

THE PIT BELOW PARADISE

EPISODE 4

"DYING FAITH"

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Revised 9-30-23

[MUSIC]

ANNOUNCER

Rusty Quill Presents: The Pit Below Paradise.

Episode Four – Dying Faith

[MUSIC]

SCENE 1

(INT. - THE DORM ROOM, MORNING. DORIAN SLEEPING, THE ONLY ONE THERE.)

SOUND: A RINGING BELL, NOT A DOORBELL, SOUNDS OUTSIDE THE DOOR.

DORIAN

Mmm...

SOUND: THE BELL AGAIN. DORIAN STIRS.

DORIAN

Who is...?

Ned? What are you doing here on a Satur— I mean, please come in.

NED

Good morning, Dorian. Or is it Dori now?

DORIAN

Oh, I like both. You talked to my mom?

NED

We spoke yesterday afternoon. She was looking for advice on how best to pray ...

DORIAN

“How best to pray..” Wh-what do you mean?

NED

You haven't been ringing your bell, Dorian.

DORIAN

(CONCERNED HE MISHEARD)

Umm...

DORIAN (CONT'D)

Oh, the doll! I thought you — nevermind. Yeah, you know, actually a ton of people have been coming by with gifts like that. There was this rattly bracelet and a little pen and...

NED

(ICY)

How kind. They're showing their faith in you.

(BEAT.)

You're changing, Dori. I'd hoped you'd prove resilient, like you promised.

DORIAN

(WOUNDED)

I...

NED

I sent you Maxine and Evelyn so you would always have family. People you could trust. Why didn't you use them?

DORIA

I — I did.

NED

Why didn't you *listen* to them? I know they've been trying to keep you on the right path.

(BEAT.)

Do you serve your family?

DORIAN

(SLIGHT HESITATION) Yes.

NED

Don't think. Just answer. Do you have what it takes—

DORIAN

—Yes.

NED

—to do your job?

DORIAN

(NO HESITATION) Yes.

NED

Then get dressed and be outside in two minutes.

SCENE 2

(EXT. - PARKING LOT, MORNING. DORIAN NEARS NED'S CAR, WHERE NED, PAULETTE, AND EVELYN STAND WAITING.)

DORIAN

Mama?

PAULETTE

Hi, honey.

SOUND: HE RUSHES TO HER. THEY HUG.

DORIAN

What's going on? Am I really in trouble?

PAULETTE

What *is* going on, sweetie? Evelyn says you haven't been praying, you've been mixing with the outsider kids——

DORIAN

——Mama, Mama, Mama. Hold on a second. You told me to blend in.

PAULETT

No one told you could date!

EVELYN

And you knew that, Dorian. But you chose to ignore it.

DORIAN

I'm not hurting anyone!

NED

Not yet.

PAULETTE

You're twisting my heart, baby. I'm a mess of worry these days. *One* stray thought is all it takes to start someone off their path.

DORIAN

Not *me*, though. You know me! Faith like a blizzard's got snowflakes, remember?

EVELYN

Until you stop praying.

PAULETTE

Now *that* is not like you, Dorian Charles.

DORIAN

Mama...

PAULETTE

And that is why Ned and I have decided you're coming home.

DORIAN

Wait, what?

EVELYN

Why so alarmed?

DORIAN

B-Because it's so sudden! I can't just disappear! That's the opposite of blending in. My friends will——

NED

——A family emergency ought to do the trick. Tell them you've got an uncle who's passing.

DORIAN

Wait, then... I'm coming back?

PAULETTE

Of course you are. As long as there's no reason for concern. You haven't visited, not once, and *that's* why you're struggling. So, from now on, Evelyn will come to pick you up on Friday afternoons and drop you back off on Sunday nights.

DORIAN

But that's all my free time——!

PAULETTE

—Are you arguing with me?

DORIAN

No.

(UNSURE BEAT.)

But Mama, Ned, you don't understand. I've been... starting their discoveries. For the church. Ruth especially seems real interested. I haven't *struggled* with anything. I'm bringing in more people to join us!

(BEAT.)

EVELYN

If that's true, why didn't you tell me before now?

PAULETTE

Evelyn, do not accuse my child of lying. This is good news. Isn't it, Ned?

NED

Certainly. Go on, Miss Dori.

DORIAN

Um, yeah! So! I've been talking to them both... about personal discovery, some of the tenets. It wasn't too long ago that Ruth and I stayed up until, oh, two? Three in the morning? Talking about her maybe attending a workshop or——

PAULETTE

——Well, this is perfect! You've got to invite them over!

DORIAN

Really?

PAULETTE

Absolutely. Harriet's running a guided meditation this afternoon. It's the perfect chance for newcomers to get involved!

DORIAN

Alright. I mean, it's short notice, so I can't make any promises, but... if it's really okay, then of course I'll invite them. I'll go find them now.

DORIAN (NARRATING)

And I meant *almost* every word. But could you blame me for throwing up a shield? No one in the church had ever done more than give me a stern look before, and now suddenly they were dragging me out of bed to ambush me in a parking lot? I didn't feel any different from the Dorian who had left Paradise village a few short months ago — well, except for that one thing.

Was I a bad friend to consider using Ruth and Will to calm my family? I *hadn't* intended on bringing either of them to the church, not how I was implying, but if it kept my family's trust in me firm, wouldn't that be alright?

SCENE 3

(INT.- RUTH'S ROOM, A LITTLE WHILE LATER.)

RUTH

They woke you up, so you had to wake *me* up?

DORI

You said you wanted to visit.

RUTH

I mean, I have thought about it more, but this is pretty sudden. Have you talked to Will?

DORI

Not yet. He usually spends Saturday mornings in the library.

RUTH

Are we trash students? Eugh Nevermind. My only thing is if I'm going, I'm *not* committing.

DORI

No, of course not! No one comes in like that. You try it out a little and decide as you go. And no matter what, you're still my friend.

RUTH

I *do* want to change. I'm tired of being exhausted and... I don't know... scared all the time. Do you think they can help me with that?

DORI

Ruth, absolutely! You'll come, then?

RUTH

Sure. But do you want me to drive so your family doesn't have to keep waiting on us?

Scene 4

INT - LIBRARY, ANOTHER SHORT WHILE LATER. DORI AND RUTH SIT AT WILL'S TABLE.)

WILL

So... you've both already decided to go.

RUTH

I mean, I can't *not* meet the people who are paying for my college.

DORI

And I can't disobey my Mama.

WILL

But if your uncle is sick, wouldn't that make this a time for family? Why would they want Ruth and I there?

DORI

(SHRUGGING)

I asked. We've got the space, and there'll be plenty for you to do all weekend. I just wouldn't be surprised if I've got to step away now and again for, er, family time.

(BEAT.)

WILL

Well, if you've both decided.

RUTH

Will, we're not trying to, like, go off without you, but you don't *have* to come.

DORI

You do seem a bit reluctant.

WILL

I don't like going new places.

(SIGHS)

But you're special, Dori, so I'll make an exception.

DORIAN (NARRATING)

So... I had them. But now what if my family somehow *didn't* like them? What if my only reason to stay at school became the reason I wasn't allowed back? What if these two worlds really couldn't mix? What if one broke the other?

Scene 5

- RUTH'S CAR, EARLY AFTERNOON, AS SHE DRIVES HERSELF, WILL, AND DORIAN UP THE ROAD INTO PARADISE VILLAGE.)

RUTH

Are those market stalls?

DORIAN

Kind of? We don't really use money around here.

RUTH

Hey, food's more valuable anyway.

(BEAT.)

I'm not going to lie, I expected there to be, you know, a *church*.

DORIAN

It's over there.

RUTH

The... tent? What if it rains?

DORIAN

It's a tent.

(TO WILL) Will, you're quiet.

WILL

Yes.

DORIAN

What do you think? Are you excited?

WILL

I'm interested in seeing where you came from. It ought to explain a lot. (BEAT.) I'm excited.

DORIAN

That's the spirit!

RUTH

Is *that* it?

WILL

It can't be, that house is huge.

DORIAN

No, that's where Ned lives. We're going all the way to the end of the road. You literally can't end up anywhere else, so you will know when you get there.

RUTH

Why does "Ned" get a big house?

DORIAN

I don't know, why does the dean get the biggest office? You know, you're missing some valuable basil action out the window.

RUTH

I'm watching where I'm going! Unless you want to hit a tree.

**SOUND: THE ROAD TURNS ROUGH,
BUMPIER, AS THEY ENTER FOREST.**

WILL

How tall is this mountain?

DORIAN

Quit complaining and get ready!

WILL

(GRUMBLING) / was just asking...

(BEAT.)

DORIAN

Okay okay, okay! Da-da-da-da! My house.

RUTH

How much land do you *have*?

DORIAN

I mean, is any land really *anybody's*? But there's no one else living out here if that's what you mean.

RUTH

For how far?

DORIAN

For all of it. The only thing past that forest is a set of cliffs.

RUTH

Whoa. Should we go diving?

WILL

(SCOFFS)

Maybe not. Are we getting out?

**SOUND: DOORS OPEN. RUTH EXITS.
DORIAN STAYS, TWISTS IN HIS SEAT.**

DORIAN

Will, hang on. Are you sure you want to be here?

(BEAT.)

WILL

Sorry. I know my temper's not the best. Especially not when things go off routine.

DORIAN

I get it. We'll get you set up with a good book in no time.

**SOUND: THEY EXIT THE CAR. THE
SCREEN DOOR ON THE HOUSE
SQUEAKS OPEN AS DORIAN'S
PARENTS EMERGE.**

PAULETTE

Hiii!!! Oh, it's so nice to meet Dori's friends! How was the drive up? Not too bad I hope?

RUTH

Oh, it was nothing!

PAULETTE

You must be Ruth! I'm Paulette, but you can call me whatever makes you feel comfortable. Are you a hugger?

RUTH

(NO)

Sure!

PAULETTE

And Will! Dori's told us so much about you. Hug?

WILL

(OVER THE HUG)

Well, one thing makes more sense already.

PAULETTE

Are you kids hungry?

(TO YURI)

Oh, Yuri darling, why don't you show Ruth where to park?

YURI

This way. All set?

SOUND: DOGS BARKING.

MARGARET (OFF)

Ugh! Lily!

SOUND: TWO DOGS COME CHARING AROUND THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE, MARGARET AND LILY RACING AFTER THEM.

LILY

It's not my fault! You said they'd already been out!

RUTH

Whoa!

**SOUND: RUTH CATCHES BOTH DOGS BY THE COLLARS.
THEY RELENT.**

RUTH (CONT'D)

Lucky you keep collars on them.

LILY

I've got their leashes!

PAULETTE

What in the world happened, you two?! Those dogs could've bowled someone over.

LILY

Margaret said to open the kennel! We were going inside to clean it — yes, it is true — and the dogs were jumping, so I thought we had to tie them off first — no, all you said was they were just excited, so I opened it, and they went berserk!

MARGARET

Lily wasn't paying attention —
— No, that's not true!
Obviously they were going to run out and go off so I assumed you would help me get them under control instead of throwing the door wide open — well, obviously they were—

PAULETTE

—Both of you, enough! What I hear is the kennel still needs cleaning, so take the dogs from Ruth and go.

MARGARET

You don't believe me, do you? Whether it's Dorian or Lily, you always take someone else's side!

PAULETTE

Margaret, please, we have company—

SOUND: MARGARET STORMS INTO THE HOUSE. A BEAT.

LILY

Forgive her. She's tired today. Sorry for disturbing you all. I'll handle the kennel, Mama.

SOUND: LILY GOES, TOO. PAULETTE ALSO BACKS OFF.

PAULETTE

Excuse that little display. I'll go check on Margaret.

YURI

Strong reflexes. You've got lots of energy?

RUTH

Me? However much I need to get by.

YURI

Are you any good with goats?

RUT

I don't... know?

YURI

I'll show you the pasture later

PAULETTE

Now, now, let them at least get settled, darling.

WILL

Oh, yeah. Where are we going to sleep?

DORIAN

We can share my room! Come on, I'll show you.

SCENE 6

(INT. - THE RANCH HOUSE, SHORTLY AFTERWARD.)

**SOUND: DORIAN LEADS RUTH AND
WILL UP A SET OF STAIRS.**

DORIAN

**So, through there's the kitchen. Bathroom's this door. And my
bedroom's upstairs.**

RUTH

***Oh wait.* There's a baby photo. Will, give me your glasses. I
need to inspect every inch.**

DORIAN

**Ok, but that means Will and I get first dibs on sleeping
arrangements.**

RUTH

Fine! I'm coming.

DORIAN (NARRATING)

**I didn't realize how much I'd missed that room until I stepped
over the threshold. Everything inside it was a symbol of love:
the rugs, woven and dragged up two flights of stairs. The
matching cushions and drapes. The bed, newly made, covers
washed fresh for my arrival. All the things on the shelves and
the shelves themselves — I was home.**

RUTH

**Oh my God, Dori, you didn't tell us that you were genuinely
spoiled... This room is huge.**

DORIAN

**It used to be the attic. Anyway, this is the bed. Air any issues
now.**

WILL

Three of us in one bed?

RUTH

I mean... It's big. As long as you both shower, I don't see why not.

DORIAN

Great! I get the middle!

RUTH
(SNORTS)

Sure. Now, I guess I'm meeting a goat or something?

DORIAN

If my dad is letting you in with his goats already, then he definitely trusts you.

RUTH

Thanks, Dori.
Now, you two leave this door open or else.

DORIAN

Oh yea, ha ha we will!

**SOUND: RUTH LEAVES. A BRIEFLY
LOADED SILENCE. WILL PERUSES A
BOOKSHELF.**

DORIAN

So... will this work as your secret hideaway while you're here?

WILL

Yes. Are these your books?

DORIAN

Yeah, feel free to take a look. I know there's not many. You brought your own, right?

(BEAT.)

Will? Will?

WILL
(JOLTS)
Sorry — that's my book.

DORIAN
Huh?

WILL
The nature poetry collection. Mary Colborne-Veel, Matthew Arnold... It's the same book. In *much* better condition.

SOUND: DORI JOINS HIM.

DORIAN
I doubt I ever even opened it. Take it.

WILL
What?

DORIAN
Your copy's all beat up. You practically store it in a safe. Take mine, I want you to have it.

(A LONG BEAT.)

DORIAN (CONT'D)
You haven't been this quiet since the day we moved in.

WILL
I don't know what to say.

DORIAN
Say whatever's in your head.

SOUND: WILL TAKES THE BOOK.

WILL
Sometimes, I think of you when I read this one: **(FLIPS
TO A PAGE)**
"The Unattainable, by Ruby Archer
"She treads the mystic trail
That points to yonder peak;

Her raptured eyes to the morning skies A
world of homage speak.

“The sunshine wanders down,
Half drowsed in dreams of mist,
And wakes the trees with his breath of breeze
To a sense of something missed...”

**SOUND: DORI ABRUPTLY CLOSES
THE BOOK.**

DORIAN

Stop.

WILL

Sorry. That was...

DORIAN

No. It's not that. I mean, yes, but I should probably — I mean,
we should probably — my Mama is probably—

WILL

—Yeah, probably.

SCENE 7

**(EXT. - MEDITATION TENT, AFTERNOON. A CROWD OF
PARISHIONERS ARE MILLING ABOUT, PREPARING TO SETTLE.
HARRIET AND A WORKER STAND BEHIND A FOLD-OUT TABLE
WITH DRINKS LAID OUT. RUTH, DORI, AND WILL ARE
ENTERING.)**

RUTH

And we were goat-proofing this little, little tree, and a bunch of
the goats were *also* so little, and your dad is really fun to work
with! He doesn't try to chat, he just cares about getting stuff
done. I was holding up some of the fence stuff and he goes,
“Sturdy arms.” You're damn right, sturdy arms!

(HAPPY SIGH)

I am so glad we came. Thank you, Dori. Also, do you guys do *anything* inside?

DORI

Not prayer.

WILL
(SOUR)

I thought this was meditation.

DORI

Which is a step down from prayer, yes, but they follow a lot of the same principles. I'm glad you had fun, Ruth.

SOUND: A NEARBY PARISHIONER, ZOE,
STOPS IN HER TRACKS.

ZOE

Dori? Back from college?

DORI

Hi, Zoe! These are my friends, W—— Ruth and Will. They've never done this before.

ZOE

Welcome! We're so lucky to have you. Have you stopped by the supplement table yet?

RUTH

What's that?

ZOE
(UNSURE)

Well, it's, uh——

(LAUGHS POLITELY) DORI
——No, go ahead!

ZOE

It's a part of prayer.

DORI
(QUICKLY)

Meditation.

ZOE

Right. Or prayer, or any activity where people might want to feel closer to each other. Harriet, over there by the table——

DORI

——She's going to be leading the meditation.

ZOE

Right. And so she's prepared a little drink for us all to share beforehand called a supplement. I love it, I think it's so nice.

WILL

...What's in it?

ZOE

Not sure.

(SHE SNIFFS HER CUP.)

Smells basil-y!

RUTH

Huh! Basil? Really?

DORI

(POINTED, TO RUTH)

Thanks, Zoe. Would you mind if we sat with you? Maybe you and Ruth could pick out our seats.

ZOE

Absolutely! Right this way.

**SOUND: RUTH AND ZOE GO OFF.
THERE'S AN AWKWARD BEAT.**

DORI

Will... About back at the house——

WILL

——That's the table?

**SOUND: THEY WALK OVER TO HARRIET'S
TABLE, STIFFLY.**

HARRIET

**Ah, Dorian, you made it. This must be one of your friends. I
thought your mother had mentioned two would be joining us. I
have handouts prepared.**

DORI

Hi, Harriet. Yes, they——

WILL

——I don't know if I'm joining. What's in these drinks?

HARRIET

**The primary component is basil leaves, for their intellectual
enhancement.**

WILL

What are the other components?

HARRIET

Nothing dangerous, if that's what you're worried about.

DORI

**No, Harriet, he really needs to know. You can tell him, dietary
stuff.**

HARRIET

**Well, whatever diet he's working with, it's only a small sip.
Surely, it won't affect——**

WILL

——Is there any alcohol in this?

**HARRIET
(RELUCTANT)**

Well, yes. It's a relaxant. It helps with the meditation.

SOUND: WILL SIGHS.

DORI

Will, I'm sorry, I didn't know—

WILL

—It's fine. I just won't take it.

HARRIET

Oh, don't be silly! It's one sip!

DORI

No! *No.*

HARRIET

Well, then I'm afraid he can't participate.

DORI

Harriet—

WILL

—I don't *want* to participate.
(TO DORI) I'll wait outside.

DORI

Wait, but... No. I don't want to leave you.

HARRIET

You can't go, Dorian. You're on atonement. Paulette sent a personal prayer for you to follow during today's session.

SOUND: HARRIET SLIDES A PAGE
OVER THE TABLE.

DORI

I'll do it later, then! We'll get Ruth, and we'll all go somewhere—
—

WILL

—Dori. I want to be alone.

(BEAT.)

DORI

Okay. I'm sorry. I really didn't know.

WILL

I'm sure you didn't.

SOUND: WILL EXITS THE TENT.

HARRIET

Well. That's regrettable. But you can't get through to everyone. Here's two supplements and a sheet for your other friend. It's good to have you back, Dori.

**SOUND: HARRIET SLIDES TWO
SMALL CUPS AND ANOTHER PAGE
OVER.**

DORI

Yeah, thanks.

**SOUND: DORI TAKES EVERYTHING SHE'S
OFFERED, POURS THE
SUPPLEMENTS ON THE TABLE, AND
GOES TO TAKE HER SEAT
ALONGSIDE RUTH AND ZOE.**

RUTH

Hey. Where's Will?

ZOE

Did you not get your supplements?

DORI

Turns out they're alcoholic.

RUTH

Oh. Does he need...?

DORI

Here's a meditation guide.

SOUND: SHE HANDS IT TO RUTH.

ZOE

I don't understand, Dori. The supplements are part of the experience. You don't want to ruin Ruth's first meditation.

DORI

Oh my god. Nothing's getting ruined! Give her yours, then, if you care so much.

(BEAT.)

ZOE
(SOFTLY)

Okay. Ruth?

RUTH

Sure. Thanks.

SOUND: RUTH ACCEPTS ZOE'S CUP.

SCENE 8

(EXT. - COMMUNE, AFTERNOON. WILL GATHERS HIMSELF SOME DISTANCE FROM THE MEDITATION TENT. HARRIET APPROACHES.)

HARRIET

Excuse me, young man. Dori's friend?

SOUND: WILL SIGHS.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
(CLEARS THROAT)

About the supplement... I certainly didn't mean to upset you so badly. I would hate for you to get the wrong impression on your first day.

WILL

Is there something I can help you with?

HARRIET

I want to make sure you know it's not about *exclusion*. It's about *unity*.

SOUND: WILL SNORTS.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

And I truly think you still ought to try meditation. Before you know it, you won't *need* to limit yourself because your soul will be healed——

WILL

——Okay. I've heard enough. Leave me alone.

HARRIET

Suit yourself, but nobody who tries supplement meditations has experienced any repercussions——

WILL (NARRATING)

Before I knew it, I was walking away from the village. And, while I wished more than anything to be leaving for good, I... didn't. Because that meant showing my two best friends that I was the odd one out. The one who didn't want to get better, who couldn't join the world the way they both wanted to so badly.

**SOUND: THE RANCH HOUSE SCREEN DOOR,
THEN THE FRONT DOOR. WILL STEPS
INTO THE ENTRYWAY. FOOTSTEPS IN THE
KITCHEN; THEN, PAULETTE EMERGES.**

PAULETTE

Will? What are you doing here? I thought you were all down at the meditation.

WILL

I couldn't participate. Sorry to intrude. I'll only be upstairs, if that's alright.

PAULETTE

Nonsense! What's the matter? What happened?

SOUND: WILL SIGHS, SPEECHLESS.

PAULETTE (CONT'D)
(TENDER)

Well, nevermind. Since you're back, I could use some help with dinner, if you're up for it.

SOUND: WILL TAKES A FEW STEPS CLOSER.

WILL

Sure. What do you need?

PAULETTE

You chop vegetables, and I suppose *I'll* wrack my brain for some old Dorian stories.

WILL (NARRATING)

As it happens, I warmed up to Paulette quickly.

SCENE 9

(EXT. - MEDITATION TENT, AFTERNOON. RUTH, DORI, AND ZOE SIT AMONG OTHER CHURCHGOERS. HARRIET STANDS BEFORE THEM, ADDRESSING THE GATHERING.)

HARRIET

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for coming out to today's program. If you are ready to get started, please hold up your supplement.

SOUND: ARMS RAISE.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Just about everyone. Ellen, could you get us one in the second row, please?

ZOE

Make that two, please.

SOUND: A WORKER LEANS IN CLOSE TO DORI, OFFERING A SMALL CUP.

**DORI
(LOWLY)**

Oh, thank you.

HARRIET

Perfect. Now, if you're using a guide, just keep it in hand, but prioritize going where your spirit takes you. You never know what you might learn. Otherwise, feel free to use your personal method, whatever that may be. On three — One, two, three.

**SOUND: THE CHURCHGOERS ALL DRINK
THEIR SUPPLEMENTS -- EXCEPT
DORI, WHO DUMPS HERS OUT ON
THE GRASS.**

Dori! RUTH

Shh! ZOE

HARRIET
(STERN)
Everyone, you may begin.

**SOUND: DORI'S DRAWN-OUT
BREATHING AS SHE ENTERS A
SEMI-MEDITATIVE STATE.**

DORI (NARRATING)
This is my apology to you. You have wanted to be faithful, and I became distracted. I have hindered you, my spirit, and drifted toward temptation. You keep me from loneliness and disgrace. If we are to be two sharing one life, I owe it to you to repent and recognize. I must remember our path. I am here to listen to what you need.

**SOUND: TRANSITION TO THE CLIFFS
OUTSIDE THE RANCH HOUSE, THE
CRASHING WAVES BELOW.**

HARRIET (OFF)

If your mind wanders, go with it... Embrace the warmth bubbling up inside you...

SOUND: A LOUD, ABRUPT WAVE CRASH, LIKE A SLAP.

PAULETTE (MEMORY)

You are so lucky, Dorian. You don't have to suffer, or be afraid, ever.

DORI (NARRATING)

And I wasn't.

NED (MEMORY)

You'd have to study your faith hard. You wouldn't get to be like everybody else.

DORI

(NARRATING) I didn't want to be.

SOUND: THE ROAR OF THE WATER SWELLS. DORI BREATHES.

DORI (NARRATING) (CONT'D)

Sometimes, I can already feel the water.

SOUND: A BELL TOLLS. THE WAVES FADES.

**DORI (MEMORY)
(FROM EPISODE ONE)**

Dori.

**PAULETTE (MEMORY)
You're my special little boy!**

**DORI (MEMORY)
(FROM EPISODE ONE)**

Dooorrrri.

**WILL
(MEMORY) You're special, Dori. So I'll
make an exception.**

**DORI (NARRATING)
No! Don't think about him right now! Focus.**

**PAULETTE (MEMORY)
Let's practice praying. When you pray, you're trying to have a
conversation with yourself. You're either going to be listening
or speaking. It'll get easier to know which you need as you get
older, but for now, let's just try listening.**

**PAULETTE (NARRATING)
I wrote these words for you, Dorian. You can't let me down.
Don't you want to make me proud? Don't you want to stay my
special, lovely little——?**

**SOUND: A BELL TOLLS. INSISTENTLY.
DORI GASPS AS WATER RUSHES BACK IN.**

PAULETTE (NARRATING)
(CONT'D) I repent...

DORI (NARRATING)
(DROWNING) I repent...

PAULETTE (NARRATING)
...and recommit myself.

DORI (NARRATING)
(DROWNING) ...and recommit myself.

**SOUND: SHE CONTINUES TO FIGHT THE
WATER.**

PAULETTE (NARRATING)
**I have chosen to live *and die* by the tenets of my faith. It was the
duty of my family to discover the truth. It is *my* duty to lead us
all to our reward.**

**SOUND: THE WATER OVERWHELMS,
THEN FADES, LEAVING US IN A
PLANE OF UTTER SILENCE.**

DORI
(ECHOING)
Hello?

SOUND: A DOOR CREAKS OPEN.

PAULETTE (NARRATING)
I apologize to you, my spirit, because through you...

DORI
I have to get back to them!

PAULETTE
(NARRATING) I can become something more.

**SOUND: TRANSITION BACK TO THE
PRESENT. DORI BREATHES RAGGEDLY.**

RUTH
(WHISPER)
Hey. That was kind of amazing.

DORI
(WHISPER) D-Did you go through
yours?

HARRIET
Twenty-five minutes have passed. If you have not begun to
already, it's time to think about returning.

RUTH
(WHISPER)
Yeah. It was... God, sometimes I feel like I'm being pulled in so
many different directions that... It was really nice. I had some
realizations.

SOUND: ZOE INHALES, ROUSING.

ZOE

Amazing, isn't it? Wait until you learn formal prayer. There are all kinds of focusing techniques to get you really untethered. You can spend hours exploring, learning, healing. It's addictive.

HARRIET

For those interested, I will be hosting a session in the black room at seven-thirty tonight. See me for more details.

RUTH

What's the black room?

DORI

You're not ready for that. Come on, we have to go find Will.

SOUND: DORI GATHERS HER THINGS AND STANDS.

RUTH

Oh. I guess you're right. It was really nice to meet you, Zoe.

ZOE

You, too! I hope we'll see you back again soon, Ruth. You're a natural.

SOUND: RUTH AND DORI LEAVE.

RUTH

Hey, did something happen?

DORI
(SHARP)
What are you talking about?

RUTH
Even before the whole — thing, you and Will were acting weird with each other.

DORI
Oh. Yeah. Will... I don't know how to talk about it. He and I... Yes, something happened, but I have a lot on my mind right now.

RUTH
Oh...

SCENE 10
(INT. - RANCH HOUSE ENTRYWAY, EVENING. DORIAN AND RUTH ENTER. WITHIN, PAULETTE AND WILL SET THE TABLE.)

PAULETTE (OFF)
Dorian? Ruth? Is that you?

SOUND: RUTH KICKS OFF HER SHOES.

RUTH
Most of us. Your son's come back without his vocal cords.

SOUND: PAULETTE ENTERS FROM THE DINING ROOM.

PAULETTE

Dorian? What's wrong, sweetie?

DORI

It's hitting me about my uncle. Mama, can we talk outside?

WILL

Hey. How'd that go?

RUTH

Um. Good, but I heard you had an awful time. And, also, I kind of heard——

SOUND: MARGARET ENTERS.

MARGARET

Oh. Hello. I was looking for Paulette.

RUTH

Ouch. First name treatment. She went outside with Dori.

MARGARET

I should've guessed. She's never here!

SOUND: MARGARET STARTS TO GO.

RUTH

Margaret, wait! Is... everything okay?

MARGARET

No. Why? Would you two want to help me?

SCENE 11

(EXT. - PORCH, MOMENTS LATER. DORIAN AND PAULETTE SIT ON THE PORCH SWING.)

PAULETTE

What do you mean “cold”?

DORIAN

I mean I felt *cold*. That has never happened to me while praying before. I got this *really* bad feeling.

PAULETTE

That’s guilt, honey. You’ve never had to do a serious atonement before.

DORIAN

I know what guilt feels like, Mama. This was scary.
(BEAT, TEARY)

What's wrong with me? Please, really listen. Don't just say it's school and yank me back until the new ceremony. I like it at school. It's something else, it's...

PAULETTE

Listen to me carefully. You did the right thing telling me, but right now, we are all in an extremely delicate position. You've brought two outsiders here who could turn non-believer quicker than a snap. We *will* address this before you leave, but for now, set it all aside. Can you play your part?

(BEAT.)

DORIAN

Yes.

PAULETTE

Then, let's go back in.

SOUND: THEY HEAD INSIDE, WHERE...

RUTH

Hey! We're learning to weave baskets!

MARGARET

I told you the one in the shed was about to snap, Mama. It near broke my wrist.

PAULETTE

(SOFTLY, TO DORI) There we are, then.

SCENE 12

(EXT. - RANCH HOUSE, MORNING.)

DORIAN (NARRATING)

Somehow, I did it. I lasted until morning, pretending everything was normal until I could pretend to sleep. By that point, Ruth was the only thing holding it all together.

RUTH

I haven't hauled wood in years. I forgot how much it was like a puzzle. Your dad said I can make real tight stacks. God, what am I even going to college for?

WILL

Vaguely helpful qualifications?

DORIAN

A short buffer against the start of real life?

RUTH

Haha. No, but... really. What if I liked this way better?

**SOUND: NED'S CAR PULLS UP,
EVELYN IN THE DRIVER SEAT.**

WILL

Who is that?

SOUND: NED GETS OUT.

NED

Good morning, Dorian. Is it finally my privilege to meet your school friends?

DORIAN

Hello, Ned. Yes...

RUTH

Ned, as in the pastor?

NED

(CHUCKLES)

Not even close to the term I'd use. Just a leader.

RUTH

Right, sorry. My name's Ruth. Thanks for letting us visit your community. It's beautiful.

NED

Isn't it? All thanks to the fine folks who work day in and day out to reap superb fruits from a charred earth.

DORIAN

Was it my mother you wanted, Ned? I can go fetch her——

NED

——No need. We've already spoken. She let me know how you were feeling about Uncle Woodrow. I'm here to take you for a visit.

(BEAT.)

DORIAN

Right now?

NED

These things don't work on much of a schedule, I'm afraid. Can your friends manage without you for the morning?

WILL

**(TO
DORIAN)**

We could come with you, if you want.

NED

That's real nice of you...?

WILL

Will.

NED

That's real nice of you, Will, but this is a family matter.

DORIAN

Yeah, I... have to do this alone. Enjoy yourselves, okay? I'll be back soon.

**SOUND: DORIAN AND NED LOAD INTO
THE CAR.**

SCENE 13

(INT. - INSIDE NED'S CAR, SHORTLY AFTER, WITH EVELYN DRIVING. DORIAN AND NED SIT IN THE BACK, TENSE.)

DORIAN

Where are we really going?

NED

I wouldn't lie, Dori. We've got family passing on.

DORIAN

We... We do? Who?

(BEAT.)

Ned?

NED

All in good time. Evelyn, I'd appreciate a simple drop-off. You can join Maxine in her new responsibilities.

EVELYN

Of course.

DORIAN

What are they doing?

NED

The only thing that matters these days — keeping you safe.

DORIAN

How is that different from what they were already doing?

EVELYN

We'll be doing it less directly from now on. If you need something, we'll expect you to call. Maxine and I are more necessary here performing interrogations.

NED

We've uncovered more non-believers in our ranks. You must have noticed that Sandra has been missing?

DORIAN

She was a...?

NED

Upsetting, isn't it? Keep that in mind.

**SOUND: THE CAR SLOWS, STOPS.
NED OPENS HIS DOOR.**

NED (CONT'D)

I'll radio you when you're needed again. We may be awhile.

EVELYN

Yes, Ned.

**SOUND: DORIAN GETS OUT, TOO. HE AND
NED STAND IN THE CENTER OF THE
COMMUNE BY AN OLD, QUIET HOUSE.
EVELYN DRIVES AWAY.**

DORIAN

Whose house is this?

NED

Woodrow Hill's.

DORIAN

***Woodrow Hill?* I thought you were just using a name back there.
I didn't know he was still alive.**

NED

He's been sick for many years. We chose not to address the rumors as his condition declined. The transition of the church to my hands went smoothly enough that there was no outcry for his return. So we've kept him in peace as long as we could, and now that he's nearing the end, he wants to go quietly. But he knows who *you* are. Are you ready to meet him?

DORIAN

The *founder*? Of course, but—— ...Of course.

**NED
(KNOWINGLY)**

You don't build your faith with studies. You build your faith with tests.

SOUND: NED AND DORIAN HEAD UP TO THE HOUSE. NED OPENS THE FRONT DOOR WITHOUT KNOCKING.

NED (CONT'D)

After you.

SCENE 14

(INT. - WOODROW'S HOME, WE FOLLOW DORIAN INTO THE ENTRYWAY. WITHIN, AN OXYGEN MACHINE HISSES RHYTHMICALLY.)

DORIAN

Should I take my shoes off?

WOODROW (WITHIN)

Hello?

NED

This way.

SOUND: THEY CONTINUE INSIDE.

DORIAN (NARRATING)

He must have been ninety, withered and propped up on pillows in a tall bed. The man who'd changed the world was hooked up to only one machine, which helped him breathe — everything else was clearly just about making him comfortable.

WOODROW

Well, this is a very welcome surprise.

DORIAN

Hello, Mr. Hill. I'm Dorian.

WOODROW

Remarkable. Remarkable! It's you yourself. And Ned! Welcome!
Come in, please!

NED

Good morning, Woodrow. I've brought you your key to paradise.

WOODROW

So you have. I am quite humbled.

DORIAN

You're humbled? I'm meeting Woodrow Hill. I'm meeting history.

WOODROW

And I am meeting the future.

DORIAN

May I pull up a chair?

WOODROW

Yes, sit! We have plenty to talk about. Would you be very kind
and pour me some water? There's a pitcher by the window.

DORIAN

Of course.

NED

Please Woodrow, allow me.

**SOUND: NED POURS A GLASS OF
WATER AND HANDS IT TO
WOODROW.**

NED

I thought it was time you two finally meet.

WOODROW

Ah. You must be talking to Samantha. She won't tell me how
I'm doing anymore, but I imagine all the right people know. Well,
what a parting gift, I must say. The proof of my convictions
pausing their work for a moment to tell me I was right. Tell me,
Dorian, I've always wondered: which is your favorite prayer?

DORIAN

**(THINKS FOR A MOMENT.) For the
downtrodden.**

WOODROW

(RECITING WITH FEELING)

**I ask myself, "Shall I try again?" And the answer was always,
"Only if you are certain."**

(AUDIBLE SMILE)

Your mother's writings are a gift to this church.

DORIAN

**Oh, she'd die to know you read them! You should hear the ones
she throws away. She only likes the ones you can "use from
multiple angles." She says a prayer is best when you can come
back to it your whole life and keep finding some new way of
hearing it.**

WOODROW

**Most useful things are that way. But you're mistaken. I've
spoken with Paulette many times.**

DORIAN

You did? She never mentioned...

NED

**Understand, Miss Dori, that this here is a tightly-kept secret.
You knowing makes eight people total.**

WOODROW

Including me.

DORIAN

**Why don't you want them to know you're alive? I'd think you'd
want to spend every minute possible with the people who love
you.**

WOODROW

- Expectation can be a burden.

NED

Mm.

WOODROW

I lived in the spotlight for most of my life, drawing people in, building most of this village by hand. By the time my lungs grew sick of me, I was more content to pass the torch and live out my days hearing my own legend.

NED

And, of course, preparing to reach Paradise.

WOODROW

Body healed, eternity in my prime! It's the only fitting reward for what I went through to get here.

DORIAN

Did you ever think it would get this far?

WOODROW

But you must know by now, Dorian. The curious thing about loyalty is how it repays faith given. That first generation... When I truly felt their trust, I knew that I would never let them down. Even after I'm gone, you'll all remember. I built the mirror that gave life purpose.

DORIAN

Are you scared at all?

WOODROW

Why should I be? Your day is on the horizon. Soon, all will join me again in a better home. Together, we'll learn what it is to be perfect. All thanks to me and you.

DORIAN

Right... My day.

NED

Dorian, why don't you tell Woodrow some of the things you've done to demonstrate your worthiness?

(UNSURE BEAT.)

DORIAN

Oh sure, um, I knew from my first day of school. I-Insisted, even. And I didn't back down until everybody saw I meant it.

Mama and Daddy pulled me back out straight away and I started homeschooling with tutors, with Ned... I know every prayer by heart.

WOODR

I would expect nothing less.

NED

Dorian is being modest. He hasn't mentioned the *strict* guidelines on nourishment, personal life, spiritual study. Why, when he was young, we used to put him through more rigorous trials than we do now! Barely ten years old, we'd have him in one of Harriet's rooms all day long, and when we'd pull him out, he could tell us such stories of the bridge he wandered, and all those thousands of doorways waiting to be opened.

DORIAN

I'd forgotten that...

NED

Coming out with details you couldn't have known! Things we could corroborate, mind you, with *your* texts, Woodrow. Books the kid had never even touched before.

WOODROW

(WEARY, DRIFTING)

My prophesied one... Our savior... You are exactly who I hoped you would be.

NED

A hero who *chose* this. It's what he's always wanted, too.

DORIAN

—

WOODROW

—You are a very good kid, Dorian. I am glad I got to meet you in this life.

(STUNNED BEAT.)

DORIAN

Well, I'm sure you—

NED

Thank you, Woodrow.

WOODROW

Thank you, Ned, for your gift.

NED

You take that rest now. You've got somewhere else to be.

WOODROW

(CLASPS DORIAN'S HAND WEAKLY)

Paradise! Hopefully we are the last to make it there the hard way.

DORIAN

Wait, but...?

NED

Now, now, Dorian.

**SOUND: THE HISSING OF THE OXYGEN
MACHINE CHANGES JUST SLIGHTLY. IT
ISN'T BEING USED ANYMORE.**

NED (CONT'D)

This is what he wanted.

SCENE 15

(EXT. - THE YARD OUTSIDE, A LITTLE WHILE LATER, APPROACHING EVENING. DORIAN AND NED SIT SIDE BY SIDE, NED PATIENTLY AND DORIAN IN SHOCK.)

DORIAN (NARRATING)

We sat together under a tree in the yard that used to be Woodrow Hill's. I didn't know how to make sense of what had happened in there. For all the time I'd spent thinking about death and how it would feel, I had never actually seen it. Someone who I'd met was gone now, on to a place that I and everyone else had only ever guessed at. And he'd held my hand asked me to follow him.

NED

Dorian. What are you thinking?

DORIA

I have no idea.

These *are* the real lessons, aren't they? Why did you keep me from them?

NED

Because you never needed reminding of what was at stake before.

DORIAN

Well, why did you say all those things in there? It was like you were trying to prove a point by rubbing my face in it.

NED

Dorian. I was comforting a dying man. A man to whom we both owe everything. Are you saying you don't feel confident. *Have you changed?*

DORIAN

(SIGHS/GROWLS)

It's other things that keep changing, not me! First, I was getting my ceremony. Then, it was pushed back. I wasn't supposed to go to college, but then I was, but now I'm maybe not again. I

thought the whole point of me leaving was that I was supposed to make friends and look normal. Now me doing exactly that is getting people all worked up.

I *know* how we got here, but...

Ned, would anybody have really noticed if I never left home? Why am I getting pushed in so many directions now? Where is all this pressure coming from?

NED

This is the exact road I didn't want you going down. I said it before you left, remember? You have the strongest faith of anybody I've ever met. But that which is purest is also easiest to bruise — which means your job is getting tougher, and we can't protect you from everything.

(BEAT.)

DORIAN

When's his funeral?

NED

There won't be one. He's gone on. We'll meet Woodrow again soon.

DORIAN

(AGGRIEVED) So what do I do?

NED

Have faith. Didn't I trust you not to stray when I gave you my blessing to head out into the wicked world?

DORIAN

Yes, you did, but it *isn't* wicked—

NED

—So have faith in me in return, Dorian. And if you can't have faith in me, have faith in your people. Have faith in Woodrow, who believed so damn hard, he was able to go the exact moment he was ready. Wasn't that a miracle?

DORIAN

It... It was.

NED

That's the power we give each other when we remain united. But you have to make the choice to be with us — or else you better quit now. If you're having doubts, then you're spitting on Woodrow's memory, and I will not abide that weakness. Nothing else matters.

DORIAN

Nothing else matters.

NED

And we will never speak of this again.

DORIAN

Ned... I've got something else I'm not sure I should say.

NED

(DISAPPOINTED) Dori...

DORIAN

You brought up that spiritual training I used to do, where I'd go in for prayer and come out with all sorts of new knowledge... I didn't remember it, but now I do, and — and — Mama put those words in me.

(BEAT)

I don't remember what I would do all day in those empty rooms, but I remember her saying how impressed people would be if I showed it was working. So, she told me what to say.

NE

I know.

DORIAN

...What? How do you know? / didn't know.

NED

What you must understand, Dorian, is that part of raising a chosen one is creating an environment where they will reach their utmost potential.

DORIAN

You and Mama have held back so many——

NED

——However you learned about the bridge of doorways, it *is* your Destiny. Everything this church has shown you about yourself, your faith, is true.

DORIAN

So now... It's just one final decision.

NED

I'm glad you understand.

SCENE 16

(EXT. - RANCH HOUSE, EVENING. DORI, RUTH, AND WILL PACK RUTH'S CAR. DORI'S FAMILY PREPARES TO SEND THEM OFF.)

LILY

It's been so nice to see the friends
Dori's making at school. That place
must not be as bad as we thought.

RUTH

(LAUGHS, SURPRISED)

Not terrible, no. Thanks for sharing your
house. Margaret, it was cool hanging
out with you.

**SOUND: MARGARET HUGS RUTH
SUDDENLY.**

MARGARET

I hope you'll come back soon.

RUTH

I... would really like to. See you again
kid.

PAULETTE

Consider an open invitation fully
extended, dear. We have
loved meeting you. You are always,
always welcome.

RUTH

Thank you.

**SOUND: RUTH HEFTS A DUFFLE INTO
THE TRUNK.**

PAULETTE

(AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT)

Oh, and you, too, Will, dear! Any time you might want to visit!

WILL

Thank you, Paulette.

**SOUND: HE CLIMBS INTO THE
PASSENGER SIDE.**

RUTH

Dori won't be glad you're taking shotgun.

SOUND: THE DOOR SLAMS. SHE SIGHS.

RUTH

Goodbye, Yuri.

YURI

Next time, you can see the greenhouse.

RUTH

**(BEAMING) Can't wait. Oh, and here's
herself now!**

SOUND: DORIAN TRUDGES UP, BAG IN HAND.

DORIAN

Where's Will?

RUTH

(VOICE LOWERING) He did not have a good time.

DORIAN

Who can blame him? Thank goodness you did, though. Really. Oh, shoot! I almost forgot!

SOUND: DORIAN KNOCKS ON THE CAR WINDOW. WILL CRACKS THE DOOR.

WILL

What?

DORIAN

Can you help me with something? Real quick.

SOUND: WILL SIGHS AND EXITS THE CAR.

WILL

What? Aren't we ready to go?

DORIAN

I'm trying to be more studious, so I packed some books. The bag was too heavy, though. I left it upstairs.

YURI

Leave Will. I can help.

DORIAN

No, Daddy, Will's a book guy. It'll make him happy. (TO WILL) Won't it?

WILL

(SARCASTIC) Overjoyed. Lead the way.

SCENE 17

(INT. - DORI'S BEDROOM, MOMENTS LATER. DORI FOLLOWS WILL IN AND SHUTS THE DOOR AFTER THEM.)

DORI
I lied to get you up here.

WILL
Are we doing this *now*?

DORIAN
You're angry.

WILL
(FIRMLY)
No.
(WITH A SIGH)

No. It's just that I've already had this argument with you five times in my head since you got back, so I'm kind of keyed up. I know I put you in a bad spot yesterday, but why did you ice me out?

DORIAN
I... panicked. First, can you forgive me for how I treated you? You holding that book and reading was... one of the nicest things I've ever felt.

SOUND: WILL SHUFFLES, UNCERTAIN.

WILL
'Course I forgive you. Do you mean that?

DORIAN
I'm the only honest one in my family.
(SMALL BEAT.)
They told me to behave one way while they've been living another. I trusted them more than I should have. I've *always* put my family first, on faith, but... they've showed me everyone keeps secrets. I want one, too. You. You could be my one secret.

You mean...?

WILL

I mean you could kiss me right now, and no one would know.

WILL

Is that what you want?

DORIAN

Yes.

WILL
(SMILING, DISBELIEVING)

Really? I thought you—

DORIAN

—Will, yes. For a long time, I've wanted... I was scared...

SOUND: WILL KISSES DORIAN. A BEAT.

WILL

This actually *isn't* a very secret place. We have to get back outside.

DORIAN

Okay. Don't forget this.

SOUND: HE HOLDS OUT A BOOK.

DORIAN (CONT'D)

I can't wait to hear what other poems you think are about me.

SOUND: THEY HAD BACK DOWNSTAIRS.

DORIAN (NARRATING)

With nobody left to keep tabs on me at college, it was possible I was about to be free for the first time in my life. And my family would just have to respect that I was going to have *one* thing for myself. And then, when it was time, as I had promised, I would perform their ceremony and change the world. But until then... I'd appreciate my own piece of this one.

[MUSIC]

ANNOUNCER

The Pit Below Paradise is a Neon Inkwell podcast distributed by Rusty Quill Ltd and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Share-Alike 4.0 International License.

This series is written and created by J Evelyn Gaskell and Directed by Micah Rodriguez and Stephanie Resendes. This episode was edited by Lowri Ann Davies, Nico Vettese, Meg McKellar, and Catherine Rinella. With Music from Sam Jones.

It featured Ian RQ Slater as Dori/Dorian, Phi Nelson as Will, Victoria Cheng as Ruth, Isabel Kruse as Paulette, KT Thomas as Ned, Lisa Stanley as Evelyn, Lisa Pengov as Maxine, and Tori Thomson as Margaret. A full list of performance credits is available in the shownotes.

Neon Inkwell is produced by April Sumner with Executive Producer Alexander J Newall and Showrunner Elizabeth Moffatt.

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Neon Inkwell: The Pit Below Paradise 4 – Dying Faith

This week, Dori goes home. Will and Ruth get to experience Paradise, but not everyone thinks its what it pretends to be.

This show contains recurring themes including:

- **Religious Trauma/Indoctrination**
- **Family Conflict**
- **Gaslighting**
- **Childhood Trauma**
- **Child Neglect/Abuse**
- **Alcoholism**
- **Toxic/Unhealthy Relationships**

Transcripts: <https://shorturl.at/pJQV7>

**Showrunner Elizabeth Moffatt
Directed by Micah Rodriguez and Stephanie Resendes
Written by J Evelyn Gaskell
Produced by April Sumner
Executive Producers Alexander J Newall & April Sumner**

Featuring

**Ian RQ Slater as Dori/Dorian
KT Tomas as Ned Ziliak
Isabel Kruse as Paulette
Lisa Stanley as Evelyn
Victoria Cheng as Ruth
Phi Hamens as Will
Sergio Salas as Yuri
Tori Thomson as Margaret
Hannah Preisinger as Zoe
Gigi Guizado as Harriet**

David A Meyers as Woodrow

**Dialogue Editor – Lowri Ann Davies and Nico Vettese
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