

MERCY REEF

by

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Studio draft
February 11, 2006

"Mercy Reef"

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

CAMERA SPEEDS through an endless odyssey of diamond-blue water. In a blur, a POD OF FIVE DOLPHINS torpedoes into view. They crisscross, dart and spin in a breakneck game of tag. CAMERA FOLLOWS as they breach the surface and begin leaping across the mirror-calm ocean. TILT UP to

A SEAPLANE

as it shoots overhead. Its red wings shimmer against the cloudless turquoise sky.

TITLE CARD ON SCREEN: BERMUDA TRIANGLE, 120 MILES OFF KEY WEST, FLORIDA. 10 YEARS AGO.

EXT. SEAPLANE - DAY

"TEMPEST KEY MARINE INSTITUTE" is stenciled on its side. The CAMERA SWEEPS OVER the wing and ZEROES in on a window where 11-year-old ARTHUR CURRY, aka A.C., stares out.

INT. SEAPLANE - DAY

A.C. is a beach rat with an unruly mop of sun-bleached hair, salt-faded tank top and shorts. He's sitting in the back along with an assortment of cages and crates.

ATLANNA (O.S.)

Keep reading, Arthur.

A.C. looks at his mother, ATLANNA CURRY, who is smiling from the pilot's seat. She is an ethereal beauty who exudes maternal warmth. Light glints off the unusual sea horse necklace that dangles from her long, suntanned neck. A.C. reluctantly peers down at the battered copy of The Once and Future King that is cracked open on his lap.

A.C.

(reading)

"The best thing for being sad",
replied Merlin, "is to learn
something. That's the only thing
that never fails."

(looking up from book)

Can I please have my Gameboy now?

ATLANNA

Five more minutes isn't going to
kill you.

A.C.

Who cares about some make-believe
king and his stupid wizard?

ATLANNA

All myths and legends are rooted in
truth. The trick is to find the
parallels in your own life.

A.C.

I don't see King Arthur snorkeling
or boogie-boarding and I don't plan
on ruling anything when I grow up.

(thinking)

Unless it's Australia, they've got
killer waves down there.

ATLANNA

You never know what destiny has in
store for you.

The RADIO CRACKLES to life.

TOM (V.O.)

(over radio)

Tempest Key Coast Guard Station to
Turtle 1. You out there, Atlanna?

Atlanna smiles as she snatches the receiver.

ATLANNA

(into radio)

Flying high and free. All the
hatcheries were undisturbed.

(beat)

You miss me?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. TEMPEST KEY COAST GUARD STATION - DAY

TOM CURRY cracks a wide grin. He's square-jawed All
American, with a face that is as handsome as it is honest.

TOM

More than I can say on an open
frequency. How did your new
research assistant pan out?

ATLANNA

He's got something to tell you.

Atlanna holds up the receiver. A.C. runs up and takes it.

A.C.

Dad, I held my breath underwater
for almost five minutes!

TOM
That's incredible, kiddo. I swear
you must be part fish.

Grinning proudly, A.C. hands the radio back to Atlanna.

ATLANNA
We're less than an hour away. You
want to grab a pizza and meet us?

But as she releases the button, all she hears is STATIC.

TOM
Atlanna, sweetheart, I lost you.
(beat)
Atlanna?

END INTERCUT.

INT. SEAPLANE

A.C. rests his arm on Atlanna's shoulder as she futilely
talks into the radio.

ATLANNA
Tom? Tom, can you read me?

Suddenly, a deafening clap of THUNDER booms. A.C. and
Atlanna look out the windshield in surprise -- they're flying
through the middle of a storm that has come out of nowhere.
Ribbons of lightning fissure through the ominous clouds.

PUSH IN ON ATLANNA: Her face is overcome with knowing dread.

ATLANNA
Arthur, buckle up!

A.C. nods, but as he turns back, the craft is hit by a bolt
of blinding-white lightning. A.C. crashes to the floor.
Atlanna fights for control as all the dials go haywire and
the plane is violently buffeted.

INT. TEMPEST KEY COAST GUARD STATION - DAY

Tom stares at the radio, perplexed. Tries again.

TOM
(into radio)
Turtle 1, do you read me, over?

But all he hears is the lonely CACKLE OF STATIC. He crosses
to the Radarman, ED, manning the Doppler.

TOM
Hey, Ed, you got a storm brewing
out there?

Ed looks down at the radar screen.

CLOSE ON RADAR SCREEN: Not a blip in sight.

ED
Blue skies for 500 miles.

OFF Tom's concern...

EXT. STORM - DAY

WIND and RAIN HAMMER the plane. CAMERA SPEEDS through the maelstrom, MELTS through the windshield...

INT. PLANE - DAY

... and into an ECU of Atlanna. As her eyes grow wide...

REVERSE TO REVEAL: A GIANT BLACK WATER SPOUT twisting out of the churning sea directly in front of the plane.

Frantic, A.C. crawls into his seat and his sweaty fingers fumble with his seat belt.

ATLANNA
Hold on!

A.C. CLICKS his buckle just as she violently jerks the wheel.

EXT. STORM - DAY

The seaplane safely banks away from the spout and right into the path of a dozen more sea-twisters.

INT. PLANE - DAY

The NOISE is deafening. The whole plane shakes. A.C. grips his seat white-knuckle tight. Atlanna desperately weaves through the deadly obstacle course until the dials on the instrument panel suddenly die.

EXT. STORM - DAY

Illuminated by strobing lightning, the crippled aircraft hangs suspended, then drops like a stone, headed straight for a massive whirlpool that churns below.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Atlanna fights all the way, but there's nothing she can do. She SCREAMS A.C. a warning...

ATLANNA
GET READY!

A heartbeat later, the plane nosedives into the sea and a geyser of water EXPLODES through the windshield.

EXT. WHIRLPOOL - UNDERWATER - DAY

The plane is tossed like a dime in a blender.

INT. PLANE - DAY

The cabin lies at an angle and is flooding fast. Atlanna unbuckles and begins swimming over to A.C., who is still strapped to his seat. But as Atlanna reaches out to him, there's a hideous GROAN and the craft tilts at 75 degrees.

A.C.
Mom! Help me!

As the water rises up her body, tears fill her ice-blue eyes.

ATLANNA
I have so much to tell you.

She pulls off her sea horse necklace as the water sweeps past her chin. With her last seconds of breath...

ATLANNA
Do good with your life. I love
you, Orin.

With that, the water rushes up over her mouth, bitterly silencing her. She hangs the sea horse necklace around his neck. CAMERA PUSHES IN as she senses something and turns.

ATLANNA POV: An outline of a SHADOWY CREATURE dart-swims past the shattered windshield.

Atlanna swings back to A.C. with a look of steely determination. With superhuman strength, she SNAPS his seat belt strap. As he stares at her in shock, a

HIDEOUS TALONED HAND

rips through the side of the plane and makes a grab for A.C. Atlanna sweeps A.C. towards the emergency exit, slams down on the lever. As the door cartwheels away, Atlanna takes a last look at him, then pushes him into the swirling whirlpool.

A.C.

turns back as he tumbles, catches the briefest glimpse of Atlanna battling a FIERCE MERMAID-LIKE CREATURE through the open door. The creature has vicious shark-tooth-like talons and a powerful scaled tail. As the plane is sucked into the vortex and A.C. tumble-spins into the abyss:

EXT. WATCHTOWER - TEMPEST KEY COAST GUARD STATION - DUSK

Tom looks out at the cloudless horizon as the oversized sun sinks into the sea. OFF his troubled face...

EXT. OCEAN - DAY/NIGHT

TIME-LAPSE SHOT: As the giant sun sets, a giant moon rises.

EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

Shafts of platinum moonlight illuminate A.C. His tank top has been ripped off and he's lifelessly floating face down. The sea horse necklace still dangles around his neck.

A DARK SHAPE

slowly looms up from the depths and begins lifting him.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

The sky is soaked with stars. CRANE DOWN to the glass-smooth water as A.C. breaks the surface, splayed on a shape that is studded with barnacles. His eyes snap open and he gulps his first breath of air. As he sits up and peers around in shock, CAMERA DROPS down the side of the black shape until an enormous, blinking eye FILLS THE FRAME. *A.C. is on the back of a whale.*

DOLPHINS

suddenly leap out of the water and begin jumping and tail-dancing around the whale. Sea turtles and shoals of sparkling fish join the celebration while a flotilla of whales begins a chorus of MOURNFUL SONG. CAMERA PUSHES IN as

A.C.

rises to his feet and takes in the magical pageant. As the whale's spout gushes, CAMERA CRANES UP through the spray TO REVEAL the scope of this awe-inspiring spectacle.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

The dawn sky is stacked with giant amethyst-colored clouds. CAMERA CRANES DOWN TO REVEAL a deserted wooden pier that is lined with sleepy souvenir shops and restaurants.

TITLE CARD ON SCREEN: TEMPEST KEY, FLORIDA. THIS MORNING.

CAMERA DESCENDS PAST some stairs until it FINDS a rusty 48-foot dive boat. It's moored at the side of the pier and bobs in the golden water. This is the "Quint".

INT. CABIN - "QUINT" - DAY

A.C. is sprawled in the sheets, naked and asleep. He's 21 now and beneath his confident, suntanned exterior beats the heart of a wounded soul. He groggily cracks open an eye and watches his beautiful companion, CASSIE, pull on her jeans.

A.C.

You bailing before breakfast? I make a killer bowl of Cheerios.

Cassie looks over, smiles. The interior is a mess of diving equipment, fast-food wrappers and empty water bottles.

CASSIE

Sounds tempting, but some of us actually have to work for a living.

A.C.

That's the beauty of being self-employed.

(takes her hand)

Come back to bed.

CASSIE

Much as I enjoy testing the buoyancy of this boat, I've really got to go.

A.C.

You're a barista at Starbucks, nobody's going to die if you're fifteen minutes late.

CASSIE

You're never going to grow up, are you, A.C.?

A.C.

Not if I can help it.

She smiles and leans in for one last kiss. As she exits, A.C. takes a deep slug from a water bottle and pulls on a pair of ivy-green boxer shorts.

He gets out of bed, causing a bra to tumble to the floor. He picks it up, doesn't turn when he hears FOOTSTEPS behind him.

A.C.
Figured you'd be back for this.

He holds up the bra as he spins and finds TEMPEST KEY SHERIFF RAY HAMMOND and a DEPUTY standing at the door to the deck.

SHERIFF
(re: bra)
We could go with that or just stick with the cuffs.

A.C. follows them out onto...

EXT. DECK - QUINT - DAY

A.C.
What did I do this time, Sheriff?

SHERIFF
Come on, A.C., it's too early in the morning to play games.

A.C.
You've got the wrong man.

SHERIFF
That so? How do explain this Kodak moment?

He hands A.C. a 4x6 print. A.C. stares at it, busted.

CLOSE ON PRINT: It's a grainy, time-coded, security-cam image of A.C. patting the head of a dolphin.

DEPUTY
We pulled it off a security camera at "Neptuneworld".

A.C.
Those dolphins were miserable. I was just doing the right thing.

The Sheriff nods to the Deputy, who spins A.C. around.

DEPUTY
Yeah, the world's full of misunderstood heroes.

OFF A.C. as the Deputy cuffs him...

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

HELICOPTER SHOT FLYING LOW AND FAST over a vast expanse of sparkling sapphire water, SKIMS over atolls of shocking white sand and SPEEDS across an aquamarine reef until it finds

A TEMPEST KEY COAST GUARD CLIPPER.

TITLE CARD ON SCREEN: MERCY REEF, 25 MILES OFF TEMPEST KEY.

EXT. DECK - COAST GUARD CLIPPER - DAY

A FEMALE WATCH OFFICER is scanning the horizon with binoculars. She sees something and CLICKS on her radio.

FEMALE WATCH OFFICER
(into radio)
Sir, we've got a floater.

CRANE DOWN OVER THE BOW to reveal a NAKED YOUNG MAN clinging to a piece of driftwood. We'll call him JOHN DOE.

EXT. DECK - COAST GUARD CLIPPER - DAY

A penlight FLARES THE LENS. As it is lowered, Tom is REVEALED. His face has been hardened by time and grief. He's examining the unconscious John Doe, who has a military-style crewcut. Tom turns to a PETTY OFFICER.

TOM
He's hypothermic and his pupils aren't responding. Notify base, I want a chopper out here.

When he turns back to John Doe, something catches his eye -- it's a sea horse necklace -- exactly like A.C.'s. As Tom reaches for it, John Doe's hand suddenly grips his wrist. Tom looks into the man's terrified face.

JOHN DOE
They're coming. I must warn Orin.

TOM
Easy, buddy. You're safe now. What's your name?

Weak, John Doe's eyes flutter closed. He releases Tom's arm and slumps unconscious. Tom checks the guy's pulse, calls to the Petty Officer.

TOM
Take his picture, e-mail it to the local PDs and papers. I want an ID on this guy.
(as he stands)
And throw another blanket on him. Nobody dies on my watch.

The CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER approaches Tom.

WARRANT OFFICER
 Captain, Tempest Key Sheriff just radioed. Wanted to give you the head's up -- A.C.'s in trouble again.

Tom nods stoically, waits until the Warrant Officer is back inside, then steps to the railing.

MYSTERIOUS UNDERWATER POV: Looking up at Tom staring out to sea, his face etched with frustration and anger. OFF this...

SMASH CUT TO:

A GAVEL -- SLAMMING onto the bench of JUDGE MORTON WEISINGER, an energetic 50 year old. He is...

INT. COURTROOM - TEMPEST KEY - DAY

Plantation fans BUZZ. Tom sits behind A.C., who is alone at the defendant's table. As the FEMALE ASSISTANT D.A. makes her case, A.C. pours himself a glass of water. Gulps it.

ASSISTANT D.A.
 Your Honor, the defendant is charged with assault, breaking and entering, and animal endangerment.

A.C.
 Endangerment? I did those dolphins a favor. I've seen port-a-potties that are cleaner than "Neptuneworld".

JUDGE WEISINGER
 Mr. Curry, don't speak until I address you. Comprende?

A.C. nods, empties the rest of the jug into his glass.

ASSISTANT D.A.
 At approximately 10:00 p.m. last night, Mr. Curry broke into "Neptuneworld" and released five dolphins into the ocean.

The Assistant D.A hands the Judge the security photos.

A.C.
 Hey, any 10 year old with a PC could have altered those photos?

Judge Weisinger BANGS his gavel again. A.C. nods his apology. The Assistant D.A. smugly sits.

JUDGE WEISINGER

Mr. Curry, now it's your turn. How do you plead?

A.C. finishes his glass of water, confidently stands.

A.C.

Not guilty.

He looks at the prosecution table, sees the water jug.

A.C.

Are you going to drink that?

The Judge rolls his eyes as A.C. pours himself another glass.

JUDGE WEISINGER

I see you've decided to wave counsel.

A.C.

I know how this works, you give me a month or two of community service and we call it a day.

JUDGE WEISINGER

Maybe my predecessor looked the other way, but that's not going to happen in my courtroom.

As the Judge holds up a thick file and SLAPS it onto his bench, Tom sinks back in his seat, knows what's coming.

JUDGE WEISINGER

I pulled your record. Very colorful. How about I hit the highlights? January 2004, you somehow boarded a cruise ship at sea and ran up a \$1,000 bar bill.

A.C.

A couple were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. I made a toast, bought everybody a round. You know what they charge for drinks on those floating hotels? Now that's a crime.

JUDGE WEISINGER

June 2005, you trespassed on Tempest Key Naval Air Base, crashed a Top Gun graduation party, and started a brawl.

A.C.
Technically I was invited. The girl just didn't tell her boyfriend. As for the fight, the squids started it, I finished it.

JUDGE WEISINGER
Now my personal favorite. You and a group of sorority girls from Boston College held a nude water-polo match in the pool at the Moonshadow Senior Citizens' center.

A.C. cracks a grin, it's clearly his favorite too.

A.C.
I was supposed to take the girls diving, but it rained all week. I figured Spring Break shouldn't be a total bust.

JUDGE WEISINGER
You obviously don't understand the seriousness of these charges.
(to BAILIFF)
I'm releasing the defendant to his father.
(to Tom)
Have him back in this courtroom 9:00 a.m. Friday for a pretrial hearing. I suggest you bring a lawyer.

TOM
He'll be here, Your Honor.

As A.C. stands...

JUDGE WEISINGER
Mr. Curry, there comes a time in every man's life when he must decide what path he's going to take. Right now your path's leading to a jail cell.

As A.C. and Tom exit, Tom sees an old man sitting in the back. This is McCaffery. It's difficult to say how old he is. His face has been leathered by the elements and his eyes are piercingly intense. OFF Tom and McCaffery's enigmatic exchange of glances...

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A SIGN -- "WELCOME TO TEMPEST KEY, FLORIDA, POP. 8,016. SUNSETS WERE INVENTED HERE!" PAN TO REVEAL the sign is proudly planted outside...

EXT. TEMPEST KEY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Tom and A.C. head down the steps of this rustic gothic relic.

TOM

I would ask what you were thinking,
but as usual you weren't.

A.C. doesn't meet his gaze, begins walking down the beachfront sidewalk of this funky seaside town. The street is crammed with pastel-colored cafes and antique shops.

A.C.

You know what yesterday was.

Tom fights to keep his cool as they walk and talk.

TOM

Don't you dare use your mother's death to justify your behavior. I miss her too, but you don't see me out there committing crimes.

A.C.

She's missing, they never found her body.

TOM

A.C., how many times are we going to do this dance?

A.C.

I know what all the shrinks and grief counsellors said, but this isn't in my head.

TOM

Kiddo, you were 11 years old. I don't discount your trauma, but sea creatures and storms that never appeared on radar -- you've got to let it go.

A.C.

Dad, I went from holding my breath for five minutes to breathing underwater. I can swim faster than a cigarette boat at full throttle.
(holding up water bottle)
If I drink any more of these, I can start my own recycling company.
How do you explain any of this?

TOM

I can't.

A.C. stops, faces his father.

A.C.
I think Mom knew the answer.

TOM
Well, if she did, she didn't share
it with me.

A.C.
She said she had so much to tell
me.

TOM
Didn't she also say, "Do good with
your life." I don't see you
fixated on that.

A.C.
You're still mad I gave up that
swimming scholarship to Stanford.

TOM
It beats teaching tourists how to
dive. You should be training for
the Olympics right now, not
worrying about being incarcerated.

A.C.
I wish there were a Wheaties box in
my future, but there isn't.

TOM
No matter where your powers came
from, I'm sure they're meant for
more than showing off and getting
laid. You're not a teenager
anymore, I can't call in favors and
make these charges go away.

His words hit A.C. hard.

A.C.
Look, I messed up. I'm sorry.

TOM
Is this the part where I'm supposed
to give you a hug and tell you
everything is going to be okay?

A.C. looks away, busted.

TOM
After a while, the words don't mean
anything, A.C. If you're really
sorry, pull your life together.

As Tom heads away, A.C. CRUSHES his empty water bottle in
frustration, then strides into the street. SCREEEEECH!

A '67 T-Bird convertible SMOKES to a stop an inch from hitting him. A.C. glares at the female driver, who glares back.

THIS IS RACHEL STARLING.

She's a 22-year-old Cuban beauty with raven hair and a laser-sharp mind. If you look long enough, you'll find something haunted about her. As he heads away and Rachel ROARS off...

CUT TO:

EXT. "THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA" - DAY

The restaurant has a corrugated tin roof, is open on three sides and is painted in wild Tahitian colors. CAMERA FINDS A.C. cautiously creeping past the umbrella-shaded tables. He passes a chalkboard, "QUINT DIVE CHARTERS. BOOK INSIDE!", has almost reached the stairs when a take-no-prisoners WOMAN blocks his way. This is EVA. She's 21 with a body to die for, and is squeezed into cut-off shorts and bikini top.

EVA

Two charters, three cases of beer,
four-hour tour, five rich doctors,
10:00 a.m. *this* morning. You swore
that you and the "Quint" would be
gassed up and ready by 9:45.

A.C. winces as he remembers.

A.C.

Had a serious case of Sheriff
interruptus.

She shakes her head, hands him a Post-It note.

EVA

I heard, "Dolphin Rescue" called,
they want to set up your legal-
defense fund.

As she turns and heads inside, A.C. follows...

INT. "THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA" - DAY

Gauguin-inspired murals cover the walls. The bar is a mosaic of starfish and shells. It's the pre-lunch lull.

A.C.

The plan wasn't to get arrested.

EVA

Then what was the plan?
(off his silence)
Classic, A.C., act first, stumble
through the consequences, and
pretend none of it matters.

A.C.

You thought it was charming in high school.

EVA

When you're sixteen being best friends with the bad boy has a certain allure.

A.C.

If you want I can moor the "Quint" somewhere else.

EVA

Running away isn't going to solve the problem and I can't believe that parade of bunk bunnies is the answer either.

A.C.

The girls I date... we have an understanding.

EVA

Yeah, don't get too attached. I used to think it was a phase but you clearly can't commit to anyone or anything.

A.C.

Hey, I'm committed to you.

EVA

Only because we've never slept together.

Her words cut deep.

A.C

I've never crossed that line because you're the one good thing in my life. I didn't want to screw it up.

The sincerity of his words soften her.

EVA

I was counting on that charter to cover this month's lease. Why did you have to pick last night to go Greenpeace on me?

A.C.

Because I felt those dolphins were calling me.

She looks at him in surprised amazement.

EVA
Are you saying you can talk to
fish now?

A.C.
Dolphins are mammals and it was
more like this weird empathy.

EVA
What did your dad say?

A.C.
I didn't share that with Captain
Tom. It's always been easier to
talk to you about this stuff.

She can see he's been rattled by this new development.

EVA
I can eat the charter fees. But
the food and beer are coming out of
your paycheck. Okay?

A.C.
I promise I'll make it up to you.

As she disappears into the kitchen with a tray...

MCCAFFERY (O.S.)
You can start by pouring me a
drink.

A.C. turns and finds McCaffery sitting at the end of the bar.

A.C.
Little early for happy hour, don't
you think?

MCCAFFERY
You're Tom Curry's boy, I've seen
you diving Devil's Deep.

A.C.
Didn't realize I had a fan club.

MCCAFFERY
You don't. I run the lighthouse on
Atlas Point. The gulls have
nothing on my view.

A.C.'s face flashes with recognition.

A.C.
You're old man McCaffery, that
crazy-ass hermit who hadn't stepped
foot out of that lighthouse in
twenty years.

MCCAFFERY

Once a month when the tides are low, I come into town to meet my good friend Jack Daniels. It's usually an uneventful sojourn. Except when some delinquent calls me a "crazy-ass hermit".

He slaps a twenty dollar bill on the table. A.C. pours him a shot of Jack D.

MCCAFFERY

How come you're so interested in Devil's Deep?

A.C.

I'm a diver. I like a challenge.

MCCAFFERY

Some say it's the gateway to the Bermuda Triangle.

A.C. scoffs, begins washing glasses.

A.C.

Didn't you hear? Scientists chalked that up to methane gas.

McCaffery looks at A.C., knows he doesn't believe that.

MCCAFFERY

I remember when your mother's plane went down. That cloudless Caribbean sky, God couldn't have painted a prettier picture. Then that storm came out of nowhere.

A.C. stops, stares at McCaffery in shock.

A.C.

You saw it?

McCaffery soberly nods.

A.C.

The Weather Bureau said it never existed.

MCCAFFERY

I don't need fancy satellite readouts to tell me what I did and didn't see... neither do you.

The moment's broken when a COUPLE OF TOURISTS enter. McCaffery rises.

MCCAFFERY
Keep the change.

As A.C. reaches for the money, McCaffery grabs his hand.

MCCAFFERY
Arthur, if you look hard and long
enough into the deep, something's
going to start looking back. Watch
yourself.

OFF A.C., shaken by this unexpected encounter...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - TEMPEST KEY HOSPITAL - DAY

JOHN DOE -- is wheeled into FRAME. He's still unconscious.
PAN TO REVEAL TOM standing with a DOCTOR.

TOM
Call me if there's a change in his
condition.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. TARMAC - TEMPEST KEY NAVAL AIR BASE - DAY

A warping heat-haze ripples. Rachel steps out wearing a
flight suit with a helmet tucked under her arm. She passes a
COUPLE OF PILOTS returning from a mission.

PILOT #1
Don't forget to turn left at Cuba,
Starling.

RACHEL
You think I'm taking directions
from you, Munns? You'd get lost on
a two-lane highway.

As they head inside, Rachel crosses to a row of F-16s.

COMMANDER DALY (O.S.)
Lieutenant Starling.

She spins in surprise and finds BASE COMMANDER PETER DALY.
They exchange salutes.

RACHEL
Commander Daly.

COMMANDER DALY
You've got a new mission. The
coordinates are in your nav-com.
You'll be flying over Mercy Reef.

RACHEL
Permission to speak freely.

(off his nod)
Sir, if you've given me an easier assignment because you don't believe I can handle the rigors of this program, you're 100% mistak--

COMMANDER DALY
(cutting her off)
This isn't the LPGA, Starling, you tee off with the men. These orders come from Homeland Security. They told me to put my best pilot on it. Needed a clean sweep of the area.
(off her smile)
Now that the sunshine's been blown up your backside, you ready to fly?

RACHEL
Yes, sir. Am I looking for something in particular?

COMMANDER DALY
Beats the crap out of me. If anything out of the ordinary catches your eye, let me know.

She salutes, hesitates as he turns away then blurts...

RACHEL
Sir, I was wondering about the status of Lieutenant Hicks' transfer?

COMMANDER DALY
It's still stuck in that five-cornered colon called the Pentagon.
(off her disappointment)
Sorry, Starling, but don't expect it to come through anytime soon.

As he strides back across the sun-blasted tarmac CAMERA STAYS ON RACHEL. OFF her face of resignation...

SMASH CUT TO:

RACHEL'S F-16 -- BLASTING into the sky and AWAY FROM CAMERA.

SMASH CUT TO:

A.C. -- diving straight TOWARDS CAMERA. He grins as he torpedo-swims off in a twisting contrail of bubbles.

A SONG THROBS as we INTERCUT between Rachel and A.C. It's like a choreographed dance. Each is a master of their own environment; Rachel in the air and A.C. underwater.

The F-16 -- flies low and fast over a vast expanse of shimmering water.

A.C. -- swims with superhuman speed, effortlessly powers across aquamarine reefs and through swarms of tropical fish.

The F-16 -- banks over an atoll of coral white sand.

A.C. -- banks around a towering wall of Technicolor coral.

F-16 -- barrel-rolls through the turquoise sky.

A.C. -- barrel-rolls between two barnacle-encrusted wrecks. As he swims away, a shadow passes over him; he looks up and sees the silhouette of the F-16 zooming past.

INT. COCKPIT - F-16 - DAY

Rachel peers down as a light blinks on her control panel.

CLOSE ON SONAR MONITOR: It's tracking a fast-moving blip.

As she banks around, leaving a CLEAR FRAME OF BLUE SKY:

MATCH CUT TO:

A BLUE HOSPITAL WALL. John Doe suddenly rises into view.

JOHN DOE

Orin...

He reaches up and clutches his sea horse necklace. As needles of light fissure from his clenched fist...

CUT TO:

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

A.C. grins as the outline of the F-16 approaches. Suddenly, his sea horse necklace glows. He peers down in surprise. As he touches it, an EXPLOSION of light ripples out like an atomic blast. The concussive force sends A.C. tumbling.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

The F-16 is consumed in the blinding tsunami of light.

INT. F-16 - DAY

As the controls go dead and the craft careens towards the water, Rachel instinctively SLAMS the ejector button.

EXT. SKY - DAY

Rachel catapults TOWARDS CAMERA a split second before the jet EXPLODES in a nightmarish ball of flame. As a dirty orange fireball licks at her boots...

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

A.C. spins to a stop. As he looks around dazed, something SMASHES into the ocean 20 feet away -- it's Rachel, still belted to her seat. Fire roils on the surface of the water as A.C. swims over, pulls off her helmet and discovers she's unconscious. He rips her restraints with superhuman ease and takes her in his arms. As he sweeps her up towards the surface in an orgy of bubbles...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - TEMPEST KEY HOSPITAL - DAY

CAMERA PANS from behind a GURGLING water cooler TO REVEAL A.C. He slugs a cup of water as he looks over at Rachel who is propped in bed. She groggily cracks open her eyes and sees him backlit by the window. He steps to her side.

A.C.

The doctor said I could wait here
until you woke up.

She studies him curiously.

RACHEL

You an orderly or something?

A.C.

I was there when you splashed down.

RACHEL

You pulled me out?

(off his nod)

But I didn't see a boat.

A.C.

You were going 700 miles-an-hour,
I'm guessing you didn't see much.
I hope the Navy doesn't have a you
break-it-you-bought it policy.

She smiles at his lame joke.

A.C.

I'll tell the nurse you're awake.

As he heads out...

RACHEL

Wait. What's your name?

A.C.

It's not important.

RACHEL

You want to play the mysterious
hero, you should at least wear a
disguise.

A.C.

I'm no hero.

He exits into...

INT. HALL - TEMPEST KEY HOSPITAL - DAY

A.C. strides down the empty corridor, headed for reception when his necklace starts to glow. As he peers down, incandescent slats of light fan out across the hall. A.C. looks to his left and stares in through the blinds of a room.

WHAT HE SEES: John Doe asleep in the bed with his sea horse necklace glowing ominously.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - TEMPEST KEY HOSPITAL - DAY

A.C. cautiously approaches. As he slowly reaches out and touches John Doe's necklace, both necklaces instantly stop glowing. John Doe suddenly grabs A.C.'s wrist.

JOHN DOE

Orin... you're alive.

A.C. stares at the young man in shock.

A.C.

Why did you call me that? Where did you get that necklace?

John Doe clears his throat. He's HOARSE and weak.

JOHN DOE

Atlanna.

A.C.

My mother? She's alive?

LOUD VOICES echo. John Doe's face is gripped with fear.

JOHN DOE

They're coming... for you.

His voice trails as his eyes close and he slips into unconsciousness. A.C. tries to shake him awake.

A.C.

Where is my mother?!

ADMIRAL MERCER (O.S.)

Visiting hours are over.

A.C. spins as ADMIRAL MERCER, an intense man in his 40s, strides into the room flanked by TWO BURLY MPs.

A.C.

Who the hell are you?

ADMIRAL MERCER

These stripes mean the only one asking questions in here is me. Did this man tell you anything?

A.C.
 Yeah, he'd like an extra pillow and
 a prettier nurse.
 (beat)
 He was unconscious the whole time.

Mercer nods to the MPs, who begin wheeling John Doe out.

A.C.
 Where are you taking him?!

A.C. follows Mercer out into...

INT. HALL - TEMPEST KEY HOSPITAL - DAY

... but as he angrily strides after them, he runs straight into a STRIKING BLONDE WOMAN -- NADIA -- and knocks the water cup she's holding down her front.

A.C.
 I'm so sorry.

NADIA
 No worries. I'm like a fish out of
 water today.

Embarrassed, A.C. grabs some tissues from the reception desk and hands them to her. As she dabs herself, she sees him watching John Doe being wheeled around the corner.

NADIA
 I'm a little lost -- could you
 point me to the elevator?

A.C.
 Second set of doors, turn left.
 Sorry again.

She glances at his sea horse necklace, smiles.

NADIA
 No problem. I'll see you around.

As he exits, CAMERA STAYS with Nadia. OFF her face...

CUT TO:

INT. "THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA" - NIGHT

LOOKING THROUGH AN AQUARIUM of opulently tailed fish. CAMERA TRACKS as Eva heads to the bar with a tray of empty glasses. She passes A.C., who is anxiously talking into a cell phone.

A.C.
 (into phone)
 Just tell him his son called again.

As he hangs up, Eva slaps down a copy of the Tempest Key Beachcomber. His photo is on the front page under the headline "Local Diver Swims to the Rescue".

EVA
Congrats, you've gone from
"troubled young man" in the police
blotter to front-page hero all in
the same day.

A.C.
Guess that makes me my own worst
enemy.

The sound of BREAKING GLASS rings out. A.C. and Eva turn and see THREE FRAT BOYS. They're standing at a table, LAUGHING DRUNKENLY while they chat to a fourth person we can't see.

EVA
I should have cut them off two
rounds ago.

Only when one of the men leans back does A.C. see they're talking to Nadia, the hot blonde from the hospital.

A.C.
Let me give it a shot.

EVA
You start more fights than you
settle.

A.C.
Actually, I settle more fights than
I start. I never throw the first
punch.

EVA
That's comforting.

OVER AT NADIA'S TABLE:

FRAT BOY #1
Come on, one dance.

FRAT BOY #2
His girlfriend dumped him today,
he's just looking for a shoulder to
cry on.

FRAT BOY #1
I promise it will be a life-
changing experience.

A.C. steps in, looks at Nadia.

A.C.
These frat boys buzzing too close?

NADIA
They're not exactly the company I
was looking for.

A.C.
You heard the lady, why don't you
settle up and take the party down
the pier?

A.C. starts gathering their beer bottles. But as he reaches
for Frat Boy #1's bottle, Frat Boy #2 grabs his arm.

FRAT BOY #2
Hey, townie, why don't you make
yourself useful and bring us
another round?

Frat Boy #2 pulls a 20 from a fat clip. A.C. crumples it and
tosses it in the guy's beer glass.

A.C.
Your money's no good here.

Frat Boy #3 leaps out of his chair and smashes A.C. with a
right hook, sending him flying. A.C. OBLITERATES a table as
he CRASHES back onto the floor. Eva glares from the bar.

A.C. lurches up, nails the guy in the jaw with a hook, but is
caught off-guard by Frat Boy #1, who gut-pummels him. As
A.C. buckles, Frat Boy #2 drives his boot into A.C.'s chest.
Eva winces in sympathy as A.C. drops.

AQUARIUM POV: Fish scatter as A.C.'s head is dunked. Blood
leaks from his lip. He is violently yanked back out.

A.C. is held by Frat Boys #1 and #3 as #2 gets in his face.

FRAT BOY #2
Apologize now and we'll call it a
night.

A.C.
I'm still a little thirsty.

Frat Boy #2 nods to his buddies, who dunk A.C. in the tank.

AQUARIUM POV: A.C. looks over at Eva, who shakes her head.
He turns away, smiles to himself. As A.C. inhales a lung
full of water, PUSH IN TO A VFX SHOT as his skin momentarily
shimmers with a million tiny pearlescent scales.

Frat Boy #1 pulls A.C. out by the hair. A.C. grins.

A.C.
Thanks for the drink.

With superhuman strength, A.C. elbows Frat Boys #1 and #2 10 feet, sending them CRASHING into the wall. As Frat Boy #2 swings, A.C. catches his fist, sweeps him head first into the AQUARIUM!

Water, glass and fish sluice out onto the floor. Dazed, the Frat Boys climb to their feet. As they exit, Eva shakes her head, annoyed.

EVA
Save the fish. I'll get a bucket
and mop.

A.C. grabs some water pitchers and begins rescuing the fish that are flapping on the floor. Nadia kneels beside him.

A.C.
Sorry about that.

NADIA
No apology necessary.

A.C.
Haven't seen you around before, now
twice in one day.

NADIA
I came out to visit my grandma in
the hospital. It's my first time
in the Keys.

A.C. scoops another fish into a glass, looks at her.

A.C.
You should let me take you diving
tomorrow.

NADIA
I was hoping we could do something
tonight.

A.C. politely gives her the brush off.

A.C.
If I bail on Eva, she's going to
cut me up and sell me as bait.

NADIA
That's too bad, A.C.
(off his surprise)
I asked around. I hope you don't
mind. I'm Nadia.

As he takes her hand, PUSH IN as she locks him in her gaze.

NADIA
I hear you're pretty amazing under
the water.

A.C. looks at her, mysteriously mesmerized.

A.C.
How about we get out of here and go
for a swim?

She smiles flirtatiously.

NADIA
You must have read my mind.

AT THE BAR

Eva walks out from a back room carrying a bucket and mop.
She finds a dozen pitchers of fish sitting on the counter but
no sign of A.C. and Nadia. She shakes her head.

EVA
Typical.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

TWO NAKED FIGURES dive towards CAMERA in a spiraling wake of
bubbles. As they kick their way back to the surface...

EXT. COVE - NIGHT

A.C. and Nadia's clothes are scattered on the old jetty that
stretches into this secluded bay. The ocean sparkles like
molten silver as the naked duo breaks the surface. He grins.

A.C.
You're not bad in the water
yourself.

NADIA
Years of practice.
(moves closer)
You know we met a long time ago.

A.C.
You sure about that? I would
definitely remember you.

NADIA
Let me refresh your memory.

She dives back under. A.C. smiles in anticipation. He waits
expectantly, but she doesn't resurface.

A.C.

Nadia?

UNDERWATER POV: A.C.'s naked form treads water. Suddenly, something streaks past the CAMERA. Except for its powerful scaled tail, it's difficult to make out its features.

As the seconds pass, A.C. nervously looks around.

A.C.

Okay, you're kind of freaking me out here.

Something disturbs the water behind him. He spins but sees nothing. When he turns back, Nadia explodes out of the water and opens her mouth to attack, revealing rows of shark-like teeth. Her hands have morphed into webbed talons and her face is now slick with scales. She is

A SIREN

and looks exactly like the creature that attacked Atlanna all those years ago. A.C. desperately fights her off, but she's too strong. As she moves in for the kill,

A CROSSBOW BOLT

WHISTLES out of nowhere and nails Nadia in her right shoulder. She utters an UNGODLY SCREECH and thrashes back into the water. A.C. darts to the jetty, clambers out of the water, his chest lacerated with scratches.

MCCAFFERY (O.S.)

I hate those goddamn things.

A.C. turns as McCaffery steps into a pool of light. He's got a heavy-duty crossbow slung over his shoulder. A.C. looks out at the water. No sign of Nadia.

A.C.

What the hell was she?

McCaffery doesn't answer, tosses him his board shorts.

MCCAFFERY

Get your clothes on. We need to talk.

OFF this declaration...

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

The beam of a lighthouse FLARES THE LENS as the CAMERA SWEEPS DOWN through a spray of sparks TO REVEAL A.C. and McCaffery. They're sitting in the amber glow of a driftwood bonfire. A.C. is shirtless and dabs the deep scratches that crisscross his chest. McCaffery pulls a silver flask from his boot and offers it to A.C. A.C. sniffs it, cautiously.

MCCAFFERY

Don't worry, it's H2O.

A.C. takes a swig.

A.C.

I can't believe I got in the water with that thing.

MCCAFFERY

Once a siren has you in her gaze, there's nothing a man can do.

(re: crossbow)

Unfortunately my aim's a little rusty. Only way to kill those scaly bitches is to nail them between the eyes.

A.C.

She said we'd met a long time ago. I think she's the creature that attacked my mom.

A.C. peers into the fire, suddenly overcome with sadness.

A.C.

People always told me I'd imagined it.

MCCAFFERY

Funny thing about human nature -- it can't stand the unknown. It tries to pass it off as legend or superstition. But every myth is rooted in truth.

A.C.

You sound just like my mom.

McCaffery musters a melancholy smile.

MCCAFFERY

How much did she tell you about the other half of your biological equation?

A.C.

Just that he was a merchant marine. They had a one-week fling. He hit the high seas and I was the souvenir. Then she moved to Florida, married my dad and he adopted me.

(horrible thought)

Please tell me you weren't that fling?

McCaffery's LAUGH echoes.

MCCAFFERY

It wasn't me and it wasn't some merchant marine either. The only one being told fairy tales around here is you.

(beat)

You must have wondered where your unique abilities came from?

A.C. futilely attempts to mask his surprise.

A.C.

Abilities? What are you talking about?

MCCAFFERY

I wouldn't play poker with that face. Let's start with the fact that you can breath underwater. You also possess incredible strength and speed in the ocean. You get extremely weak when you're dehydrated, and I assume you freed those dolphins because of an empathetic connection, not because you're some misguided reef-hugger.

A.C. studies the old man's face.

A.C.

Who are you?

MCCAFFERY

A friend. An exile just like you and your mother.

A.C.

Exile from where?

MCCAFFERY

It has different names in different cultures, but you probably know it by it's most famous -- Atlantis.

A.C. shoots him a mocking grin.

A.C.
Yeah, right, next time you're down
there say hello to the Little
Mermaid and Captain Nemo for me.

MCCAFFERY
You think I wanted to be the one to
tell you?

A.C.
Better lay off the booze, old man,
it's pickled your brain.

A.C. gets up and begins to head across the sand. McCaffery
casually stabs the fire with a stick.

MCCAFFERY
You can't run away from your true
calling, Orin.

That name stops A.C. in his tracks, he slowly turns back.

MCCAFFERY
You sure you don't want that drink?

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPEST KEY NAVAL AIR BASE - NIGHT - TO ESTABLISH

Palm trees frosted with moonlight sway over this 1930s
complex of hangers, buildings and bungalows.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - TEMPEST KEY NAVAL AIR BASE - NIGHT

JOHN DOE sits on the edge of a bed in a cell-like room. PULL
BACK THROUGH the one-way mirror TO REVEAL Admiral Mercer and
an AIDE watching intently.

ADMIRAL MERCER
When did he wake up?

AIDE
Five minutes ago.

ADMIRAL MERCER
Has he displayed any violent
tendencies like the others?

The Aide shakes his head and hands Mercer a time-faded
military folder.

AIDE
This is the file you requested from
the Air Force archives. The DNA is
a perfect match.
(MORE)

AIDE (CONT'D)

Our John Doe is Private Gus
Thompson. He was a member of
Flight 19 that disappeared December
5th, 1945 in the Bermuda Triangle.

Mercer pulls a sepia-toned photo from the file and holds it
up to the window. It's circa WWII and features a young Air
Force pilot. There's no mistaking the face. It's John Doe.

ADMIRAL MERCER

Welcome home, Private Thompson.

(beat)

Where the hell have you been for
the last 60 years?

OFF this tantalizing riddle...

EXT. TURRET - ATLAS POINT LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT

A.C. stands on the wrought-iron balcony that circles the top
of this whitewashed tower. The massive Xenon light in the
lantern room behind him spins past every 30 seconds, its beam
bleaching out across the sea. McCaffery steps out holding
two crystal glasses of whiskey. He hands one to A.C.

A.C.

If Atlantis exists, how come no
sub, sonar or deep-sea probe has
ever discovered it?

MCCAFFERY

Because it's cloaked in a shroud no
modern technology can penetrate --
the Bermuda Triangle.

A.C.

So the storms out of nowhere, the
disappearing boats and planes...

MCCAFFERY

Our way of keeping tabs on the
course of human events. Your
father always treated the
"visitors" with respect. Made sure
they assimilated into our society.

He stares across the vast glittery blanket of water.

MCCAFFERY

But there were those who wanted to
wage war on the surface world and
use the visitors as the first wave
of attack. Your father resisted.

McCaffery's voice trails. A.C. understands the subtext.

A.C.

So they killed him.

McCaffery nods sadly.

MCCAFFERY

I managed to get you and your mother out. I knew the only place you would be safe was up here. We were found on Mercy Reef by a young Coast Guard cadet.

A.C.

My dad.

(growing angry)

Then he knows? He's known the truth all along.

MCCAFFERY

No, your mother insisted we say nothing. She made up some story about a boat accident. I don't know if Tom really believed it, but it was love at first sight. He even got me this job, God knows it wasn't my sparkling personality.

A.C.

If you were so close to my mom, why were you never around?

MCCAFFERY

She didn't want to be reminded of the past, and she probably thought she could hide you from your destiny.

A.C.

Words like destiny and guys like me don't usually go together.

MCCAFFERY

You're the key to this struggle.

A.C.

What struggle?

MCCAFFERY

75% of this planet is covered in water. Mankind has managed to pollute and exploit most of it. Time is running out and the people down there know it. They're not going to sit by and watch their world destroyed.

He looks out at the moon-spangled ocean.

MCCAFFERY

There used to be a balance. A balance only you can restore.

A.C.

I've never been the answer to anybody's problem.

MCCAFFERY

You've got to protect the world you've embraced as your own and defend the ocean from which you were born. That's your destiny.

A.C.

So you want me to fight sirens and Standard Oil? Thanks, but I'll pass.

MCCAFFERY

Sirens are just the beginning, there are creatures down there that you couldn't imagine. And your enemies up here are just as dangerous. Don't worry, I'll train you.

A.C.

Forget about it. Find somebody else. I'm not interested in the job.

MCCAFFERY

This is your wake-up call. You can't go back to sleep now.

A.C.

Just watch me.

A.C. backs away, McCaffery's words ricocheting in his head.

MCCAFFERY

Destiny is like a riptide, Orin, you don't know it's pulling you in until it's too late.

OFF A.C., rocked to his core...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPEST KEY COAST GUARD STATION - DAY

The sky is blushed with pink as Tom pulls up in a Coast Guard Jeep and finds A.C. waiting. He's clearly been there all night. Tom approaches, annoyed.

TOM

I thought you were meeting with the lawyer this morning.

A.C.

You lied to me.

TOM

Can it wait? I've got a tropical storm coming in tonight.

A.C.

I spoke to McCaffery, he told me about Mercy Reef.

That name stops Tom dead.

TOM

Let me guess, he gave you his cock-and-bull story about you and your mom being from Atlantis?

A.C.

Then you know?

TOM

That he's certifiable? Absolutely. You didn't actually believe him, did you?

A.C.

The creature that attacked Mom, the siren, came back last night for me. McCaffery stopped it. I even have the scar to prove it.

A.C. lifts his shirt, peels back the bandage only to reveal that the scars have miraculously healed.

TOM

Yeah, it did a real number on you, kiddo. You've got a court case in 3 days, why aren't you focused on that?

A.C.

Dad, I swear.

TOM

Did your friend mention that he spent two years in a mental asylum?
(off A.C.'s shock)
I'm not surprised he left that part out.

A.C. shakes his head as he tries to make sense of everything.

TOM

I know you've got questions, A.C.,
and there are things in your life
we can't explain, but that old man
is not the answer.

OFF A.C., reeling from these revelations...

CUT TO:

EXT. "QUINT" - DAY

A.C. is scrubbing the deck. The events of last night still
weighing on him. He guiltily looks up as Eva approaches.

A.C.

Sorry I left you hanging.

EVA

I hope she was worth it.

A.C.

Actually, I barely got out alive.

They share a smile. As Eva turns to go she sees Rachel
heading down the dock.

EVA

(whispered, to A.C.)

This one looks more promising.

As Eva steps off the boat, A.C. pulls on a shirt. Eva smiles
at Rachel as she passes...

EVA

Proceed with caution.

Rachel looks at her curiously, then climbs onboard.

RACHEL

I thought only guys in detective
novels lived on boats, Arthur?

A.C. grins.

A.C.

Real estate is overrated and
everybody calls me A.C.

A.C. reaches into a cooler, pulls out a couple of bottles of
water. Their hands brush as he passes her one.

RACHEL

I realized after you left that I
never said thank you. Not many
people would risk their lives like
you did.

A.C.
I was in the neighborhood. It was
no big deal.

RACHEL
It was to me.

There's a moment of awkward silence...

RACHEL
I was wondering, did you see
anything strange out there?

A.C.
You mean other than your jet
falling out of the sky?

She smiles, decides not to push it.

A.C.
When I pulled off your helmet I
wasn't expecting to find --

RACHEL
A woman?

A.C.
No offence but most pilots are
cocky white guys who OD'd on Top
Gun.

RACHEL
When I was little I always dreamed
of touching the sky.
(blushing)
Sounds corny, doesn't it?

A.C.
Yeah, but in a good way. It must
be nice knowing what you want to do
with your life.

RACHEL
I'm not sure I knew, I just
couldn't imagine doing anything
else. Must be the way you feel
about diving. Everyone tells me
you're the best.

He cracks a mischievous grin.

A.C.
Why don't you find out for
yourself?

RACHEL
I think I'll stick to dry land.

A.C.
What's the matter? You afraid of
the water?

She deftly deflects the question.

RACHEL
Are you always so direct?

A.C.
Just with you.

RACHEL
My family escaped from Cuba on a
sorry excuse for a boat. After
four weeks of storms and sharks I'd
had my fill of the ocean.

A.C.
You should have joined the
Air Force.

RACHEL
Navy's got the best pilots and I
wanted to be the best. When I'm in
the air...

She smiles, shakes her head.

RACHEL
I don't know. I can't describe it.

A.C.
It's the only place that feels like
home.

She stares at him surprised by his understanding.

RACHEL
Yeah.

A.C.
That's me in the water.

They look at each other with charged attraction. The
intimate moment is broken when her cell phone BLEATS.

RACHEL
I have to get back to the base.

As she steps on the gangplank, she almost falls. As A.C.
grabs her arm and pulls her back, his sea horse necklace
dangles free.

A.C.
Saving you is becoming a full-
time job.

RACHEL
 (re: necklace)
 Where did you get that?

A.C.
 It belonged to my mom.

RACHEL
 It's beautiful.

A.C. smiles sadly.

A.C.
 So was she.
 (beat)
 You ever want to change your luck
 in the water, you know where to
 find me.

OFF A.C., watching as she heads back up the dock...

CUT TO:

A BLINDING FLASH OF LIGHTNING -- forks across the storm-
 wrecked sky while WIND and RAIN pound ...

EXT. BARRACKS - TEMPEST KEY NAVAL AIR BASE - NIGHT

CAMERA TRACKS BEHIND a NURSE as she runs up the wooden stairs
 to an MP who is standing guard at a door. The MP smiles as
 she approaches. REVERSE TO REVEAL the nurse is Nadia.

MP
 Forget your umbrella?

NADIA
 Little water never hurt anyone.
 How's the patient tonight?

MP
 Sleeping like a baby, ma'am.

She leans in close, smiles seductively.

NADIA
 Did anyone ever tell you that you
 have beautiful eyes?
 (locking him in her gaze)
 If you wanted to take a break, it
 would be our little secret.

The MP nods, entranced.

MP
 I really could use some coffee.

As she smiles and lightning FLARES...

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. ROOM - TEMPEST KEY NAVAL AIR BASE - NIGHT

John Doe waking up from a nightmarish fever dream. His face is slicked with sweat. As he reaches for a glass of water he comes face to face with Nadia. She's naked and dripping wet.

NADIA

I don't know how you escaped, but
thank you for leading me to Orin.

OFF his terrified face...

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. AIRCRAFT HANGAR - TEMPEST KEY NAVAL BASE - NIGHT

CAMERA CRANES DOWN TO FIND Rachel and Mercer walking and talking through the maze of sleeping aircraft.

RACHEL

Admiral, Sir. I'm confused. I
already went over the accident
report with Commander Daly.

ADMIRAL MERCER

I understand, Lieutenant, but I was
the one who ordered the mission. I
wanted to debrief you myself.
(off her surprise)
I was curious about the flash of
light you saw before you lost
control.

RACHEL

To be honest, I was disoriented.
It could have been a sun flare.

ADMIRAL MERCER

You don't have to placate me I
won't think you've lost your mind.
After all, you were flying over the
Bermuda Triangle.

RACHEL

With all due respect, Sir, that's
just a myth.

Mercer smiles wryly.

ADMIRAL MERCER

I used to share that sentiment.

RACHEL
What changed your mind?

Mercer calmly twists the platinum band on his finger.

ADMIRAL MERCER
Why don't I show you.

SMASH CUT TO:

A MORGUE PHOTOGRAPH.

of a muscular, 40 YEAR-OLD MAN.

ADMIRAL MERCER (V.O.)
Last year this man boarded an oil platform in the Gulf and attempted to blow it sky high. He was killed before he succeeded. His name was Evan Corday.

PULL BACK TO SEE Mercer and Rachel standing in front of a 50-inch plasma screen that is suspended in the middle of a cavernous black space.

INT. CHAMBER - TEMPEST KEY NAVAL BASE - NIGHT

Mercer hits a remote causing a black and white image to flash on. It features Corday, only now he is dressed in turn of the century garb and is at the helm of a wooden racing yacht.

ADMIRAL MERCER
He disappeared along with his yacht off the coast of Bermuda on July 6th, 1905.

RACHEL
Impossible. It must have been a descendant or somebody who looked like him.

ADMIRAL MERCER
I'd agree expect the fingerprints were a perfect match. If that wasn't strange enough the explosives he used were traced back to a military vessel that vanished in 1962.

Rachel struggles to make sense of the story.

RACHEL
Admiral, there has to be a rational explanation for this.

ADMIRAL MERCER

How do you rationally explain a man who hasn't aged a day in a hundred years carrying out a terrorist threat?

(beat)

And he's not the first one to come back.

RACHEL

Come back from where?

ADMIRAL MERCER

That's what Project Nautilus aims to find out. I want you to join us, Lieutenant, and help unlock the mysteries of the Bermuda Triangle.

Rachel shakes her head.

RACHEL

Sir, I'm a pilot. I don't know what relevant experience I could offer.

ADMIRAL MERCER

You have more experience than any of us. You witnessed something extraordinary out there and lived to tell the tale. I don't believe a pilot of your impeccable record is taken out of the sky by a sun flare or freak mechanical failure.

RACHEL

Sir, I joined up to fly jets and serve my country, not chase windmills.

ADMIRAL MERCER

This isn't a fool's crusade. It's a matter of national security.

He hits a button on a remote causing a series of 10x20 Perspex screens to be illuminated. They're hung from the ceiling on cables and each features rows of headshots. Rachel stares at the faces that run the gamut of humanity.

ADMIRAL MERCER

All of these people vanished in the Bermuda Triangle. They're MIAs in an invisible war. And Tempest Key is the front line.

As she reacts his cell phone RINGS. He flicks it to his ear.

ADMIRAL MERCER
 (shocked, into phone)
 I'll be right there.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ROOM - TEMPEST KEY NAVAL AIR BASE - NIGHT

TIGHT ON RACHEL AND MERCER as they enter and stare in shock. The white walls are covered in arterial spray. John Doe's body is splayed on the bed. As blood drips onto the floor...

CUT TO:

INT. "THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA" - NIGHT

The storm ROARS outside. A.C. and Eva are scrambling.

EVA
 A.C., nail down the shutters, I'll pull in the patio furniture so we don't have to go diving for deck chairs tomorrow.

Suddenly the lights go out. Lightning blazes.

EVA
 Great, power lines have already blown over.

A.C.
 (looking out window)
 Must be the circuit breaker, the lights are still on at Cap'n Jacks.

INT. STOREROOM - NIGHT

Rain pours through a cracked skylight. A.C. is hunched over the circuit board while Eva holds a heavy-duty flashlight.

EVA
 You sure you know what you're doing?

A.C.
 Would it kill you to keep the flashlight steady?

The flashlight drops to the floor.

A.C.
 Very funny. Do you want the lights back on or not?

As he retrieves the flashlight, he hears a strange SUCKING sound. He turns and raises the light to Eva's face -- her expression is frozen in terror.

A.C.

Eva?

As she tries to speak, blood GURGLES out of her mouth. He follows her gaze as she looks at her chest and sees five razor-sharp talons protruding. As Eva drops to the floor dead, Nadia is revealed standing behind her.

NADIA

You couldn't hide forever, Orin.

Lightning strobos as she viciously backhands A.C. into a wall. As he slumps unconscious, she steps over and rips off his sea horse necklace. OFF her snarling grin...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

The CAMERA PLOWS THROUGH a crackling band of lightning, SWOOPS through the driving rain, and FINDS the "Quint" dwarfed in a sea of mountainous waves.

INT. BRIDGE - "QUINT" - NIGHT

Nadia is at the wheel. The sea horse necklace dangles from her neck. Her face is etched with cruel determination as she steers the battered craft into the black heart of the storm.

INT. CABIN - "QUINT" - NIGHT

The windows and doors have been sealed and everything that isn't nailed down slip-slides as the vessel violently pitches. A.C. is on the floor unconscious, shirtless and dehydrated. His hands and feet are bound behind his back.

AN OLD SWIMMING TROPHY

topples off a shelf and smacks him in the head. He opens his eyes and finds himself staring into a cracked photograph. It's a snapshot of him and Eva. The memory of her murder hits him. He angrily tries to loosen his bonds.

MCCAFFERY (O.S.)

Save your strength, you're going to need it.

A.C. rolls over and comes face to face with *McCaffery*, who has been tied up and beaten.

A.C.

She killed Eva... it happened so fast.

His throat sounds like sandpaper.

MCCAFFERY

I'm sorry about your friend, but I'm more concerned about your life right now.

A.C.

I'm not. She's dead and I should have stopped it.

He ROARS in angry frustration.

MCCAFFERY

Eva's gone. There's nothing you can do about it. We need to get you off this boat.

A.C. calms.

A.C.
Where's she taking us?

MCCAFFERY
Home... to be executed.

A.C.
(parched)
I need water.

MCCAFFERY
My flask's in my boot.

Using all his strength, A.C. bends back and pulls out the flask that's tucked into McCaffery's boot.

A.C.
Any bright ideas how I get it to my mouth?

MCCAFFERY
You don't. Smash it.
(off A.C.'s look)
Do it.

A.C. slams the flask, there's a CHINK of breaking glass as the inner-lining shatters. A.C. musters a weak smile, picks up the flask and shakes out a long, sharp shard of glass.

INT. BRIDGE - "QUINT" - NIGHT

A wave batters the windshield as Nadia checks the GPS.

CLOSE ON GPS SCREEN: They're almost at Devil's Deep.

INT. CABIN - "QUINT" - NIGHT

TIGHT ON A.C. as he gulps a cup of rainwater. He sticks the cup out a broken portal to refill and turns to McCaffery, who is just finishing cutting himself free with the glass shard.

A.C.
How do we take her down?

His strength restored, A.C. crosses to McCaffery with the cup. McCaffery hungrily drinks the water, wipes his mouth.

MCCAFFERY
We aren't doing anything. You need to get out of here.

A.C.
That siren took my mother and killed my friend. I'm not going anywhere until she's dead.

McCaffery takes him by the shoulders.

MCCAFFERY
I promised your father on his dying
breath that I would protect you.

A.C. reluctantly nods.

MCCAFFERY
Do you have any weapons?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE - "QUINT" - NIGHT

Nadia smiles to herself as she pulls out the keys. She is just reaching for the sea horse necklace when she hears THREE MUFFLED SHOTGUN BLASTS over the fury of the storm. Enraged, she charges down the ladder and strides towards:

THE CABIN DOORS

which she has nailed shut with 2x4s. She grabs the handles and with superhuman strength RIPS open the doors. As she peers in, a harpoon trident suddenly WHISTLES towards her. She snatches it an inch from her head, smiles at McCaffery, who is holding the harpoon gun.

NADIA
Your aim's gotten better.

She rips the cable off the trident and viciously grabs him.

NADIA
Where is Orin?

He smiles smugly. She savagely plants the spear into his leg. He stifles a scream and looks at her contemptuously.

MCCAFFERY
He should be sipping Mai Tais on
Miami Beach by now.

Only then does Nadia see the hubcab-sized hole that's been blasted in the side of the cabin. PUSH IN ON HER FACE as she realizes A.C. has escaped. She spins back to McCaffery.

NADIA
I'll return with a legion of sirens
and hunt him down.

As a glowering rod of lightning flashes, A.C. catapults out of the water and lands on the deck behind her. Water streams down his face, which is etched with revenge-wrecked fury.

A.C.
I'm right here.

She snarl-smiles, then leaps out the door towards him.

EXT. DECK - "QUINT" - NIGHT

THE FIGHT IS ON! A.C. backhands her into the pulpit. She gets right back up and spin-kicks him in the gut. As he buckles, she pounds his back. A.C. drops to the deck, winded and outmatched.

MCCAFFERY -- reaches for the trident that protrudes from his leg. He grits his teeth as he slowly yanks it free.

NADIA -- straddles A.C. Blood oozes above his right eye.

NADIA

Your mother can't protect you this time.

A.C. desperately struggles as Nadia reaches up and grabs the sea horse necklace. Light fissures from her fist, then explodes out in a blinding, atomic-like ring.

GO WIDE: As the ring ripples past CAMERA, the "Quint" is illuminated in a triangular shaft of light that stretches up into the heavens. A weird HUMMING SOUND reverberates.

MCCAFFERY -- uses every ounce of strength to finally pull the trident free. He crawls to the door and slides the weapon across the deck towards A.C. A.C. tries to reach for it, but it slides away when a wave hits the boat.

The HUMMING SOUND grows louder and the light burns brighter.

NADIA

Welcome home, Orin.

Just as the SOUND CRESCENDOS, the boat pitches back and the trident slides into A.C.'s hand.

A.C.

I'm not going anywhere, bitch.

With that, he sweeps up the trident and plants it between her eyes. She looks at him surprised, then utters an UNHOLY BANSHEE WAIL before she IMPLODES in a writhing ecstasy of cataclysmic pain.

TIGHT ON THE SEA HORSE NECKLACE: As it drops to the rain-soaked deck in SLO MO.

GO WIDE as the triangular shaft of light is extinguished and the HUMMING SOUND goes silent.

A.C. picks himself up. He looks around and sees the storm has vanished. The sea is calm and the sky glistens with stars. Backlit by the moon, he steps to McCaffery with the trident in one hand and the necklace in the other.

MCCAFFERY

Well done, Orin, well done.

OFF this triumphant moment...

SMASH CUT TO:

A CANDLE. It's one of dozens that make up a flickering shrine to Eva that's been set up in front of...

EXT. "THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA" - DAY

The doors are locked and the shutters are down.

TIGHT ON A HAND -- as it gently leans a photo against a polished conch shell, PULL BACK TO REVEAL A.C. The photo is the one from the "Quint" and shows him and Eva smiling in happier times. When he stands, he finds Tom waiting.

A.C.

Yeah, I know, I'm going to be late for court.

TOM

All the charges have been dropped.

A.C.

You're kidding?

TOM

You must have friends in high places.

A.C.

Not high enough to do that.

Tom looks over at the shrine, then back at A.C.

TOM

You sure you're okay?

A.C.

I'll survive.

Tom studies his son, can sense the depth of his pain.

TOM

A.C., we've got to get better at this father and son thing. We've been drifting so long one of these days we're going to drift out of each other's lives for good. I don't want that.

A.C.

Neither do it.

TOM
So what do we do?

A.C.
You can start trusting me more.

TOM
I will if you give me a reason to.

A.C. nods, a new era of understanding reached.

A.C.
Sounds like a plan.

Tom pulls him into a hug.

A.C.
Dad, you realize we're hugging?

TOM
I won't tell anyone if you won't.

OFF this bonding moment...

EXT. DECK - "QUINT" - DAY

White clouds steamroller across the popsicle-blue sky. A.C. is on his hands and knees repairing the damage as Rachel steps onto the gangway.

RACHEL
I heard about your friend. I'm
sorry.

He looks away, still wrecked with guilt.

A.C.
Eva and I went through a lot
together. She knew all my secrets
and I probably knew half of hers.

She glances up towards the shrine.

RACHEL
They have this seminar in test-
pilot school in case one of your
classmates dies during training. I
always thought it sounded crazy,
you can't teach someone how to
grieve, but it wasn't about that.
They taught us the best way to
honor the dead is to strive to live
a better life.

He looks at her, sincere and tender.

A.C.

A couple of days ago, I wouldn't have appreciated that. But now... thanks.

Their connection is real and very special.

A.C.

My offer to take you diving still stands, once the "Quint" is seaworthy again.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Sounds like fun.

SLO MO as Rachel spins in shock and sees JESSE HICKS. He's recruitment-poster good looking and cuts a dashing figure in in his crisp white naval uniform.

RACHEL

Oh my God. Jesse!

REAL TIME RETURNS as she runs up and leaps into his arms. A.C. watches as they passionately kiss. They break off...

RACHEL

When did you get here?

JESSE

Transfer came through yesterday. An Admiral Mercer put it on the fast track. You know the guy?

Rachel covers her surprise with a lie.

RACHEL

Name doesn't ring a bell.

Jesse looks over at A.C., suspicious.

JESSE

Who's your friend?

Awkward, she leads him to A.C.

RACHEL

A.C., this is Jesse... my fiance.

OFF this unexpected triangle...

INT. CHAMBER - TEMPEST KEY NAVAL BASE - DAY

CLOSE ON THE SEAHORSE NECKLACE. It glints as it dangles. RACK TO REVEAL MERCER studying its every detail. He steps to one of the illuminated screens of those who have vanished in the Bermuda Triangle. Stares at a photograph.

ADMIRAL MERCER

I promise... I will find you.

As he reaches out and touches the image REVERSE TO REVEAL the smiling faces of a BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN and a 6 YEAR-OLD GIRL. OFF their haunting faces...

CUT TO:

EXT. LOOKOUT POINT - DUSK

SUPERWIDE MAGIC-HOUR SHOT OF A.C. standing on a rocky promontory, face against the wind, staring out to sea. He doesn't turn as McCaffery approaches.

A.C.

Eva didn't deserve to die. I should have protected her.

MCCAFFERY

You can't blame yourself. Every war has its casualties.

A.C.

You warned me and I didn't listen. It's my fault.

MCCAFFERY

No, it's mine. I should have started your training years ago. You have greatness within you, Orin. I saw glimmers of it last night.

A.C. makes a decision.

A.C.

Then let's do it... let's start. I won't allow the people I love or anyone else to be hurt.

McCaffery smiles, pulls out a present.

MCCAFFERY

I bought you a birthday gift.

A.C.

Thanks, but my birthday's not for a couple of months.

MCCAFFERY

You became Arthur Curry on April 15th. But today is the day Orin was born.

A.C. takes that in and reaches for the gift.

A.C.
 (disappointed)
 Feels like a book.

MCCAFFERY
 Just open it.

A.C. tears off the wrapping and stares at a worn leather-bound volume. He reads the spine...

A.C.
 "Henry IV, Part I and Part II".
 (beat)
 I didn't know Shakespeare was into sequels.

MCCAFFERY
 I expect you to have read them by next week.

A.C.
 I gave up book reports in the 6th grade.

MCCAFFERY
 This is part of your training.

A.C.
 When you said training, I thought you meant wielding tridents and doing cool stuff in the water.

MCCAFFERY
 All in due time.
 (re: book)
 Don't worry, there's plenty of sex and violence in there to keep you interested.

A.C.
 Couldn't you just give me the highlights and tell me how it ends?

MCCAFFERY
 The lesson isn't in the ending, Orin, it's in the journey.

McCaffery smiles wryly, then heads over the rocks. Dwarfed by the giant setting sun, A.C. looks back out at the vast twinkling expanse of sea, daunted by the mysteries it holds.

FADE OUT.

THE END