



SKETCHES IN HYDE PARK  
BY  
PAT BLOSSE & DENNIS DIAMOND

Extract

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**SKETCHES IN HYDE PARK**

**by**

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Episode 1 of 5 (running time: 14 minutes)

1<sup>st</sup> May 1851

### Characters, in order of appearance:

Charlotte Bronte (CHARLOTTE) – female, aged 35, distinctively Yorkshire but  
not unintelligible accent, writer.

Charles Dickens (DICKENS) – male, aged 39, writer and journalist

Angelica (ANGELICA) – female, aged early 20s, a Cockney flower-seller

Douglas Parminter (DOUGLAS) – male, aged 32, a London-born (but not  
Cockney) street artist

Captain Nathaniel Stannard (STANNARD) – male, aged 40-50, retired Indian  
Army Captain

Exhibition Steward (STEWARD) – male, age immaterial

Sophia del Rey (SOPHIA) – female, aged 27, recently widowed, slight Spanish  
accent

SCENE 1

FX: INTRODUCTORY BACKGROUND MUSIC:

OPENING BARS OF 'I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble  
Halls' ON PIANO FADING OUT BEFORE SINGING

STARTS

CHARLOTTE: I do wish you would not interrupt so.

DICKENS: My voice, I think you shall find, is the one that  
listeners are more attuned to.

CHARLOTTE: By which you mean your opinions, or are you  
insinuating something about the way I speak?

DICKENS: It is not a sin to have been born in Yorkshire,  
Charlotte – merely a misfortune.

CHARLOTTE: (BEAT) As you might have gathered, Mr Dickens and I  
do not always see eye to eye.

DICKENS: I have nothing but respect and admiration for your  
work, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE: And I for yours, Charles. It is such a pity that your  
respect cannot be extended to my person. (PAUSE,  
SIGHS) Have we ever agreed on anything?

DICKENS: There was that time at the Great Exhibition. You descended like a redeeming angel - after I had paved a path for you – and retrieved a delicate situation with grace and wisdom. I was very much in awe of your person on that day.

CHARLOTTE: I have a vague recollection.

FX: A THRONG OF EXCITED VOICES, HOOVES ON COBBLES, ONE OR TWO MARKET-SELLERS CALLING THEIR WARES (“Strawberries! Buy ‘em ripe and juicy!”, “Hot pies!” etc.)

DICKENS: Let me remind you of the occasion. It was the day that the Great Exhibition opened in Hyde Park.

CHARLOTTE: 1851

DICKENS: A rather overcast day I recall, in May of that year. Such a throng of people I have never seen. A veritable hive!

CHARLOTTE: The sun was beating down and the heat inside the great, glass house was almost unbearable. Several people fainted.

DICKENS: That was inside. It was another story outside...

FADE

SCENE 2

FX: BACKGROUND FADES UP A LITTLE. ONE

VOICE IS HEARD MORE CLEARLY – THE FLOWER-

SELLER, ANGELICA

ANGELICA: Fresh flowers! A carnation for yer buttonhole, sir?  
And ‘ow about a little posy for the lady? (PAUSE)  
Please yerself.

DOUGLAS: Can you hear the choir?

FX: FADE IN DISTANT SOUND OF A LARGE

CHOIR SINGING THE HALLELUJAH CHORUS

ANGELICA: Cor, it don’t ‘alf make you proud to be British.

DOUGLAS: All the world is represented here today to see our  
dear Queen Victoria and Prince Albert open this  
modern wonder. A great exhibition to be sure.

ANGELICA: ‘ow does all that there glass stay up?

DOUGLAS: The wonder of modern science and engineering. But what do I know - being a mere artist?

ANGELICA: It sparkles like a thousand diamonds.

DOUGLAS: You have a poet's soul, Miss – (PAUSE) As we shall be neighbours for the coming months, we should be introduced.

ANGELICA: (CHIRPY BUT SHY) I'm Angelica, Angie for short. The old grump behind our flower stall is me Pa. Him don't say a lot though - other than (MIMICKING) "take the money girl before they get away" and the like.

DOUGLAS: (LAUGHING) A pleasure to meet you, Angelica, and you can probably see who I am by my sign over the marquee entrance.

ANGELICA: (SLOWLY, VACANT) Yeah, right, pleased to meet you - sir.

DOUGLAS: Just call me, Douglas.

FADE

### SCENE 3

CHARLOTTE: And that is how the story began. (FONDLY) May the first, 1851.

DICKENS: When our poor artist –

CHARLOTTE: Douglas Parminter

DICKENS: - lost his heart.

CHARLOTTE: And you and I stood back to follow the unfolding drama.

DICKENS: Yes, and do you remember this black hearted villain?

#### FX: CROWD BACKGROUND

CAPT STANNARD: (GREATLY AGITATED) What?! Damn you. Stand aside and let us through.

STEWARD: I cannot let you through, sir. As I have tried to explain to you already, the opening ceremony has begun. We are instructed that any late comers...

CAPT STANNARD: Late?! Late do you say?!

CHARLOTTE: (V.O.) And his beautiful, raven-haired consort in her widow's weeds.

SOPHIA: Please, let us not make a fuss. People are staring at us.

CAPT STANNARD: Let them bally well stare. I'll give them something to stare at when I flog this wretch. Out in India, I would have had him shot!

SOPHIA: Come away, Captain, please. We can go in later. There is plenty to see outside, look at all the stalls.

CAPT STANNARD: I haven't come here for trinkets like some commoner. I came here to meet... (PAUSE) We wouldn't have been late but for you.

SOPHIA: I said I am sorry.

STANNARD: (BEGRUDGING) Very well, let us see what baubles there are for you here. Women are the same the world over. Wherever I go, all they care for is adornment.

SOPHIA: (IRKED) You said you loved me.

CAPT STANNARD: I gave you a roof over your head, the clothes on your back - and a bed...

SOPHIA: Not so loud, please!

CAPT STANNARD: It is a bit late to be coy, Mrs Del Rey.

ANGELICA: 'ello, sir. A fine officer of Her Majesty's army, I see.  
'ow are you this special day?!

CAPT STANNARD GROWLS

ANGELICA: What about somethin' for the lady? So sorry Ma'am  
for your loss.

SOPHIA: Thank you, but...?

ANGELICA: The black veil n'all?

SOPHIA: Of course. I am so used to wearing it, I...

CAPT STANNARD: (MOVING OFF) If you're going to stand and pass the  
time of day with every wretched street seller that  
accosts you....

ANGELICA: (SOFTLY) 'e's a bit off, int 'e, Ma'am? Is 'e always like  
that? 'Most people are excited to be 'ere, 'specially on  
the openin' day, n'all.

SOPHIA: Not that it is any business of yours, but he is a little fraught. He only brought me here to meet a business partner and, to be perfectly honest, I am rather fed up with being a wallflower at his endless 'business' meetings.

ANGELICA: And quite right too. Us ladies deserves a bit of respect sometimes.

SOPHIA: It seems I must yet again waste an hour or two twiddling my thumbs while he tries to wheedle money out of some poor soul.

ANGELICA: 'ere, come and meet my new friend. 'e's an artist. 'e can do you a lovely little portrait while you're waitin'.  
(CALLING OUT) 'oi! Douglas. I got a customer for you!

SOPHIA: No – really – I couldn't.

DOUGLAS: Good morning, Madam. Are you interested in a portrait?

SOPHIA: No – I –

ANGELICA: 'Course she is. (ASIDE) 'e's good too. You want to see some of the pictures in 'is marquee. I took a butchers this morning when 'is back were turned. 'e's a professional I reckon.

DOUGLAS: You've been poking about in my marquee?

ANGELICA: We're all friends 'ere, ain't we?

SOPHIA: But my – friend.

ANGELICA: 'e's abandoned you, lovie. I saw 'im duck inside the Palace when the steward wasn't lookin'. Come on – you've got nothin' to lose.

SOPHIA: Well, all right.

FX: CANVAS CURTAINS PARTING, OUTSIDE

SOUNDS ARE MUFFLED

SOPHIA: Oh, my goodness! (PAUSE) Did you do all of these?  
They are so – they are...

DOUGLAS: Pastels mostly. A few oils, some chalks. My favourite medium is pen and ink, but that takes time. For the sort of work I shall be doing here, I shall be using mainly pastels or chalk.

SOPHIA: It's all very good – but this one is especially striking.  
The little girl – you feel she is going to reach out and touch you.

DOUGLAS: Thank you.

SOPHIA: (PAUSE) They are special to you?

DOUGLAS: My wife and my daughter.

SOPHIA: Oh, they must be so proud of you. I'm surprised it's not hanging in pride of place above your mantelshelf.

DOUGLAS: They died two years ago. (LONG PAUSE) Smallpox.

SOPHIA: I – I'm so sorry. (PAUSE) I don't know what to say.  
(PAUSE) You must have loved them dearly.

DOUGLAS: I do. But you too have suffered?

SOPHIA: I would rather not talk about it.

DOUGLAS: I apologise, I did not mean to intrude. (EAGER) Let us begin. You will need to lift your veil....

SOPHIA: There. Where would you like me, Mr Parminter?

DOUGLAS: (TAKEN ABACK) Oh, yes, right, please be seated.

FADE

SCENE 4

DICKENS: I think we know precisely where he wanted the beautiful widow.

CHARLOTTE: Now then, Mr Dickens, you are incorrigible. Douglas Parminter was a gentleman; he would never take advantage of a lady in distress.

DICKENS: How naive. You think she was in distress, and a lady?

CHARLOTTE: I know that my parsonage upbringing might not have made me as worldly wise as you, but...

DICKENS: Yes, yes, another time. The story; do not lose the plot!

FX: MARKET-PLACE FADES IN, SCRATCHING OF

PASTEL ON PAPER

SOPHIA: How quickly you sketch, Mr Parminter, almost as one possessed.

DOUGLAS: (LAUGHS SHYLY) I suppose my art is a form of possession.

SOPHIA: Your drawing hand has a slight tremor, Mr Parminter. Are you feeling unwell?

DOUGLAS: Quite well, thank you, although it is rather hot in here inside the marquee.

SOPHIA: This is nothing. I was in India for many years. The heat out there was unbearable. So much sickness and death everywhere; cholera, plague - malaria was rife. (SAD, SNUFFLING) My husband – succumbed....

DOUGLAS: You do not have to speak of it if it causes you anguish.

SOPHIA: You are a kind and gentle man, Mr Parminter. I have met so few good men in my time. I wish there were more like you.

DOUGLAS: My wife tells me – that is, she used to say - that I would never amount to anything. I am too reserved, set in my ways, not ambitious enough.

SOPHIA: (IRONIC LAUGH) Ambition! (REFLECTIVE) It is a silent killer. It destroys those who yield to its charms.

FX: CANVAS DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING

ANGELICA: 'ow's it goin' in 'ere? Well – would you look at that?

DOUGLAS: Do you like it?

ANGELICA: She's beautiful.

DOUGLAS: She certainly is. (PAUSE) It's not finished of course. I must add more depth and a little background. Not too much. Nothing should detract from those eyes; so dark, so penetrating. (PAUSE) She needs a little more colour though.

SOPHIA: Excuse me...

ANGELICA: She's very pale. Looks like she's 'ad a bit of a tough time, I'd say.

DOUGLAS: Really?

ANGELICA: Oh yes. (SOTTO) Them eyes – they hold a thousand secrets. (PAUSE) She needs a nice, bright flower – in 'er 'air. Hang on 'alf a 'mo.

FX: CANVAS DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING

SOPHIA: What is happening?

DOUGLAS: I am not quite sure.

FX: CANVAS DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING

ANGELICA: 'ere you go, carnations - pink ones, red ones, yeller ones. Choose what you like.

DOUGLAS: I don't –

ANGELICA: For 'er hair. It'll set it off right nice.

DOUGLAS: Yes, it would. Just one?

ANGELICA: Of course; she's not a flower vase! Pick a colour you like - you're the artist, but maybe not the striped one.

DOUGLAS: No?

ANGELICA: (SOTTO) Regret, unrequited love – not good. Not the yeller one neither. Plenty to choose from still, but choose wisely; there is a secret language.

DOUGLAS: I want this one. (PAUSE) Is that all right?

ANGELICA: It's perfect.

FX: BACKGROUND FADES OUT

CHARLOTTE: And it was too. A deep red carnation added such a dramatic touch to the picture that it couldn't help but catch the eye of everyone who saw it.

DICKENS: I wonder if Angelica knew what she was doing when she brought him those carnations? You women are such wily creatures.

CHARLOTTE: You are a mere man and not equipped to understand the mind of a woman. Give up the chase. You will never succeed.

FX: BACKGROUND FADES IN

ANGELICA: 'ere you are m'dear. Let me pop this in yer 'air.  
(PAUSE) There. Is that all right for yer, Douglas?

DOUGLAS: I must say, you have somehow improved upon perfection, Angelica.

SOPHIA: So much flattery; you make me giddy.

STANNARD: (ANGER, OFF) Where the blazes is the woman?!  
Sophia!

FX: CANVAS DOOR OPENING

ANGELICA: Looking for the widder, are ya?

STANNARD: Sophia?! You, flower girl, have you seen the woman who was with me?

SOPHIA: (AGITATED) I do believe our time is up.

DOUGLAS: Not to worry, I can finish this at my leisure, I shall add the carnation to your hair and the Crystal Palace as a backdrop - and I shall set the pastel in a mount.

FX: CANVAS DOOR PULLED BACK SHARPLY

STANNARD: What are you doing in here with this gutter painter?

SOPHIA: I have had my portrait done by this fine young artist.

STANNARD: Who no doubt wants paying for his 'work'?

SOPHIA: Of course, Captain. But, if you prefer, I have a little money of my own.

STANNARD: God forbid that anyone should say that Captain Nathaniel Stannard cannot pay his debts. Here man, take this and be grateful for it.

DOUGLAS: Thank you, sir.

SOPHIA: Is it enough?

DOUGLAS: It will suffice. I take only what the payer wishes to pay.

SOPHIA: I see what your wife meant.

STANNARD: (IMPATIENT) Come along, woman!

DOUGLAS: Do come back in a few days for the finished work. I shall look forward to seeing you again. ... (CALLING AFTER HER) What name shall I put on it?

SOPHIA: (CALLING BACK) Sophia. Sophia Del Rey.

STANNARD: Ye Gods, come along woman!

SOPHIA: Good day, Mr Parminter, you have an extraordinary talent, nurture it.

DOUGLAS: Good day, Mrs Del Rey.

FX: CANVAS DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING

ANGELICA: Smitten.

DOUGLAS: I beg your pardon.

ANGELICA: Like a puppy dog. (MOCKING) 'I shall look forward to seeing you again.' (HARD) An' you don't charge near enough for yer bloomin' skills.

FX: SNORING

DOUGLAS: Maybe so. Speaking of 'blooms', your customers will be running away with your profits.

ANGELICA: What?

DOUGLAS: I do believe your father is fast asleep.

FX: SNORING

ANGELICA: (MOVING AWAY) Oh Pa, leave the bottle alone an' serve the punters!

FX: CANVAS DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING

ANGELICA: Yes, Madam, can I take for those lovely flowers?

FX: BACKGROUND FADES

DICKENS: She was right you know, that pretty little flower girl. He was smitten. If ever a man fell instantly for a woman, it was that artist for that sitter. From the moment she lifted her veil.

CHARLOTTE: And then you barged in –

FX: CROWDS AND MOVEMENT

STANNARD: You! Boy! Find me a cab!

SOPHIA: Please don't drag me about like a rag doll, Nathaniel.

STANNARD: Because of you, I have missed my appointment.

SOPHIA: That is hardly my fault.

STANNARD: It is all your fault!

FX: BODIES COLLIDING. SOPHIA CALLS OUT IN SHOCK

DICKENS: Look where you are going man! I am so terribly sorry,  
Madam. Are you alright?

SOPHIA: Thank you. There is no harm done.

DICKENS: Let me pick up your flower for you. I hope you are not  
too winded.

SOPHIA: It was nothing.

DICKENS: And you, sir, should not be charging about like that in  
such a crowd. What is your rush?

STANNARD: Mind your own damned business.

FX: A HANSOM CAB PULLS UP

DICKENS: Your carnat –

STANNARD: Get out of our way!

DICKENS: Sir! – some manners please.

FX: STANNARD PUSHES SOPHIA INTO THE CAB

STANNARD: Soho, and don't dally!

SOPHIA: Do you mind? Unhand me! Don't pull me about so!

STANNARD: Drive!

FX: CAB PULLS AWAY, SOPHIA SQUEALS,

BACKGROUND FADES OUT

DICKENS: And there I was, stood in the middle of Hyde Park, trying to catch my breath, clutching a red carnation and wondering what on earth had just happened.

CHARLOTTE: You noticed the woman though.

DICKENS: Undoubtedly, she was such a striking beauty.

FX: MARKETPLACE FADES IN

ANGELICA: You alright, sir? You look a little winded. Douglas, we got a wounded man out 'ere!

DICKENS: I shall recover, I think.

ANGELICA: Come in and sit down.

FX: CANVAS DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING

DOUGLAS: Yes, yes please, sit. Is that Sophia's carnation? What happened?

ANGELICA: Just a bit of a bump. That Captain needs takin' down a peg or two. He was pulling 'er about and 'e steered her right into this gentleman's midriff. Not sure who was more shocked.

DOUGLAS: Excuse me, but have we met, sir?

DICKENS: I do not believe so. You may have seen images of me about.

ANGELICA: Are you famous?

DICKENS: Some think so.

CHARLOTTE: (V.O.) If there is one thing I hate, it is false modesty.

DICKENS: (V.O.) Don't interrupt.

ANGELICA: I 'ave seen your face somewhere! 'ere, it wasn't the Police Gazette, was it? We might 'ave a murderer in our midst, Douglas!

DOUGLAS: Too many penny bloods, Angelica. I have it now. It's Mr Dickens. Charles Dickens; the famous writer.

ANGELICA: Yeah, I've 'eard of 'im, but I never read 'is books.

DICKENS: Can you read?

ANGELICA: 'ere, there's no need for that! Don't be so quick to judge. We're not all like characters in a book, yer know?

DICKENS: My apologies, Madam.

DOUGLAS: It is an honour to meet you, sir.

DICKENS: I must say you do capital work, Mr - ?

DOUGLAS: Parminter. Douglas Parminter.

DICKENS: And this portrait is the lady who I was so recently acquainted with. Who is she?

DOUGLAS: Apart from the fact that she is a widow and recently arrived from India, I know little about her.

ANGELICA: Except she's taken up with a bully and a rogue.

DICKENS: The rather bombastic Captain?

DOUGLAS: Rogue?

ANGELICA: You shoulda seen the pittance 'e paid for this portrait.

DICKENS: He's bought it has he? But it is still here.

DOUGLAS: I have yet to finish it, but I hope that they will return for it in a few days.

DICKENS: Let us hope so. I should like to bump into her again.

ANGELICA: Ooh, Mr Dickens!

DICKENS: Figuratively speaking. And if they don't come back, I shall buy it from you myself – and I shall not be ungenerous. I could look upon that face all day. And this one. Who are they?

DOUGLAS: That one's not for sale. It's just by way of a demonstration. Advertising my wares if you like.

DICKENS: Hmm. Have you read *The Old Curiosity Shop*?

DOUGLAS: Of course.

DICKENS: I thought so. This is Little Nell. And the woman is my sister, Mary Hogarth, on whom I modelled the character of Nell.

DOUGLAS: No, sir.

DICKENS: Come now, my life is being laid out before my eyes!

DOUGLAS: No sir. It is my wife and my daughter. Lost to smallpox some six months past.

DICKENS: Remarkable. And this woman's name?

DOUGLAS: Sophia Del Rey

DICKENS: The very vision of a character that I am working on at this very moment. Why, I do believe that you have been stalking me, sir. Yes – I must have her. That Captain is hardly likely to return. I want to see the finished article, of course, but I mean for it to be mine.

DOUGLAS: I am sorry, sir, but it is already paid for. I must keep it until she returns.

DICKENS: And if she never returns?

DOUGLAS: Then I shall find her myself.

DICKENS: Huh. An impasse. Never fear. I shall return. I can be persistent.

DOUGLAS: With the greatest respect, sir, so can I.

END

