

Black Shadow Moon

Original Screenplay

by

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WGA Registered

Property of:
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BLACK SHADOW MOON

FADE IN:

INT DEMETER CARGO HOLD NIGHT

The crypt-like darkness is cold, damp, endless. The blackness so powerful that the glow from the single lantern is squeezed to dimness, as if by a huge, unseen hand. Metal dully RINGS against metal, sending a rat scurrying deeper into the gloom. A SEAMAN fastens tackle around something large, wooden. The object is too obscured by darkness to discern any detail. He works skillfully, but with a quick urgency, his face taut with dread, the frost of his breath coming in short bursts.

EXT DEMETER DECK NIGHT

The light from scattered lanterns is no more effective against the darkness than the heat of their flames against the numbing chill. Blackness that can almost be felt oozes out of the hold like a teeming pool, spreading out across the planks, enveloping the entire ship. More SEAMEN work with ropes, rigging tackle. The ropes draw tight.

SEAMAN 1
(frightened, in Romanian)
Careful! Careful... keep it steady!

SEAMAN 2
(frightened, in Romanian)
Shut up and work.

We catch only the briefest glimpse of the wooden object as it rises up from the swell of darkness. TWO DECK HANDS nervously, reluctantly move forward to guide it.

The hoist arm pivots and the seamen look up at the wooden thing out of sight above their heads. The hoist arm catches on some rigging.

SEAMAN 1
Watch out! Hold it, you fools!

SEAMAN 2
Got it... got it. Just get it over...
quickly!

EXT EAST PIER NIGHT

A horse-drawn freight wagon is parked at the end of the pier. Several large objects are already in the wagon bed but are blocked from view by the tarpaulin the DRIVER is wrestling into place.

The hoist arm pivots into view, its cargo still blocked from clear view by shadows and crates stacked high on the pier. DOCK WORKERS guide the swaying wooden thing to the back of the freight wagon.

The driver pulls the tarpaulin into place and secures it. He climbs into the driver's seat and starts the horses. As the wagon moves off down the pier, CARTER, PATERSON & CO., LONDON can be briefly seen painted on its side. It disappears into the night to the obvious relief of the seamen.

ESTABLISHING SHOT WHITBY NIGHT

The moon glows eerily over this small fishing village. Fishermen cottages with tarred roofs are built close to the river that flows down the middle of the village into the North Sea. Boats are turned upside down and nets are stretched on poles.
SUPERIMPOSE: WHITBY, ENGLAND 1895.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT EAST PIER DAY

It is late in a cold, foggy afternoon. BRAM STOKER approaches the ship Demeter, tied to the pier. He is in his early forties, of medium build with a neatly trimmed beard. Physically strong and a forceful personality, Stoker appears preoccupied, and somewhat agitated. He pulls a small notebook from his coat pocket, then removes a newspaper clipping from its folds. Stoker looks at the clipping.

The paper is the Whitby Daily. A small headline reads: "MYSTERY AT SEA... ship of tragedy moored in Whitby. The Admiralty Court and local constabulary are investigating the apparent deaths of three seamen registered as crew on the Russian vessel Demeter out of Varna. According to crew, the three men simply disappeared, apparently lost overboard in rough weather. Authorities are puzzled by the lack of witnesses."

Troubled, Stoker returns the newspaper clipping to the notebook, then boards the ship.

EXT DEMETER DAY

As STOKER steps onto the deck, the coldness seems more acute. He pulls his coat tighter around him. A few DECK HANDS go about their business, their faces drawn and haggard. The atmosphere is heavy, with the crew sharing a mournful type of relief that follows a funeral.

A SEAMAN confronts Stoker.

SEAMAN
(in Romanian)
What is it you want, sir?

STOKER
Your captain? I must speak with your captain.

The seaman strains to understand. In the background, the CAPTAIN emerges from his cabin.

STOKER (CONT'D)
Your captain. I say I want to— The captain approaches and the seaman hurries away.

CAPTAIN
(heavy Romanian accent)
I am captain.

STOKER
(relieved)
Ah, yes. I was speaking to one of your crew on shore. I'm trying to get some information but your man said you'd probably be more help.

CAPTAIN
(suspiciously)
What information?

STOKER
I... I've heard... stories... about your last crossing.

CAPTAIN
That was over a month ago. Done.

STOKER
It's very important I know the details.

CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN

Details. I give details to police... to news reporters. They don't believe, they think I'm fool. Nothing more to say.

STOKER

(anxiously)

But please! I must know what—

CAPTAIN

(interrupting)

You are news reporter? I talk no more with news reporters.

STOKER

No. I'm not with a paper. I assure you.
(pause)

Listen... I've met a man. It... it's possible he knows what really happened on your ship.

The captain appraises Stoker, his curiosity growing.

STOKER (CONT'D)

It's rather cold out here. Might we step inside... please?

The captain sizes Stoker up another moment, then hesitantly motions him towards the nearest hatchway.

EXT EAST CLIFF CHURCH STEPS SUNSET

199 steep steps rise up from the village to St. Mary's Church. Behind the rows of gravestones are the imposing ruins of Whitby Abbey. A WOMAN kneels next to a grave in the churchyard.

EXT WHITBY ABBEY SUNSET

The WOMAN pulls the last of the weeds from the grave. She is a working-class young woman in working-class clothes. She glances at the sun disappearing below the horizon behind her, then hurriedly gathers up her few garden tools.

WOMAN

Back in a fortnight, papa.

A mist is beginning to gather, and night shrouds the churchyard as the woman makes her way among the graves, heading towards the Church Steps. She stumbles in the dark, dropping her tools. SIGHING, she gathers them up. The woman shivers, draws her shawl around her, then continues towards the steps.

CONTINUED:

A sound, almost like SOFT, LOW GROWL stops her in her tracks. She peers into the darkness ahead.

EXT CHURCHYARD WOMAN'S POV NIGHT

The steps leading to the safety of the village are seen beyond several yards of gravestones. An UNDISTINGUISHABLE SHADOW is barely glimpsed moving behind a marker.

EXT WHITBY ABBEY NIGHT

The woman takes a few steps forward, caution lining her face. A RUSTLING SOUND in the bushes ahead quickly transforms her caution to fear. She changes her direction towards the church. FOOTSTEPS draw closer to her. She moves faster, then faster still. Her eyes are wide with terror as she stumbles through the thorns and weeds, lurches over the grave mounds. Long, distorted shadows cast from the church and gravestones appear to reach out for her.

The woman drops all her garden tools but one—a sharp, pointed thing which she holds aggressively, ready to stab. Her breath comes in short, terrified WHIMPERS. She almost reaches the church but brambles grab at her legs. She stumbles and falls, the tool flying from her hand. The FOOTSTEPS draw closer. She crawls desperately towards the garden tool, gets it in her hand.

The woman quickly rolls over, drawing back the tool to stab. Her eyes widen in shock as a SHADOW looms over her. She is transfixed with fear as she stares at the SHADOWY, HUMAN FORM OS. The SHADOW moves, removing the tool from her fist.

The SHADOWY FORM bends over the woman, the distance too great and the mist too thick to make out details. We hear the fabric of her dress RIPPING. She utters a weak, pathetic CRY.

DISSOLVE TO:

ESTABLISHING SHOT LONDON NIGHT

A familiar, moonlit London skyline.

EXT ROYAL LYCEUM THEATER NIGHT

The gaslight from the theater is bright, cheerful. A large banner proclaims OPENING NIGHT CELEBRATION. Posters state that HAMLET starring Sir Henry Irving and Ellen Terry is being presented. Cabs and elegant coaches wait at the curb. A cab pulls up. STOKER climbs from the cab carrying a small travel bag.

CONTINUED:

He pays the DRIVER and walks thoughtfully down the alley next to the theater.

EXT ALLEY NIGHT

Stoker approaches a doorway bearing a sign that reads: STAGE ENTRANCE. He enters.

INT BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR NIGHT

CAST, CREW and EXTRAS hurry about. HARRY LOVEDAY, the stage manager, is signing a receipt for a young CLERK as Stoker approaches.

STOKER
Evening, Mr. Loveday.

LOVEDAY
Right on schedule as usual, sir. Curtain's about to go up.

Stoker nods and enters his office. A brass plate on the office door reads ABRAHAM STOKER, GENERAL MANAGER.

CLERK
You can set your watch by him... that's a fact.

The sound of APPLAUSE is heard.

INT LYCEUM AUDITORIUM NIGHT

The auditorium is luxurious Victorian. The AUDIENCE, attired in evening dress, applauds. Among them is FLORENCE STOKER, in her mid-thirties with dark hair and eyes. There is an elegance to her beauty, and quiet strength.

The company's star, SIR HENRY IRVING as Hamlet, strides on stage. A fastidious man in his early forties with longish hair, tall, lean and aristocratic. Each move Irving makes is calculated, he wears his inner courage and large ego like a uniform decoration. Off stage, he's slightly foppish. The audience applauds again and Irving graciously acknowledges them.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT BEEFSTEAK ROOM NIGHT

The room is large and Gothic, crowded with Hamlet's happy cast and crew for the opening night party. A large banquet table loaded with food and drink takes up the center of the room. Irving's portrait as Philip the Second is among the paintings hanging on the oak paneled walls.

Irving, Stoker and Florence stand in front of a hearth containing a roaring fire. Irving raises his glass.

IRVING

Let's raise our cups to the new season...
may it be overflowing with memorable
performances.

STOKER

And substantial profits.

Everyone LAUGHS and Stoker puts his arm fondly around Florence, pulling her close.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT BEDROOM NIGHT

The room is dark except for a table lamp burning low. STOKER and FLORENCE are entwined on the bed fervently making love. Her delicate night clothes are gathered around her waist. As their passion grows, Stoker pulls the bodice of her gown aside, his lips move across her throat, linger a moment, then continue down to her breasts. They totally focus on one another as they climax. Lying back on the bed, they take a few moments to catch their breath. Florence cuddles against Stoker.

FLORENCE

(content)

I had a lovely time tonight. Sir Henry
was really quite wonderful.

Stoker doesn't reply, his mind elsewhere. She notices and pushes against him teasingly.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

You're not ignoring me, are you?

Stoker snaps out of it and turns to stroke her cheek.

STOKER

Uh, no... no. I was just thinking...
about a new book.

CONTINUED:

FLORENCE
Writing another?

STOKER
Possibly.

He pulls her closer in an attempt to change the subject.

STOKER (CONT'D)
How could I possibly ignore such a
beautiful woman?

Florence pushes gently, playfully away, holding him at arms' length.

FLORENCE
I'm not sure I like the sound of that.
I'm looking forward to the new season...
the parties... dinners. And I don't want
some new project to keep you from being
there with me.

He pulls her back to him and kisses her lightly, then opens her night clothes completely, drinking in her beauty.

STOKER
Well... I'm here now... aren't I?

FLORENCE
Yes...

Stoker takes Florence in his arms, his body covering her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT ROYAL LYCEUM THEATER NIGHT

A banner proclaims LAST TWO PERFORMANCES. THEATER PATRONS bustle past a poster stating that THE RIVALS is the play closing the season. A cab races up to the front of the theater. STOKER climbs from the cab clutching his travel bag. He pays the DRIVER and hurries distractedly down the alley next to the theater.

INT BACKSTAGE AREA NIGHT

STOKER, preoccupied and his eyes sunken with worry, hurries by STAGE HANDS and EXTRAS. He passes a young, COSTUMED GIRL and the CLERK who is holding a cash box.

GIRL
He's just getting here?

CONTINUED:

CLERK

Missed the curtain. First time I can remember.

INT BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR NIGHT

Stoker strides down the busy corridor. IRVING, in costume, approaches with his valet, WALTER COLLINSON, and LOVEDAY following behind him. Collinson carries a costume change that he futilely tries to slip onto the agitated Irving as they fall into step with Stoker. Irving anxiously wields his prop sword, fortunately still in its scabbard. The others make sure to stay out of its way.

IRVING

Bram... Bram!

IRVING NOTICES THE TRAVEL BAG

IRVING (CONT'D)

Where have you been?

Stoker forces himself to attention, stopping in the corridor.

IRVING (CONT'D)

Never mind. Loveday told me. It's certain now? We can't get "The Cup?"

STOKER

We can't clear the rights in time to meet next season's opening schedule.

IRVING

But we must have a play. It's the opening spot.

STOKER

More importantly, we must have a theater in which to present a play.

IRVING

Oh, you're not going to start with that financial rubbish again, are you?

STOKER

The Lyceum does a steady business... but purchasing the lease left us low on capital. Let's just hope the press doesn't get onto it.

CONTINUED:

IRVING
(alarmed)
We can't have that! It's not their
business. We need a play—

STOKER
(interrupting)
We need a play that'll do business... and
with luck we'll acquire it this evening.

IRVING
Ohhh, but it's... it's such a common piece
of work. And I can barely tolerate the
man.

STOKER
We can tolerate the fact his stories have
outsold every author in England. It'll
bring in a tidy business.

COLLINSON
It's true, sir. I've read them all.
Quite entertaining, really.

Irving fixes an icy gaze on Collinson, then sighs in half-surrender. Loveday takes the opportunity to gently relieve Irving of the sword while Collinson helps Irving into the costume change. Stoker struggles to keep his attention focused on the conversation.

IRVING
Alright... alright. We must pursue it.
But he mustn't know we need him. He's
greedy enough as it is.

Irving hurries off. Stoker tiredly watches him depart, then
EXITS FRAME.

LOVEDAY
Sir Henry... more concerned with having
no play than no money.

COLLINSON
(thoughtfully)
My... Henry Irving without a role to play.
Who would he be, then?

Loveday shrugs and the two men EXIT.

INT STOKER'S OFFICE NIGHT

The door is flung open and Stoker rushes in, tossing his bag into the nearest chair. It is the cluttered office of a busy man. A single transom window is set high in one wall.

Stoker turns and is surprised to see FLORENCE sitting expectantly in a corner chair. Her face is drawn with worry and a hint of irritation.

STOKER

Florence! What are you doing here?

Florence's gaze quickly turns his surprise to discomfort. He moves to kiss her. She stands up, avoiding the kiss.

FLORENCE

(quietly)

Where... were you... Bram?

STOKER

I told you I'd be at—

FLORENCE

(interrupting)

I know what you told me... but I expected you back last evening.

STOKER

Yes, well... a research opportunity presented itself. My project... it must be exceptional and—

FLORENCE

(interrupting)

I wasn't sure what to do. That's why I came here. I didn't know what may have happened.

The box office clerk enters, placing the cash box on the desk.

CLERK

Receipts, Mr. Stoker.
(spotting Florence)
Oh... sorry.

Stoker hurries to the safe and dials the combination, still trying to be attentive to Florence. He swings open the safe door.

STOKER

I didn't mean to cause worry... really.

CONTINUED:

FLORENCE

Why didn't you at least send word?

Stoker flashes a brief, embarrassed glance at the clerk, then removes the cash from the box, placing it on his desk.

STOKER

I've got quite a lot to do here.

The clerk tucks the cash box under his arm and holds out a receipt to Stoker. Florence is working hard to keep her emotions in check.

FLORENCE

What is it? You've changed... these past months. I hardly see you.

Stoker's embarrassment moves towards irritation. The clerk extends the receipt towards him.

CLERK

Uh, sir.

The sound of MUFFLED APPLAUSE draws Stoker's attention.

STOKER

(to Florence)

Now isn't the time to discuss this.

Florence begins to tremble with frustration.

CLERK

Sir, the receipt... if you please.

STOKER

(impatiently)

Alright!

Stoker angrily scribbles his signature across the receipt. The clerk timidly exits. Stoker turns his back on Florence as he quickly counts the cash.

FLORENCE

If something's wrong, won't you please tell me?

STOKER

There's nothing... really.

Stoker keeps his back to her as he places the money in the safe, closes the door and spins the dial. Florence rises, her concern hardening into suspicion.

CONTINUED:

FLORENCE
 (coolly)
 Whatever keeps you away so much... I trust
 it's only work.

Florence exits abruptly. Stoker takes a moment to collect himself, then exits the office.

INT LYCEUM AUDITORIUM NIGHT

The AUDIENCE APPLAUDS as the CAST assembles center-stage for bows. The CLAMOR GROWS as Irving steps forward. With broad, sweeping gestures, he acknowledges the crowd's enthusiasm, then EXITS.

INT LYCEUM LOBBY NIGHT

The AUDIENCE exits from the auditorium. SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, in evening dress, appears in the crowd. He's a large, athletic man in his late thirties wearing a full moustache waxed on the ends. Doyle is robust, moody, expansive in both movement and curiosity. A GENTLEMAN slows as he passes by.

GENTLEMAN
 Sir Arthur. How good to see you.

DOYLE
 Yes, oh, good evening.

An OLDER COUPLE approach Doyle.

MAN
 Good evening, sir

WOMAN
 Mr. Sherlock Holmes, himself.

DOYLE
 (frostily)
 My name, madame, is Arthur Conan Doyle.

Doyle pushes on through the crowd OUT OF FRAME.

INT WINGS NIGHT

STOKER is standing in the stage wings, lost in troubled thought. Doyle ENTERS FRAME.

DOYLE
 I say... Stoker.

CONTINUED:

Stoker snaps out of his daze, quickly gets his bearings and shakes hands with Doyle.

STOKER

Sir Arthur... good evening.

DOYLE

Our appointment... you were going to meet me in the lobby?

STOKER

Yes, certainly... I am sorry. Sir Henry's probably already waiting for us. Hope you weren't inconvenienced.

DOYLE

No matter...

(observing Stoker)

You're quite alright?

Stoker nods uncomfortably, then ushers Doyle OUT OF FRAME.

INT BEEFSTEAK ROOM NIGHT

IRVING is pacing, a long cigar gripped loosely in his hand. A fire CRACKLES in the fireplace. STOKER and DOYLE ENTER. Doyle and Irving's coolness towards one another professionally vanishes.

IRVING

Ah, Sir Arthur... good evening.

DOYLE

Sir Henry.

IRVING

How's your charming wife? Louise, isn't it?

DOYLE

Yes. She's well, thank you. Prefers to stay with the quiet of home when I'm in London on business. Wonderful performance tonight... first rate.

IRVING

You're too gracious.

(to Stoker)

A very enthusiastic crowd.

COLLINSON ENTERS carrying a tray laden with plates of food. He places it on the end of the table, then pours wine from a nearby buffet.

CONTINUED:

Doyle heartily attacks the food while Irving just picks nervously at it. Stoker absent mindedly stocks his plate.

DOYLE

Well, Sir Henry... why don't we get right to the business at hand.

The professional charm is quickly replaced by mutual wariness. Stoker is distracted, exerting great effort to pay attention. Collinson EXITS.

IRVING

Hmm, yes... well. Actually... I, I'm just unable to picture myself as this, this Sherlock Holmes fellow.

DOYLE

(stiffening)

Oh...?

IRVING

It's just... I've built my career on Shakespeare, the classics. It's been my policy to present only the finest possible entertainment to our patrons. But a play about a, a policeman?

Stoker winces, forcing himself to focus on the conversation.

DOYLE

(hotly)

A policeman! We're discussing the "Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," not a... not a south end bobby. If this is a way to avoid meeting my price—

STOKER

(interrupting)

You mustn't think that, Sir Arthur. We're still working out the finances. It's a bit dicey since you require more than the standard royalties.

DOYLE

It's been a bloody long while since I've accepted less.

IRVING

But I'm still not convinced your play is something I should undertake... especially for a long run.

Stoker can hardly believe Irving said it.

CONTINUED:

DOYLE

Well, then... if that's the way you—

Stoker's patience finally runs out.

STOKER

(interrupting)

Gentlemen! You'll pardon me, but with each of our meetings I've listened to virtually the same exchange. Yet both of you return for more discussion. In light of that, I assume we all want and need this arrangement, do we not?

Doyle and Irving eye each other tentatively, but don't deny it.

STOKER (CONT'D)

Very well, then. If we can meet here again tomorrow afternoon, I'll draw up an agreement I'm certain will satisfy all requirements.

Doyle and Irving are each relieved that the discussion has been saved, although Doyle is still silently fuming.

DOYLE

I'll look at any reasonable agreement.

IRVING

As will I.

STOKER

Two o'clock, then?

DOYLE

Done.

Stoker is relieved it's over. Irving begins to sink into a chair. Doyle begins to exit, but pauses in the doorway. Irving's on his feet again.

DOYLE (CONT'D)

(to Stoker)

You highly compensate for his... his being an actor!

Doyle EXITS, leaving Stoker and Irving alone in the room.

IRVING

Difficult man.

EXT ROYAL LYCEUM THEATER NIGHT

DOYLE crosses the street and enters a telegraph office.

INT TELEGRAPH OFFICE NIGHT

DOYLE grabs a form and pencil from the counter. He hastily fills out the form, then pushes it in front of the CLERK.

DOYLE
Telegram, please.

CLERK
(reading form)
To... Herbert Barwood.

DOYLE
My solicitor. Number twenty-three Coventry
Street.

(dictating)
Meeting with Irving tomorrow, two PM,
stop. Must conclude Holmes business soon
to cover losses from Westheath venture,
stop. Will advise, stop.

Doyle tosses a coin on the counter.

DOYLE (CONT'D)
Send that straight away, please.

CLERK
'Course, sir.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT STOKER'S OFFICE DAY

A wall clock reads 1:59. STOKER stands at a corner table rummaging through some papers. LOVEDAY ENTERS carrying a bundle of folded newspapers which he places on Stoker's desk.

LOVEDAY
The Lyceum advertisement stands out
especially well in the Gazette.

Stoker glances at the newspaper Loveday hands him.

STOKER
Ah, yes... very nice. Thank you.

CONTINUED:

LOVEDAY

Certainly.

Loveday EXITS. Stoker leafs through the newspaper. Stoker reacts to something he sees in the pages. Concern darkens his face as he sinks into his chair, his eyes staring at the print.

INT BEEFSTEAK ROOM DAY

DOYLE sits in a wing chair, fidgeting with his walking stick, but also enthusiastically partaking of the pastry tray on the table next to him. He consults his pocket watch. IRVING paces uncomfortably. COLLINSON lays out tea.

IRVING

A scene in act three... I'm sure. I had over a hundred performers on stage.

COLLINSON

Beg your pardon, sir. Corsican Brothers employed precisely seventy- four players.

Perplexed, Irving stares at Collinson. Doyle closes his watch.

IRVING

How does he do that?

COLLINSON

I saw Mr. Stoker's cast sheet. Always had a mind for numbers, sir.

DOYLE

Eleven minutes past the hour. Where the devil is he?

IRVING

This really isn't like Bram.

COLLINSON

Shall I go find him?

Irving seizes the opportunity to put some distance between himself and Doyle.

IRVING

No. I'll go see what's holding him up.
(to Doyle)

Excuse me.

Irving EXITS.

INT CORRIDOR DAY

Irving makes his way quickly down the corridor to Stoker's office. He pauses in the doorway, looking inside the office.

INT STOKER'S OFFICE IRVING'S POV DAY

STOKER leans over the newspaper spread across his desk while scribbling on a piece of notepaper. He blots the paper.

INT STOKER'S OFFICE DAY

Irving steps into the office.

IRVING
Bram... do you realize the time?

Startled, Stoker hastily turns over the newspaper. Irving notices. Stoker retrieves his hat from the rack.

IRVING (CONT'D)
Is something the matter? Sir Arthur and I have been waiting since well before two.

Stoker's blank look shows that he doesn't remember the meeting. He heads for the door, pushing by Irving.

STOKER
(anxiously)
I... I, Henry... I can't just now.

IRVING
(flustered)
You can't? Sir Arthur's...

Stoker EXITS hurriedly, still clutching his notes.

IRVING (CONT'D)
Stoker!

Dumbfounded, Irving stares after Stoker a moment, then glances down at the open newspaper on the desk. Curious, he turns the page back to where it was.

A story is marked by Stoker's pen. It reads: "THE WHITBY HORROR... another woman found dead. We have just received word that a woman, missed two nights ago, was only discovered late in the morning under a furze bush near Chutham Street... "

CONTINUED:

Irving slams his hand down impatiently on the desk, then hurries out of the office.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT CHEYNE WALK DAY

It is late afternoon as a hansom cab makes its way down the fashionable London street.

DOYLE (O.S.)
(angrily)
In all my career, I've simply never experienced anyone leaving me high-and-dry... waiting. Never!

INT CAB DAY

DOYLE seethes, his knuckles squeezed white, clamped over the head of his walking stick. IRVING shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

IRVING
I wasn't pleased with his behavior either.
I simply have no explanation.

DOYLE
I thought I made it clear to Stoker... there's little value in our agreement unless we do it now!

IRVING
An expeditious schedule is important to me, as well... but chasing the man down to his home. I'd resent it... if you did it to me.

EXT CHEYNE WALK DAY

The cab stops in front of Number 27. DOYLE and IRVING pay the DRIVER, then hurry up the steps and ring the bell. TILLY, a young maid, opens the door.

IRVING
Good afternoon, Tilly. Mr. Stoker, please.

TILLY
Oh, hello Sir Henry. I'm sorry, sir.
But he's not at home just now.

CONTINUED:

DOYLE

And when will he return?

TILLY

I'm not really sure, sir. He stopped in long enough to tell me to prepare a bag for him... then left straight away.

IRVING

(surprised)

He's traveling?

Doyle is intrigued by Irving's surprise.

TILLY

I'm sure I don't know, sir.

DOYLE

We might as well be off.

(to Tilly)

Thank you.

TILLY

Good day, gentlemen.

The door closes behind them as Doyle and Irving descend the steps. They walk thoughtfully up the street.

DOYLE

You'd expect he'd let you know if he were going away... in case of some emergency at the theater, or some such business.

IRVING

He takes a bit of time away now and then... but his leaving London... I had no idea.

doyle I wonder where he plans to go.

Doyle and Irving give the matter some thought.

IRVING (CONT'D)

In his office this afternoon... He'd been looking at the Gazette. Marked an article about Whitby. You think he has interests there?

DOYLE

What was the article about?

IRVING

Something about a woman... found murdered or some such rot.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

IRVING (CONT'D)
(horrified)

Dear heaven! You don't think he's involved
in anything like that? It could ruin us!

Doyle's irritation is replaced by professional curiosity. He is even excited by the possibility.

DOYLE

A rather intriguing thought. I want to
see that Gazette article.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT ROYAL LYCEUM THEATER NIGHT

THEATER-GOERS file out of the theater, climb into waiting coaches and cabs.

EXT ALLEY NIGHT

A cab stops in the mouth of the alley. STOKER climbs out, turns to the DRIVER.

STOKER

Wait, please. I shan't be long.

Stoker hurries down the alley.

INT STAGE DOOR AREA NIGHT

STOKER enters through the stage door and hurries past LOVEDAY. Unnoticed by Stoker, Loveday follows after him.

INT STOKERS OFFICE NIGHT

Stoker enters, hastily gathers some papers together and stuffs them into valise.

INT IRVING'S DRESSING ROOM NIGHT

IRVING is already in street clothes, seated at his dressing table. He wipes away traces of make-up, looking critically at his reflection in the mirror. COLLINSON hangs up costumes as DOYLE enters.

CONTINUED:

DOYLE

Bloody irritating... Stoker not showing up tonight. Didn't even bother to send word.

IRVING

Closing night of the season, too. Loveday had to manage the receipts.

DOYLE

We're capable men. Our differences aside... if we have to sit down without Stoker and come to an agreement, then let's get on with it!

IRVING

I depend on Bram to manage all my business affairs... have for years. I wouldn't know where to begin.

COLLINSON

Besides, sir, you'll recall... Mr. Stoker's signature's required on all theater documents... and checks.

IRVING

Yes. We arranged that as a precaution several years...

Loveday quickly enters. Collinson is about to help Irving into his coat.

LOVEDAY

Mr. Stoker, sir. Just arrived. I told him you wanted a word... he didn't seem to hear me.

Irving follows Doyle hurriedly out of the room. Collinson, still holding Irving's coat, rushes to catch up. Loveday watches in confusion a moment, then exits in the opposite direction.

INT STOKERS OFFICE NIGHT

Doyle, Irving and Collinson suddenly appear in the doorway. The office is empty. They quickly turn back towards the wings.

INT BACKSTAGE NIGHT

Doyle, Irving and Collinson hurry past the remaining STAGE HANDS who are shutting down the theater for the evening. Doyle suddenly sees something OS and reacts.

CONTINUED:

He quickly stops Irving and Collinson, then motions them behind the nearest stage draperies. Irving begins to object but Doyle motions for silence, then looks out from behind the drapery. Irving follows his gaze.

INT STAGE DOOR AREA IRVING'S POV NIGHT

STOKER, gripping his bag, stands very close to CLARISE. She is in her early thirties, fair and very attractive. Too far away to be heard, he is speaking intently to her. Stoker withdraws an envelope from his pocket and hands it to Clarise.

INT BACKSTAGE NIGHT

Irving is concerned, Doyle more curious than ever.

IRVING
(whispering)
So... that's it, then.

DOYLE
(whispering)
You don't know her?

Irving shakes his head, his irritation beginning to show.

IRVING
I'll put a stop to this, right now!

Irving starts towards Stoker OS but Doyle stops him.

DOYLE
Not yet.

IRVING
This kind of thing could cause irreparable harm. The man's married!

DOYLE
Your assumptions aren't based on fact. Right now, we've more to gain from watching.

INT STAGE DOOR AREA DOYLE'S POV NIGHT

Stoker suddenly opens the stage door for Clarise and they both exit, the door swinging shut behind them.

INT BACK STAGE NIGHT

Doyle hurries for the stage door. Irving and Collinson follow.

IRVING

What are you doing? Where are you going?

DOYLE

I rather fancy knowing where they're off too. I'll look you up tomorrow.

IRVING

You're going to follow them? What on earth for?

DOYLE

This is all shaping into something quite fascinating. Secret trips... another woman. Possibly a story in it.

Irving is horrified. They reach the stage door.

IRVING

You couldn't do such a thing. The scandal... everyone would know who you were writing about. I forbid you to go!

Doyle is mildly amused at Irving's powerless command, but anxious to be on his way.

DOYLE

You worry too much about reputation, Sir Henry. And I am going.

IRVING

And you worry too little about it! If you refuse to stay out of this, then I'm going with you... as much as I detest the idea.

DOYLE

(alarmed)

What! No! Why should you?

Collinson quickly helps Irving into his coat.

IRVING

How else can I possibly hope to protect my interests? I'll not have your pulp stories sully my name... nor my theater. I'm going!

CONTINUED:

The remark angers Doyle but he realizes his quarry is getting away.

DOYLE

There's no time to argue. Alright then...
for now, at least. But please do as I
instruct.

Doyle and Irving cautiously slip outside.

EXT ROYAL LYCEUM SIDE ENTRANCE NIGHT

Doyle and Irving conceal themselves behind a set flat up against the alley wall. Doyle looks out from behind the flats.

EXT ALLEY DOYLE'S POV NIGHT

STOKER and CLARISE stand in the fog beside Stoker's cab at the mouth of the alley. A second cab pulls up beside them. Stoker helps Clarise into the second cab, speaks briefly to the DRIVER. The cab pulls away. Stoker climbs into his cab and it departs.

EXT ALLEY NIGHT

Doyle's excitement is obvious as he cautiously leads a reluctant Irving to the mouth of the alley. Doyle waves over a cab. The DRIVER opens the door and Doyle ushers Irving inside.

DOYLE

(to Irving)

I say we stay with Stoker.

(to Driver)

Keep that cab in sight... but stay well
back. If we're not seen and you stay
with him there's a sovereign in it for
you.

Doyle climbs in the cab and it pulls away.