

"DEAD WATER"

A short screenplay

by

Steven JC Johnson

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FADE IN:

EXT. RIVER THAMES - LONDON - DAY

A 27-foot, white cabin cruiser is chugging slowly down the Thames. On either side, the city is in flames, with huge, billowing clouds of smoke rising up from a decimated skyline. No other operational boats can be seen.

EXT. CABIN CRUISER - WHEELHOUSE - DAY

A man and woman are in the wheelhouse, staring at the devastation. The man is piloting the boat. They are BILL and SIAN TALBOT, husband and wife.

BILL

Christ, Sian. Look at it.

SIAN

It's horrible.

A helicopter THUNDERS overhead and they instinctively duck.

BILL

Bloody hell! That was low.

SIAN

It's heading for the City Airport.
Look.

Sian points towards where the helicopter is heading, about two miles away to the left of the dome of the O2 Arena, which they are sailing by. Several more choppers are circling the area and we can make out several landed aeroplanes, most of them military.

BILL

I think that's where we should go, too.
It looks like the authorities have
taken over the airport.

Another helicopter flies over them and begins hovering close to the airport, over the river. Sian looks around as a pair of Tornado jets streaks across the sky. Behind them, a series of explosions has them ducking again.

They look around and see that the explosion was far behind, at least two miles. Over the rooftops, fire and smoke lick towards the sky and we hear the sound of metal and concrete RENDING and COLLAPSING.

BILL

I think they're taking out the bridges.
Maybe the disease hasn't got south of
the river, yet.

Sian doesn't reply. She is watching the helicopter that is hovering high over the river. It wobbles, erratically, as though the pilot is struggling with the controls. Suddenly, a door slides open and a body falls out. Sian's hands go to her mouth.

SIAN

Bill! A man just fell out of the
helicopter!

Bill looks to where she is pointing. He watches as the figure crashes to the ground, behind some industrial buildings, close to the riverside.

BILL

Bloody hell!

Suddenly, a missile STREAKS across the sky and the helicopter explodes. Fire and debris rain down onto the ground and the river. A huge chunk of burning metal strikes the water close to the boat, sending spray over Bill and Sian.

Bill tries to steer the boat away from the falling debris. Sian is screaming.

As soon as it began, the rain of debris ends and two fighter jets FLASH overhead.

SIAN

Bill, they blew up their own
helicopter. Did you see that? Bill?

BILL

(shouting)

Yes, Sian! Of course I saw it. We're
nearly at the Thames Barrier. Then
we'll be away from all this.

Sian sits down on one of the wheelhouse's cushioned seats and begins sobbing, her head buried in her hands and her shoulders wracking. Bill looks at her with genuine emotion.

BILL

Look, why don't you go below and fix us
both a drink. Something stiff.

Sian sniffs and quietly steps down into the main cabin. Bill continues steering the boat along the river.

The O2 Arena has gone by now and the Thames Barrier is slowly becoming visible around one of the many, meandering bends of the English capital's river.

In the distance, Bill sees a jetty protruding out into the river. On it are people, jumping around and waving, seemingly at him. Sian re-emerges, with two tumblers of scotch. She sees the people.

SIAN

What are they doing over there?

BILL

I don't know, love. I think they're at the Thames Barrier Park.

As they slowly draw closer, we can begin to hear them screaming and shouting, still waving at the tiny boat, all alone on the river.

SIAN

We can't get them all on board, if that's what they want.

Bill doesn't respond. He steers the boat, so that they will pass close to the jetty. Another helicopter flies overhead, heading for the City Airport. Somewhere, gunfire CRACKLES.

BILL

Why don't they just go to the airport?
I mean, it's right there.

By now, we can see that there are dozens of people lining the wooden jetty. Behind them, an apartment block reflects the sun from its whitewashed walls.

SIAN

(scared)

Don't stop for them, Bill. You can't help them all.

The cries are more clear now and we can hear "Help us!" and "Don't go!" coming from the jetty. A movement catches Bill's eye and he looks towards the Barrier, now looming large about 300 yards beyond the pontoon.

An Apache helicopter appears over the Barrier and begins hovering between it and the jetty, its downwash frothing the river beneath it.

BILL
Hell's bells!

PILOT
(O.S. via helicopter PA)
This is a military quarantine zone.
Disperse immediately or you will be
fired upon. There will be no warning
shots.

Bill turns the wheel of the cruiser hard right and increases power. The boat lurches to one side and angles away from the jetty, where people are now screaming at the chopper.

Some people run from the jetty back onto land, but several dive into the water and begin swimming towards the cabin cruiser.

The jetty erupts and bodies fly everywhere as the Apache opens fire with its 30mm cannon. People are ripped open and blood and entrails splash into the water, staining it crimson.

Sian begins screaming again, throwing herself to the deck of the wheelhouse, and Bill struggles with the wheel. Several of the shells hit the forward deck of the boat, sending splinters of wood and fibreglass flying all around.

BILL
Shit!

Then all is quiet, except for the rhythmic thump of the chopper's rotors and the wheezing coughs of the cabin cruiser's engine.

The Apache turns and heads away from them, flying towards the nearby airport. Bill looks at the remains of the jetty and the sickening bloom of red that is expanding outwards into the river.

BILL
Holy crap! Sian, are you alright?
Sian?!

He looks round and sees his wife sobbing again on the floor. He turns and picks her up, setting her down on the seat.

BILL

It's going to be okay. They weren't shooting at us.

A NOISE towards the rear of the boat has him looking away from her. We see a man struggling to climb on board. Bill leaps to his feet.

BILL

Oi! You can't come on here!

The MAN, in his late twenties, with short, blond hair and wearing jeans and a t-shirt, but no shoes, flops over the railing and gasps for breath.

MAN

(panting)

Fuckin' 'ell, mate. You gotta be kiddin' right?

Another hand appears, grasping at the metal rail. It is female.

WOMAN

(feebly)

Help. Please.

Bill looks back to Sian and then at the man. He shakes his head and grabs the WOMAN's hand. He pulls her on board and we see that she is young, early twenties, with long, red hair. She is wearing a white, short-sleeved blouse and ripped jeans. She has a nasty cut on her forearm.

Bill helps her sit down and then sinks to his knees, staring at the two newcomers.

BILL

Look. I know what's going on here, but you really can't stay. We've no room, you see.

MAN

Fuck off! There's plenty of room. (he glances at the woman) You okay, sweetheart?

She nods, clutching her arm. Bill gets up and grabs a first aid kit from the wheelhouse. Sian is staring off into the distance, seemingly ignoring their new passengers. The boat chugs through the Thames Barrier, its high sides dwarfing them as they traverse.

BILL

Let me look at that cut.

He holds her arm and winces at the nasty wound. It is a deep, crescent-shaped gash and there is the hint of bone peeping through the blood and shredded flesh.

Bill quickly wraps a bandage around the wound and ties it off.

WOMAN

Thanks. I'm Steph.

BILL

No problem, Steph. I'm Bill and that's my wife, Sian.

He looks to the man.

MAN

(sighing)

Shane. (pause) Look, mate, I'm sorry about the verbals, but I'm shit-scared, you know. Jesus, did you see what fuckin' happened back there?

BILL

Why were you all on that dock? The airport's right by it.

STEPH

They wouldn't let us in. There's tanks and stuff all around it. And soldiers. They wouldn't let any of us in. So some of us tried the river, hoping to find a boat. Then suddenly they were everywhere.

BILL

Who?

SHANE

The fuckin' zombies, man! Infected. Whatever they're callin' 'em on the news. They're all over the place.

BILL

Zombies? (he looks around at the burning skyline) Is that what all this is about?

Shane looks at him with disbelief.

SHANE

Where the frig have you been? Yes, fuckin' zombies!

BILL

We haven't had the telly or radio on. We only arrived in London yesterday and then all hell broke loose. We daren't moor because of all the fires. And we're running low on food and water now. (he looks around again, shaking his head) Zombies. How?

STEPH

Nobody seems to know. The news people said it was a virus or something. A new disease. But it spreads so quickly.

SHANE

Yeah. One bite and that's it. So they say, anyway. You die and then you come back like a fuckin' mentalist. All screamin' and clawin'. (he looks back towards land) My old mum got bit. I just ran. I fuckin' ran like a little kid. (his eyes fill with tears) I want my mum back.

He begins sobbing and Bill looks to Steph's arm.

BILL

What happened to your arm? Was it the helicopter?

Steph doesn't reply. Bill stands and steps back into the wheelhouse.

BILL

Were you bitten, Steph?

Shane stops crying and looks to the girl. He scrambles away from her to the opposite side of the boat.

SHANE

Fuckin' 'ell, girl. Are you bit?

STEPH

(quietly, scared)

It was all so fast. We were running for the river when this guy jumped out at me. I screamed and my friend, Tanya, came back to help me. This guy was all wrong. His eyes were, I don't know, crazy. He bit me and then Tanya hit him with her bag. Then he jumped on her and started screaming and scratching at her. She was punching and kicking and then she went quiet. I ran away. I left her and she saved me.

Steph begins weeping.

SHANE

You're bit. You'll change. You'll kill us all.

He looks to Bill, terror in his eyes.

BILL

I don't know what to do. Sian, what do we do?

Sian ignores him, stands and steps down into the main cabin.

STEPH

I've not changed. I'm still me. I promise I won't change.

SHANE

You don't know that!

Sian reappears from the main cabin and stands in front of Steph.

SIAN

(smiling)

Stand up, love. Come on. Let me see you.

Steph stands and looks into Sian's eyes. Sian brushes strands of red hair from the young woman's face. Then there is a flash of metal and Sian sinks a kitchen knife deep into Steph's chest. Steph gasps and staggers backwards, tripping over the rail and falling into the river.

SIAN
(screaming)
Get off my boat!

Sian turns to Shane, the bloody knife ready.

BILL
Sian! For Christ's sake! SIAN!

Shane tries to scramble away, but the boat is tiny. He makes a lunge for the cabin, but she flashes the knife at him, an evil smile on her face.

SIAN
Get off my fucking boat now, you little piece of shit!

Shane leaps over the rail and splashes into the water. Bill looks back and sees Shane bobbing in the boat's wake. Steph's body is floating in a puddle of blood a little farther away.

SHANE
(shouting)
You're fuckin' mental! You're fuckin' worse than the fuckin' zombies!

Bill stares at his wife, terrified and with disbelief. Sian stares at him for several seconds, then goes back into the cabin.

SIAN
I'm going to put on the television and see what's going on.

Bill cannot respond. He simply turns to the wheel and continues steering the cabin cruiser away from London.

We PULL BACK and watch as the boat continues its lonely course towards the sea, London burning far behind.

FADE OUT.

THE END

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