyes were simply looking out at the surrounding woods. No, that was foolish—he had been spotted. But, perhaps he could draw his prey to him instead. Risking another glance around the tree, he saw that the face had disappeared from the window. If he was discovered, he would do whatever was required to find a way to spring his trap, even if it cost him everything. Failing that, he would wait for another opportunity to take his revenge.

He had been away at a distant port when the letter came bearing news that would change his life forever. From that moment, James had vowed vengeance and thought of little else. He had been hunting for years now with only one previous encounter with his prey. That time he had lost his nerve. But now he would finally finish it. A little patience would cost him nothing and would be well worth the wait to end that particular life.

After several minutes with no alarm being sounded, he gradually retreated and moved deeper into the forest to wait. Nearly a quarter-hour of time passed. He snapped his head up abruptly as a faint scraping sound announced the approach of someone nearby. James cocked the hammer of his revolver and pointed it in the direction he had taken back from the house. Minutes passed in deafening

silence as his heart thudded rapidly in his chest. There was no one there.

The attack came from his side instead of the front. James was completely unprepared by the sheer force of whatever hit him and knocked him sideways onto the ground. He only had a sense of a large dark shape as it continued the attack, falling upon him. Desperately, James brought his revolver to bear and fired a shot in the center of the enormous shape. A sound of pure fury exploded from the thing as a massive, clawed hand raked a fire of agony and blood across his outstretched arm and sent his revolver smashing through the dense brush. James tried to rise to his feet, but more burning pain blossomed in his chest and stomach. The terrible strength of the creature forced him down, crushing the breath from his lungs. He saw sharp canines and the hairy muzzle of a wolf as it slammed into his face and neck. He could only scream in surprise and disbelief as the foul-smelling animal ripped into his body and life began leaking out from him. His last fading thoughts were of his terrible failure and the unjustness of the world. This impossible creature had inexplicably killed him and prevented him from taking his revenge. He would never have the satisfaction of ending the life of the man whose face

he had seen staring back at him through the country
house window.

THE WOLF PUP

Despite the general calm of the country air and the purposeful seclusion of her art studio, Sage Holdsworth was having a difficult time focusing on her latest composition. It wasn't caused by the faint tangy fragrance of the Hookah smoke which wafted slowly upwards to the high wooden beams. Nor was the distraction coming from the plush, inviting pillows of the Chesterfield sofa where Lady Helena was lying seductively—as she was wont to do. Nor was it the dull throb of Sage's lingering migraine. Amazingly, it wasn't even the subject of the work itself that was causing the issue. No, the subject was more than fine, perfect and beautiful and distracting in its own way. The problem preventing her from continuing her painting was the soft and persistent whining coming from behind the heavy-oak door to the kitchen.

Sage put down her mahogany palette and sable brushes. They were extensions of her own hands and encrusted from heavy use, but still the

finest that money could buy. Looking over at Lady Helena's relaxed form, she was struck with a moment of envy at her generous curves and glowing skin that was delicate and firm despite a life that would invite an onslaught of wrinkles to a normal woman. The woman's right hand seemed to point to her revealing bust line, while her left hand was thrown casually above her beautiful and regal face. Her heavy-lidded lashes revealed fiery and mischievous eyes which were set above full pink lips that were currently pursed in a slight smirk.

Sage shook off the feeling of inadequacy that came from comparing her own mousy brown hair and plain face to that of her friend. She shot her an imploring look. "Helena, please. Do something about the pup's crying. I'm trying to concentrate."

"Why should it be my job? It's your silly sense of charity that took that ridiculous pup in." Lady Helena sat up slowly and casually tossed back her long, obsidian-silk hair. "You must know that someday, that wolf cub will grow up into the beast that its mother was."

Sage tried to ignore the flash of blood, as the image of the giant grey wolf rushed back into her mind. During one of her nightly gatherings in Epping Forest, she was astounded to come across the animal

—which was thought to have been hunted to extinction in England well over two centuries ago. She was at a loss to explain what her eyes saw. Perhaps it had escaped from a zoo.

Sage timidly approached the wolf mother, already dead from starvation and caught in the metal leg hold fox trap that had cruelly ended the animal's life. Somehow, the grey wolf pup had been spared and the tiny creature sat crying next to the motionless form of his mother. The small animal also had a large gash on its paw, as if cut while trying to free the mother from the trap. Perhaps the mother had continued to suckle the wolf pup, even as she starved. It was a tragic loss, as the majestic animals no longer roamed the mighty forests and were even quite rare to see in captivity. Luckily, that evening she hadn't been alone but had taken along Dorian Gray for the first time.

Upon seeing the animals, wonderful kind-hearted Dorian had forgotten all about his trepidation of tramping through the damp forest at night. He had reluctantly agreed to help search for herbs that Sage needed for her paints. She would only allow paints that she mixed herself to touch her prized brushes and expensive canvases. The herbs were necessary to bring out the brilliant colors that

distinguished her lifelike and compelling style. They gave the images a certain power—and they had other uses as well.

Her knowledge of herbs was of no help to the wolf mother. She was already gone as Dorian set his powerful arms to unhinging the fox trap. The hinge of the trap cracked and it broke, scoring a nasty gash across his hand—which he nobly ignored. Dorian gently lifted the lifeless form of the mother free and insisted on digging a hole in order to bury the she-wolf beneath the soft forest floor himself. He had been concerned for the small wolf pup and hugged it to his chest as the two walked through the trees and back to her studio. He patiently allowed the tiny animal to lick the blood that was freely flowing from the gash on his hand. At the sight of it he simply laughed merrily, amused at the apparent hunger the pup showed in response to the warm blood. Sage had almost warned him then, but instead seized on the adoring look in his endless blue eyes and offered to raise the pup herself. Turning it over to a zoo or conservatory seemed cruel. The animal could very well be the last of its kind and Sage hoped to one day release it back into the forest when it reached adulthood. She tenderly treated the uneven wounds that the jagged teeth of the fox trap had caused to the

small grey paw. Sage dressed the injury with some dry bandages, staunching the surprisingly large flow of deep, red blood and treated it with an extract of coal tar. She would ensure that the wound healed properly and nurse the animal back to full health. That way, Dorian could visit as often as he liked and the two of them could play with the little whelp together for hours on end—and that suited her just fine.

With a sigh, Sage dragged herself away from the easel and walked towards the kitchen. As the bulky door swung open, the wolf pup ran out and went tumbling in a ball of fluff. It was still unsure of itself in this new environment and adorably sniffed around before retreating to the protection her legs offered. Unable to help herself, Sage giggled and scooped him up, planting a kiss on the soft, furry head. In that moment her migraine cleared and she hugged the animal and whispered to him. “Being adorable is another thing you share with him. That and also being grey. So, that is what I will call you, little Dorian Grey.”

After finding a few bloody scraps of rabbit meat in the ice box, which the small wolf eagerly scarfed down, she changed the bandages on the injured paw. There was still a small amount of blood, slowly

seeping out from the deep cuts on the tiny paw. She dabbed these and then re-bandaged the wound gingerly. Then she picked the small animal back up and exited the kitchen, depositing him in a shabby old dog bed by the roaring red fireplace. This way he would be within eyesight but safely away from her antique easel. Hopefully the fresh meat and warmth from the hearth would soon sooth the trying animal to sleep and prevent him from getting into any more trouble.

As she returned to her paint-smattered palette and darkened brushes, she placed the bloody bandages near her materials. Her aesthetic gaze took in how much more vibrant the crisp colors were on the changed bandage. She fancied how much closer she could get the current mixture on her palette to the color of Dorian's lips, if she only mixed in a few drops of the red blood. On a whim, she swirled her brush in the bloody bandage, and mixed it with the colors on her palette, before using the brush to apply it to the canvas. She stubbornly ignored the nagging sensation at the back of her mind that attempted to disrupt her creativity with annoying warnings. As she finished applying the new paint mixture, she noticed Lady Helena was no longer spread out in her feline pose, but was now admiring the canvas with a

seriousness and focus that she had rarely observed from the socialite.

Lady Helena leaned forward to inspect the canvas. “This is your finest work, Sage. Easily the best that I have ever seen. You really must exhibit this at Colnaghi’s gallery! Or, we can open a new one together, like I’ve been begging you to do for years now. Just imagine, our own darling gallery set along Dover Street or by the Berkeley Square gardens. I’ll front the money if that’s what it takes. Art like this must be seen and appreciated!”

Since they first met, Lady Helena had been trying to convince Sage that the two should open up an art gallery and go into business together. Sage appreciated her friendship and that Lady Helena had taken her under her wing, but she couldn’t help but feel it was at least partly done because it was considered fashionable to be friends with a well-known artist. She often felt paraded around like a trained monkey at the various social events organized by Lady Helena, but was too shy to risk losing her friendship by complaining about it. She didn’t mind having her work publicly praised by her friend, even if Lady Helena managed to somehow take credit for most of it. She always had been an overbearing person, as her husband knew well. Lady

Helena all but ran her husband's flourishing trading company. She was the true mind behind the intricate business deals, the complicated purchase decisions, establishing trade routes, and managing contacts. Her husband was remanded to a figurehead, who merely signed the contracts that were put in front of him and provided any financial backing that was needed. This arrangement allowed Lady Helena to be very free with her spending, including her famously generous support for the arts.

Sage scowled. "Not this one." She formed her face into the familiar stubborn look which Lady Helena knew meant she might as well give up the argument now—for Sage would never change her mind.

"Are you sure? My dear, have you lost your mind entirely? This would elevate your fame to a level of international renown. I don't understand you artist types; so quick to create a masterpiece, then you go and hide it away under a mattress. If you won't display it, at least let me purchase it from you. Name your price, I'll pay a considerable sum for it."

"I can't, this painting is not for sale or for display."

Lady Helena sat down on the sofa and crossed her long, smooth legs slowly, fixing Sage with a

momentary brooding glare. It lasted only for a few seconds before she was laughing in glittering tones.

“Why ever not?”

“You’ll tease me, but it’s just too important to me. I’ve put too much of who I am into it.”

Lady Helena scoffed. “Too much of who you are? My, you are vain—besides you aren’t even in the painting. It’s just that admittedly striking wolf pup and the most chiseled, intriguingly handsome young Greek god that I have ever beheld. Why, I do believe with those steely blue eyes and those golden locks, no man can be more beguiling.”

“Yes,” Sage admitted, “Mr. Gray is the most astounding man and quite difficult to look away from.”

“Mr. Gray? Wait, you mean there is an actual living person who looks this good and I haven’t met him? Where have you been hiding him, you naughty girl?”

Sage rolled her eyes. “I haven’t been hiding him. I was just enjoying spending time with a new friend and didn’t want him exposed to the terrible social scene that we have here so soon.”

Lady Helena placed a bejeweled hand innocently over her ample chest. “My dear, I am a happily married woman you know, he has nothing to

fear from the likes of me! Although, fear can be an important sign that you are doing the right thing. It is far more fun to do something, than to be constantly afraid of it. To not do something because of fear is really just a deception of self.”

She paused to examine the expensive ring on her finger. “That is the beauty in being married, the necessity for deception by both spouses. Why, my Lord Husband has no clue what I am doing right now or where I will be later this evening, and it takes at least a few probing questions for me to discover his whereabouts—were I so inclined. But we do so often see each other at a Gala or fundraiser and the occasional dinner, of course. Now I am rambling, tell me about this astonishing young man that you have been keeping all for yourself.”

Sage sat down next to Lady Helena, excited to relate the tale of her first encounter with the intriguing man in the painting and unable to resist her conspirators tone.

“It was three months ago at a crowded gallery opening across town. I was having some of my minor works from my Realism period exhibited and was required to make an appearance. I was bored to tears after ten minutes of trying to follow the tedious conversation and limp Hors d’oeuvres. Then I felt

someone's eyes on me from across the room. You know that itchy, ghosts-on-your-neck feeling? I looked to the side and saw him standing there, just looking at me. Oh how I must have made a fool of myself. When our eyes met I stopped breathing and I was terrified. I felt like my whole soul was drained and taken in at that one look from him. His face was art itself, with a jaw hewn from mythology. His figure was a bronze statue of perfection, and an aura of charisma glowed off of him. It felt like my life was fated to that one moment, that one meeting.”

Sage began picking nervously at the stitch work of the sofa. “I was petrified and tried to turn to leave. Then he started walking towards me, with that boyish grin on his face and my feet became frozen in place, as if by an icy glacier. He approached confidently, introduced himself with a courtly bow, and said that he had been waiting all evening just to meet me. Me of all people! He went on to say that my art had inspired him. We talked for hours about art and the various compositions that were on display. He always had a warm smile on his lips and laughed so easily. We had an immediate connection and were friends at once. That was the first time I met Dorian Gray.”

Lady Helena cocked her head to the side in a distinctively bird-like expression and gave her a calculating look. “Tell me more about this Mr. Gray. How often do you see him?”

“Nearly every day! It makes me so happy to see him and he sits for my painting for hours.”

“Why Sage, I thought only your art brought you happiness?”

“He is like art, and our time together fills me with more inspiration than I have ever felt before. All of my work is suddenly electrifying!”

“Tell me, is he very fond of you?”

Sage considered this question for a few moments. “He likes me. I know he likes me. I do compliment him too much and find myself telling him things I have never told anyone—which he must find tedious. We sit and talk of everything and he is very charming towards me, although he does tend to say thoughtless and hurtful things quite carelessly. But I am sure he doesn’t mean any of them. I feel like I’ve opened my whole self to him, but I am nothing more than a curiosity or artistic indulgence in return, like a decoration which suits his vanity.”

“Don’t worry my dear, an artistic genius with your talents will soon find inspiration elsewhere. I am sure you will expeditiously tire of the whole thing

long before he does. Men are fickle creatures and are too easily distracted by the next shiny bauble, or whatever curvaceous set of hips walks in front of them next. You mustn't let him think you are too interested, or he will mistreat you. Try ignoring him a little, or being cold to him the next time you meet. That always does wonders for romance. If you go in for that sort of thing. Maybe I can help."

"I don't want you to meet him."

"Why ever not?"

"Dorian is my dearest friend. He is kind and has a pure soul and a simple nature. You'll try to influence him or spoil him somehow. This is the one person who adds more to my art than I could ever explain and I couldn't stand to lose him."

Suddenly there was a ring at the door, followed by the elderly butler entering and announcing, "Mr. Dorian Gray has arrived to see you, my lady."

DORIAN GRAY

As Sage put her hand to the door of the parlor she turned back to Lady Helena. “I am trusting you.” She fixed her with a glare then slowly opened the door. “Dorian, hello! You are just in time to sit for me a bit longer as I finish”.

“I am so tired of sitting. Let’s do something fun today instead, oh,” he trailed off as his gaze took in Lady Helena’s alluring figure standing in the background. “I didn’t realize you weren’t alone.” A slight bit of color reached his cheeks as his eyes traveled her enticing torso.

“Dorian, I would like to introduce my good friend Lady Helena Wotton to you. Lady Helena, this is Mr. Gray.”

Lady Helena slowly strode forward, with a distinctive sway to her hips as she bowed her head gracefully. “A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Gray. Sweet Sage here has been telling me about how the two of you met, but I am afraid I have so little other useful information. Pray tell me, what do you do for a living?”

Dorian paused with a sudden frown reaching his face. After a brief second it disappeared and he gave a handsome bow. “A pleasure to make your acquaintance, Lady Wotton. As to my profession, well, I am a musician you see, but really I dabble in quite a few things including philanthropy for theatre and the arts mainly—oh yes, and also the operation of my late father’s business.”

A certain naive look that was yearning for approval reached the bold-blue eyes, as the shiny, blond-haired head remained slightly inclined.

Lady Helena took it all in at once and immediately understood the youth and the purity, the face that inspired trust and trusted immediately, the impeccably sharp and expensive clothing, the demeanor of a young man who had been raised by his mother alone—until she too had passed away, leaving him flush with cash from a trust fund that had been endowed by his deceased father’s business. No wonder Sage worshipped him.

“You are far too charming for philanthropy, Mr. Gray. Please do call me Lady Helena, I insist.” Helena cooed as she took a long cigarette from her purse and placed it suggestively between her lips before igniting it. “Lady Wotton was my overbearing mother-in-law, may she rest in peace.”

“Dorian,” Sage interrupted, “come sit for me so I can finish your painting today. Helena, it was nice seeing you but we really must finish. I hope you don’t mind leaving so soon, I don’t mean to be rude.” She immediately moved out of the parlor and to her art studio. She stopped by her easel and began mixing paints and preparing her brushes.

Dorian and Lady Helena both followed her into the room. “Oh, no Lady Helena, please don’t leave—we have only just met. I think Sage is just in one of her bad moods, and it would be nice to have someone to talk with while she paints. She concentrates so much that she absolutely refuses to speak a word and it gets quite dull. Besides, I am intrigued to hear why you think I am not well suited for philanthropy. You don’t mind do you Sage? It would be nice for me to have someone to talk to while you work.”

Lady Helena sat back down on the sofa, flicking ash recklessly towards a bowl—that was definitely NOT an ashtray, while managing to show even more cleavage.

“I suppose it would be alright if it helps Dorian sit still. Then you must stay, of course.”

“Well, I would but I am afraid I have some pressing business of my own and must be leaving. I am meeting an associate at the Orleans.”

Dorian’s eyes widened at that and his jaw tightened with resolution. “Sage, if Lady Helena must leave, then so too will I, for it does get dreadfully boring. You must ask her to stay.”

Sage surrendered to his stately petition immediately. “Very well then, please stay—I insist. Surely you could reschedule and meet this associate of yours at another time?”

Lady Helena gave a reproachful look. “Very well, if I must. I suppose I can send him a letter through my valet, begging his forgiveness and propose that we meet later this evening.”

“Perfect!” Dorian’s face lit up with a broad smile and he strode confidently towards the fireplace while removing his tailored jacket. “And how is my sleepy little wolf doing today? Have you eaten well? Wake up sleepy one, it is time for us to sit for Sage while she paints. Then, maybe you can have some treats!”

Dorian lifted the wolf out of the chewed dog bed, to excited yips and licks all over his face and hands. He laughed playfully as he seated himself, and the two turned towards the easel, assuming a comfortable position. “Lady Helena, have you met

my wolf pup? He thinks I am well suited for philanthropy. Don't you boy?"

Lady Helena laughed in an inviting manner. "Why my dear, you do have a clever wit about you. I will tell you my thoughts on philanthropy. You see, there is far too much danger of influencing people in philanthropy. To influence someone, is to give them a piece of your soul. Then that person's passions and thoughts are no longer their own. Their sins—if there is such a thing as sin, are but a borrowed thing. Their music, is but a recording of the real notes and they are but actors, playing a role for which they themselves were not written."

Lady Helena paused to make sure she still had everyone's attention and smoothed her dress, before reclining further and continuing on in a thoughtful tone. "The purpose of life is to develop and grow, to reach the heights of one's potential, and to experience all the pleasures and joys that this existence has to offer. To do that, you must understand your own nature. This can be a difficult process involving extensive experimentation and exploration—sometimes even pain. People are too afraid to learn about their true selves and thus they never understand the meaning and value of their lives. Courage in the face of fear has fled society and

people are governed only by an outdated sense of moral and religious ideals.”

Sage spoke without taking her eyes from the canvas. “Dorian, turn your head a little to the side and try to hold that fuzzy trickster still. No, to the other side. Perfect.”

“And so,” Lady Helena went on in a musical voice, ignoring the interruption, “I believe if a man were brave enough, he would live his life to the fullest and most complete level—then he would experience every feeling and thought, every dream and beauty, and every impulse and joy possible. At that point he would no longer fear himself, but truly understand his own mind and the essence of his body. There would be no purity or sin, only the memory of pleasure or the luxury of regret. For temptations are only ended when you give into them.”

Lady Helena let that thought sink in, while looking on with half-lidded eyes and slowly stroking her fingertips along her leg and thigh. She delivered Dorian a seductive look that would quicken any man’s pulse. “The sickness of longing can be cleansed from the soul only by not forbidding anything from yourself—despite invasive laws or societal norms. And of course, this all begins in the

mind. Surely, Mr. Gray, you have had unfulfilled passions or thoughts that have made you afraid to act or limited your experiences. Tell me, do they come to you through brief day dreams or by means of extended nighttime fantasies?”

Dorian’s face once again colored, as he struggled to respond in a coherent sentence. “I, well, I have never heard things explained in that way before or thought about them in such a manner.” Dorian glanced out of the open window and out at the trees with a thoughtful look.

Lady Helena could tell that he was considering her words carefully. His hands moved in an absent-minded way in response to the furious, tiny wolf as it tumbled and chewed on anything within reach. A full two minutes passed in near-silence, save for the scrape of Sage’s painting knife and the sandpapery-slide of her brush strokes.

Lady Helena spoke up again in silvery tones that made her flirtation clear. “You really do have a wonderful and classic profile Mr. Gray. I hope you endeavor to shade yourself from the sun.”

Dorian gave a cheeky smile. “What does it matter, a little sun can’t hurt.”

“It should matter to you. Your youth is a treasure, the one treasure worth having.”

“Isn’t there so much more to life than youth, Lady Helena?”

“Ah, NOW you are inundated with an endless stream of senses to feed the soul. But one day, you will be old and wrinkled and ugly, with your forehead creased with lines, your lips cracked and scarred, and you will feel the weight of age in your very bones. Then you will understand my point. For now, a face such as yours could change the world, but will it always be that way?”

Lady Helena stood and boldly extended her hand, stopping just short of caressing his cheek. “Remember Mr. Gray, a flower dies when first it begins to bud. There are only a few years left for you to truly live fully and in the moment. Every day, your youth fades a little more and you come closer to death’s door. So, cherish your youth while you have it and do not squander a single moment. Even love is merely a mixture of pheromones and physiology. Most young men can’t help themselves, nor control their actions when it comes to a willing and suited partner. Why limit yourself to experiencing love only once—or only a few times? Live your life and seek out new sensations while fearing nothing! For there is nothing you could not do. The world is your oyster