

BLACKHEATH

Screenplay by
Richard Cullen

Story by
Richard Cullen & Peter Allen & Darren Hayes

940 14th Street,
Unit E,
Santa Monica, CA 90403
323 348 7828
richard.cullen.mail@gmail.com

EXT. LONDON, OVERGROWN CEMETERY - MID 17TH CENTURY - NIGHT

Somewhere amid the broken headstones, three CITY GUARDS dig out an old grave. CLUNK. They hit wood.

They haul out a rotting coffin, and dump it to the side.

Lightning flashes, illuminating Lord WHITECHAPEL. 50s.
Imperious and aloof. He watches from a cautious distance.

WHITECHAPEL

Open it.

A jittery GROUNDSMAN realizes he's being addressed. He scurries over, brushes dirt off the lid... He hesitates...

FOWLER sidles over. Part dandy bruiser, part ghoul, he hides his pox-ravaged face behind powder and a silver half-mask.

FOWLER

Afraid of the dead, my love?

The Groundsman steels himself, and wrenches the coffin open.

It's empty.

GROUNDSMAN

Forgive me, my Lord! I swear to you, this is where Dr. Dee --

WHITECHAPEL

Inside. You'll find an object.

Unsure, the Groundsman reaches inside. He finds a small clay figure, marked with symbols. He offers it to Whitechapel --

WHITECHAPEL (CONT'D)

Break it.

The Groundsman snaps it, and the figure crumbles to dust.

Whitechapel eases slightly, and nods to Fowler.

GROUNDSMAN

I don't understand --

WHITECHAPEL

No matter. A man of your station, you have no need to understand.

The Groundsman winces. Looks down. He's been stabbed. Fowler withdraws his dagger into the folds of his cloak.

The Groundsman falls backward, dead, into the open coffin.

WHITECHAPEL (CONT'D)

Find the girl. And this... bury it.

Lightning flashes. The coffin drops into the open grave.

INT. ROYAL PALACE, VARIOUS - NIGHT

KING'S BEDCHAMBER:

MAIDS scramble to prepare the room. They pull sheets over the royal bed. They smooth and tuck. They spray perfume. They place flowers, candies, a chamber pot.

The old CHAMBERMAID pushes a bundle of linen into the arms of LILY. She's 9, untidy, untamed, and has straw-colored hair.

CHAMBERMAID

Laundry. And don't dawdle. His Majesty arrives within the hour.

Lily rolls her eyes. The Chambermaid catches the look, and yanks her back, gripping her hard.

CHAMBERMAID (CONT'D)

You need to remember your place, girl. Or you'll be in the street.

Chastised, Lily curtsies.

CONNECTING ROOMS:

Lily struggles along with the sheets, through dark, quiet rooms. She drops some. Stops to gather them up.

Behind her, a floorboard CREAKS. She peers into the dark.

LILY

Hello..? Who's there?

She waits. No response. Uneasy, Lily carries on her way.

Soft FOOTSTEPS behind, following. Lily tries not to panic, keeps her pace. She rounds a corner, and she bolts.

She tosses the sheets, runs through corridors, to the --

STEWARD'S OFFICE:

Lily bursts in. Slams the door. Bolts it. Calms herself. She spies paper and ink on a desk. Grabs it. Scribbles a NOTE.

A TAP on the door. The latch RATTLES. A long silence. Then, sudden POUNDING and SLAMMING on the door.

Lily looks around. Sets her eyes on a small window --

EXT. LONDON STREETS - NIGHT

Lily runs. Through a maze of narrow lanes and dark alleys.

CITY GUARDS ahead! She ducks into shadow, chooses her moment, and darts down another alley.

And into a market square. A stone well stands in the middle.

The coast clear, she takes out the note, and conceals it under a loose stone in the well-head.

Suddenly, a strange, high-pitched SCREAM. Rats. A huge pack runs SQUEALING into the marketplace, toward Lily. She jumps out of the path, onto a stack of crates. They crash around it and flood past, away, out of sight, chased by cats.

Lily watches them go. She steps down, turns, and --

FOWLER

Hello, missy.

He covers her mouth and pulls her into the shadows.

INT. DR. DEE'S HOUSE, STUDY - NIGHT

DR. DEE's eyes snap open. Bright, intense. Scared.

DR. DEE

Lily! No!

He's old and ragged, dressed in tattered robes. AMULETS hang around his neck and strange GLYPHS are inked into his skin.

He sits on the floor, surrounded by divining cards. He moves his trembling hands over the complex reading, trying to make sense of it. Images of death and destruction. Bad news.

DR. DEE (CONT'D)

Who can save us?

Outside, the wind HOWLS. Candles flicker.

He lifts a new CARD from the deck. Turns it. The KNIGHT OF COINS, depicting a young soldier surrounded by money.

EXT. PORTUGAL, HILLSIDE - DAY

William BLACKHEATH scans the landscape, perplexed.

He's late 20, athletic, alert, rough around the edges. He's armed, dressed for battle, and he looks like trouble.

BLACKHEATH

We're not attacking the fort?

He glances around, counting heads, estimating their chances.

A small army of PEASANTS covers the hill. They're a poorly armed rabble, dressed for the field, not for battle. Dotted among them are other battle-ready MERCENARIES. But not many.

Beside Blackheath, a surly CZECH mercenary loads his musket.

CZECH

I think... defend.

At the top of the hill sits a squat, ornamented fort. But the army faces the valley at the bottom.

BLACKHEATH

From the outside? That's not the most inspiring idea I've heard.

CZECH

We get paid.

BLACKHEATH

Only if we win. And a purse of gold won't bring me back from the dead.

CZECH

Tell it to their king.

BLACKHEATH

You mean him?

Blackheath indicates a FAT BARON some way off - he stands on a cart, flanked by GUARDS, and mumbles through a speech.

BLACKHEATH (CONT'D)

He's no king.

CZECH

How you tell?

BLACKHEATH

He's not inside the fort.

The Czech SNORTS, and turns to a YOUNG PEASANT to share the joke. The Young Peasant stares blankly.

CZECH

Spanish. No sense of humor.

BLACKHEATH
They're Portuguese. Not Spanish.

CZECH
Same thing. And you? English?

BLACKHEATH
Not any more. My life there is
over. I'm taking my gold to the New
World, to start a new one.

A distant HORN sounds.

Across the valley, another ARMY marches into view. Larger.
Better armed. Bright RED uniforms and shining steel. An army
that looks as though it will win.

Behind Blackheath, a YELL of terror. Everyone turns to look.

A FARM-BOY throws down his axe and flees to the woods. A
CAPTAIN raises his crossbow. Aims. Fires. THUD.

The dead Farm-Boy hits ground like a sack.

Point made. The Peasants obediently face the Red Army again.

CZECH
Your next life, I think, is not in
America. At least we die fighting.

Blackheath draws his sword. Flashes a smile at the Czech.

BLACKHEATH
See you on the other side.

The Captain orders the CHARGE. The Peasant Army raise their
weapons, give a defiant ROAR, and surge forward.

INT. DR. DEE'S HOUSE, STUDY - NIGHT

Dee ponders the Knight of Coins, troubled by its meaning.

DR. DEE
William Blackheath. So be it.

Resolved, he places the Card in the middle of the reading,
and sweeps from the room.

EXT. PORTUGAL, VALLEY - DAY

Small skirmishes play out across the battlefield. Swords
CLASH, muskets CRACK, and smoke fills the air.

Blackheath makes his way toward a DERELICT BARN. He hacks through RED SOLDIERS as goes. He cuts down one. Then another.

A way off, behind a low wall, a RED MUSKETEER takes aim.

A RED SWORDSMAN engages Blackheath. Blackheath outfights him, fends him off, forces him back, and swings to cut --

The Musketeer FIRES --

A metallic PING. Blackheath's blade SHATTERS. Blackheath and the Swordsman stop, stunned. They turn, see the Musketeer. They look back at each other... And Blackheath bolts.

The Musketeer struggles to reload as Blackheath runs at him. He gives up. Grabs a fallen musket. Aims. But too late --

Blackheath attacks. He grabs the musket barrel. Yanks it away from the Musketeer, making it FIRE, shooting the pursuing Swordsman. He SLAMS the butt into the Musketeer's face. Done.

Blackheath takes cover. Surveys the battlefield.

Some way off, he sees a Red Army DEATH SQUAD, led by a CAPTAIN carrying a crossbow and wearing a SKULL faceplate. They surround a wounded Peasant, taunt him, and kill him --

Blackheath looks away.

He sees the Barn. Not too far. The coast is clear. He takes the Musketeer's sword, breaks cover, and runs for it.

INT./EXT. PORTUGAL, DERELICT BARN - DAY

Blackheath sneaks into the Barn. It's big, dark.

He spies out through the slats. He makes out a RED SENTRY slouching outside, slacking off. Blackheath draws a flintlock, aims, and SHOOTS the dirt at the Sentry's feet --

The Sentry starts. Looks up at the Barn. He draws his sword.

The Sentry pushes the door open and steps in. He creeps through the Barn, peering into the shadows.

Someone taps him on the shoulder with a sword. Blackheath.

BLACKHEATH

I'm afraid I need your uniform.

The Sentry stares. A long beat. He attacks. But Blackheath toys with him. He feints and lunges and dodges, showing off.

Finally, Blackheath spins the sword from the Sentry's hand, and holds his to the Sentry's throat.

BLACKHEATH (CONT'D)

You can give it to me. Or --

BANG. A shot grazes Blackheath's hand. He drops his sword.

A RED SOLDIER stands in the door. He aims a second pistol --

Blackheath grabs the Sentry, hauls him into the firing line and -- BANG -- the Sentry takes the bullet. In one move Blackheath drops the body, draws the Sentry's flintlock, aims and -- BANG -- shoots the Soldier.

The Soldier drops to the ground, dead.

VOICES outside. The Death Squad approach.

Blackheath stands over the Sentry, and takes off his coat.

INT. DR. DEE'S HOUSE, LIBRARY - NIGHT

Dee pulls on his ritual robes. He scrabbles through stuffed shelves, scattering dust, papers and books.

He grasps a SHIP IN A BOTTLE. He SMASHES it on the floor, and snatches up the Ship.

EXT. DR. DEE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Whitechapel and his CITY GUARDS approach the chained gates.

WHITECHAPEL

Keep your heads. This place is bewitched.

A City Guard SHOOTS the rusty padlock. The gates open.

INT. PORTUGAL, DERELICT BARN - DAY

The Barn doors swing open.

The Death Squad stride in.

Two bodies lie on the ground. Skull Captain looks them over. The Soldier. And another, face down, wearing Blackheath's coat. Skull Captain kicks it over. It's the Sentry.

Blackheath, wearing RED UNIFORM, emerges from the shadows.

Skull Captain scrutinizes him. He draws a pistol, uses the barrel to slowly turn Blackheath's face. First one way, then the other, as if trying to place him.

He runs the muzzle down Blackheath's lapel. To the bullet hole. He opens the jacket. No wound. He smirks.

A side door CRASHES open. The Czech staggers in and falls to his knees, spent. He sees the Death Squad, and Blackheath, in red. Confused, he looks from face to face.

SKULL CAPTAIN
(to Blackheath)
You know him?

Wary, Blackheath shakes his head. Skull Captain places his pistol in Blackheath's hand. And saunters away.

SKULL CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
So kill him.

The Czech eyes Blackheath, resigned, and almost laughs.

CZECH
See you on the other side.

Blackheath steels himself, raises the pistol.

BLACKHEATH
Spanish. No sense of humor.

The Czech grabs for his flintlock -- Blackheath FIRES --

INT. DR. DEE'S HOUSE, STUDY - NIGHT

Dee recoils from picking up the Knight of Coins.

He's suddenly unsure...

A CRASH downstairs. No time for doubt. He snatches it up.

EXT. RED ARMY ENCAMPMENT, PAYMASTER'S TENT - EVENING

The PAYMASTER marks his ledger. He takes coins from a chest and hands them to the next in a line of Red Army MERCENARIES.

Blackheath sets down his pistol, and takes the coins.

EXT. PORTUGAL, WOODS - LATER

Blackheath pulls a leather SATCHEL from the roots of a tree. He adds the coins to the many purses and trinkets inside.

He takes out a SILVER LOCKET and opens it. He contemplates the image inside. The moment passes. He snaps it shut.

He mounts his horse. Rides.

INT. DR. DEE'S HOUSE, RITUAL ROOM - NIGHT

Dee steps into a MAGIC CIRCLE. He places the Card on the model Ship in the center. He spreads his arms wide.

DR. DEE
Per Adonai Elohim, Adani Saboath...

The room darkens. Outside, a storm breaks. THUNDER.

EXT. PORTUGUESE COAST, SEAPORT - DAY

Blackheath dismounts on a busy dock.

He strides toward a GALLEON, preparing to sail. At the gangplank, a QUARTERMASTER checks the MANIFEST.

Blackheath nods to the ship.

BLACKHEATH
America?

QUARTERMASTER
Havana.

BLACKHEATH
Close enough.

Blackheath tosses a PURSE. The Quartermaster catches it. Without breaking stride, Blackheath boards the Galleon.

A breeze catches the flag. Distant THUNDER rolls.

INTERCUT - DR. DEE'S HOUSE/GALLEON AT SEA

Dee concentrates on the Ship as he recites the ritual text.

Blackheath stands on the foredeck, breathes the free air. THUNDER. He looks back. OMINOUS CLOUDS roll toward the ship.

As Dee recites, the storm outside grows more ferocious. Windows blow open. A gale blows through the room.

Whitechapel's City Guards SMASH Dee's door. It CRACKS.

Stormy sea. Blackheath and CREWMEN heave on ropes, struggle to keep control. Waves SMASH. Lightning strikes. A mast SPLINTERS. Spars fall and CRASH into the deck.

A storm RAGES inside the Ritual Room. Lightning flashes. Dee recites louder over the violent ROAR of the wind. Foaming sea-water CRASHES around from every side.

The City Guards BURST through the door.

Blackheath looks on as a HUGE WAVE barrels towards the ship.

The Guards burst in as Dee SMASHES the model.

EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

Sudden, surreal calm. Blackheath, suspended in the water.

He watches the wreck and its cargo fall around him. His treasures, too. Trinkets. Coins. Dr. Dee's divining cards.

The silver locket drifts past. He reaches for it... but it slips from him. It disappears into the depths.

Blackheath's eyes close. He sinks into the darkness.

INT. DR. DEE'S RITUAL ROOM - NIGHT

The Guards pull an exhausted Dee to his feet. Whitechapel hesitates at the edge of the circle, then steps up to him.

He grabs Dee's wrist. Cuts him. Dee bleeds for a moment then quickly, miraculously, heals. Satisfied, Whitechapel smiles.

WHITECHAPEL

Dr. Dee, at last. You look well,
for a man half a century dead.

(a beat. Dee simmers)

I have something that you want.

He opens a pouch, presents a lock of straw-colored hair.

DR. DEE

Monster! Where is she?

WHITECHAPEL

Alive for now. And if you want her
to stay that way, you will give me
something that I want. You will
place your skills at my disposal.

(MORE)

WHITECHAPEL (CONT'D)

And you will share, with me, all
your secrets about the veil between
the Living and the Dead.

DR. DEE

Careful, my Lord, lest you reach
for knowledge you cannot grasp.

Whitechapel says nothing. He cues his Guards.

They throw a sack over Dee's head, and drag him out.

Whitechapel notices the Card on the floor. It troubles him.
He picks it up.

EXT. RUGGED SHORE - NIGHT

Crashing surf. The waves dump a body on the pebble beach.
Blackheath. Barely alive. He hauls himself to his feet.
Exhausted, dishevelled. Shirt torn open.

The beach is empty. No wreckage, no survivors. Blackheath
staggers toward the cliffs, to a MARINER walking his MUTT.

BLACKHEATH

Good sir... what country is this?

The Mariner stares at the BRAND on Blackheath's chest. The
shape of a CROWN, seared into his skin. Uncomfortable,
Blackheath pulls his shirt closed. The Mariner sneers.

MARINER

This, good sir, is England.

Blackheath's face drops.

BLACKHEATH

No. It can't be. That's not fair --

The Mariner WHACKS him on the side of the head with a CUDGEL.
Blackheath hits the ground. Everything goes BLACK.

INT. RICKETY COACH - NIGHT

Blackheath jolts awake, MANACLED and trussed in ROPES. MOLLY,
a grim country girl, has wedged herself into the corner. She
waves a PISTOL vaguely in Blackheath's direction.

MOLLY

Don't try nothing... funny.

He glances out. A city races past. He looks at Molly, at the pistol, at the window. He pulls at the ropes.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

What do you think you're doing?

BLACKHEATH

Escaping. What do you think I'm doing?

MOLLY

Stop it. Stop it or I'll shoot.

BLACKHEATH

Lady, I've known a lot of people who could pull a trigger and kill a man. You're not one of them.

She thinks. He may have a point. He keeps on at the ropes.

MOLLY

I'll scream. My husband'll shoot.

BLACKHEATH

The King has a price on my head, and I think your husband wants it. So go ahead and scream. But he's not going to shoot me either.

She fidgets uncomfortably, suddenly unsure what to do.

BLACKHEATH (CONT'D)

Can you drive a carriage?

MOLLY

What? Why?

BLACKHEATH

Don't you think it strange that he's driving, and he's left you, alone. To guard me, an outlaw. And he won't even come if you scream? Not exactly a gentleman. Is he?

MOLLY

(dumbfounded)

I can drive a carriage...

Blackheath moves to her side, free of the ropes.

BLACKHEATH

You could teach him a lesson. I'd offer to help, but --

He displays his wrists. Still manacled. She pulls him close.

MOLLY

Throw him off the carriage, and
I'll give you the key.

EXT./INT. RICKETY COACH, LONDON OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Blackheath clammers up, onto the roof.

Up front, the Mariner drives the horses hard. His CUDGEL
beside him on the seat.

Blackheath steals up, reaches for it... but the Mutt sits up
and SNARLS. The Mariner sees Blackheath, pulls a PISTOL,
clammers over the seat, onto the roof.

The horses gallop. The coach drifts across the lane. Inside,
Molly opens a door. The coach grazes a shop front. The door
RIPS off. She YELPS, and tried the other door.

The coach hurtles past a masked PLAGUE DOCTOR, who daubs a
house with a large, red "X". He watches it speed past.

The Mariner grabs at Blackheath. Blackheath dodges, and
swings the cudgel.

Blackheath sees ahead, behind the Mariner, a GALLOWS. A caged
corpse hanging from it. He throws himself down onto the roof.
The Mariner turns to look behind, but -- too late!

The cage SLAMS into the Mariner. Instinctively he grabs on...
and he's dragged from the coach. The Mutt leaps after him.

Blackheath glances up. The gallows CREAKS. The rope snaps.
The Mariner falls. The cage CRASHES down on top of him.

Blackheath clammers to the front. Molly already has the
reins. She levels her pistol at him.

MOLLY

How much are you worth?

BLACKHEATH

Less than you'd think. But, madam,
your pistol isn't even loaded.

Flustered, she fires the pistol into the air to test it and --
BANG -- unloads it. Blackheath beams at her, smug.

BLACKHEATH (CONT'D)

The key?

She punches him. Hard. He falls back, off the coach and --

EXT. LONDON BRIDGE, GATE - CONTINUOUS

-- hits the dirt. The coach disappears. The Mutt chases it.

Blackheath staggers to his feet.

Looming over him, the entryway to London Bridge and the City. A fortified GATEHOUSE, adorned with heads on spikes and rotting bodies in cages. A grim warning.

Across the street a young, nervous KING'S MAN, one of the Royal Guard, levels his musket at Blackheath.

KING'S MAN

Halt! In the name of the King! I'm arresting you. Breaking curfew.

BLACKHEATH

I can't halt. I'm not moving.

A bugle CALL. The gate into London opens.

A carriage hurtles toward them. They jump out of its path.

It THUNDERS past. A gilded contraption, pulled by a team of white mares. For a moment Blackheath sees King CHARLES II's powdered face glaring out. He's 30s, angular. Glossy black wig and too many ruffles. And Charles sees Blackheath.

A moment of mutual recognition. Then it's gone.

The carriage disappears into London.

The Gate closes.

The King's Man re-aims his musket, but Blackheath's gone. He blows a WHISTLE to raise the alarm.

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

GUARDS hack at something grisly SNARLING in the shadows.

It staggers into the light. It's another Guard... But he looks like a corpse. Grey and skeletal. He's UNDEAD.

Dee sits, caged in the middle of the dungeon. Occult markings and scattered papers cover the floor. Residue of a ritual.

Dee watches the Guards, pained.

DR. DEE
Burn it. Or cut off its head.

The WHOOSH of a blade, a wet THUD, and the head rolls --
Dee looks away, and up at Whitechapel, descending the stairs.

DR. DEE (CONT'D)
I warned you. The ritual brooks no
error. It is exacting. Intricate.
This is the price of your haste.

Whitechapel reaches the body. He nudges it with his foot.

DR. DEE (CONT'D)
Blood is required. Family blood.

Whitechapel picks up the head. Disgusted, but fascinated.

DR. DEE (CONT'D)
And a talisman. An object that held
meaning for the departed. Something
their spirit would return for.

Whitechapel stops. Takes in Dee's words. An idea strikes him.

WHITECHAPEL
You will have what you need.

DR. DEE
And I want my grandchild.

Whitechapel places the head just outside Dee's cage --

WHITECHAPEL
For you to contemplate, until she
arrives. It would be unfortunate
for her to suffer the same fate.

He approaches one of his Guards -- a flash of silver dagger --
the Guard's body slumps to the floor.

WHITECHAPEL (CONT'D)
Try again.

Dee watches him leave, and closes his eyes in quiet despair.

EXT. RIVER THAMES, WHARF - NIGHT

A troop of KING'S MEN thunder along a cluttered, ramshackle
wharf. They pass by, leaving it empty. Quiet.

Blackheath emerges from under a cart and watches them go. He sniffs. A stench comes from the cart. He lifts the tarp. Dead bodies, gaping faces, black sores. He drops it back.

A FLATBOAT emerges from the mist on the river. A FERRYMAN pilots it. A hooded, hulking, bear of a man. He tosses a mooring rope for Blackheath to tie off.

FERRYMAN
(re: the manacles)
In trouble?

BLACKHEATH
And trying to get out of it. I need passage out of England. Tonight. I need a ship.

FERRYMAN
There are no ships, sir. Not tonight. Nor any other night.

BLACKHEATH
No ships? What do you mean? This is London. London has ships.

FERRYMAN
The Plague, sir. There's no trade, no traffic. The graveyards are full and the city chokes. No ships come, and no ships go. No ships.

BLACKHEATH
A bark, then. A boat. Anything. If I'm found here I'm a dead man.

The Ferryman unloads cargo. A dead body THUDS onto the Wharf.

FERRYMAN
Then you'll be in good company.

BLACKHEATH
There must be something unofficial. If you take my meaning.

FERRYMAN
Smugglers? You must take care, sir, folk are executed for less. In any case, you'd need to know the right sort of people. Or the wrong sort.

A WHISTLE in the distance. The King's Men head back. Blackheath sees them coming. He makes a decision.

BLACKHEATH

Take me across the river. I'll pay.
When I can.

FERRYMAN

Into London now, is it? Got a
friend inside the Walls?

BLACKHEATH

Maybe. If they don't hold a grudge.

FERRYMAN

Why not? Ordinarily I just ferry
the dead. But a wanted man heading
into London..?

(he extends his hand)

You're as good as dead already.

Blackheath climbs aboard.

EXT. LONDON STREET - NIGHT

CITY GUARDS, on patrol, pass a tavern, THE RAVEN INN, and
approach a DRUNK, slumped by a cart.

FIRST GUARD

Oi! Curfew. Cough up and go home.

The Drunk doesn't move. At all.

SECOND GUARD

He's not paying, mate. He's dead.

The First Guard kicks the body. It slumps. Rats scurry away.

FIRST GUARD

Typical. Search him.

Blackheath watches from the shadows as they search the body.

He sneaks up to the tavern. He tries the door. Locked. A
window. Stuck. He disappears to the back.

INT. THE RAVEN INN, BAR - NIGHT

Empty. Quiet. Blackheath creeps down the stairs, into the
bar. He scans the room. Embers glow in the hearth... Smoke
curls up from a candle, recently snuffed...

A board CREAKS behind him. He turns -- a silhouette. The
silhouette cocks a flintlock.