

FATHOM

BY

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FATHOM

TEASER

Up on a massive fog bank, shapes in the gloom, and resolve...

1

EXT. SOUTH ANTARCTIC SEA. DAY.

1

...into a cold, misty day on the South Antarctic Sea. An escarpment of glacial ice lines the far horizon. A transport helicopter comes in for a landing on the U.S.S. RONALD REAGAN, a cruising aircraft carrier.

TITLE CARD: ANTARCTIC OCEAN, PRESENT DAY

The helicopter is guided in by a crew wearing parkas. Out steps CLAY LING, 54, Asian, mustache, weathered, likable.

He braces against the wind as several other Pentagon functionaries pile out, followed by a scientific team: one man carries video and photographic equipment, another carries Hazmat gear, a third has a radiation detector.

A young naval lieutenant named BARRY COBB, an overfriendly Oklahoma type, late 20's, rushes up to Ling:

COBB

Cold enough for you sir?

LING

(shivering)

W--where--is ss-she?

2

EXT. AIRCRAFT CARRIER. DAY.

2

Ling and his associates, Cobb, and three other Naval officers are lowered down the side of the carrier on a scaffold towards the U.S.S. JEFFERSON CITY, a ballistic missile nuclear submarine that's listing in the waves next to the carrier.

An enormous MOLTEN DENT is visible in the hull, as if the sub has been hit with a giant superheated battering ram. The smooth steel skin of the craft is corroded, as if by some chemical, and reset to SLAG in places.

COBB

We found her about four nautical miles south of here, just listing in the waves. It was sheer luck, really, that we found it at all. A storm had blown us east.

LING

You h-h-haven't tried to board her
have you?

COBB

We were under orders to wait until
you arrived. Listen you want some
coffee, a heavier coat...

ADMIRAL GATLING

I'm not one to question orders Dr.
Ling, but it seemed ridiculous not
to board. Those men have got to be
half-starved...I was on a sub for a
few years and let me tell you...

The Navy contingent is headed by ADMIRAL PHILIP GATLING, a
thin, gaunt, tall man in his early 50's.

LING

(chattering)

I understand your c-cc-concern
Admiral. This is a special c-case.

ADMIRAL GATLING

Goddamn right its a special case!
Lose track of a nuclear sub for 46
hours...then it pops up 5000 miles
from where it went missing...and
Marshall sends me a civilian
meteorologist--

LING

Take up any command issues up with
the Office of Net Assessment,
Admiral. I've got total clearance.

ADMIRAL GATLING

(pissed, barking orders to
crewmembers below)

I want those corpsmen ready!

Ling and the Naval officers step off onto the hull of the
JEFFERSON CITY.

3

OMIT

3

4

INT. U.S.S. JEFFERSON CITY. DAY.

4

A blow torch cuts through the last bit of the hatch, which is
pried back by three members of the Explosive Ordinance
Disposal (E.O.D.) team.

The black clad soldiers drop into the submarine.

The E.O.D. COMMANDER, a stocky man, barks out dispersion orders. We follow the commander as he takes a tour of the ship: through the mess, through the torpedo room. All empty.

The Commander enters the berthing area. The beds are disheveled; there's a copy of ROLLING STONE on one of the bunks; a scattered deck of cards on the floor.

A E.O.D. SOLDIER comes in and reports.

E.O.D. SOLDIER
We checked the reactor room,
machinery spaces. Nothing.

The commander nods grimly as some of Ling's men come in and begin to photograph the scene.

5 EXT. U.S.S. JEFFERSON CITY. DAY.

5

Gatling and Ling stand amidst a group on the hull, waiting to board. Gatling communicates to the E.O.D. Commander via walkie...

E.O.D. COMMANDER
(over walkie)
We can't find anyone aboard the
ship, sir.

ADMIRAL GATLING
(into walkie)
Horseshit.

E.O.D. COMMANDER
(over walkie)
We checked twice sir. Top to
bottom with infrared.

ADMIRAL GATLING
(into walkie)
What about main control?

E.O.D. COMMANDER
(over walkie)
That's what I was going to tell you
about sir.

6 INT. U.S.S. JEFFERSON CITY MAIN CONTROL. DAY.

6

Gatling, Ling and the Navy brass make their way through the bowels of the sub and emerge into the main control room.

It too is empty, but the dispersion teams have taken apart much of the control machinery in the main control room. The E.O.D. Commander explains.

E.O.D. COMMANDER

Main navigational computer's fried--
silicon in the chips melted.
Massive electrical shorts in every
system.

(beat)

Like she was struck by lightning.

LING

(to his men)

No one touches anything. I want an
accurate record.

Gatling shakes his head and speculates:

ADMIRAL GATLING

Beijing maybe. Moscow doesn't have
their act together to pull a stunt
like this.

(off Ling's calm reaction)

You don't look too surprised.

LING

We've seen this before, Admiral.

The Admiral raises an eyebrow.

LING (CONT'D)

Last weekend.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. MISSION BAY, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA. NIGHT.

7

A perfect summer night on the bay, no wind, the lights of the beach houses twinkling on the shore, a full moon above...the kind of night that makes you wish you were 16 again.

TITLE CARD: MISSION BAY, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

A ski boat breaks the placid surface of the bay. As we move closer, we realize its not just a booze cruise...someone is actually pulling a kid behind the boat. Wakeboarding.

At 2 A.M.

Inside the boat, a bunch of teenagers drink beer and watch the boarder rip raleys off the wake behind them.

The driver's name is ZACK, rangy, wearing a dry wetsuit. He snatches a beer from Lisa, sophomore, French club president, smoking hot.

ZACK

Cool out with the beer.

Zack takes a chug. Lisa snatches the beer back.

LISA

You're always telling us to cool out with the beer.

(mimicing Zack)

That's cuz I've been pulled over before. The Coast Guard is all over the place out here...

A skinny kid, 14, turns down the radio. PHIL. Phil is nervous and funny.

PHIL

Hey isn't it true that sharks come in at night to feed?

ZACK

Don't tell Miles. He's already freaked about being in the water at night.

Behind the boat, MILES, the wakeboarder, clears the wake, gets props from the passengers. They tell him to go for it again. He turns into the wake, rips off the lip, lands a 360, but catches the front rail and does a nasty header.

PHIL

Miles is down homeslice.

LISA

Let's wait to go get him!

ZACK

Yeah. Let's mess with him some.

8 EXT. WATER -- NIGHT

8

Miles comes up and shakes off the fall. We see that he is about 13-- several years younger than everyone but Phil. The boat races away from him.

MILES

So lame.

Miles goes to collect his board as laughter rings across the water and then falls out of earshot.

It dawns on Miles that it's awfully quiet. He continues towards his board, and is just about to reach it when something MOVES in the water nearby. Miles turns. A buoy, bobbing fifty yards away. He looks towards the horizon, towards the boat, now even farther away, thinks about yelling, decides not to.

So he waits, eyes the dark water around him.

He looks back towards the buoy. It's not there. Gone.

9 EXT. BOAT -- NIGHT

9

The teenagers are singing along to the radio. Phil's ears perk up and asks Zach to turn it down. Zach's too busy singing so Phil turns it down. Distant screams are audible.

PHIL

Should we go get him?

ZACK

Naw. Let him stew a little bit.

ZACK turns the radio back up.

10 EXT. WATER -- NIGHT

10

Miles treads lightly, scans the surface. He smiles to himself-- I'm being an idiot....

He turns his head, only to see movement in the water behind him.

A sleek black head bobs on the surface fifteen feet away. A seal? A porpoise? Whatever, it's backlit...indistinct...impossible to identify.

Miles stares for several seconds. An alien gurgling comes from the creature, like a porpoise's blowhole.

Miles can't make a sound in return. Until it goes under.

11

EXT. BOAT -- NIGHT

11

PHIL tells Zach to turn down the radio again. No response. Phil tries to get someone to turn it down, but no one cares. Finally Phil gets up and turns it down-again.

Then they hear a louder scream, echoing across the water.

LISA

He's faking it.

Another wail echoes over the glassy surface.

PHIL

That didn't sound like a fake.

ZACK

You're so gullible...

Lisa shrugs. Another scream, insistent, strong. The kids' resolve weakens just a bit. Sure Miles is messing with them but, fuck, what if he's not....

Zack throws the boat in gear and brings the craft around.

Everyone piles into the bow to see what's going on. After a few beats Miles emerges on the horizon.

He looks almost catatonic in the water, eyes wide, staring straight ahead, shivering.

Everyone laughs. Somebody sings the 'Jaws' theme. Miles pulls off the wakeboard and swims towards the boat.

PHIL

Hey!! The board, you lil bitch!

MILES

Screw the board! You get it.

Miles gets to the ski deck and pulls himself up.

LISA

Paranoid much?

MILES

Something came up right next to me, alright--

ZACK

What'd it look like.

MILES
I don't know, it was dark, I
couldn't see-

PHIL
(interrupting)
Shhhhh. Guys, you hear that?

Lisa giggles-- Phil is funny.

ZACK
Yeah. Everyone shut up. Maybe we
can hear...the...creature...

Zack's joke quiets the group. As their voices echo out, a
sound emerges, something large, coming through the water...

... at that instant they are hit with the spotlights.

A booming voice through a megaphone:

BOOMING VOICE
This is the United States Coast
Guard--

12 INT. COAST GUARD CUTTER. NIGHT.

12

Five wet and frightened teenagers sit in blankets on the bow.
The Coast Guard Captain shakes his head as he looks at the
kids' cooler of beer.

COAST GUARD CAPTAIN
Zero tolerance. Heard of that?

Zack, the assumed ringleader, shrugs.

ZACK
Means you can take my boat.

COAST GUARD CAPTAIN
Means I can take your dad's boat.

The Captain steps away. Zack looks pale as a ghost.

ZACK
I'm dead.

The other kids feel the same way. Phil starts to dry heave.

As the kids bemoan their misfortune, we drift to young Miles,
lost in his own thoughts.

PHIL
You okay dude?

Miles shrugs, his eyes locked on the velvety water off the bow.

13 EST. HOUSEBOAT. PUGET SOUND. EARLY MORNING. 13

Establishing a houseboat in lovely Puget sound, part of a small floating community. A little on the hippy side, but a form of suburbia nonetheless.

TITLE CARD: PUGET SOUND, SEATTLE

14 INT. DAUGHTERY CARSTARPHEN'S HOUSEBOAT. MORNING. 14

We PAN across a domestic catastrophe in progress: a mountain of clothes strewn across the floor, intermingled with a whiffle ball bat and dirty dishes. We pan to the wall, where a Certificate of Appreciation from the PUGET SOUND ACTION TEAM PARTNERSHIP hangs askew...over to a POST GRADUATE DEGREE in MARINE BIOLOGY from the University of Hawaii...

Somewhere an alarm goes off. NPR. Morning Edition. It prattles on as we come to DAUGHTERY CARSTARPHEN, 28, brown hair made blond by the sun, athletic, sarcastic, smart, and right now, sleepy.

HUGE CRASH comes from the other room. She throws the chemosynthesis textbook she fell asleep with to the floor.

DAUGHTERY
(opening her eyes)
Jesse.

We track behind her as she trundles out into the kitchen. Housekeeping is NOT HER STRONGSUIT. A pizza box still on the kitchen table. TV is on with dubbed Japanese cartoons, a PlayStation and cartridges scattered on the carpet.

DAUGHTERY (CONT'D)
I don't hear the shower, Jesse.

A barbaric sounding SQUAWK is the only answer. She comes into Jesse's room.

It looks like a cyclone hit it. Epic devastation. Dirty clothes everywhere. It looks like it has snowed Legos.

A beanie baby tumps forward from the closet. Daughtery turns to face her son, Jesse, aged eight, baby fat, brown as a berry, tow-headed.

He currently has on a mixture of baseball catching equipment, a football helmet and ski gloves, - hunkered down in the closet, determined not to be budged.

JESSE
I'm not going.

He waves a plastic Light Sabre at his mother for defense. Daughtery looks at him, unfazed. This ain't the first time.

DAUGHTERY

Fine.

She turns and walks out. We track with her back to the kitchen. Jesse yells after her.

JESSE

You can bribe me all you want!

DAUGHTERY

I'm not going to bribe you.

Daughtery pulls an electric knife from the cabinet.

DAUGHTERY (CONT'D)

I'm going to break you.

She fires up the knife and walks back to Jesse's room.

JESSE

What are you going to do with that?

DAUGHTERY

How do you get to a man Jesse? You find out what he cares about and you squeeze.

She picks up a cuddly stuffed Alien.

DAUGHTERY (CONT'D)

Now either you get ready to your dad's or Alvin dies.

JESSE

You wouldn't.

Daughtery revs the electric knife, brings it close to Alvin the Alien's neck. She inches closer, actually letting the blade chew through some external fuzziness...

JESSE (CONT'D)

(throwing off catcher's mask)

OK, OK. You win. This time.

15

EXT. TIM CARSTARPHEN'S SUBURBAN HOUSE. DAY.

15

Daughtery and Jesse are met at the door by Daughtery's ex-husband, TIM CARSTARPHEN, 30s, a Microsoft middle manager. He's got on the weekend warrior gear--bike pants and gloves and a sweatshirt.

DAUGHTERY
Hey, sorry I'm late--

TIM
Relax, I factor it in.
(to Jesse)
Howya doing big guy?

JESSE
Keep your girlfriend away from me.

Behind Tim, in the kitchen, the new girlfriend appears, Cheryl, late 20's, gold jewelry, too much makeup, a rich girl. She waves nicely.

JESSE (CONT'D)
She's not my mom.

Jesse slides past his father into the house.

DAUGHTERY
I didn't teach him to do that.

TIM
He's a lot like you, D.

DAUGHTERY
I like to think he gets his bad habits from you.

TIM
Why start? Isn't that why we pay the lawyers?

Daughtery shakes her head. They are both good people trying to make the best of the divorce.

DAUGHTERY (CONT'D)
I'll be back on Sunday. If he won't eat, try those little microwavable pizza pockets, he's been into those. And bedtimes been a little flexible lately.

Tim opens up Jesse's duffel bag to see clothes just stuffed inside willy-nilly.

TIM
Flexible--?
(sniffing Jesse's clothes)
Are these dirty?

DAUGHTERY
Sorry, I was cramming.

TIM

(sarcastic)
Too busy with proving that the hot
vent ecosystems are the source of
all life...

DAUGHTERY

You were paying attention.
Shocker.

TIM

Hey I...
(stops himself)
Whatever. I'll see you next week.
Be safe.

16 INT. HALLWAY. DAY. 16

Ling walks down a hallway to a security checkpoint with a magnetoscope manned by armed Navy security forces.

TITLE CARD: PORT ARTHUR, U.S. NAVY BASE, BANGOR, MAINE

Ling flashes a security badge and guard waves him through to an air lock. Ling dons one of the clean suits hanging on the walls. A light on the wall flashes from RED to GREEN and Ling pushes through the far door into a six-story, blinding white CLEAN ROOM where the wrecked JEFFERSON CITY is in dry dock, swarmed over by forensic and mechanical teams.

17 INT. COMMAND ROOM. DAY. 17

A navy communications tech sits in front of a bank of computer monitors. The JEFFERSON CITY is visible through the command room windows.

CLAY LING, in clean suit minus hood, looks at digitized waveforms.

We hear the familiar submarine depth 'ping' as a QuickTime-like image pops up on the screen showing the bow of the sub.

COMMUNICATIONS TECH

These were the last recorded moments from the box. Only recovered the left side--so the balance goes in and out...

Ling nods. Good. They listen. Navigational chatter. Then, on the tape:

SONAR OFFICER

(on tape)
...unidentified object 2500 meters south by south west...

CAPTAIN
 (on tape)
 Rudder Amidships, all ahead full.
 Arm the torpedoes.

SONAR OFFICER
 (on tape)
 Copy. Object closing, sir. 2000
 meters and-

The officer is cut off by the now familiar low-end wail. An ethereal, spine tingling sound, it seems to be coming from everywhere at once.

CAPTAIN
 (on tape)
 --what the hell--

SONAR OFFICER
 (on tape)
 Object 1000 meters. Impact in six,
 five, four--

CAPTAIN
 (on tape)
 Bearing one eight zero! All
 engines ahead FLANK!

The sound gets louder and louder. The picture and sound begins to deteriorate, until nothing is left but an unintelligible grid of digital squares.

ANGLE on Ling. A voice offscreen:

GOULD
 Clay, get up here.

Ling looks up to see his colleague JAY GOULD, standing on a catwalk outside the command room, motioning for Ling to climb up.

GOULD (CONT'D)
 You got to see this.

18

INT. CLEAN ROOM. CATWALK. DAY.

18

The professorial GOULD stands talking with some other colleagues as Ling approaches.

LING
 Alright. I'm here.

Gould points down at the sub. Ling turns to look.

His face goes blank.

ANGLE ON the entire submarine. It is impossible not to notice the circular SCARRING that circumscribes the hatch.

LING (CONT'D)

Symmetrical scarring on the hull?

Gould looks at him.

GOULD

It's a bite mark.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

9 INT. MILES ROOM. DAY.

19

Tight on a blond seventeen year old. This is SAVANNAH, Miles' puritanical sister.

SAVANNAH
Nice work, asshole. You and your
slack friends.

Pull back to reveal Miles still in bed, one eye cocked open at his sister as she wakes him up.

He throws his pillow at her. She sidesteps it and deadpans:

SAVANNAH (CONT'D)
Two words. Community college.

Savannah walks out. Miles gets out of bed, goes straight to his i-Mac, nearly buried on his desk under teenage detritus.

He pulls up the GOOGLE homepage. He types in: SEA MONSTER.

Several links come up. He is in the middle of clicking through a picture of a plesiosaur when we become aware of a presence behind him.

His father, MILES SR., a successful lawyer, domineering, alpha male. He ties his tie as he lectures in his son's doorway.

DAD
Straight home after school, you
understand. You are in the
doghouse my friend. Today begins a
new regime.

Dad steps away. Miles clicks on a new picture:

The famous BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPH of the LOCH NESS
MONSTER.

20 INT. MILES KITCHEN. DAY.

20

Miles trundles into the kitchen, a dead man walking. The maid/nanny, ROSIE, Hispanic, 40s, gives him a reprovng look. Miles avoids eye contact, cracks the fridge, begins to take a swig of Orange Juice straight from the carton until a hand interrupts him:

SYLVIA
Other people have to drink that you
know.

Widen to reveal Miles' mom, SYLVIA, an athletic, tanned brunette. She's wearing an old March of Dimes 10K t-shirt. The quintessential limo liberal.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
 (taking the OJ)
 I don't know what to do with you anymore.

Miles shrugs, crosses to a large FISH TANK that walls the kitchen and looks out into the Living Room. He starts to absentmindedly feed the clownfish.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
 Brought home by the police in the middle of the night. You think that's fun for us?

MILES
 The Coast Guard thing wasn't our fault.

SYLVIA
 Not your fault--?

Beat. Miles is reluctant to say it.

MILES
 There was something in the water.

A withering look of skepticism from Mom.

SYLVIA
 Miles James. Lying is only going to make things worse.

21 EXT. COAST OF MADAGASCAR-- DAY

21

TITLE CARD: ANTANARIVO, MADAGASCAR

The ridge of a vast sand dune. After a beat a drone becomes audible, growing in intensity until a

MILITARY JEEP comes over the ridge. Inside Ling rides shotgun. An MP navigates the rugged terrain as a MILITARY ATTACHE leans forward from the back seat, trying to show Dr. Ling a series of SATELLITE PHOTOS. Beside the attache is a Malagasy native, a translator named Marcus who does his best not to get thrown out.

MAJOR KEANE
 (screaming over the wind)
 ...and these are the NavStar photos taken seventeen hours ago. See? There it is. A pod, over 20 miles wide...

The officer turns to a new page as the Jeep picks up the coastline and heads down the strand.

MAJOR KEANE (CONT'D)

(over wind)

Now here's an image taken five seconds later. The pod has vanished. Just gone.

The Major pauses as Malagasy tribesmen begin to zip past the Jeep, one at first, then more...until we realize we are in the midst of a large gathering on the beach.

MAJOR KEANE (CONT'D)

(over wind)

Now I don't have a Nobel so Doc explain to me how you move 400 square miles in 5 seconds--

LING

(ignores him)

How many eyewitnesses?

The Major laughs as the jeep pulls to a stop. The Malagasy tribesmen all crowd around the jeep.

MAJOR KEANE

(motioning to crowd.)

All of them. Witnesses aren't the problem.

LING

What is.

MAJOR KEANE

Getting 'em to open up. Talking about it is a "bad omen"....

Major Keane steps off into the gathering Malagasy crowd and begins to negotiate with some of the senior Malagasy.

We focus on LING as he falls to the back of the crowd and gets interested in a thin young Malagasy sitting on a log on the strand. He looks lonely and ignored.

Ling leans to Marcus, his Malagasy translator:

LING

What about him?

MARCUS

Him? Why you want to talk to him. Him kamboty.

LING

Him what?

MARCUS
Kamboty. Orphan.

Ling starts to walk towards him. His M.P. tries to pull him back but Ling waves him off and sits down next to the boy.

He smiles sweetly at the boy and holds out his hands.

A wave of recognition comes over the Malagasy's face. He points to Ling's right hand.

Ling opens his hand to reveal a TOOTSIE ROLL. The boy takes it and smiles. The commotion with Keane continues in the background.

LING
(to Marcus)
Ask him what he saw.

Marcus looks annoyed and barks a few words to the child. The boy nods, a little skittish.

MARCUS
He says he heard it first.

The boy sees Ling's confusion and points to the HORIZON LINE. The M.P. and several Malagasy tribesmen move over to eavesdrop.

LING
What'd it sound like?

Marcus translates. The boy does his best to mime a storm cloud and make a sound like....

LING (CONT'D)
(guessing the boy's
intention)
...thunder.

A wave of skittishness passes over the growing crowd. Keane ambles over. Ling makes eye contact and turns back to the boy.

LING (CONT'D)
What did it look like?

Marcus translates. The boy pauses, trying to find the words. After a beat, he looks up and speaks.

MARCUS
Like All the stars. Had Fallen.
Into the Water.

Off Ling--

2 EXT. MONTEREY OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE. DAY. 22

Daughtery's busted up Jetta pulls into the parking lot of the institute. Her bumper sticker reads: SAVE THE HUMANS.

23 EXT. DOCKS. DAY 23

DAUGHTERY makes her way down a congested dock towards a large scientific vessel--the KELLY CHOUEST-- the flagship of the Monterey Oceanographic Institute.

24 INT. KELLY CHOUEST. DAY. 24

Daughtery walks towards the bridge with her research assistant ANDY CLINE, 31, thin, intelligent, odd. Outside, we can see the ship is headed for the open sea.

ANDY

Okay...I got the benthic spectrometer, extra syringes, dry ice, blank tapes for the video feed, an extra sweater--

DAUGHTERY

Andy what would I do without you.

ANDY

(flatly, a fact)

Drown.

Daughtery and Andy reach the bridge where the head of the Institute and Captain of the KELLY CHOUEST, BARRY HANSEN, mid forties, a salty dog from Boston with a love of all things mechanical.

BARRY

Four years. You ready?

DAUGHTERY

(smiling)

I better be.

25 EXT. NORTHERN PACIFIC. DAY 25

WIDE: the KELLY CHOUEST cuts through in the open ocean beneath a raft of cumulus clouds.

On the deck, ANDY and two other operational techs are going over last minute checks on the one-person MYSTIC SUBMERSIBLE, the premier deep sea research sub in the world.

BARRY goes over last minute instructions with the pilot and only passenger. Daughtery.

BARRY HANSEN

Just watch out for thermal drafts.
Don't get near the wash of the
vents--

DAUGHTERY

Got it the first twelve times,
Barry.

BARRY HANSEN

It pays to be remedial with you.
Experienced pilots are the ones--

DAUGHTERY

(finishing)
--most likely to make a mistake. I
know.

BARRY HANSEN

Fine. Your funeral.

He turns and stomps back to the bridge as Daughtery pulls on her headgear, makes a last minute audio check with ANDY, and is about to get in the MYSTIC when Andy approaches, holds his hand under Daughtery's mouth.

Daughtery spits out a piece of GUM. Andy shakes his head and walks off.

26 EXT. OCEAN. DAY. 26

WIDE: the MYSTIC is craned off the deck and released into the ocean.

27 EXT. UNDERWATER. DAY 27

The MYSTIC descends through the icy Pacific, headed more than a mile down-- well beyond the reach of sunlight.

28 INT. MYSTIC SUBMERSIBLE. DAY. 28

Daughtery sits at a bank of computer equipment, monitoring a sonar reading of the ocean floor as the cramped MYSTIC quakes with the extreme pressure.

The MYSTIC's headlights illuminate a strange geologic formation on the sea floor.

DAUGHTERY

(into headset)
Now at 8,000 feet. Godzilla
straight ahead.

9 EXT. UNDERWATER. DAY. 29

The MYSTIC approaches 'Godzilla', a 150 foot tall 'black smoker', that rises like a giant chimney from the sea floor. A smoker is essentially a hot vent that spews superheated water from the earth's molten core out into the ocean--an kind of submerged 'Old Faithful'.

'Smoke' pours from the vent--a choking mix of sediment expectorated out into the ocean.

30 INT. KELLY CHOUSET. BRIDGE. DAY. 30

Barry, Andy and a handful of other oceanographers sit in front of several monitors displaying live feeds from the sub's cameras.

BARRY
(into headset)
Keep on the heading.

31 INT. MYSTIC SUBMERSIBLE. DAY. 31

Daughtery negotiates past the smoker.

ANDY
(radio)
Beats a video feed, don't it?

Daughtery smiles and looks out at the teeming ecosystem of strange fish, giant clams, and enormous tube worms that survive at the base of the smoker, as a result of the superheated water. The colors are spellbinding.

The tube worms, giant firehouses with open, gaping mouths, drift lazily with the current.

DAUGHTERY
(reading gauge)
Water temperature at 400 degrees.

Daughtery operates the robot arms, carefully collecting her samples for study.

We see a DIM LIGHT flash in the darkness for a moment behind Daughtery.

ANDY
(radio)
MYSTIC, we're picking up some
lights off the starboard bow.

32 INT. KELLY CHOUSET. BRIDGE. DAY. 32

Andy watches something from the starboard feed.

ON MONITOR: A small series of shimmering LIGHTS in the distance, then a CRACKLE of VIDEO static.

ANDY
(into radio)
There it is again.

33 INT. MYSTIC SUBMERSIBLE. DAY. 33

She looks but no lights appear in the distance. Daughtery is having trouble seeing out because of the interior reflection.

ANDY
(radio)
Starboard. Three o'clock.

She leans into towards the glass, cupping her hands around the side of her face to block everything out.

34 EXT. UNDERWATER. DAY. 34

A faint glowing pulse of phosphorous from the gloom. Daughtery turns her spotlights to starboard.

35 INT. MYSTIC SUBMERSIBLE. DAY. 35

Face to the glass, Daughtery sees a shimmering sequence of lights disappearing around the smoker.

Daughtery navigates the MYSTIC forward, easing the ship around the volcano like structure.

ANGLE, DAUGHTERY'S POV: outside the front of the MYSTIC, the craft's floodlights illuminate a vast expanse of flat sea floor, where hundreds, if not thousands of HOLES appear.

The holes are symmetrical and evenly spaced, each thirty feet across. Daughtery's mesmerized by the alien site.

DAUGHTERY
(into radio)
You seeing what I'm seeing?

36 INT. KELLY CHOUET. DAY. 36

On the monitor, the grid of mysterious holes stretch as far as the throw of the MYSTIC's spotlights.

BARRY
Better. I'm recording what you're seeing.

37 EXT. OCEAN. DAY. 37

The MYSTIC drifts towards one of the darkened holes.

INT. MYSTIC SUBMERSIBLE. DAY.

39

Daughtery trains the spots to look down into one of the strange dark cylinders, eases the MYSTIC towards the abyss.

She looks to a depth monitor that displays the ocean floor.

DAUGHTERY

No ping yet...

(reacting to a sudden
change)

Wait. Check that. I got a bottom.

The depth finders' indicates a depth of 8,542 ft....and
DROPPING.

DAUGHTERY (CONT'D)

Eight and an half, no, eight
four...

Daughtery taps the fluctuating monitor.

DAUGHTERY (CONT'D)

Wait-- something's wrong-- the
depth is changing...

Even as Daughtery says this it dawns on her-- the depth is
changing because--

DAUGHTERY (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Something's coming out.

BARRY

(staticky, over radio)

Didn't copy. Come again.

DAUGHTERY

I said...something is coming--

39

EXT. OCEAN. DAY.

39

An enormous INDISTINCT SHAPE barrels out of the hole past the
MYSTIC.

40

INT. MYSTIC SUBMERSIBLE. DAY.

40

The porthole darkens with the vastness of the creature. Pale
albino flesh rolls by.

It flits past with a thrust of a massive tail that chokes the
water with sediment.

The hulls rocks violently and knocks Daughtery to the floor.
Monitors go haywire. Amidst the din we can just make out
Barry's voice over the static:

BARRY
 (over radio)
 MYSTIC, we've lost video, MYSTIC.
 Do you copy?

Daughtery braces herself against the tumult of the passing creature. She looks at her flickering instrumentation-- the sonar screen, the depth finder, her video equipment-- all have gone haywire.

Outside, the silt from the sea floor has taken visibility to a few inches. Daughtery gathers herself and barks into the radio-

DAUGHTERY
 (desperate, into up radio)
 ...uhh...CHOUEST, request emergency
 ascension--

Ear-splitting feedback in her headpiece. She tears it off as the monitors scramble.

41 INT. KELLY CHOUEST. BRIDGE. DAY. 41

Andy looks at the freeze frames of digital garbage from the MYSTIC feed.

42 INT. MYSTIC. DAY. 42

Daughtery tries to bring the ship back on line as the ship's navigational and computer systems go on the blink.

The lights in the sub flicker...once...twice...then fail altogether.

She's alone, in the dark, at the bottom of the ocean.

She gathers her thoughts, the only sound her jagged intake of breath. She becomes aware of the low end rumble. It grows until the sub begins to shake. The portals groan with the cascades of sound.

A blazing wash of light from a thousand pinpoint sources blasts through the craft. The lights get brighter, hotter, to beyond the visible spectrum, to an X-ray intensity...

Daughtery screams.

The sound and the fusillade of lights cease.

An eerie calm gathers. Daughtery sits, afraid to breathe. One by one the lights of the MYSTIC flicker back to life.

Daughtery, too stunned to react, listens to a voice coming through the headset.

BARRY
 (over radio)
 ...I repeat, come in MYSTIC. This
 is CHOUEST. Come in MYSTIC.

43 INT. KELLY CHOUEST. BRIDGE. DAY 43

Barry, Andy et al. Several people have their hands cupped over their mouths and fear the worst. A weak reedy voice over the radio:

DAUGHTERY
 (over radio)
 This is the MYSTIC.

44 EXT. KELLY CHOUEST. BOW. DAY. 44

The crew lines the port bow and scans the sea. A long row of apprehensive faces. Andy spies the bubbles, 50 yards out. The MYSTIC surfaces in a plume of foam.

45 INT. KELLY CHOUEST DECOMPRESSION CHAMBER. DAY. 45

Tight on Daughtery, inside a steel decompression chamber. She's holds smelling salts as she tries to regain her senses. She has a nasty, growing rash from the decompression sickness.

ANGLE on: Barry and Andy share look of concern for their colleague.

46 INT. DEL MAR ACADEMY LIBRARY. DAY. 46

Tight on the famous black and white photo of 'NESSIE'--the LOCK NESS MONSTER.

PHIL
 That what it looked like, dude?

MILES
 Kind of. Not really.

PHIL
 Was it like an otter? Like a lizard?

MILES
 It wasn't an otter. It had a blowhole.

A wide shot reveals Miles and Phil in a carol at the back of the library, surrounded by books on CRYPTOZOOLOGY, SASQUATCH, UFOS, THE LOCH NESS MONSTER, JERSEY DEVIL. Phil riffs about blowholes as a pack of OLDER KIDS appear from the stacks. Among them are ZACK and LISA, from the wakeboarding adventure, and MILES' sister, SAVANNAH.

SAVANNAH

They throw the book at you?

MILES

Six weeks in Auschwitz. Grounded.
Took my blackberry.

DIANE

Hey, at least your parents care
enough to ground you.

PHIL

You serious?

DIANE

I'm trying to make him feel better,
idiot.

ZACK picks up one of the books. He likes nothing better than
torturing kids a few years younger than him.

ZACK

What you reading?

MILES

Nothing, spezmorph.

PHIL

Nice proboscis, spezmorph.

ZACK

(reading title)
Sea monsters of Antiquity--

MILES

Give it--

ZACK

(reading super-
melodramatically)
July 1734. Off the south coast of
Greenland. A six headed sea-
serpent was spotted--

LISA and SAVANNAH crack up. Miles lunges for the book but
ZACK holds the it away and then snaps it closed.

MILES

Give it back--

Miles snatches the book but Zack is too strong. He cracks
more jokes at the boys' expense, which crack the girls up,
which humiliates the younger boys. Finally Zack gets bored
of his torment and gives the book back.

Miles is upset.

ZACK
OK. OK. We'll leave you guys to
your Sasquatches.

The girls all giggle and walk off in a coven, leaving Miles
red faced and angry.

47

INT. DECOMPRESSION CHAMBER. DAY.

47

Daughtery sits on the small 'bed' in the decompression
chamber. Her rash has subsided-- she's been in the tank for
10 hours. BARRY and ANDY talk to her through an intercom
just outside.

Daughtery is, to put it mildly, amped. She breathlessly
tries to explain what she saw to Barry and Andy. This makes
her pant HEAVILY, since her blood oxygen levels are still
very very low.

DAUGHTERY
It came up from the hole and it was
huge and it was like RRRRRRRRRR and
there was this noise...you should
have heard the noise, Barry.

ANDY (OVER INTERCOM)
Russians. The new class of
boats...

DAUGHTERY
This was not a sub. Barry...listen
to me...the noise...

BARRY (OVER INTERCOM)
Methane gas.

DAUGHTERY
What light was refracted? I was at
3000 feet. Please--

BARRY (OVER INTERCOM)
Sorry, devil's advocate--

DAUGHTERY
The noise Barry! It was like a
jet...but deeper...a foghorn maybe
but SO LOUD...

ANDY (OVER INTERCOM)
Describe the anatomy.

DAUGHTERY
Big.

BARRY (OVER INTERCOM)
How big.

DAUGHTERY

Bigger than the throw from the spots.

BARRY (OVER INTERCOM)

Giant squid-

DAUGHTERY

(shakes her head)
Saw a pectoral fin.

ANDY (OVER INTERCOM)

Living fossil, like the coelacanth.
Eocene whale--

Barry nods. Part of him is excited too.

DAUGHTERY (OVER INTERCOM)

No. No coelacanth. No Eocene. It wasn't anything in any phylum or sub grouping or anything anybody's ever seen or even thought of---

BARRY (OVER INTERCOM)

A major vertebrate species--

DAUGHTERY

Why not? The hot vents have spawned an entire ecosystem--

BARRY (OVER INTERCOM)

Yeah, tube worms and clams, invertebrates--

DAUGHTERY

No one would have thought that was possible before Galapagos in '77! Life without light? Please...

Daughtery pauses to catch her breath, chest heaving, glistening with sweat.

BARRY (OVER INTERCOM)

Okay, okay. Just let me say this out loud. See how it plays.

(beat)

This morning you saw a sea monster.

DAUGHTERY

Yes--!

Daughtery's yelp is cut off as she bonks her head off the low ceiling of the decompression chamber.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

8 EXT. FISHING SHACK ON GULF OF MEXICO. DAY. 48

Tight on the massive mouth, glazed eyes, jagged teeth of a HUGE RED SNAPPER. Cooked and garnished. Carried by one RICHARD OWEN, 30s, dad of three, ex high school football star, LSU alum, now insurance salesman. Also the designated griller.

We cut wide to reveal three drinking buddies grilling on the dock of a fishing shack in the swamps near the gulf of Mexico.

RICHARD

All part of a day's work boys.

Richard's best friend from high school, BUG WILSON, grunts approval from under a middle-America mustache.

BUG

Don't get no bettern this.

RICHARD

We got a little lemon butter, garlic to go with. If you need it. Tartar sauce...

Richard's younger brother, GEORGE, fetches out another NATURAL LIGHT.

GEORGE

You wouldn't think four guys could kill 8 cases in 9 hours...

The boys dig in, drinking having a great time.

RICH

To my little bro's first rig dive!

Cheers all around. Then a voice speaks from behind them.

BUG

To slaying 'em tomorrow.

They all turn to see their buddy BUG WILSON mask, fins, and 70S SPANDEX PANTSUIT. Imagine Elton John on a scuba dive. BUG has his F-387 Lazer Speargun in his hands and an evil grin on his face. All the good old' boys howl with laughter. BUG sashays forth.

BUG (CONT'D)

What? It's my Cajun wetsuit!

Lots of backslapping and laughter.

TIME CUT TO:

Rich walks down the dock towards the Aquasport, coozie in hand. George walks with him.

RICHARD
What'd you do with my tackle box?

GEORGE
Back there by the bilge well.

Richard turns to open up the well.

RICHARD
Only a fool puts the tackle in the--
(reacting to something in
the well)
Oh me. Oh me oh my.

George smiles ear to ear upon seeing his brother's surprise, as Rich pulls out a brand new RIFFI SPEARGUN, still in the box.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
A crossgrain doweled muzzle...you didn't.

GEORGE
I did.

Rich is beaming and starts to open up the box.

RICHARD
How'd you know what to get?

GEORGE
Trace helped me out a little bit-

RICHARD
Didn't know Buick salesman had that kind of disposable income--

GEORGE
(smiling)
They don't.

Rich is genuinely fired up by the gesture. He hugs his brother.

RICHARD
Well, bro, you just put the pressure on Christmas.

Off Rich and George's hug, we

CUT WIDE: the boys' Aquasport bobs next to the dock as the echo of their voices roll out across the Gulf.

9 INT. DAUGHTERY'S HOUSE. DAY.

49

Daughtery staggers back into her house, exhausted. She pauses a beat to see the stacks of unopened mail, a weeks worth of newspapers. She looks over to see a 17 year old girl-- a babysitter-- watching SNL reruns. Daughtery puts her finger to her mouth, pays her. Babysitter leaves.

Daughtery goes in to see her precocious son Jesse who is in his room, playing with an Erector Set. He ignores her. She brushes his hair.

JESSE

You said you'd be back Sunday.

Daughtery hugs her son.

DAUGHTERY

I'm sorry. Everything took longer than I thought. I'm glad to be back now. With you. You know that?

Jesse shrugs and rolls over away from her. Daughtery puts a hand on his shoulder.

DAUGHTERY (CONT'D)

You know why I dive don't you?

Jesse looks up, wounded but curious.

50

EXT. HOUSEBOAT. 'DUSK.

50

Daughtery leads Jesse to the back deck of the houseboat. There is a swimmer's platform off the back. She steps out of her shoes and goes and sits on the platform, legs in the water from knee down.

Daughtery motions him over, takes the heel of her hand and begins to beat out a tattoo on the heavy wood. She does it several times, always the same beat...three hard thuds.

Curious, Jesse crawls over and sits down next to her.

Daughtery continues beating and Jesse continues not knowing why. They look out over the harbor. After a beat, Jesse starts to bang on the wood, too.

In the silver moonlight, something breaks the water about fifty feet away.

Jesse starts, a little scared.

We hear a clicking sound...and realize that Daughtery has attracted a pod of porpoises.

Daughtery and the animal play a game: She beats three times, the porpoise blows three times. Two times, two times.

A wide slow smile breaks over Jesse's face.

DAUGHTERY

Now you know.

51 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY.

51

A topographical map of the world's oceans-- dotted with push pins. There is one large one off the coast of Madagascar.

LING

(offscreen)

Some of you will recognize the famous bloop from the deep sound channel that we picked up on S.O.N.A.T. in '91.

Pull back to reveal LING sits in an impressive READING ROOM across from several men in monochromatic suits. Behind them, other government officials from various branches of government are S.R.O.

At the center of the table is a fit, grey haired man: MARSHALL ANDREWS a.k.a. "Yoda", the head of the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment. He is a serious individual.

The suits flick through mounds of REPORTS that have been distributed for the meeting as Ling runs the briefing. Ling is nervous, and there is a serious, deliberate air.

LING (CONT'D)

As there was no geologic activity near the JEFFERSON CITY'S last recorded position, this lays to rest the seismic theory.

Murmurs throughout the crowd. The elder man with glasses rises with a hoary head and an accusing finger:

SUIT #1

Brass tacks, Dr. Ling. Do the Chinese have something down there we don't know about?

LING

The JEFFERSON CITY was the fastest attack sub in the world. To hijack it and board it in open water...technically conceivable, but highly unlikely.

ADMIRAL

So what am I suppose to say to the families of those hundred and eleven men and women--

LING

At this point their disappearance defies easy summary.

This is the kind of hemming and hawing the panel has come to despise.

SUIT #1

(acid)

What we are trying to ascertain here, Dr. Ling, is whether we can take the foreign power off the table.

Beat. Ling considers, parses carefully.

LING

I don't know.

General consternation.

SUIT #3

9 million dollars in special appropriations and you still don't know your ass from a hole in the ground--

Consternation, outrage, etc. LING motions for some assistants to come forward.

LING

If you gentlemen will bear with me-- there is some evidence that this is a natural phenomenon, without direct antipathy to our national interests.

Ling motions to an aide. A cart is rolled in for the group. On top. A box is covered by a curtain.

Ling culls the curtain. The men crowd around a large plexi container and gaze down at a shiny triangular shaped object about the size of a pool rack. Preserved under glass.

LING (CONT'D)

This washed ashore near the sighting in Madagascar.

(beat)

As best we can tell, it's a tooth.

- 52 INT. MILES BEDROOM. NIGHT. 52
 An alarm clock detonates at 3 A.M. A paw swats the sleep button. Pan to Miles, wide awake. He peels off the covers and we see he's COMPLETELY DRESSED.
- 53 INT. HALLWAY, MILES HOUSE. NIGHT. 53
 Miles creeps along the upstairs hall. Eases past the doorway to his parent's room. In the half-light he sees the shape of his mom...but where is his Dad? Just then the toilet flushes.
 Miles freezes as his Dad emerges from the bathroom, scratching his balls, eyes at half mast. Close call.
- 54 INT. KITCHEN, MILES HOUSE. NIGHT. 54
 TIGHT ON The punchpad for a high end house security system. A finger keys in the password. The alarm is deactivated.
- 55 EXT. DRIVEWAY. NIGHT. 55
 Miles pushes the family VOLVO CROSS-COUNTRY station wagon down the driveway. When it's far enough from the house, he fires the ignition.
- 56 INT. VOLVO. NIGHT. 56
 Miles drives along a manicured street until his headlights land on PHIL, idling on the corner.
- 57 EXT. MARINA. NIGHT. 57
 Off the darkened Volvo to find the two boys piling into a battered green skiff with a 20hp pull motor on it, and pull out into the bay.
- 58 EXT. MISSION BAY. NIGHT. 58
 A spotlight announces the boys approach in the boat to a spot in the middle of the bay. Lights twinkle in the distance on shore.

MILES
 Spotlight?

PHIL
 Check.

MILES
 Fish finder?

PHIL
 Yep.

MILES

Bait?

Phil holds up three loaves of WONDER BREAD.

59

EXT. MISSION BAY. LATER

59

Miles and Phil drift, looking and listening to the soft lap of the swells against the hull. Pieces of bread float in the water.

PHIL

You ever read about the Jersey Devil, it was this pseudopod that like absorbed three people in Teaneck.

Phil eyes the soggy bread.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Maybe it likes whole wheat.

MILES

Phil.

PHIL

What.

MILES

Shut up.

Phil bangs the heel of his hand against the hull, making a dull thud.

MILES (CONT'D)

Stop spaz.

PHIL

This might attract the entity...

Miles rolls his eyes when somewhere, out in the dark water, a sound. Miles reacts.

MILES

Stop banging.

PHIL

How do you know it's not working.

MILES

Shhh---

Phil trails off as they hear the sound of splashing from just off starboard. They stand up and turn towards the sound. Miles shines the spotlight. The boys squint. They look at each other. Holy shit.

Miles fires the engine, engages it to get momentum to carry them over to the splashing, then cuts the engine again for a stealth approach.

A THIN SKELETAL CREATURE thrashes on the surface. The intensity increases as the boys approach.

Miles and Miles bend over to paddle. After a few strokes, both boys notice that a strange GELATIN covers the surface of the water. Phil puts his hand down to the goo to feel it...

PHIL

Weirdness.

Miles looks over the bow at a PELICAN splayed out on the surface. It's exhausted, caught like a fly in soup. The boys come alongside and pull it free of the gelatin. It shakes itself and takes off. The gelatin glows phosphorous where it was disturbed by the bird.

Phil then notices what looks like opaque sacs, all bunched up, floating statically in the gelatin. Phil shines the light...

Miles pulls a crab net from the bottom of the boat pulls up one of the sacs. He dumps it on the bottom of the boat so they can get a closer look with the spotlight.

The sac is opaque. Inside we can see unformed viscera. Entrails. A jaw bone.

It dawns on Miles what they are.

MILES

Eggs.

60

INT. MILES' HOUSE. NIGHT.

60

Miles and Phil enter through the sliding glass door carrying a playmate cooler.

They carry the cooler over until Phil's grip slips and the cooler thuds to the floor. Water sloshes out; Miles freezes and gives Phil a withering what-the-fuck look.

They hold in silence a beat to see if anyone wakes up. All clear. Miles hoists the cooler onto the dining room table, removes the top of the cooler and looks down into the brackish water at the EGG.

Miles slides it into the fish tank. It settles into the corner near the filter. Phil's dubious of the plan.

PHIL

You sure your parents won't notice?

MILES

They don't notice me half the time.

Phil nods. Good point.

MILES (CONT'D)

Just rearrange the pirate ship...yeah kind of behind the bubble maker...

Phil nudges the egg with the fishnet to a semi-concealed spot. Satisfied, they mash their faces to the glass.

MILES (CONT'D)

Total creature dude.

61 EXT. MONTERREY OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE. DAY.

61

Daughtery approaches the institute in her Jetta, surprised to find four armed National Guardsman at the entrance. She comes to a stop, rolls down her window.

DAUGHTERY

What's going on? Everything okay?

GUARDSMAN

(curtly)

Name.

DAUGHTERY

I work here.

The Guardsman motions for an ID, Daughtery offers her Driver's Licence. The Guardsman takes it and steps over to confer with a uniformed officer. The Officer reads Daughtery's name into a walkie. After a beat, the officer walks over to the car.

OFFICER

They're waiting for you.

62 EXT. PARKING LOT. DAY.

62

Four armed guardsman meet Daughtery as she emerges from her car. The Officer from the gate steps forward.

OFFICER

This way, Dr. Carstarphen.

Several men in CLEAN SUITS are loading the MYSTIC SUBMERSIBLE onto a FLAT-BED TRUCK.

DAUGHTERY

Where are they taking the MYSTIC-?

OFFICER
It's being confiscated as part of
the inquiry--

Before Daughtery can complain she's roughly ushered into the
front hall of

63 INT. MONTERREY OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE. DAY. 63

Barry Hansen, the head of the facility, runs toward her.

DAUGHTERY
Barry what is going on-

BARRY HANSEN
D.A.R.P.A., U.S. Ocean and Atmo,
one guy said he was from the
Pentagon--

Barry pauses, looks Daughtery in the eye.

BARRY HANSEN (CONT'D)
I've here since six and I still
don't know a damn thing. But
they've got warrants, subpoenas.

The guardsman points Daughtery to the conference room.

OFFICER
They're waiting for you.

He opens the door to reveal a crowded conference table. A
man we recognize stands as Daughtery appears:

LING
Hello, Dr. Carstarphen.

64 INT. MILES HOUSE. DAY. 64

TIGHT on Miles, staring intently as something offscreen. A
television plays a Tide commercial somewhere.

ANGLE Miles POV: on the EGG SAC, sitting patiently behind
the filter in the family fishtank.

SAVANNAH
(offscreen)
Earth to Elrod.

Miles looks up to see his sister, shaking her Audi keys.

SAVANNAH (CONT'D)
We're gonna to be late.

Miles pulls himself away and exits. The camera drifts back
to the egg.

TIGHT ON TELEVISION MONITOR. DAY.

65

A single wide-shot: Daughtery sits at roundtable conference in progress. In addition to Ling, we also see Gould, and some of the cadre of government functionaries. They've been at this a while.

GOULD

Any headaches since the encounter?

DAUGHTERY

No.

GOULD

Numbness on the left side of your face or torso?

DAUGHTERY

No.

GOULD

Blind spots in right eye?

DAUGHTERY

No. When do I get to ask a question?

Ling looks at her a beat, ignores the question, looks down into his notes.

GOULD

Let's go back a bit. After you encountered these mysterious "holes"--

DAUGHTERY

Dr. Ling, I've been answering your questions for three hours--

GOULD

Did you see any brightly colored lights...

DAUGHTERY

Yes. My turn. Who are you people?

LING

Scientists. Like you.

DAUGHTERY

From where? What institutions?

Gould glances to Ling.

LING

A mix of private and public concerns.

Daughtery is incredulous.

DAUGHTERY

What's all the Area 51 crap about? We just discovered a new species--

GOULD

If we could continue--

DAUGHTERY

I'm not talking until you tell me what YOU know about all this. Then, like scientists do, we work together to figure out what's down there.

LING

I'm afraid that's impossible, Ms. Carstarphen.

DAUGHTERY

Why is that?

LING

Because the institute's research programs have been suspended indefinitely--

DAUGHTERY

What--?

LING

-- and the Institute, a government facility, is under temporary oversight by my office. And I have enlisted the United States Armed Forces to assist me.

A stunned uncomfortable silence.

LING (CONT'D)

We'll need you to sign some things before you go.

DAUGHTERY

I'm not signing anything. My work is my life.

Ling nods to some MPs by the door.

LING

You have no choice.

FREEZE-FRAME on Daughtery's stunned, angry face.

We pull out of the videotape to reveal LING and GOULD...

65A

INT. COMMAND CENTER. DAY.

65A

...watching a replay of their earlier conversation with Daughtery.

Ling regards Daughtery, with a sympathetic, pained look. He is a scientist as well.

LING

I hated to do that.

Gould acknowledges Ling's feelings, but...

GOULD

You had no choice.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

66 EXT. GULF OF MEXICO. DAY.

66

The expanse of the azure Gulf. Then on the horizon, an Aquasport cuts through the lazy swells. The strains of Jimmy Buffet's "Margaritaville" echo lightly over the water.

TITLE CARD: GULF OF MEXICO.

Our three spearfishermen, George, Bug and Rich, bounce along drinking beer, telling lies. Bug still sports his Cajun wetsuit.

Up ahead looms the massive specter of the OCEAN STAR OIL RIG, an enormous platform rising ten stories above the waves. A wonder of modern engineering.

RICH

Look, bro, you know-- I've dived all over the world. But for quantity and size--nothing compares to the rigs--

BUG

Hundred pound AJs. 300 pound jewfish.

RICH

Commonplace.

GEORGE

Your shitting me.

RICH

I crap thee negative.

Rich readies his NEW SPEARGUN--the gift from George.

RICH

I could take out Orca with this thing.

BUG

Just remember this ain't no Sandals resort out here. The riptides'll slam you into the rig...barnacles'll slice clean through a 60mm wet suit. Grind you like hamburger.

George looks like he's going to be sick. Rich gives Bug a wink behind George's back and pulls the AQUASPORT up along side one of the pilings that support the oil rig. They tie up and begin to gear up for the dive.

Rich and George gear up for the dive and get into their scuba gear, recheck their spear guns. Bug stays in a t-shirt and slops.

BUG (CONT'D)

One last thing. Be careful when you see that trophy Grouper 50 feet below you that you check you depth--

RICH

Don't get all excited and forget how deep you are...

BUG

Not unless you want to go all warm and fuzzy...

Rich spits confidently in his mask. George eyes him, copies him weakly, washes it out and puts it on.

GEORGE

How long we gonna be down?

Bug holds up an MGD Lite.

BUG

Three beers.

(with a wink)

I crack the fourth one, I'll know to send the search party.

67

INT. OCEAN. UNDERWATER. DAY.

67

Rich and George make their way down through several feet of brackish Mississippi run off. After a beat they come out of the silt into a luminous band of cobalt blue.

They move down through streaking schools of huge snapper and spade fish. Rich signals to George that he sees something below. He descends. George is nervous but follows him towards an OMINOUS SHAPE on the bottom.

They soon come upon a huge WARSAW GROUPE. The fish sees the divers and descends.

They descend as the fish does, until they lose it as it eases around a tripod of rig pilings. George points for them to follow.

Visibility drops to five feet. Only the faintest light at this depth.

The two round the corner of the rig. Deep ahead of them, the SHADOW of the grouper.

Rich gears up his speargun, motions for George to do the same.

The dark shape gets bigger. Hard to make out how big it is in the gloom, but it's big. TROPHY BIG.

Rich fingers his speargun. The shadow comes closer. George gives him a signal. Wait until its close.

The SHADOW resolves into a MASSIVE BEHEMOTH, not a grouper at all, but something much bigger.

The water is very murky. We get a vague impression of a manatee-like creature with an odd protruding lower jaw and nasty underbite. It takes on the color of the water, its skin shimmering with bioluminescence.

Rich glances to George, who is awestruck as the creature swims toward him.

Rich fears for George and pulls the trigger.

The gig sticks into the beast's flesh.

The creature reacts with a mighty flick of its tail and dives. Rich is pulled violently into a rig piling. His face plate spiders. He loses the handle on his mouthpiece, sucks in a lungful of water.

The creature continues its descent. Rich's arm is about to be ripped out of its socket because he's tangled up in the piling.

George tries to cut the tether with a gutting knife as the rope digs into his brother's flesh. In an instant Rich is able to release his speargun, but it gets whipped violently and catches in George's tank hose.

George is picked off the rig and dragged into the depths.

Rich watches helplessly as the creature pulls his brother into the abyss.

A LIGHT ignites below, as if the creature were a giant underwater LIGHTNING BUG, silhouetting George.

The light signals once, twice, then the entire sea floor responds with hundreds and hundreds of more lights, like a field of lightening bugs.

Rich blacks out, floats up toward the surface.

BUG puts down a FOURTH BEERCAN and looks out nervously at the water. He looks at his watch. They've been down too long.

RICH surfaces face down, unconscious.

INT. DAUGHTERY'S HOUSEBOAT. NIGHT.

69

Daughtery paces on her back deck on a portable phone. Her face is red, eyes swollen.

DAUGHTERY

-- Dad, this isn't some set-back, OK? I don't even know when I can get back into the Institute, they've confiscated all my research, the tapes from the dive. Barry's practically cooperating with them. Call who? They are the authorities--

Daughtery chokes back a tear, catches Jesse looking at her from the doorway.

DAUGHTERY (CONT'D)

Jesse, I'm talking to Papa. Go watch TV.

Jesse reluctantly trundles over to the television, clicks it on. A rerun of Law and Order. Jesse flips through the channels, coming to rest as Keith Olbermann proclaims the Top 5 stories on tonight's Countdown.

OLBERMANN

(on T.V.)

Story number four on today's countdown...what lies beneath...

ON TV: A distraught Rich talks to reporters.

RICH

(on T.V.)

I been fishing the rigs for fifteen years. I know these waters. I've never seen anything like it.

Jesse's ears prick up.

JESSE

Mom.

Daughtery ignores him, still on the phone the phone.

JESSE (CONT'D)

(louder)

Mom.

Daughtery ignores Jesse. The television cuts to a shot of the OCEAN STAR OIL RIG. Jesse knows this is important.

JESSE (CONT'D)
 (louder still)
 Mom.

DAUGHTERY
 (looking up, annoyed)
 Jesus, Jesse, what?!

Daughtery puts the phone to her shoulder and focuses on the television, which cuts to a shot of RICHARD OWEN.

RICH
 (on TV)
 Damn thing had claws the size of a Volkswagon. Glowed like a firefly. People round here been saying I was narked out. I was clear as a bell. The thing that...

Rich chokes up.

RICH (CONT'D)
 ...the thing that took my brother wasn't no grouper. I know that much.

TV cuts back to OLBERMANN.

OLBERMANN
 (on TV)
 Something in the water down there in Louisiana. We don't make this stuff up folks.

Over the portable, Daughtery's father is audible, unaware she's not listening.

DAUGHTERY
 Dad. I gotta go.

Daughtery clicks over on the phone. She dials 411. The operator answers.

OPERATOR
 (through phone)
 City and state please?

DAUGHTERY
 New Iberia, Louisiana.

70

INT. MILES' KITCHEN. NIGHT.

70

Miles sits at the kitchen counter, eating a bowl of cereal. Behind him, his mother paces in front of the FISH TANK while she talks on the portable:

SYLVIA

(on phone)

...call Kayla, she's a gas, she just got married too and I hear he's Scottish, Irish, something-

Mom stands before the empty fish tank.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Where are all the fish?

Miles freezes. His Lucky Charms hover on the spoon. The fish are gone? He turns and looks to the tank. His mom wanders off into the din, prattling on about her dinner party.

Miles gets up and takes a few cautious steps to the fish tank. He looks behind the filter. Nada. Zip. Empty.

71 INT. PHIL'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

71

Phil's geeky family is all watching FEAR FACTOR when the phone rings. Phil goes into the kitchen to answer it.

PHIL

Nance residence.

MILES

(through phone)

It hatched. It's gone. Get over here.

72 INT. MILES' KITCHEN. NIGHT.

72

Miles hangs up the phone and looks back to the fish tank. Where the fuck is the egg! He looks with growing uncertainty around the kitchen. A noise behind him! He wheels to see his SCOTTISH TERRIER scratching his way around the floating sink.

MILES

What's wrong Toto?

The dog growls in answer as Miles's mom calls from the other room.

SYLVIA

Miles could you come in here for a second?

Miles reluctantly heads off to the DEN to find his mother standing by the couch the mother stands, hip cocked, hand to phone.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
 How many times have I told you not
 to eat in the living room?

MILES
 Wow. Sorry, mom, I--

Miles is interrupted by the piercing sound of SHATTERING
 GLASS, followed by a CASCADE OF WATER hitting a wood floor.

SYLVIA
 (flatly, to Miles)
 What's going on in there?

A rush of tank water spills through the doorway and onto the
 Persian rug. Miles stutters but can't answer the question.
 His mother steps past him into the KITCHEN to find the
 terrier going apeshit. Water is everywhere. She puts her
 hand to her forehead.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)
 (to the maid)
 Rosie! We got a mess in here!!

As Miles' mom begins to rummage for the mop, Miles sees
 something move in his periphery. He looks around just in
 time to see a fleeting, indistinct glimpse of a small, wet,
 glistening THING scoot around the corner down the hall.

73 INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT.

73

Miles follows a wet trail leads down the hardwood floor of
 the hallway to SAVANNAH'S ROOM.

She is in the midst of laying out her clothes for school
 tomorrow.

SAVANNAH
 What do you want?

Miles glances down to see that the water trail leads into
 Savannah's BATHROOM.

MILES
 Dad's hogging the downstairs.

SAVANNAH
 (turning away)
 You are disgusting, you know that?

Miles shrugs and enters the bathroom.

INT. SAVANNAH'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

74

MILES locks the door behind him. He looks to see that the water slick runs behind the toilet.

He can hear it, whatever it is, skittering behind the john.

He leans down for a look but gets a menacing low end growl. The mirror starts to rattle.

MILES
(whisper)
It's okay. It's okay there little
guy.

Miles holds out his hand, like you do to a dog to let him sniff you. The creature recoils. Miles pulls a stick of BUBBLEGUM out of his pocket, unwraps it, and places it back near the toilet.

After a quiet beat, a small, slick paw emerges and slowly pulls the CANDY back out of sight.

MILES (CONT'D)
Cute.

Miles can hear the creature chewing. A rap at the door.

SAVANNAH
(through door)
Elrod. Everything ok in there?

MILES
(lying)
No. Gotta upset stomach...

Savannah groans her disgust through the door. We hear her stomp off. Miles goes back to coaxing.

MILES (CONT'D)
(to critter)
Easy. It's OK. You're OK.

The creature recoils and makes a strange growling noise.

MILES (CONT'D)
I got ya little fella...

Miles puts his hand on the creature's back. Strokes it once, twice...then the creature wheels and BITES, sinking it's teeth into Miles's forearm.

Miles recoils, surprised, in pain, as the thing scampers up the toilet bowl...and dives in.

It wiggles its way down the pipe and is gone.

FADE TO BLACK: