

Chris Barnes

# Holy Father





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## Characters:

- *Dorian Flecker, the son;*
- *Celia Flecker, the daughter;*
- *Mary Flecker, the wife;*
- *Joe Flecker, the father.*
- *Bob, the old neighbour.*
- *Gepetto, Doc.*
- *Joshua, the little traveller.*
- *Gustave Bönickhausen.*
- *Shaugnessy, a policeman of Whitechapel.*
- *Captain Brown, an officer of the Whitechapel police.*
- *Peter Cunningham, the pupil that told the story of Jack the ripper.*
- *Dick, a policeman in the county jail.*
- *Maureen London, the girl of Hyde Park.*
- *MLK.*
- *Len Steele (Dorian's pseudonym).*
- *Dorian, the grandfather.*
- *Laura, the grandmother.*



## Chapter 1

### Dorian

Dorian was an awful teenager. From his earliest days, he had been incredibly hard to live with, all the time laughing at “special” people, teasing girls and weak people. He was not what we could call a “bad” boy, for sometimes he really was willing to help his mother in her daily tasks and the old neighbours who never considered him as such; on the contrary, Bob – the next-door old man – always said that, once his crazy days had passed, he would be the best boy the town had ever seen. Waiting for those blessed days, Dorian did more and more stupid things that got on the people’s nerves; and when his father came back from his tiring job – he was a labourer – he refused to be bothered by his wife’s or other people’s recriminations; to tell the truth, he was really fed up with his son and considered him a great pain.

– Why did you want another child, Mary, why? Celia was quite enough! And *she* is quite nice contrary to that monster!!

Mary was embarrassed to hear such a language; it was true that Dorian was quite a naughty kid, but he certainly had a lot of qualities, and he was *their* son; they *had to* love him and show him how much they

loved him... But she really had the feeling that Joe did not like his son at all; he kept punishing him and he even beat him without even checking whether all that the people complained about was true or not... He often closed him in his bedroom, thus forbidding him to get out, even to go to the toilets; the poor boy did his business in the very middle of the room and was even more and longer punished... Sometimes, he spent three or four days without being allowed to get out; his sister Celia gave him a little piece of old bread and cheese, taking incredible risks on doing so. One of the most difficult things was to uncloset the door silently, the bolt being all the time quicker than what she would have liked it to be. Another time, Joe decided that his son Dorian had definitely not the right to be happy or to get some relief while being punished, and he forbade his son to read while in his bedroom. As he had noticed that his son read anyway, he took his light bulb out just to prevent him from reading... In winter, when the weather was very cold and below zero, he obliged him to chop wood outside, only clad with shorts and a tee-shirt... When Mary thought all this over, she could not help shedding a tear; she often told him he was too tough with the boy, but he insisted on saying that their awful brat had to be “educated”.

– We have to show him what Society and life are made of; what I’m doing is just aimed to help him with his future life. D’you understand this??

Mary was quite confused and would most certainly have liked to express her disapproval, but when she wanted to speak, she could not say anything in front of her big almighty husband; so she shut up, letting her son being punished as if he had killed somebody...



## **Chapter 2**

### **The escape**

Minutes, hours, days, weeks and months were incredibly long in passing by for the little boy; he never knew when his calvary would stop; he longed to go back to school where he could see his friends again and show how clever he was; and clever he really was as he got all the time the best marks and comments from his teachers. But there were so many and so long holidays! For him, they were not “holy” at all; on the contrary, they really were damned days indeed. It seemed to him they would never end! In the meantime, he stayed in his bedroom, most of the time, for having committed too infamous mistakes... Once, when he went to school, he had a bluish mark on his left cheek, and, when the teacher asked him what had happened to him, he just said that he had bumped into the door of his bedroom...

– But don’t you have light?

– Well, yes, but, you know, in the morning, I don’t want to disturb my parents with the light on; so I try to do all I’ve got to do without putting it on...

Nobody believed him, and it was true that everybody wanted to help him; they tried to make him confess what the trouble was, but he never changed what he had said before; so they could not do anything to help him. But one day – he was fourteen then – he decided to run away from that hell. He knew that his mother would be quite sorry for that, but he had to get away; he *had to*, and that was that!

As he came rarely back home on his own, he noticed with a lot of attention and care a lot of seemingly unimportant things. Once, on going back home alone – but that rarely happened, for his father did not want him to be tempted by all the awful things he might have done, and either he took him to school himself, or charged his wife with it – and crossing a little hamlet called Reensburg, he noticed a very particular scene. An old man was speaking there with a teenager; the old man had a lot of white hair and little glasses on the tip of his nose that gave him a sure resemblance with Gepetto, you know, Pinocchio's father. He made up his mind to call him so: "Gepetto". He slowed down his pace and sat down near the two persons, making his very best to hear what they were talking about.

– Well, Joshua, were you satisfied with your travel?

Joshua did not answer right away, being obviously shocked by some invisible incomprehensible thing. Dorian was more and more intrigued and interested.

– Tell me, Joshua, did you see anything...special?

– W... Well, yes...

– What was it?

Obviously Gepetto was very interested in Joshua's answers, but the boy did not want or could not give quick answers. But why, Good Heaven, why? Dorian pricked his ears still more attentively; the task was rather difficult as the two persons did their best not to be overheard by anybody and spoke in a low voice. Fortunately, they never thought that Dorian would be interested in what they were saying, and they went on with their talk. As a matter of fact, they were sitting on the other side of the double bench, in the back of Dorian.

Joshua hesitated a lot before answering; at last, he gathered his courage and said:

- I... I saw my old man...
- You mean your father?
- No, my grandpa...
- And what's so exceptional about that?
- Well... He died a long time ago...
- Oh, I see, Sonny, I see...

Dorian was swimming in nonsense; how can one see one's grandfather again after he died? He must have been joking, for sure!

- Has the travel box worked well, as expected?
- Well, yes... That box is incredibly...great... You have just to press that red button, and there you fly into the past or the future... Before that, I would never have believed such a thing was possible... Never...

- Good; good...

Gepetto was happy; but why? Who could have known? Anyway, all the talk was about a

possible...travel through time! Who could have believed that was possible? No, those

two guys were probably jokers or crazy people; that was dead sure! Even nowadays, how could one travel through time and come back?? Dorian caught himself dreaming of escaping his miserable daily life. Wherever he might go would always be better than what he was living... After some time spent in concentrated talking, Gepetto and Joshua got up and went away, still talking on and on... They had been so concentrated in what they were saying that the old man had forgotten to get his travel box back. It stayed on the bench... Dorian felt a terrible wish to take it and try it... He hesitated for a few seconds... That would be a bad action, and any bad action would entail a harsh punishment... He would still have to undergo painful blows and a horrible confinement in that horrible and cold room... But, precisely, if what the pair had said was true, he could escape his poor life and travel into the future and into the past... What a marvel! He could see what he would never see in a lifetime... He could – just like Joshua – see his Grandpa or his Granny... He kept a very faint memory of those two beloved persons for they had died such a long time before, but he did remember that they were very nice people indeed... Why was his damned father so bad and wicked? Who had bequeathed that to him?? He knew beforehand that thrashings and punishments were not finished, and that he would still suffer a lot from his father's harsh personality... It was much better to fly away through time and space, or whatever it might be provided he escaped!! He turned round and got hold of the little box... Once he got it he felt it was light; too light in