

DOGS OF WAR
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EXT. ROSS SEA, ANTARCTICA - NIGHT

The pointed tip of a Japanese harpoon ship - ASANEBO - pushes past thick, rolling fog that limits visibility for miles....

EXT. ASANEBO - SAME

An ugly, narrow seining vessel. DOZENS of BLOODY WHALE CARCASSES strewn about the deck are fensed and processed for merchants by an assiduous, skeleton crew. It's business as usual.

CAPTAIN SINAR KO: a vigilant, grim-jawed Asian man in his thirties, glances at a SPINNING COMPASS that slows as they escape fog shrouding:

A burst of CRACKLING, MYSTERIOUS LIGHT - resembling lightning - vanishing behind them....

EXT. SEA WOLF, ROSS SEA - MORNING

GUNS-N-ROSES' "Welcome to the Jungle" blares across:

SEA WOLF: a 60-year old fishing trawler treading cautiously past fog and icy waters, adorning a frayed FLAG of a ferocious wolf.

Leaning over her railing to methodically tighten the support of a 7 ft. jagged blade designed to tear open another ship's hull:

CAPTAIN NATE ASHBURN: brash, unorthodox, and athletic - also in his thirties - with a determined spirit and years of experience.

NATE

Let the poachers try again. They'll be limping home tail in ass.

VALA: Sea Wolf's 2nd Mate; a late-twenties unkempt, free spirit with bleached dreadlocks flapping in the wind as she does the "Axl Rose" sway, lowers the music and helps Nate back on deck.

VALA

I suppose every underdog has his day.

She playfully "shoulder-knocks" Nate as they survey the ship:

Motley DECKHANDS perform maintenance on an assortment of wicked hand made WEAPONS built to incapacitate whaler ships:

- an iron tipped RAM and 2 CATAPULTS of sewage on the bow
- a rusted, whale HARPOON on the stern
- tear gas bombs scrawled with: WHALE KILLERS, MURDERERS GO HOME

NATE

We need more toys.
(to deckhands)
And give them a good polish!

NATE
(sarcastic)
I want them nice and shiny for the
press.

VALA
More weapons? You're crazy. Another
surprise visit from the Coast Guard-

NATE
-With more bogus fines? Screw 'em.

'JACK', a happy-go-lucky PITBULL runs up to Nate with a bone,
wanting to play, and he whips it across the deck for her.

INT. SEA WOLF, BRIDGE - SAME

A disorderly, tight cabin dominated by outdated computer
equipment and RESEARCH FILES documenting MARINE ACTIVITY.

FRANK: Nate's uncle and 1st Mate; a crotchety, thick barrelled
man in his sixties with muttonchops and a slight southern drawl,
mans the ship, mid-argument with:

TAO: a slovenly, facetious man of Chinese descent, wearing a
'Star Trek' T-shirt and thick glasses. He hunches over a SONAR
MONITOR hunting for poachers. Presently, there's none.

FRANK
We're hittin' more ice, dammit! This
ship's not built for that.

Sea Wolf JOLTS as it squeezes past a few blocks of ice.

TAO
So don't hit any big, white blocks.

FRANK
They're late! I'm headin' to open
water. 'Sea Sprite' can find us.

Nate has entered unnoticed - pouring a cup of coffee - calm.

His dog follows him in and darts for her bed in the corner.

NATE
'Sea Sprite' is always late, Uncle
Frank. They'll be here. They know we
need supplies. Stay the course.

SPERM WHALES pop up on the SONAR MONITOR.

TAO
Our family's back, Captain.

NATE
Moby. Good.

The massive male "MOBY" comes up for air with an impressive breach, showcasing a CLEFT above his right EYE. Even stranger:

Abnormal ARMOR-PLATED SCALES with a metallic sheen have grown to encompass Moby's head, spreading sparsely across his body.

Concern for the whale's "mutation" consumes them.

FRANK

A whale with scales; just ain't right.

NATE

They've doubled since last week. He'll be covered in them by season's end.

TAO

Evolution in the making. Wicked!

NATE

Move in closer. I want to re-test radiation levels in his blood and get skin samples from his calf.

Nate - a MARINE BIOLOGIST - analyzes a sample of MOBY's SCALES.

NATE

Lets see if these armored scales are hereditary or a reaction from long term exposure to pollution.

Frank's peeved and stares Nate down - arms crossed.

NATE

(for a rise)
Too much coffee, Frank?

FRANK

I'll give you coffee, Nathan. Right across the jaw.

Nate smiles wider -- knowing his uncle says this for affect and a display of bravado -- as he passes Frank an ashtray to stop him from littering used pipe tobacco out a window.

FRANK

Retrievin' skin samples? In ice-locked waters? You take too many risks. And it's Friday. You know damn well it's bad enough luck to sail on Fridays.

A FLICKER OF LIGHT on the horizon; too far away to see clearly.

FRANK

Sea Sprite?

NATE

They would've given a head's up.

TAO
The French should be passing through.

Nate grabs the radio to hail the ship in question.

NATE (IN FRENCH)
This is Captain Nate Ashburn of Sea
Wolf. These waters are a protected
whale sanctuary. Respond.

Silence. Tension elevates.

NATE (IN ENGLISH)
Respond or I'll blow your asses out of
the water.

Still, no response. Nate passes the radio to Tao.

NATE
It's not the French.

TAO (IN JAPANESE)
Unidentified vessel, your presence
violates international law. Respond.

ASANEBO appears in open water with HUNDREDS of WHALE CARCASSES
on deck and chasing down a small pod of panicked gray whales.

FRANK
Japanese Harpoon ship.

TAO
The Asanebo. Holy mother lode!

NATE
Intercept.

Frank pulls back a chrome lever and Sea Wolf slows.

FRANK
Too risky. The fog, the ice. One big
hit, we go down. Call the Coast Guard!

Nate looks to Tao wondering if that's a viable option.

TAO
20 minutes away, at best.

NATE
Then a lengthy debate. Our whales
don't have that long.

Nate grabs the helm with a razzing, crazy grin - full throttle.

NATE
Game time!

Nate's quixotic and fanatical and there's no stopping him.

Tao slams his hand on a big RED KNOB, sounding the ALARM.

Frank gapes out the window, anticipating the worst.

EXT. SEA WOLF, DECK - SAME

The BLARING ALARM flashes red across the ship as it gains speed.

Nate's seasoned CREW moves quickly but not too seriously that they forget this is fun as they catapult sewage and tear gas bombs at Asanebo throwing the whaling crew in disarray.

The gray whales escape.

Sea Wolf's crew cheers and readies more weapons.

INT. SEA WOLF, BRIDGE - SAME

A COLLISION WARNING blinks repetitively on the SONAR MONITOR.

TAO
We'll be right on top of Asanebo in 25
seconds, 24 -- 23 -- 22....

Nate accelerates. He's one with the ship.

FRANK
You made your point. Pull back!

NATE
It's all about instinct, Uncle Frank.
Sit back and enjoy the ride.

As they speed in for a collision:

Nate calculates perfectly. It's instinctual. He pulls back on the propulsion -- skidding alongside Asanebo -- creating a massive WAVE that floods his foes' deck as:

EXT. SEA WOLF, DECK - SAME

Deckhands rips a gash in ASANEBO'S HULL with the JAGGED BLADE.

INT. SEA WOLF, BRIDGE - SAME

Nate's energized. He lives for this. He readies for round 2.

ASANEBO'S distressed CREW waves HAND WRITTEN SIGNS in an attempt to stop another attack and shield them from international law:

"RESEARCH", "COLLECTING TISSUE SAMPLES"

NATE
Bullshit.

Nate bears down for a dangerous game of chicken.

FRANK
What the hell you gonna do?

NATE
Ram 'em!

Frank straps himself in a chair.

EXT. SEA WOLF - SAME

Nate slides a sharp right -- avoiding collision with only seconds to spare and his DECKHANDS release the powerful RAM.

WHAM! It punches an enormous, jolting DENT in Asanebo's HULL.

Asanebo's CREW retaliates with unrelenting WATER CANONS that reel Sea Wolf's CREW across the deck.

NATE (O.S.)
(via microphone)
Harpoon!

Vala and a few DECKHANDS recover quickly and launch the HARPOON at Asanebo's RUDDER and it tangles in the fast moving propeller, jamming the blades, forcing Asanebo to an abrupt halt.

The HARPOON CHAIN goes TAUT. An unexpected complication.

VALA
Release! Release!

Too late. Sea Wolf's STERN dips into the frigid ocean and tips upright almost as fast.

Lagging PEOPLE fall overboard. Vala clings to the railing.

INT. SEA WOLF, BRIDGE - SAME

Frank's thrown into a window -- cracking glass.

The dog slams into a steel cabinet -- denting it.

Nate and Tao hold on for dear life....

Sea Wolf steadies.

NATE
Everyone alright?

Frank gives a grudging thumbs up -- the dog comes to -- and Nate's concern darts out at his crew on the deck:

Vala's screaming and waving her hands in the air.

VALA
MAN OVERBOARD! MAN OVERBOARD!

Deckhands toil to rescue their mates with life jackets and ZODIACS (motorized rubber lifeboats).

TAO
(re: sonar monitor)
Asanebo's going after Moby.

Nate immediately tries the STALLED ENGINE a few times.

FRANK
We're dead in the water.

NATE
I'll take a Zodiac.

FRANK
A captain doesn't abandon ship. Your crew! Christ, Nathan!

NATE
Asanebo goes down today.
(shoulders past Frank)
Tao, you're with me.

Tao is already geared up and follows Nate without delay.

Frank's stewing and grabs the RADIO to call for assistance.

FRANK
This is Sea Wolf. We need the damn Coast Guard. We need them right now!

EXT. ROSS SEA - SAME

Moby and his family flee for their lives....

Asanebo - in hot pursuit - readies grenade-tipped HARPOONS.

Nate, Vala, and Tao - in a ZODIAC - make a beeline for them.

NATE
I'll distract. Drive off the whales.

Nate lights a few flares and throws a grapple hook. It catches on the railing and he leaps onto Asanebo before Tao slows.

EXT. ASANEBO - SAME

Nate scales the rope, whipping flares across the deck.

SUPPLIES catch FIRE. CREWMEN move quickly to extinguish them.

Ko runs up - kicking Nate in the face with his hard boots.

KO
Off my ship, Ashburn!

Nate now hangs perilously over the sea by one arm.

NATE
Surrender, Ko!

Ko draws a REVOLVER and FIRES on Nate.

Nate dodges the bullet and climbs aboard the ship with a jolting swing at Ko, pummeling the seamy whaler across the bloody deck.

They roll and twist. Trading punches. The revolver goes flying.

CREWMEN run over directing a SONAR WEAPON dangerously close to Nate and he relinquishes in excruciating pain.

Ko gets to his feet with his revolver and haughty self-assurance and he aims directly at Nate - finger on the trigger.

KO
One nation's butcher; another's hero.

A sudden onslaught of SMOKE BOMBS obscures vision, interrupting a clean gunshot at Nate, and leaves everyone fighting for air.

VALA (O.S.)
Captain!

Despite the thick smoke, Nate trails Vala's voice and the continuous hurling of smoke bombs to the ZODIAC, racing up alongside Asanebo, and he takes a flying leap of faith.

INT. ZODIAC - SAME

Nate lands - flailing back - nose kissing the water.

Vala risks herself to pull him in and he scolds her for it.

NATE
You shouldn't have come back for me!

VALA
They could've killed you!

Asanebo's speeding off -- closing in on Moby.

NATE
Go! Go!

Tao cranks the boat - full speed - braving gigantic waves.

NATE
Get between Asanebo and the whales. Ko
will back down. He can't kill us all.

Tao rides between Asanebo -- 5 times its tonnage -- and the family of SPERM WHALES -- aiming to block an attack.

Nate stands -- waving his arms -- hollering out his demands.

NATE
STOP NOW! You're violating-

BOOM! Asanebo fires a HARPOON -- striking the FEMALE WHALE and she lets out an unearthly CRY that raises goose bumps.

A geyser of her BLOOD gushes everywhere, tainting the sea.

Nate and Tao react with stunned silence. Vala cries openly.

Moby slaps his tail on the water and hurls himself at Asanebo.

Just before MOBY can strike, Asanebo HARPOONS him, too, and the leviathan falls back -- straight at the Zodiac -- rearing up.

Nate, Vala, and Tao look paralyzed. This is it. The end. Moby will surely slam down on their boat, drowning them instantly.

Instead, Moby's muscles pull back and tighten as if he knows Nate was trying to save his family and he'll do the same.

As Moby slides underwater - drowning in his own blood - he makes eye contact with Nate - exuding recognition and empathy.

An act that will leave an indelible mark on Nate forever. The whale saved his life and he'll do anything to return the favor.

EXT. JAPAN, TOKYO HARBOR - DAY

A crisp sea mirrors the scudding, blue sky.

Sea Wolf -- berthed along with a string of other ships.

Nate gives his dog affection, inspecting her for wounds.

NATE
You're alright, Jack. You're okay,
girl.

The dog settles down with a bone and Nate leans over the railing - despondent - watching lolling Minke Whales idle and blow.

FRANK (O.S.)
Ko was interrogated and released.

Nate turns to Frank standing beside him, smoking his pipe.

FRANK
Threw all blame on you.

NATE
At least he's consistent.

FRANK
(empathizing)
We lost a battle, Nathan, not the war.

NATE
Not good enough.

FRANK
It'll have to be for now.

NATE
You can't understand. You didn't see
the look in Moby's eyes. He saved us.

FRANK
Be grateful Ko ain't pressin' charges.
He's a big man now. You know this.

Nate forces a chuckle, finding the notion ridiculous.

NATE
I didn't just lose a few whales. I
lost 10 years of research. Research
that could save this planet.

FRANK
So, make yourself a hero.

Frank nods back at the INTERNATIONAL PRESS interviewing their
CREW. JOURNALISTS push forward. Microphones and cameras on Nate.

UK REPORTER
How does it feel interrupting this
year's largest campaign to slaughter
our ocean's most intelligent mammals?

Nate shifts, overwhelmed by all the attention.

NATE
It's a start.

JAPANESE REPORTER
What of allegations by our Japanese
Government labeling you and your
reckless crew as terrorists?

NATE
A joke.

AMERICAN REPORTER
Will alleged death threats deter your
valiant efforts to save our oceans?

Nate glares out at MOBY'S CARCASS hanging on Asanebo's deck then
turns directly to a camera, addressing his enemies.

NATE
Bring it on.

His cocky response feeds their frenzy. They all talk at once.

Nate shoulders past the madness, letting out a fierce WHISTLE
without breaking stride, and his dog catches up....

INT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

Soft moonlight shines down on MOBY's CALF: ARMOR-PLATED SCALES prominent around his restless eyes scatter lightly on his back.

Nate dives to the calf with gentle confidence. His presence is soothing and they play awhile until:

Vala's FEET plop in the water and knock against glass walls. This is a tank of water, not the ocean.

EXT. TANK - SAME

A large 'NO TRESPASSING' SIGN hangs behind Vala relaxing on a wooden plank with a six-pack and a bottle of scotch.

Nate surfaces the water to join her and catch his breath.

VALA
How long this time?

He looks to his expensive DIVE WATCH as she cracks open a beer.

NATE
5 minutes, 57 seconds. Could've lasted
another minute. Maybe two.

VALA
An hour with an air tank.

Nate hops out of the water with a grin and sits beside her.

NATE
Where's the fun in that?

VALA
(suddenly serious)
We'll get him, you know. Ko. Won't
stop till we do.

Nate somberly nods in agreement.

VALA
How does our calf look?

NATE
Ready to blow this joint. Pun
intended. Armored scales and all.

Vala's equally disturbed as Nate shares the CALF's SCALE SAMPLE.

NATE
Same as Moby. I can prove the ocean's
toxic enough to mutate them - and
worse.

VALA
Good news, bad news.

Vala tosses a handful of krill into the water and strokes the calf sympathetically as he skims the surface to eat them.

VALA
They're releasing him in the Spring
when he's stronger. Greenpeace is
overlooking his care until then so-

NATE
-Don't do anything crazy?

Vala tussles Nate's hair and passes him the scotch.

VALA
You do have a vision.

NATE
And you're hiding something.
(off her feigned surprise)
A 15-year old Macallan?

She pulls out a glass from her pocket and pours him a drink.

VALA
Neat.

NATE
Neatly out of your budget.

Vala gazes up at the clear night and bright stars, evading.

VALA
Don't you love clear nights like this?

NATE
Last time you bought me something-

VALA
-Your dive watch. For Christmas. Every
man needs a nice watch.

NATE
You lost Jack.

VALA
Found her the same day.

NATE
Spill it, Vala.

A frown of trepidation replaces Vala's usual warm smile.

VALA
It'll only invite more trouble.

She passes him a disturbing E-MAIL that reads: *The International Whaling Commission (I.W.C.) rescinds your invitation....*

INT. "INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION" - NIGHT

REPRESENTATIVES from every country in the world sit at tables in stiff suits with wheat grass shots and tofu sliders.

The PRESS lingers in the back of the room - cameras rolling.

KO lectures the crowd, flashing PHOTOS on a PROJECTOR that depict Greenpeace and Whalers working together in harmony.

KO

We sit here tonight with a common goal. To save our oceans. If the oceans die, the planet dies, we die.

PROJECTOR PHOTOS: Scientists dissect and study whale carcasses.

KO

As the largest predators of the sea, whales are key to gaging its toxicity.

Nate observes in the doorway, fuming and drunk. He trades his empty scotch bottle for an appetizer off a WAITRESS' tray.

KO

By collaborating these past few months, we've reduced ocean pollution 25% while maintaining a healthy whale population, we're-

NATE

(commandeers stage)

-Full of crap!

Nate snatches the microphone from Ko and turns to the crowd with all the charisma he can muster in his drunken state.

NATE

Thank you, Ko, everyone. I'm flattered to be here. Truly.

Nate pops the last bite of food in his mouth.

NATE

Wow! This amazing vegan whatever you wanna call it; eggplant, a little miso. You should all really try one. Who made this?

KO

You're not on the guest list.

NATE

Isn't that what we're all about, folks? Showing up uninvited?

A susurrus response from the crowd.

NATE
My dear friend Sinar Ko illegally
slaughtered hundreds of whales and
tried killing me - all in the name of
science - yet he walks freely thanks
to his new nature-loving liaison with
U.S. Navy Admiral Jensen. Thanks, sir.

Nate salutes U.S. NAVY ADMIRAL JENSEN: a supercilious man;
patrician in manner, sitting in the front row in mute agitation.

KO
You're drunk, Ashburn.

NATE
A cliché, isn't it? But it works.

A dozen or so representatives leave, wanting no part of this.

NATE
So why am I here? Action, dammit!

Nate slams his FIST on the podium. The microphone intensifies
the bang - jarring nerves - and he speaks to the PRESS now.

NATE
Ko's lying to you. Over 22 million
tons of pollution per day continues
killing our oceans.

Tao leaps up waving PROTEST SIGNS. Vala has already seized the
PROJECTOR to display disturbing PHOTOS.

NATE
Garbage...

PROJECTOR PHOTOS: 'The Great Pacific Garbage Patch.'

NATE
Oil spills...

PROJECTOR PHOTOS: Oil rig leaks smother birds, fish, and WHALES.

NATE
Nuclear waste...

PROJECTOR PHOTOS: Cracked nuclear power plants gush radioactive
water into the ocean where WHALES FROLIC.

NATE
Whale population is down 90%. There is
no healthy whale population. There is
no healthy ocean!

Nate pounds his fist again. Louder this time.

NATE
I have proof, people!

He brandishes the WHALE CALF's ARMOR-PLATED SCALE SAMPLE.

NATE
Proof the sea's dirty enough to mutate
and murder marine life! How much
longer till our planet's dead?!

The crowd erupts with tumultuous chatter.

COPS move to intercept Nate and he addresses the press again.

NATE
My tactics might be a little off but
they're justified!

The cops restrain Nate. Haul him off. He doesn't make it easy.

NATE
(brutal, passionate)
Believe Ko and we're all dead! Listen
to me! Everything! We're all dead!

INT. JAPANESE JAIL CELL - DAY

Nate's slumped on a cot, recovering from a hangover.

CLICKING HEELS draw his attention to the iron door being
unlocked by a lanky JAPANESE GUARD allowing Ko to enter.

KO
I paid your bail.

NATE
You're not getting off so easily.

Nate stands to face his adversary.

KO
I also discredited your armored
scales. They're an obscene
exaggeration. I managed to get your
captain's license revoked, too.
Permanently. It's been a good day.

Ko glowers down at Nate pissing on his shiny shoes. It takes
every last bit of energy to maintain his poise.

KO
You have 8 hours to crawl back from
where you came or I'll pull a few more
strings and you'll call this filthy
abode "home" - indefinitely.

Ko struts out quietly. The door slams behind him.

Nate shoves a chair out of his way, writhing in anger.

EXT. DOCKS - EVENING

Frank scrubs down Sea Wolf while listening to 'bluegrass'.

NATE (O.S.)
We're going after Ko.

FRANK
Bloody hell, Nathan! Give an old man a heart attack.

Frank follows Nate's scowl to Asanebo leaving port.

FRANK
Your theatrics at the I.W.C. only made our job that much harder.

NATE
He's got the military in his back pocket. I want to know why. I want to know how. Whatever they're doing can't be good. Ko needs to be stopped.

FRANK
International eyes are on him now. Ko won't do anything foolish.

NATE
He's arrogant. Of course he will.

Frank chuckles to himself, thinking the same of his nephew.

Nate holds up a VIDEO CAMERA still adorning the price tag.

NATE
It's the only way to finish this.

FRANK
I'm startin' to wonder who the hell raised you. Not me.

NATE
Minimal crew. You, me, Vala, Tao. In and out. No confrontation.

FRANK
When did savin' the planet become more about revenge?

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

A cloudy, cold night. A cluster of FISHING SHIPS.

Sea Wolf's camouflaged among them.

Asanebo's not far off - alone - her skeleton crew unloads large STEEL BOXES from heavy crates.

INT. SEA WOLF, BRIDGE - SAME

The cabin's dark except for the pulsing green light of the sonar monitor and the glow of 2 compasses.

Nate's honed in on ASANEBO via the VIDEO CAMERA on the sill.

Frank's at the helm, bored. He tests his ability to balance a quarter on his bulbous nose with each rolling wave.

Tao's stressing over the sonar monitor.

TAO

Storm's rolling in. Due west.

Vala entertains herself by playing 'solitaire' at a small table and sharing 'Cheetos' with Nate's dog.

VALA

Wouldn't be a stakeout without a good storm.

FRANK

Storm's are no joke, Vala. Especially in these waters. Strange things happen if you stay out here long enough. Things you can't explain.

Frank scans the horizon imagining the very worst.

Vala shares a private smirk with Nate over this as she settles back with a blunt and a diet soda.

VALA

Lord, all mighty! Hurry it up Ko or call it a night already so I can get some frickin' sleep!

FRANK

This is a waste of time.

NATE

He'll make his move. Every bone in my body says so. Just keep blending with the fisherman.

FRANK

We're blendin' just fine, Nathan. I ain't senile yet.

VALA

(in jest)

Don't know 'bout that, Frank.

Tao broods over a news article juxtaposed with NATE'S MUGSHOT.

TAO

They're branding us eco-terrorists.

NATE
Better than right-wingers.

Nate snatches the newspaper for a look of his own.

FRANK
It's propaganda. Pay it no mind.

VALA
Eco-terrorists?! We're-

NATE
-Earth warriors.

VALA
Eco-vigilantes.

NATE
Has a nice ring to it.

Frank snaps the quarter on the table between them.

FRANK
Sorta like a death knell.

SONAR: PING! PING! PING!

Everyone stiffens on high alert.

TAO
Asanebo's on the move. 18 knots. 200
degrees heading away from us.

Nate claps his hands -- ready for action -- joining Frank.

NATE
'Bout damn time! Go after her.

Frank accelerates - cutting past thin FOG that quickly THICKENS.

TAO
Asanebo's slowing. Speed at 15 knots,
12, 7 -- Wait!

Tao's trying to recover images on the sudden grainy monitor.

NATE
What's wrong?

TAO
They're off the radar. There's some
kind of interference.

FRANK
(slowing, ruffled)
Fog's too thick. They could be
straight in front of us.

Nate glances at buffeted windows -- the oncoming storm.

Suddenly, the GYROCOMPASS and MAGNETIC COMPASS spin wildly out of control -- faster -- faster -- faster....

VALA
What's wrong with the compasses?!

TAO
Navigations out. Completely out!

LIGHTNING CRACKS on the ocean just off Sea Wolf's bow, rocking the ship and everyone's nerves.

FRANK
(via radio)
Mayday! Mayday!
(static)
Communication's out, too.

A random series of LIGHTNING BOLTS strike all around.

Fear edges on Nate's face for the first time.

FRANK
We need to get outta here!

NATE
No! We'll end up deeper in the storm.
Ride this out!

CRACK! JOLT! LIGHTNING hits off the starboard.

WARNING SIRENS BLARE!

VALA
(re: mainframe computer)
A leak. Engine Room.

NATE
(grabs tools)
Got it!

EXT. SEA WOLF, DECK - SAME

Gale-force winds and rough waves rock the ship to and fro.

Nate runs out to fix the leak - struggling for balance when:

The burst of CRACKLING, MYSTERIOUS LIGHT returns - striking off the port - easily mistaken for a lightning bolt until it RIPS a JAGGED HOLE in THIN AIR....

Nate blinks in total shock with no time to react as the might of the boom throws him into the railing and washes him overboard.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. SHIP, BRIDGE - DAWN

Nate wakes discombobulated. On a hard floor. Soaking wet.

SLAM! Something gigantic and powerful whacks the ship with a force so great it nearly capsizes.

Nate flies flat against a BRASS PLAQUE on the wall: SEA WOLF

EXT. SEA WOLF/OCEAN - SAME

A military hovercraft with a panoply of advanced armaments.

INT. SEA WOLF, BRIDGE - SAME

Nate gapes around in further confusion:

High-tech computer equipment all around.

Frank, Vala, and Tao - preparing for immediate danger - are oddly dressed head to toe in sleek, black, flexible ARMORED SUITS with heavy steel toed boots to match.

A cumbersome TITANIUM DEVICE of coils wraps around their right forearms and seems to secure a narrow, rectangular box under their wrists that extends to their elbows.

FRANK wrestles the helm. VALA manhandles the armory. TAO tenses over the sonar monitor.

NATE
What's happening?!

They're alarmed when they finally see Nate awake.

NATE
Why are you-

Another SLAM rocks the ship. A bigger problem at hand.

FRANK
Leave him! Assessment! Now!

TAO
Only one so far.

NATE
One, what?!

VALA
Readying railguns!

Nate tries to take the helm but collapses with weak knees.

NATE
What's attacking us?

SMASH TO:

EXT. SEA WOLF/OCEAN - SAME

A gnashing SPERM WHALE with a CLEFT EYE - MOBY - now horn nosed with a spiked tail and skin COVERED COMPLETELY in ARMOR-PLATED SCALES - lurches from icy waters at the hovercraft.

5 huge RAILGUNS mounted on the hull FIRE on Moby relentlessly with a projectile of ENERGY COILS more powerful than bullets.

Moby stirs with an angry, frothing ROAR.

The railguns retract and are instantly replaced with stronger CANNONS that fire an onslaught of INCENDIARY BOMBS.

Oozing napalm sears patches of Moby's ARMOR-PLATED SKIN.

INT. SEA WOLF, BRIDGE - SAME

Nate blinks in utter disbelief as Moby bellows out in pain.

NATE

Moby?

The hovercraft races off.

TAO

2 more whales closing in!

FRANK

Vala, rocket launchers.

NATE

(struggling to stand)
Belay that order!

FRANK

Nathan, sit down!

Nate slams a fire extinguisher into the armory console, instead.

NATE

You're killing him!

SPARKS FLY! Vala shoves Nate to the steel floor.

VALA

You idiot!
(assessing damage)
Weapons offline, Captain!

Nate and Frank both acknowledge the title "Captain".

NATE

Stand down! All of you!

Nate's eyes widen in sudden fear, looking over Frank's shoulder:

Moby bites down on Sea Wolf's hull with a protruding jaw and sharp teeth that voraciously dent steel.

Experience tells Frank what's to come next.

FRANK
BRACE YOURSELVES!

Frank, Tao, and Vala grip something steady as:

Moby whips Sea Wolf left - right - left again. WHOOSH!

The hovercraft tumbles across the ocean. Lands upright.

Nate flies into a wall -- vomits on the floor.

Frank immediately tries the flooded engine a few times. He's determined. Angry. Not having any luck.

TAO
2 more whales. 45 seconds away.

FRANK
Abandon ship! Grab the supplies.

Tao opens a heavy metal hatch and jumps, ignoring the steps.

Vala frantically tries to download data from the mainframe computer onto a handheld one but there's too much damage.

VALA
The V.T.S. It's fried. I need more time to retrieve it.

FRANK
Vala. Below. Move it!

Vala's glare sets on Nate. She stuns him with a hard right hook.

VALA
This is your fault!

FRANK
We'll come back for the V.T.S.

Vala succumbs to logic and climbs below the ship and Frank barks at Nate -- all patience expired.

FRANK
You, too. Move it!

NATE
Tell me what's going on.

FRANK
You're not in command. Not on this world.

Frank forces Nate down the stairs after Vala.

EXT. OCEAN - MOMENTS LATER

A hatch on Sea Wolf's hull drops open and out zooms:

2 stealthy and futuristic, rocket powered SKI-DO's, dragging SUPPLY BARRELS, cutting over icy water, manned by Vala and Tao.

Moby breaks up from thin ice and bucks Sea Wolf as:

Frank speeds out last with Nate desperately clinging on.

FRANK

We don't save whales here, Nathan. We
kill 'em! Kill 'em or die.

NATE

Are you out of your mind?!

Moby's tail swipes at them. Frank speeds up. A near miss escape.

FRANK

I told you; this ain't your planet.

A 2nd armor-plated WHALE charges up with a wide, chomping mouth.

Frank punches downward with his right fist and the TITANIUM
DEVICE on his forearm extends stiff COILS that FIRE powerful
bursts of ENERGY RINGS -- keeping the leviathan at bay.

NATE

That thing's a gun?

Sharp right.

A 3rd armor-plated WHALE surges up - open mouth - blocking.

Skid left.

Moby rages up again -- surprising them -- surfacing harder and
faster and farther than the others.

NATE

Uncle Frank!

FRANK

I see it!

Frank slides to evade but takes the turn too fast.

WHOOSH! The Ski-Do tips, throwing Nate belly-spinning over ice.

He eventually stops and takes a breather, pondering his baffling
predicament. A dream? The afterlife? Insanity?

NATE

This isn't real. It can't be.

CRACK! The ice breaks from Nate's weight and reality SPLASHES him in the face with glacial water that's unforgiving.

CHOMP! CHOMP! CHOMP!

FANGED FISH leap up from ice floes -- closing in fast.

Nate paws to escape on a small iceberg when the FISH are SHOT off by Frank zooming by with a quick, rude hand that throws him on the back of the Ski-Do and they dash off.

Nate's shivering. Pale. In complete shock.

FRANK
Welcome to chaos!

As they charge towards dry land, a haunting red sky with a scorching sun suddenly replaces the winter air.

Steam roils off the ocean -- melting ice.

Nate goes from trembling cold to perspiring profusely as he gapes ahead at his new and unexplainable surroundings:

EXT. ALASKA - DAY

Post apocalyptic. A result of mammoth earthquakes and tsunamis.

Leveled buildings and homes. Mounds of wreckage and rubble. Cracked earth littered with trash and human skeletal remains extends to the imposing Chugach mountains split down the center.

The Trans Alaska OIL PIPELINE, automobiles, debris, and a sign "WELCOME TO ALASKA" are twisted in PREHISTORIC-like FOLIAGE.

NATE
None of this -- it's not possible.

FRANK
You crossed through a vortex. A doorway to your world and mine.

NATE
A what?

FRANK
Our ecosystem's outta whack from pollution overload; from rising intensities of global warming. You defend nature where you're from. Here, Mother Nature's the enemy.

Frank jolts to a stop on the black, oily beach.

The Ski-Do effortlessly unfolds squishy, steel "bean-bag-like" wheels to transition from water to land.

NATE
What are you saying? This is some kind
of parallel universe?

FRANK
(casual)
Yeah, that.

Frank maintains a chillingly honest face.

NATE
No. No way. You stay away from me.

Nate fumbles onto OIL SMOTHERED birds, salmon, seals, and WHALE
CARCASSES caking the beach for miles. He staggers, devastated.

FRANK
Nathan....

NATE
Stay the hell away!

Nate runs scared, nearly tripping over his own feet as he
escapes over a dune - heading for swampland.

FRANK
Nathan, get back here!

Vala has circled back and skids beside Frank.

VALA
The fool runs for a Dead Zone.

Frank's eyes narrow on Nate vanishing into a dark unnerving:

INT. DEAD ZONE - DAY

One quick foot in front of the next across the muddy terrain:

Nate races past a swampy forest of dead trees and rolling mist.

FORMLESS SHADOWS with disembodied GROWLS creep on higher ground,
advancing -- circling -- shaking Nate's confidence.

He tramples through murky water up to his knees, pushing past
DANGLING VINES, and quickly finds himself tangled within.

The VINES swiftly coil around his appendages, pulling him apart.

POP! Nate's RIGHT SHOULDER SNAPS out of place.

He lets out a long awaited SCREAM, finding the energy within,
and furiously rips at the woody vines until he's free.

PLOP! Nate lands in reddish-brown mud, nursing his shoulder.

Without warning:

FROGS with trumpet-shaped snouts assault Nate with fire pellets.

NATE
(tumbling away)
Ouch! What the-

SPIDERS swarm in, jabbing him with unusually large, spiny legs.

NATE
(swatting free)
Son-of-a-

Suddenly, they all scatter. A fatigued moment in turmoil until:

Hot BREATH and mucus-like drool dribbles down Nate's face.

He gawks up at the formless shadow now revealed:

A ravenous KODIAK BEAR - the size of a heifer - towers over him with an ear-splitting ROAR, glowing green eyes, brown quills as fur, and huge upper canines.

Nate panics and runs - looking for a safe haven.

The Kodiak pursues. Snapping mouth on his heels at every turn.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Vala speeds in on her Ski-Do with the metal coils of her forearm device FIRING at the bear with near hit shots until it runs off.

Nate collapses. Physically drained.

Vala skids up alongside him with furrowed brows.

VALA
On your feet. Get up, Nate.

Nate reels back - eyeing her weapon - unsure of her intentions.

Vala catches up to him without a word, twists his shirt in her fist, and squirts a clear liquid in his eyes from a skin pouch.

NATE
Stop! Vala!

VALA
It's water. Be still.
(firmer, finishing)
A few more seconds, that bear's
slobber would've blinded you. Not that
you don't deserve it -- after what you
did to our ship.

Vala drops Nate in the mud and drinks from the skin.

VALA
You're lucky it was only a cub.

NATE

Only?

POUNCE! The CUB'S MOTHER - twice its size - pummels Vala.

She flicks her wrist sideways and a JAGGED KNIFE EJECTS into her palm from the BOX under her forearm as they roll across the mud.

The Kodiak quickly drapes over Vala with open jaws and Nate kicks the bear's face again and again; kicking it senseless.

NATE

Off! Get off her!

The bear swipes at Nate. Razor sharp claws miss. Vala seizes the opportunity to stab it in the heart. Blood saturates the ground.

Nate uses all his strength to push the Kodiak off to free her.

NATE

You okay? Are you hurt?

Vala lugs the knife from the dead bear's breast and snaps it back into her forearm device with another flick of the wrist.

She ignores Nate's helping hand. Gets to her feet on her own.

VALA

Don't act so familiar.

Vala - suddenly alert - FIRES, killing 3 more KODIAK CUBS fleeing in the near distance. She's quick. Experienced. Heated.

CREAK! CRACK!

Vala pivots to shoot whatever threat sneaks up behind her but it's only Nate grabbing her forearm to stop the shooting.

NATE

It's over.

Their eyes meet - simmering down - with an equally unearned attraction of familiarity. She looks away first.

VALA

I'm not the Vala you know.

She moves to skillfully bind the mother bear's legs with rope.

NATE

I see that.

VALA

It's basic quantum mechanics. For every possibility, there's a different reality; in theory anyway. We've only discovered yours.

Nate sits down on a rock trying to fathom all this madness.

NATE
Different reality?! More like a sneak
preview.

VALA
(tosses Nate rope)
Snap out of it. Make yourself useful.
You still have one capable arm.

Nate helps Vala secure the dead Kodiak to her Ski-Do until he
sees its vacant, lifeless eyes -- and he pauses empathetic.

NATE
She was protecting her cubs.

VALA
Cubs waging war -- like everything
else on this planet.

NATE
You didn't need to kill them. They
were running away.

VALA
For reinforcements. Contamination of
this planet has made nature more
aggressive, more predatory.

She scoops up SALAMANDER HATCHLINGS from under a rock, stuffs
them in a handheld cylinder gadget, screws on the top. CRUNCH!

NATE
Clearly.

VALA
Salamander and frog hatchlings have
algae inside their cells that create
energy using photosynthesis.

The HATCHLINGS ILLUMINATE the gadget -- it's a flashlight.

NATE
Solar-powered salamanders?

VALA
It's that, or walk in the dark.

LIGHTNING BOOMS in the distance. Charcoal clouds sweep in.

VALA
Storm's coming and you don't have an
armored suit. We'll never make it to
base in time. Keep quiet and keep up.

Vala starts up the Ski-Do and drags off the bear. The added
weight slows her down.

Nate just stands there -- weighing out his limited options.
An EAGLE with multiple neon eyes stalks him from a high tree.
TRANSLUCENT BATS swoop in to attack with a high-pitched SHRILL.

NATE
(darting off)
Vala, wait!

EXT. DEAD ZONE - EVENING

LIGHTNING and THUNDER crackles across the crimson horizon.

HEAVY RAIN pounds through a cracked NUCLEAR POWER PLANT where a mangy, disfigured MOOSE drinks from a radioactive stream.

INT. CAVE - SAME

Nate's spreading out BEAR GUTS, at the mouth of the cave for protection, looking disturbed and saddened as he observes the MOOSE, until it meets his gaze and scampers off, frightened.

He removes his bloody gloves and turns to join Vala.

She's using a 9-volt battery, steel wool, and tree cotton from her satchel to start a small fire.

VALA
We're safe for the night. The scent of
that bear will scare off predators.

NATE
This really is some parallel universe.

With a cursory glance she sees he's fixated on the mutated bear.

VALA
Everything's poisonous or mutated.
Everything but us; what's left of us
anyway. A few thousand maybe....

NATE
The human race down to a few thousand!

VALA
Would've been worse if Frank hadn't
brought us together. We're all family
now. With one purpose. Survival.

Nate warms himself by the fire just staring at Vala, intrigued. Everything about her seems different. She's guarded and pensive and cold - but very beautiful with naturally dark, silky hair.

NATE
How long has your planet been-

VALA

-A dystopia? Long enough to forget I love chocolate cake and chai lattes.

(somber, reflective)

A little over 10 years. By the time we convinced the world to acknowledge global warming; to shift our economies from industrial to agrarian and ecologically sound, it was too late.

NATE

You should've tried harder.

Vala retrieves a green leaf resembling aloe, from her satchel, and peels back its rubbery skin with her knife - mixing a few drops of steamy liquid with its clear flesh onto a BANDANA.

VALA

Mother Nature rebelled against us with vengeance. Storms, quakes, tsunamis. Power plants exploded, oil rigs. It all happened too fast.

His eyes linger on the monstrous weapon adorning her forearm.

VALA

It's one of 7 prototypes. Fishing near the world's most advanced science facility when all hell breaks loose has its advantages. We call it an I.C.: Ion Contraption.

(shrugs at the simplicity)

Take off your shirt.

NATE

Excuse me?

VALA

Your shoulder's dislocated.

Vala rips off his shirt to examine his wounded shoulder.

Nate tenses in pain that's soothed by her tender touch as she wraps the bandana concoction around his injury.

He can't take his eyes off her. She feels it. Averts his gaze.

VALA

This is the closest thing I have to morphine. Might knock you out.

NATE

You a doctor?

VALA

No.

Vala thrusts a stick between Nate's teeth and before he can blink she SLAMS his dislocated SHOULDER into the cave.

Nate wails out in pain and whips the stick -- fighting anger.

VALA
Don't look at me like that. It's back
in place, isn't it? Sore but usable.

Nate rolls out his wounded shoulder -- seemingly on the mend.

NATE
Your bedside manners are uncanny.

VALA
You're welcome.

He's suddenly dizzy; fighting heavy eyes and distorted vision.

NATE
Whoah! I can't-

VALA
-Lie down. Rest.

She helps him sit near the fire and he shrugs her off.

NATE
I don't answer to you.

The "morphine" overpowers Nate. He collapses. Out cold.

VALA
You do now.

INT. CONFINED SPACE - NIGHT

HAIL hammers down on the solar-panelled roof.

Nate wakes up groggy. On a cold, cement floor. Wrapped in a
woolen blanket. Locked behind an iron door.

NATE
Hello?!

He catches his reflection on the steel walls.

They've shaven his mussed hair. He has red splotches all over
his skin. He's shoe-less and wearing fatigues two sizes too big.

NATE
(manhandling bars)
Open the door! Let me out of here!

A hefty foot shifts in the darkness. Nate braces for danger.

NATE
Show yourself!

Frank steps out looking gruff, clean-shaven, and knotted with muscles in a worn, military uniform. He's sewing a hole in a sock with a needle and thread.

FRANK
Relax, Nathan.

NATE
(flip)
Just sit back, 'cry uncle'?

Nate bristles with his natural air of authority.

NATE
I want out of here. Now. I want off
this godforsaken planet.

FRANK
God? Don't know 'bout him anymore. He
abandoned us long ago; but we call our
planet Earth.

NATE
Earth? What kind of name is that?

Frank pours himself coffee at a table - savoring his first sip.
It's been a while since he's tasted such a treasure.

FRANK
You shouldn't be here, Nathan. An
unfortunate accident, you fallin'
overboard. Waves swept you through the
vortex. Be grateful I saved you from
drownin' and have a seat.

NATE
My crew?! Where are they?

FRANK
Wrestlin' that storm, last I saw.
(forces Nate in chair)
Now sit.

Nate glances at Frank's rugged I.C. with a nervous half-smile.

FRANK
You can't go back to your world - none
of us can - not till you fix the
technology you smashed the hell out of
on our ship. Technology that took
years to invent - and more to perfect.

NATE
Not a problem. I can fix anything.

FRANK
Gotta find it first. Ship's lost at
sea.

FRANK
 You wanna survive that long,
 understand this is a dog eat dog
 world.

Frank shifts with a motion so quick it's not visible and the compact, METAL COILS jet out from his I.C. between Nate's eyes.

FRANK
 You're alive as long as you're useful.

NATE
 (cautious)
 Useful?

INT. LABORATORY - NIGHT

Nate warily pushes past a grisly assortment of hanging beast cadavers - cougars, bison, wolverines - making his way to:

Frank lugging out a frozen BODY BAG from a heavy compartment.

FRANK
 Scouts found him the night you came;
 tryin' to make his way back to base.

Nate unzips the body bag and stares down strangely fascinated at a gruesome, half-eaten corpse: his DOPPELGANGER'S CORPSE.

NATE
 That's me. How did I -- he die?

FRANK
 Demon Dogs. Evil, blood thirsty
 creatures. They dominate this land.

Nate pulls back a tinge yellow as he follows Frank's glare to hanging dead wolves (Demon Dogs): jet black, thick tusks, sharp fangs, and 3 times the size of any wolf he's ever seen.

TAO carries over a syringe. He's equanimous, clad in spiritual tatoos, and maintains an alarming, aggressive physicality.

TAO
 No, Ashburn died of head trauma long
 before Demon Dogs got to him.

Nate stands speechless -- adjusting to Tao's drastic change.

Tao extracts fluids from the bear killed by Vala to mix with potions and herbs from his 'Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde' chemistry set.

TAO
 Looks like he fell.

Frank finds severe head trauma to his dead nephew's skull and gapes down, resenting the loss that pains him deeply.

FRANK

The boy never listened. Always pushin' it. It's his own damn fault for goin' off alone.

Tao passes Nate his serum: a vial of pink, frothy liquid.

TAO

(re: red splotches)
You have radiation poisoning. From the Dead Zone. This will cure you.

NATE

The last "cure" made me pass out.

TAO

Drink!

Nate tentatively swallows the harsh, burning liquid.

NATE

What exactly do you want from me?

FRANK

The technology you're gonna fix. The V.T.S. My Nathan invented it.

TAO

(off Nate's confusion)
Vortex Tracking System.

FRANK

One of a kind. Our key to survival. The only way you're gettin' home.

Tao extracts other fluids from the bear for more medicines.

TAO

Vortexes are surges of electromagnetic pollution. The V.T.S. detects and harnesses them for 7 minutes.

FRANK

Long enough to sneak on and off your world for resources.

NATE

So, you destroyed your world; now you want to drain mine....

Tao interrupts to keep Frank from erupting with anger.

TAO

The V.T.S. is integrated with Sea Wolf's mainframe computer. Thumbprint activated.

FRANK
Meanin' we'll get it up and runnin'
faster with your cooperation. Got it?

Nate takes one last look at his doppelganger's corpse; at one possible fate, and the thought quietly infuriates him.

NATE
Whatever it takes to get home.

EXT. ALASKA, MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

RAIN mauls an isolated MILITARY COMPLEX that's heavily guarded, overlooking a tempestuous sea, and enclosed by a perimeter wall built to deter predators in the expansive wasteland below, extending from the great north to the southern peninsula.

INT. MILITARY COMPLEX - SAME

Busy. Systematic. "Green". PEOPLE tend to composts, hang clothes to dry, recycle anything and everything to survive: water, electronics, trash, etc.... There's no beauty beyond necessity.

Nate meanders down the hallway in awe. Tao at his side.

TAO
No phone service or internet, no TV.

NATE
(light)
Almost civilized.

TAO
Most of our technology utilizes
renewable energy, bio-fuels-

Nate snatches his toothbrush and some clothes from SOLDIERS sorting through SUPPLY BOXES he recognizes from his ship.

NATE
-Anything you steal from my world!

FLICKERING LIGHTS draw Tao swiftly around the corner.

Nate catches up -- smacked with a room's foul stench.

NATE
Holy crap!

INT. BIO-FUEL/SEWER - SAME

MEN and WOMEN in waist-high rubber overalls toil in SEWAGE, dumping buckets of it into a large GENERATOR made of recycled cell phones that creates ELECTRICITY from methane gas.

TAO
Sid! The storm worsens. We can't
afford to lose electricity again.

SID: a jittery, bedraggled American, muscling a wrench to fix leaky pipes, glances at Nate -- relieved to see him.

SID
It's just back flow, Mister Tao.
Methane gas build-up.

Sid throws his weight into it and a rush of water flushes CLOGGED SEWAGE through the clear pipes. Electricity is restored.

NATE
You recycle sewage for power. This entire complex. It's remarkable.

TAO
Wait here.

As Tao inspects the squeaky generator, Nate notices everyone wears a firearm except:

SID
(low, heated)
Ashburn, where have you been?

Nate's struck with curiosity until he sees Tao exiting.

EXT. HALLWAY - SECONDS LATER

Nate runs to keep up with Tao's even paced strides.

NATE
He a prisoner?

TAO
An outsider, like you. Sid found his way here through a natural vortex. Like many things have for centuries.

NATE
Funny, we're the only two without a weapon.

TAO
You walk freely with your logic, your intuition, your senses.

NATE
So, you do have a sense of humor.

TAO
(expressionless)
Sending Sid home would not serve his best interest.

NATE
Not serve his best interest?!

TAO
Ashburn found Sid in a collapsed house. Living off radio-active mud. He prattles like a madman now. What would become of him on your world? Here, he's useful.

Nate frowns with disdain and Tao guides him into a bedroom.

TAO
Ashburn's quarters. Your quarters.

INT. ASHBURN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Nate looks around the tight and tidy room, taken aback by the savage decor; by the stark contrast from his own life:

FEROCIOUS BEAST HEADS adorn every wall as trophies.

WHALE TUSKS in abundance as decorations and for practicality.

TAO
You lived as a lion.

NATE
That's not a compliment.

TAO
No, it isn't.

Awkward silence.

Nate rummages a closet: military fatigues and clothes made of animal skins and furs - all labeled N. ASHBURN, COMMANDER

He finally gets a repulsive look and feel of an "armored suit".

NATE
Your armored suits are whale skin?!

TAO
Wear it off base if you want to survive.

Tao shuts the door, exiting. Nate throws on a T-shirt and jeans.

OUT THE WINDOW: thunder cracks with a nerve-racking BOOM as high wind and rain carries off trees, garbage -- an armored truck.

OVERHEAD LIGHTS flicker and pop -- then go completely black.

The ECHO of GUNS FIRING - WINDOWS BREAKING - chaotic SCREAMS of PEOPLE being attacked - the cries of DYING ANIMALS as they're shot off for commandeering the complex to hunt for human food.

LIGHTNING FLASHES on a DEMON DOG snarling down at Nate and he fumbles in the darkness for a blunt object to defend himself.

Flickering lights. Electricity returns. The demon dog is just another trophy on the wall....

Nate inhales a bit of calm and languishes on the bed.

FADE TO BLACK:

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

INT. ASHBURN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Nate pries one eye open to a mechanical BEEPING SOUND directly over his face. He was sleeping soundly until now.

GUNNAR: a sober-faced 12-year old boy armed with an I.C. and the hard muscles of a grown man, stands over Nate, scanning his body with a MEDICAL DEVICE.

NATE
What are you doing, kid?

GUNNAR
Radiation's gone.

Nate gives himself a quick once-over. The radiation splotches have vanished. Satisfied, he rolls over to go back to sleep.

GUNNAR
Time to eat.

Nate's eyes snap open, liking the sound of that.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Gunnar matches every one of Nate's steps, stopping and starting after him, like a mindless automaton.

Nate finally turns around, standing over the stoic boy, amused.

NATE
Who are you supposed to be? My
bodyguard? Escort?

Nate waves a hand in front of Gunnar's blank face, trying to evoke a response.

NATE
Sycophant?

Gunnar points down the hall for Nate to resume walking.

NATE
You got a name, kid? What do I call
you -- other than annoying?

Gunnar remains silent and Nate notices a LIEUTENANT patch on the boy's military uniform.

NATE
Lieutenant? How does a little kid like
you get such a big rank?

GUNNAR
(defensive)
My father's the greatest warrior
Earth's ever known. Taught me
everything he knows.

Nate shrugs, accepting this, and drifts down the hallway.

INT. MESS HALL - NIGHT

Packed. Stifling hot. MILITARY MEN and WOMEN move about
systematically in a cafeteria type line for food.

Nate's famished. He grabs a tin plate and silverware and gets in
line, noticing every SOLDIER is twice his size in muscle mass,
armed, and regarding him like a new inmate in prison.

LI: tightly wound and crude, shoulders past Nate to cut in line.

LI
Food's for soldiers who earn it.
Outsiders eat last.

A few more MEN laugh and push past Nate to cut in line as well.

NATE
Fantastic!

By the time Nate makes it to the food, all that's left is a
bloody CARIBOU CARCASS stripped to the bone.

NATE
Got anything else, Chef?

A no-nonsense burly CHEF with dirty fingernails bitten down to
the quick, scoops up a vulgar serving of slimy, bloody, caribou
anus and testicles and tops it with a gooey eyeball.

Nate doesn't know whether to laugh or vomit.

CHEF
Tastes like chicken.

Nate grudgingly takes the plate, a water, and a seat beside the
only person not intimidating:

She has long, glossy locks and wears a thin, shiny robe that
outlines her perfectly toned body -- then he sees her I.C.

NATE
Hi, Vala. If I sit here, you're not
going to shoot me, are you?

Vala turns mid-laugh with comrades.

VALA

I might.

Nate forces a grin, trying to blend in with these heathens who lap up spoonful after spoonful of bloody, messy meat.

NATE

This'll be the best braised butthole,
caribou ball dinner I've ever eaten.

He's the only one that finds that humorous.

GUNNAR - sitting beside Nate - stabs into his rare meat and rips a mouthful off his fork, chewing obnoxiously. Blood drips from his lips and he wipes it away with his sleeve.

Nate stares at the boy -- mouth slightly agape.

GUNNAR

Got a problem, outsider?

Gunnar rests his I.C. on the table with a rough grin and Nate contemplates if this child may actually be able to take him.

NATE

No.

A few FIERCE MEN and WOMEN laugh and continue eating.

VALA

Ignore him and eat, Gunnar.

NATE

Gunnar, is it?

Nate smiles at the boy like he's pulled one over on him.

KO (O.S.)

Nate Ashburn-

KO's jarring face looks up - sitting across the table - reaching for Nate's steak KNIFE - wearing an I.C.

KO

-Unpopular on any world; poor sap.

NATE

(bracing to fight)

Ko!

VALA

(furtively stopping him)

Not your Ko.

Ko uses the knife to cut his own meat. He's crass and boisterous but making a genuine attempt at friendship.

KO
 Amazing the similarities to our 'Ash.'
 (off Vala's shrug)
 I'm not talking appearance; I mean the
 fire in his eyes. Look at him. Primal,
 passionate-

VALA
 -reckless, impulsive.

KO
 -The kind of nut who jumps in front of
 a fast ball.
 (to Nate)
 I like you already.

Nate maintains a stone face. It's hard to mask his inherent
 hatred -- even if it's not the same man.

KO
 Clearly, one sided. With charm like
 that you'll fit right in here.

NATE
 Don't count on it.

KO
 (suddenly solemn)
 Ash and I were as brothers. His death
 is a great loss to us.

Nate's taken aback by the reveal. Vala rises coolly to leave.

VALA
 Gunnar, bedtime.

Nate jabs the boy lightly, trying to gain his favor.

NATE
 Bedtime? Who does she think she is
 bossing you around?

GUNNAR
 My mother.

Nate blinks, surprised by this, and Gunnar opens his mouth full
 of food to gross him out -- and it works.

NATE
 You need a good beating - or ten.

Gunnar lets out his first smile and follows after Vala.

GUNNAR
 Enjoy my recycled urine, outsider.

Not a fun thought as Nate's chugging the last of his water.

INT. GREENHOUSE - NIGHT

Vala tends to an array of young, potted vegetables and fruit trees when she senses Nate standing in the doorway.

VALA
It's rude to stare, you know -- and
rude to pry; so if you're here to-

NATE
-Cause trouble? Never.

Nate throws up his hands, diffusing her temper as he joins her.

NATE
Just wondering if you people can
sustain yourselves - clearly you can -
what do you need from my world?

VALA
It's not so easy, Nate. Medicinals
need to be cultivated. We're not
always successful. As for food-

Vala examines a healthy seedling under a microscope.

VALA
-unless we get it from your side, it's
a work in progress. Earth is wounded.
I'm trying to integrate healthy plants
from your world to heal her. That's
why the V.T.S. is so important to us.
(defensive)
We only take what we need.

Vala uses a few drops of a smoky tonic on the seedling but instead of enhancing it, the plant withers and dies.

VALA
If I can just make them flourish in
our harsher climate. Outside of this
greenhouse, they die.

Nate pops a raw apricot in his mouth.

NATE
Makes you wonder, doesn't it? Why stay
here?

VALA
We can't rebuild Earth if no one's
left. You're a mission man. You should
understand.

Vala tries to swat a vibrant ORANGE BUTTERFLY off her apron to kill it but Nate stops her.

NATE
Maybe it'll play nice if you do.

The butterfly crawls peacefully on Nate's finger.

NATE
(flirting)
Seems friendly. Must be male.

VALA
(coquettish)
With a death wish. Like you.

Vala slaps the butterfly dead. Nate grimaces.

VALA
Eventually, butterflies burrow under
your skin and eat you alive. Ravenous
little beasts.

Direct eye contact. There's more meaning behind those
butterflies and Nate gets it with a subtle, dry smirk.

In a sudden hurry to leave, Vala looks to the familiar DIVE
WATCH on her wrist -- NATE'S WATCH -- clearly stolen.

NATE
(flashing his bare wrist)
Only what you need, huh?

A playful grin edges on Vala's face as she turns to leave.

VALA
We do what we must.

Nate pops another raw fruit in his mouth with a chuckle.

INT. TRAINING GYM - NIGHT

A forest-like setting of faux grass and trees, blow-up pool
toys, stone statues, and garden decorations; salvaged odd and
ends for CHILDREN 5 years and older to perfect combat skills.

Nate - hard at work - uses the open space to reinforce solar-
panels by painting them with a paste made of grass clippings.

MALICIOUS LAUGHTER draws his attention outward to:

Gunnar -- pummeled with fists by a gang of TEENAGERS.

Nate runs over whipping random stones to scare them off.

NATE
Hey! Stop it right now!

The TEENAGERS laugh, drop Gunnar in the mud, and run off.

NATE
You alright, kid?

Gunnar wipes his tears and hides his face as Nate approaches.

GUNNAR
Go away, outsider.

Nate catches a glimpse of Gunnar's black eye.

NATE
That's quite a shiner. Aren't you
supposed to be in bed, sleeping?

GUNNAR
Get outta here. Leave me alone.

Nate takes a seat beside Gunnar on the ground and grabs a
HANDHELD COMPUTER and TOOLS stomped to pieces nearby.

NATE
They do this, too?

Gunnar says nothing.

NATE
(awkward)
If you'd rather build computers than
shoot blow-up sharks, that's a good
thing, kid. When they call you a geek;
it's a compliment. It means they're
jealous. You're smarter than them.

Gunnar throws Nate a look that insists he's the "geek", not the
other way around, and he snatches back his broken things.

Nate tries again -- more straightforward.

NATE
Bullies are cowards. Know what I do
with bullies?

GUNNAR
Antagonize them.

Nate laughs to himself. The boy's right.

NATE
Well, I should ignore them.

GUNNAR
They called my dad weak. Said his
death wasn't honorable.

NATE
That's no reason to -- Parents are
only human. Your father--

GUNNAR
--is you.

Gunnar shows Nate the ETCHING on his I.C.: ASHBURN, NATHAN

Nate stares into Gunnar's familiar eyes for the first time before taking a private moment to absorb the shock of this.

NATE
Wow, I was a really lucky guy.

A wide smile edges on Gunnar's face and Nate helps him up.

NATE
Give me your jacket.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAINING GYM - MOMENTS LATER

Gunnar runs a kite made from his military jacket - laughing, exhilarated, having a good time. Nate takes pleasure in this.

NATE
Faster! It'll fly higher!

GUNNAR
What do you call this thing again?

NATE
Fun!

Gunnar feeds the kite more string when he should pull it taut and it tangles in an exhaust fan. Nate helps him free it.

GUNNAR
What's it like where you're from? I'm not old enough for those missions yet.

NATE
I don't have a son if that's what you're wondering.

GUNNAR
Why not?

Uncomfortable silence. Nate passes Gunnar the kite.

NATE
Flying a kite is kind of like fishing. You ever fish, kid?

GUNNAR
My mom says you're a brave warrior.

NATE
Does she, now.

GUNNAR
You fight for your home like we do.

NATE
Not like you. But to save it, yes.

Gunnar passes over a NEWSPAPER from his back pocket, folded to the article with NATE'S MUGSHOT from his Asanebo confrontation.

GUNNAR
She said 'stay away from you,' too.

NATE
(sarcastic)
I'm not a likeable guy.

Gunnar drapes the kite over a clay tree and sits on a big rock, fiddling with a bronze COMPASS around his neck.

GUNNAR
It's a compass.

NATE
Yeah, I see that.

GUNNAR
It belonged to El Viejo. It leads to his secret hunting ground. Only the greatest warriors will ever find it.

Nate sits incredulously beside him -- examining the compass.

NATE
El, who?

GUNNAR
El Viejo del Monte. An ancient warrior who roamed forests killing any animal in his path. No respect. No remorse.

NATE
Gee, great bedtime story.

GUNNAR
To pay for his sins, he was brought back as nature's protector.

Gunnar puts the compass around his neck again - emotions rising.

GUNNAR
My dad and I were supposed to face him together.... He shouldn't have gone alone.

Gunnar cries openly - mourning his loss - and Nate comforts the boy - sympathetic - searching for the right thing to say.

NATE
Maybe one day you'll live somewhere safer.

INT. MILITARY COMPLEX, ASHBURN'S QUARTERS - DAWN

Nate's jolted from slumber by FRANK'S BLARING VOICE on the P.A.

FRANK (O.S.)
Attention! V.T.S. scout mission
commences immediately. Convene in my
office for further instructions.

Nate stumbles clumsily out of bed -- throwing on fatigues.

HALLWAY - SECONDS LATER

Nate zig-zags hastily past a UNIT of SOLDIERS in ARMORED SUITS.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - SAME

Forbiddingly bare and plain.

Frank's meticulously shaving his barely noticeable beard in a
cracked mirror when Nate slides through the door out of breath.

NATE
The scout mission. When do we leave?!

FRANK
For the V.T.S? Troop's gone.

NATE
(realizing)
I just passed them in the hall!

Frank uses his arm to block Nate from running after them.

FRANK
(re: Nate's fatigues)
And you're not in proper attire.

NATE
You've gotta be kidding me.

FRANK
I don't joke about savin' lives. I
don't joke about anything.

NATE
I'm your best chance at succeeding. I
know the sea like the back of my hand.

FRANK
So do we. Better!
(softer, concerned)
You're not acclimated. You're a damn
fish outta water. Hell, you don't even
know how to shoot a gun; do you?
(off Nate's hard silence)
You stay on base. Where it's safer.

Nate eases back. Pours a cup of coffee. Tries a new approach.

NATE

As a marine biologist, I've spent the last decade trying to force my people to see they're killing our planet, killing themselves.

(for a reaction)

What's happened to your world is happening to mine....

Frank doesn't seem fazed by this as he finishes shaving.

NATE

In a twisted way, Earth's demise will save us all -- once my people see what will happen without drastic changes-

FRANK

-Blind eyes never see and truth tastes bitter. Unfortunate for everyone.

NATE

So, I'll drag them here! Shove it down their throats! The sooner the better. Send me on that scout mission. You need every capable hand you've got.

FRANK

I'm not your enemy, Nathan.

NATE

My world is running out of time! I won't just sit back, waiting.

(provoking)

That's not being *useful* - or am I a prisoner?

Frank lights up a cigar and puffs away, mulling over an idea.

FRANK

You wanna save the world? Report to Vala for flora duty. In proper attire. No argument.

EXT. ALASKA, MEADOW - DAY

Smoldering hot. Muggy.

Nate's knee-deep in steamy manure, planting SUNFLOWERS. He's clad in an armored whale skin suit and feeling suffocated by it.

All around him, an annoying sense of camaraderie:

Tao and Li in a TROOP of SOLDIERS till tainted earth and deciduous vegetation that was once acres of thriving Alaskan wilderness.

Vala oversees everyone, dousing planted sunflowers with a special serum. She stops to scare off tinny flies swarming Nate.

VALA
Sunflowers heal contaminated soil by
extracting radioactive cesium; if only
I can keep the bugs away.
(lighthearted)
Maybe they just like you.

Nate keeps working - and keeps to himself.

Vala's perceptive to the shift and reaches out with sincerity.

VALA
Thanks, by the way. For Gunnar's kite.
It's not often a boy gets to be a boy
around here.

NATE
He's a good kid.

VALA
The best.

Vala catches Gunnar's continual drifting eye in Nate's direction
and she raises her guard again.

VALA
He told you, didn't he? About his
father?

NATE
You could've told me; especially
considering-

VALA
-you're a stranger to us? You'll be
gone tomorrow if you have your way. I
owe you nothing.

Her terse response finally sets him off, hotheaded.

NATE
Wasn't asking.

He ends the conversation by walking away. She follows, riled up.

VALA
You have no right to be upset.

NATE
I'm not upset.

VALA
You're crazy if you think we want
anything from you.

NATE
Wasn't offering.

She grabs him to stop him. A charge of emotion between them.

VALA
You being here only confuses things.

NATE
Exactly.

Neither moves. He could kiss her or kill her but he storms off.

Vala takes out her frustration on an oversized, radio-active
DRAGONFLY - shooting it as it buzzes by. When she looks back:

Nate's crossing the unguarded perimeter.

VALA
Nate! Nate, stop.

NATE
We should be concentrating our efforts
on finding the V.T.S.; not planting
little flowers that'll die anyway!

VALA
It's not safe. Come back!

Nate turns -- walking backwards to get in the last word.

NATE
You're too bossy. You do know that,
right?

WHOOSH!

Nate TRIPS over partially eaten animal parts. Staring over a:
CLIFF

A NEST of savage, hideous VULTURES feast on wild boar.

The largest bird jerks back to choke down a hunk of meat, seeing
Nate, and alerts the flock with a deafening CAW!

NATE
(scurries to his feet)
RUN!

MEADOW

Nate grabs Vala's hand and together they make a run for it.

The BIRDS take flight - a tight formation - swooping low and
fast to snatch them with scalpel sharp claws.

VALA
(warning soldiers)
VULTURES!

A VULTURE SPEWS acid-like VENOM at Nate's back but his ARMORED
SUIT REPELS the poison, saving his life.

Vala retaliates by blasting the bird to little pieces.

GUNNAR

Over here!

Gunnar -- using a RUSTED JEEP as cover -- shoots diversionary FIRE that gives Nate and Vala seconds to flee.

Nate dives inside the vehicle. Vala and Gunnar hide behind open doors FIRING ENERGY RINGS that OBLITERATE the BIRDS INSTANTLY.

NATE

Give me a weapon!

VALA

Stay down!

SOLDIERS led by LI join the FIRE FIGHT shooting down one VULTURE after the next as the birds DIVE in from all directions SPEWING more VENOM - scorching exposed skin of the less experienced.

Even more VULTURES plunge from trees - outnumbering the SOLDIERS in a vicious tug-of-war - tearing at skin - ripping appendages.

TAO defends CHILDREN with a retractable I.C. MACHETE - cleaving, hacking, and tearing birds apart with bare hands and berserker strength as the battle degenerates to a bloody, muddy scuffle.

2 huge VULTURES come at Vala and Gunnar with collective wrath and they slam the JEEP DOORS shut just in time.

The 2 vultures land on the roof - clawing and ripping at steel with iron clamping beaks - rolling the JEEP OVER the CLIFF.

INT. RUSTED JEEP - SAME

Nate, Vala, and Gunnar tumble - out of control.

The jeep makes a sharp stop. Nose down. Tangled in tree roots.

Vala lands with a jolt. In the backseat.

Gunner and Nate drop in the front.

Wide eyes gape down a rocky canyon; a long agonizing drop.

VALA

You're a magnet for good fortune!

NATE

I try!

The 2 vultures circle. Nate stops Gunnar from shooting.

NATE

You blow out a window, they'll come straight in.

ROOTS SPLINTER from their weight - cracking through windows - and the JEEP SLIPS FURTHER.

The 2 circling vultures rush past. The FRONT DOOR SWINGS OPEN.

GUNNAR flies out.

VALA

GUNNAR!

NATE

Got him!

Nate painfully stretches as far as he can - clenching Gunnar's I.C. at the last second - but now the boy hangs unsteadily over:

The NEST: hungry, BABY VULTURES jump and peck to eat Gunnar's flesh and he fervently kicks them off - one after the next.

GUNNAR

Off! Get off!

Movement makes the JEEP slip more until it DANGLES by ONE TIRE.

GUNNAR

We're going to fall!

NATE

Don't move! Stop moving.

VALA

Gunnar, do as he says.

Vala's quietly panicked. Searching for an out. Finds:

THICK ROOTS - cracked through the back window to the front.

VALA

Nate!

She gestures her idea to Nate. They're of the same mind.

Nate's losing his grip on the boy. Fear fills Gunnar's face.

NATE

Hold onto me. As tight as you can!

GUNNAR

I'm slipping!

NATE

Look at me. Keep your eyes on me!

The jeep shakes and rattles. The tire begins to skid loose.

VALA

Nate?!

Nate strains to grip Gunnar with all his might, grabbing a root with his other hand, rocking the jeep to the point of no return.

NATE

Vala, now!

The TIRE breaks free of the roots and the jeep starts to fall.

FIRE! Vala SHOOTS OUT the BACK DOOR.

They duck past roots and soar through the jeep as it plummets to the canyon, taking the nest and circling vultures along with it.

EXT. CLIFF - SAME

Nate, Vala, and Gunnar swing back and forth, dangling against the steep rock, with smiles of relief exchanged between them.

NATE

Just another day in paradise.

Nate and Vala come face to face. Emotional shields lowering.

EXT. MEADOW - EVENING

The setting sun glows on the aftermath of battle: DEAD VULTURES and SOLDIERS - mothers, fathers, children - litter rows and rows of blood stained sunflowers.

Tao and Li help REINFORCEMENTS carry off their wounded comrades who suffer from burns, broken bones, loss of limbs, etc....

Nate stares out, deeply affected by the carnage. He's nursing his wounded shoulder when his concern darts on:

Gunnar. Beside him. Examining a SCRATCHED ANKLE.

NATE

You hurt, kid? You okay?

Gunnar casually pulls down his pant leg and stands.

GUNNAR

Just a scratch. I'm good, Nate.

Vala approaches to look her son over for wounds.

VALA

I'll be the judge of that.

GUNNAR

Like any mother hen. I'm fine!

Satisfied, Vala tussles Gunnar's hair and kisses him on the head. There's a loving banter between them Nate admires.

VALA

Get goin', Lieutenant.

She scoots Gunnar off to join the others and turns to Nate.

VALA
Let me see that shoulder of yours.

NATE
You're not coming anywhere near my
shoulder, woman.

Amused, Vala cleans up his scraped cheek, instead, with a gentle touch he welcomes. Their closeness suddenly makes her uneasy.

VALA
You have quick reflexes. You'd make a
good soldier.

Nate's lost in a tumult of thoughts.

VALA
That's my weak attempt at gratitude.
(raw, appreciative)
You saved my son. Thank you.

NATE
A son who wouldn't need saving had I
listened to you. I'm sorry -- I know
me being here is confusing for him.

VALA
He's not the one confused.

Vala's gaze is soft and lingers longer than usual -- making her feelings obvious -- catching Nate pleasantly off guard.

INT. TAO'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Spiritual and dimly lit with candles Tao lights one by one.

TAO
Today was an unfortunate accident.
Like too many others. Amazing you're
still alive. The heavens must favor
you.

Nate glances up from rummaging through Tao's medicine bag only to regard the man like he's out of his mind.

NATE
More like curse.

Tao grabs his bag from Nate, immediately finding what he needs: a syringe - and he jabs Nate's shoulder with it to heal it.

TAO
Everything happens for a reason, Nate.

NATE
(remorseful)
Little comfort for all the lives lost
today.

TAO
I was referring to your arrival on
Earth.

Tao removes a blanket from a cage to feed a BABY VULTURE bread.

NATE
You saved one. Why would you do that?

TAO
This small bird managed to fly to the
cliff top. Before his time. The will
is very powerful.

NATE
I thought harmony between man and
beast was impossible here.

TAO
As we restore our planet, so shall we
restore the balance.

Nate's intrigued.

TAO
The days of man ruling the Earth are
over. That belief has led to nothing
but destruction.

NATE
On my world, too.

TAO
Indeed. We must teach them another way
if we are to save both our homes. It
is how we will honor the lost. Mankind
must remember we are nature, too.

Nate accepts bread from Tao with a newfound hope for this place.

EXT. ANCHORAGE, ALASKA - NIGHT

A SNOWSTORM blows past the ruinous city monopolized by a
menagerie of rabid, MUTATED ANIMALS running amuck - hunting.

Frank, Vala, Ko, Chef, and Li race ruthlessly past it all on Ski-
Do's, FIRING I.C.'s on the occasional encroaching BEAST.

Tao races up beside them with Nate riding on back.

They soar over a slushy hill and slide to a skidding stop before
an eerie, dilapidated office building, in the middle of nowhere.

NATE
What is this place?

Li spits a wad of chewing tobacco at Nate's feet - moves on.

VALA
A science facility.
(re: I.C.)
We need more ammo.

With I.C.'s and flashlights waving about, they warily make for the building -- all except Nate who trails in last and unarmed.

INT. SCIENCE FACILITY, LOBBY - SAME

Complete disarray. Littered with broken computer equipment, trash, and glass. Overrun by thick foliage gone awry.

Tao leads the group -- forging a safe path with his machete.

They reach the center of the room. Keen eyes scan the premises.

TAO
Looks abandoned.

FRANK
Stay alert, people!

They remove their restrictive snow masks and armored hoods to gape up at the building's 3 tiers.

FRANK
Spread out. Be quick. Take anything
useful. Nathan, you're with me.

Nate's already making his way upstairs with Gunnar, Tao, and Ko.

GUNNAR
I'll protect him, Uncle Frank.

Frank grumbles his dissatisfaction with Gunnar and Nate to Vala but she shrugs it off - boys will be boys - marching past him.

YELLOW EYES of a ravenous BEAST skulk about behind them....

TIER 3 - FUEL STORAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Dangling circuits and electrical wires are interlocked with vines all over this steel encased room, thickly insulated to protect the many large FUEL TANKS from warming temperatures.

Nate fills up canisters of fuel and loads them in a duffle bag.

Gunnar rummages a desk -- finding stale candy he eats anyway.

NATE
How much fuel do we need?

GUNNAR
 (in jest)
 Whatever you can carry.

Nate smiles to himself and continues his work when the sound of a TIN CAN rolling across the floor alerts him of danger.

He grabs a random pipe as a weapon and cautiously makes his way in deeper to investigate, stopping abruptly at:

An emaciated, WHITE DEMON DOG trapped in twisted wires, licking clean a rusty soup can as a meal, squirms madly to free herself at Nate's sudden appearance, resulting in tighter restraints.

GUNNAR
 (joining)
 Better it dies fast.

Gunnar raises his I.C. to shoot but Nate gently stops him.

GUNNAR
 That dog will kill us.

NATE
 No, she won't.

Nate moves to help the White Demon Dog. He's calm and assertive.

TIER 1 - LOBBY/HALLWAY

Chef and Li branch out - pushing past tight brush - patrolling.

TWIGS SNAPS ahead in the darkness - seizing Chef's attention.

Mysterious shadows canvas the walls.

CHEF
 Li, fall back.

LI
 What do you see?

From the darkness, sudden SHARP CLAWS clench LI's CALF and drag him off SCREAMING with lightning speed.

Chef fires bursts of I.C. ENERGY COILS as he runs to help his friend. He's taken two strides, maybe, when:

WHOOSH! The beast with YELLOW EYES - the ALPHA DEMON DOG: black, with a unique gray mane, leaps from shadows, going straight for Chef's JUGULAR.

TIER 2 - RESEARCH LAB

Rotted animal experiments in broken incubation tubes.

Tao raids shelves for beakers, flasks, vials, etc....

Ko searches cabinets - flips through a pornographic magazine.

I.C. FIRE and death SCREAMS echo through the AIR VENTS.

Tao and Ko ready their weapons.

Eyes searching for danger find CUBBYHOLES and DOG DROPPINGS.

TAO

This science facility is a den.

DEMON DOGS reveal themselves - lurching out of the darkness.

TIER 1 - STORAGE

A library of floor to ceiling research files.

Frank and Vala stop rummaging through them at the distant sound of GUNSHOTS and SCREAMS and charge out the door to fight:

LOBBY

They find the gray maned ALPHA FEASTING on Chef's insides and fire relentlessly -- but the elusive canine escapes.

FRANK

Tao, Nathan! Get down here!

An army of HOWLING DEMON DOGS creep out from every nook and cranny - high and low - surrounding - then pounce to attack.

Frank and Vala stand back to back - FIRING and SLASHING with all they've got - killing one ferocious Demon Dog after the next.

TIER 3 - FUEL STORAGE

The White Demon Dog cowers as Nate bends with a dominant stance, restraining her as a precautionary while he frees her.

GUNNAR

Leave it alone.

NATE

She won't attack if she's not threatened. Understand?

GUNNAR

This is crazy.

NATE

Trust may be the first casualty of war but peace starts with mercy.

With the White Demon Dog free, Nate backs away.

NATE

Throw her something to eat.

Gunnar offers the stale candy.

NATE
No, food rations.

Gunnar tosses the White Demon Dog dehydrated meat and she wolfs it down, quickly feeling threatened by their closeness - SNARLS.

NATE
(guides Gunnar behind him)
That was only a warning. Stand strong.
No quick movements.

Gunnar stiffens, mirroring Nate, and the dog calms down -- then:

Tao pushes open the door. Alarming GUNFIRE suddenly REVERBERATES off the walls and the White Demon Dog GROWLS in fear.

TAO
Time to go!

Tao ushers Gunnar out to join Ko in the hallway and the two descend vines to assist Frank and Vala - guns a blazing.

Nate's backing up slowly -- too slowly.

TAO
Nate, move it!

Tao stomps over, seeing the White Demon Dog for the first time, and he misreads the situation, taking perfect aim for a shot.

NATE
No, wait.

Nate grabs Tao to stop him - inadvertently exposing him to:

The ALPHA atop a fuel tank. The muscular dog plunges onto Tao, biting clear through his skull, taking him down.

NATE
Tao!

8 more DEMON DOGS jump from shadows with silent stealth, MAULING TAO. A hoarder or two dies in the vicious scuffle.

Nate staves off the DEMON DOGS one by one with the pipe but they return even more determined, rushing at him with bloody chops.

He dives - slips on Tao's I.C. like a sleeve - spins, punching down to fire - unprepared for its great force as it throws him.

The savage canines are mere seconds away - lunging to kill.

A swift twist of Nate's wrist. The MACHETE jets out in his hand.

The Demon Dogs' OPEN JAWS clench down on Nate from every angle at the same time, thrashing his arms and legs to rip them off.

Nate snaps with a roar so great it demands victory and he maims every beast in sight - losing himself in a violent frenzy.

A vicious growl behind him:

The ALPHA - across the room - eyes down Nate; his prey.

Nate steels himself - welcoming the challenge.

The Alpha charges and leaps.

Nate holds his ground - waiting until the very last second, then decapitates the Alpha, saving himself.

Caked in blood and riven with wounds, Nate stands the disconcerted victor. He's drawn back to his senses by:

TAO - sprawled out on the floor in horrific pain; shredded to the bone in many places - inhaling labored breaths.

NATE
I'll get you out of here.

Nate pries a dead Demon Dog off Tao and that's when he sees the man's CHEST CLAWED wide open. There's no saving him.

Tao looks to Nate as a warrior begging for peace.

NATE
(emotional)
I'm sorry.

Nate RAMS the MACHETE through TAO's CLAVICLE, taking his life. An act of mercy that betrays every bone in his body.

He collapses, demoralized by the kill. Blood on his quivering hands makes it all the more real.

RUSTLING LEAVES in the corner.

Nate looks up at the emaciated WHITE DEMON DOG creeping out from her hiding spot - having avoided the bloody brawl - and she sits before him, staring ever so oddly - then runs away....

He leans back against the wall bloodied and broken....

INT. ASHBURN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Nate rinses blood and dirt from his face in a basin, catching his reflection in a mirror, not liking the stranger he sees.

He peels off the armored whale skin suit. Can't get it off fast enough. The sight and feel of it on his body only sickens him.

EXT. MILITARY COMPLEX, PERIMETER WALL - NIGHT

Nate opens the palm of his hand that cradles Tao's BABY VULTURE. He gently strokes it with his finger - then RELEASES IT.

The vulture takes flight, gaining strength with every stroke.
 Nate watches envious as the bird flies back where it belongs.

EXT. MILITARY COMPLEX, BARRACKS - SAME

PEOPLE pay tribute to their fallen brethren with one large
 CEREMONIAL FIRE that burns corpses in a horizontal line.

Frank gives his nephew 'Ashburn' one last mournful glance, as
 the corpse catches fire, with Gunner crying silent tears at his
 side, then together they return to the base.

Vala remains, gazing into the soaring flames with faraway eyes,
 when she hears FOOTSTEPS on GRAVEL approaching:

Nate makes for the ceremonial fire beside her with TAO's DOG
 TAGS in hand. After a solemn moment, he tosses them in.

NATE
 I've never killed anything in my
 entire life -- until now.

VALA
 Stop blaming yourself. No one's to
 blame.
 (paraphrasing Shakespeare)
 Our foul deeds for personal gain shall
 smell above the earth for eternity.
 (regrettably)
 We are all 'Dogs of War.'

Vala's unsettling view resonates before Nate follows her eyes to
 the wild flames devouring Ashburn's corpse.

VALA
 It didn't really hit me until now.

NATE
 (uneasy)
 I'm sorry for your loss. As strange as
 that sounds coming from me.

VALA
 Want to know the sad part?

Vala wipes her tears away before she looks at Nate with an
 ironic chuckle and leads the way to the edge of the cliff.

VALA
 We were barely more than strangers. I
 almost feel I know you better.

The NORTHERN LIGHTS: a burgundy wave with teal-tinged tips and a
 greenish glow materializes on the midnight horizon, ebbing west.

Vala takes a seat on the cliff's crest -- watching in wonder.

VALA
We don't stop to smell roses anymore
but life's not without beauty.

Nate relaxes beside Vala, admiring her inner strength.

NATE
Breathtaking.

They share a soft smile.

VALA
(re: Northern Lights)
Lately, it comes every night. I look
at it and see hope. God hasn't
abandoned us yet. My son will sleep in
peace if it's the last thing I do.

There's sadness and vulnerability behind Vala's conviction.

Instinctively, Nate puts a comforting arm around her - grins.

VALA
What?

NATE
Just wondering when you'll break my
arm.

Vala chuckles and tilts her head on Nate's warm shoulder and together they stare out at the ethereal phenomenon.

INT. MILITARY COMPLEX, WAR ROOM - DAY

SNOW pelts windows as a storm strengthens.

Frank paces the cold room - stressed and flailing a cigar.

Vala and Ko sit attentively at a table.

FRANK
Good news, we've located Sea Wolf. Bad
news, she sank here. Whale territory-

Frank circles an area of ocean on a wall map.

FRANK
-which means it may get a whole lot
bloodier retrievin' her with only one
ship capable of those depths.

Nate straddles a chair backwards with an insolent stare.

FRANK
We'll hit whatever comes at us hard
and fast and tow Sea Wolf home. Repair
the V.T.S. on base.

FRANK
 (to Nate)
 No cowboy crap.
 (dismissing them)
 Prevail or perish.

VALA KO
 Prevail or perish, sir. Prevail or perish.

Vala heads out and Frank reloads his I.C. with vials of fuel.

NATE
 You plan to go in shooting. Like last time. Much success that was.

FRANK
 If you've got a better strategy-

NATE
 -Communication. Show the whales we're no threat. They're highly intelligent.

FRANK
 Communicate?! The wicked bastards will devour us if given the chance.

Nate mellows in an honest effort to practice what he preaches.

NATE
 Sperm whales on my world eat tons of cuttlefish a day; millions. They're not wicked. They're feeding.

FRANK
 We're not talkin' cuttlefish, Nathan. We're talkin' people. Us.

NATE
 They've as much right to exist as we do. Their survival is our survival.

FRANK
 You're an outsider. You know nothing.

NATE
 I know whales. I see your archaic ways not working. Too many lives have been lost.

Just as he's starting to get through to Frank...

NATE
 If mankind's to prevail, you need to respect nature and you need to earn nature's respect.

FRANK
 Earn nature's respect? Do you hear how ridiculous that sounds?

Nate opens his mouth to argue further but Frank stops him by pressing his I.C. into his chest.

FRANK
You've got two options, son. Sit this out or follow my lead or I'll-

NATE
-You're not going to kill me.

FRANK
No, I'm a fair man. You'll rot in a cell if you try anything stupid.

Frank smashes his cigar in an ashtray and marches out.

Ko - mildly amused by this, as with most things serious - gives Nate an unexpected brotherly pat as he exits.

KO
No worries. I've got your back.

Nate doesn't know what to make of that so he doesn't try.

INT. DOCKING BAY - DAY

SOLDIERS perform maintenance on a solar-fueled, ragtag fleet of aircraft and land vehicles reinforced with armor-plating.

The leanest, meanest, and stealthiest of these:

INTREPID: a well armed, hydrogen-powered, arrow-shaped saucer designed for land, air, and sea. SPARKS fly from underneath:

Nate slides out, having welded a MAGNETIC TOW to its hull.

NATE
Give it a whirl!

INT. INTREPID - SAME

Ko -- at the helm -- sits before a futuristic control panel, efficiently designed with a cacophony of levers and knobs.

KO
Ready to pull a rabbit out of your hat?

Ko uses his THUMBPRINT to run a computer check.

AUTOMATED VOICE
Thumbprint recognized. Ko, Sinar. Lieutenant Commander. Integration complete. All systems operational.

KO
You've got Ash's golden touch.

Nate stands modestly at the door, wiping grease off his hands.

NATE
I bypassed a few systems. Nothing
vital.

A big, red knob stands out as new and Ko belts out a laugh.

KO
Including Frank's cigar lighter.
Annoying red knob. Nice touch.

NATE
The magnetic tow will have no problem
hauling Sea Wolf home if you're sure
this tiny ship has enough power.

KO
This baby could haul off an army of
rhinos -- atop a 10-story building.

Nate practices moves with Tao's I.C. now adorning his forearm.

NATE
They're more cumbersome than heavy.

KO
They grow on you. Like a rash.

NATE
You never take them off?

KO
Not on this planet.

Nate finds the comment odd. Ko passes him a flask he's drinking.

NATE
What is it?

KO
Something harsh. Alcoholic. I'm out of
the good stuff.

FRANK (O.S.)
Let's move out, people!

Vala struts past, geared up, and crawls inside the ship.

NATE
What about Gunnar?

VALA
Wanted to sit this one out.

Frank lags a few steps behind - grimacing at Nate.

NATE
What? What did I do now?

Frank whips the flask to a nearby SOLDIER and climbs onboard.

FRANK
Now, Nathan; not 5 minutes from now.

INT. INTREPID - SAME

A hard, cramped cockpit.

Frank straps himself in a bucket seat beside Vala as Nate clambers inside, slams the door shut, and sits beside Ko.

FRANK
Ko, get her started.

Ko punches a few buttons and the TURBINE HOWLS. He plays 'HARD ROCK' music on a makeshift radio to Nate's liking.

KO
No dirty martinis, cashews, or smoking today. Sit back, enjoy the death ride.

The docking bay SAFETY DOOR screeches open.

Ko flicks a switch, pulls back the steering wheel, and they roll out with a quick acceleration that smashes down on Nate.

NATE
HOLY SH--!

EXT. MILITARY COMPLEX - DAY

Sheets of snow turn to sheets of hail battering Intrepid as she races down the muddy runway. The perimeter wall opens just long enough for the ship to pass and safely shoot above storm clouds.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Fearsome CREATURES of the deep have made a mainstream home in dying, murky water littered with seaweed and modern trash....

SPLASH!

Intrepid dives deep. Thrusts past. Respected as a bigger "fish".

INT. INTREPID - SAME

Ko clips the music and cranks Intrepid into gear. Vala pulls down a weapons panel. Frank strains over a sonar monitor.

FRANK
Sea Wolf's down another 20 meters.
Dangerously close to a massive abyss.

Nate's gaping out a window - distraught by all he sees.

NATE
Your ocean. It's annihilated.

FRANK
Nathan. Focus. Ready the tow.

The hovercraft SEA WOLF comes into view, shipwrecked on the sea floor, with a WALL OF BUBBLES rising from the abyss behind it.

VALA
Sea gas?

SONAR: Blinking dots conglomerate into larger blobs.

FRANK
Air-bubbles. That abyss is a whale
lair 50 strong.

VALA
That's more whales than we have ammo.

FRANK
We all know the risk. They're down 900
meters. If we're fast, we're fine.

Nate locks on Sea Wolf with the MAGNETIC TOW.

NATE
Sea Wolf's secure. We've got her.

PING! PING! PING!

SONAR: A blinking dot. On the move. Straight at them.

FRANK
Whale closin' in. Port side!

Ko skids on the sea floor, CAMOUFLAGING INTREPID under sediment.

The SONAR PINGS faster -- tracking the approaching whale.

Tension is thick. Palpably so.

Vala shifts with an itchy trigger finger.

FRANK
Hold...

OUT THE WINDOW

A battle-scarred SPERM WHALE speeds by with a backslide on the ocean floor; its FAMILIAR CLEFT DEFORMITY in plain view.

BACK TO SCENE

Nate squints for a closer look, recognizing the whale, before a cloud of sand obscures him as he swims into the abyss.

NATE

Moby...

FRANK

Everyone just breathe. Back to work.

NATE

Bad idea. We should wait.

KO

It didn't see us.

NATE

A whale doesn't need to see us to know
we're here. I'll dive for the V.T.S.
I'm too small to be a threat.

VALA

Big enough for a snack.

KO

I'll go, too. He'll need back-up.

Ko's camaraderie comes as a pleasing surprise to Nate.

FRANK

No. Too many things could go wrong.
Tow Sea Wolf up from the lair. It's
faster than draggin' her over sand.

Frank places a placatory hand on Nate's shoulder.

FRANK

Lets just finish this and go home.

Ko propels Intrepid closer to Sea Wolf.

Suddenly, MOBY's disconcerting SHADOW looms curiously above.

FRANK

Warnin' fire. Scare it off.

Vala FIRES 2 LASER SHOTS but instead of swimming off scared,
Moby nudges INTREPID, throwing everyone off balance.

FRANK

Again!

Nate grabs Vala's hand to stop her as he pleads with Frank.

NATE

No. Roll this tin can over. Submit.

VALA

We're going to lose our shot.

NATE
I can get us out of this. Listen to
me. Let me dive for the V.T.S.

FRANK
Outta the question.

NATE
What do you lose if I fail?!

FRANK
Another nephew!

EXT. OCEAN - SAME

Moby whacks INTREPID with its spiked tail - denting steel - and the ship tumbles dead center into the ABYSS, taking SEA WOLF along with it - swaying by the magnetic tow, precariously below.

INT. INTREPID - SAME

Everyone prepares for another assault as Moby veers back around.

FRANK
Vala, napalm! Ko, get us outta here!

Vala fires a thundering blast of NAPALM BOMBS on Moby, setting patches of his armor-plated skin momentarily ablaze.

Ko jets off. Dragging Sea Wolf prevents a speedy escape.

KO
There's too much weight. We can't go
any faster!

Moby lets out a WILD ROAR and circles both ships.

NATE
He's calling for backup.

The SONAR PINGS out of control.

FRANK
The entire pod!

Stirring BUBBLES from Moby make it impossible to see.

KO
I can't make heads or tails.

Within seconds, 50 SPERM WHALES concentrate even more bubbles to create a tightening CYCLONE around both ships that drive them down slowly into the depths of the black abyss.

NATE
They're hunting!

An opening below. A possible escape. Everyone sees it.

FRANK
Descend! With everything we've got.
It's our only way out!

NATE
No, it's a trap.

Nate steals the helm - cranks upward - full throttle.

NATE
We need a sacrificial lamb.

He hits a lever, releasing Sea Wolf from the magnetic tow.

EXT. OCEAN - SAME

Sea Wolf free falls straight through the trap and the WHALES
DEMOLISH the HOVERCRAFT with their horns and spikes.

Moby barges in last. He's tenacious and thrashes the hovercraft
in his mouth. Sends it tumbling across the ocean floor.

Intrepid's escaping. Moby finally sees it and gives chase....

EXT. SKY - SAME

Intrepid rockets out of the ocean and above calm clouds.

Moby breaches the water with chomping jaws -- seconds too late.

INT. INTREPID - SAME

Nate levels out the ship as Ko runs a computer check.

KO
The V.T.S.; it's still intact.

FRANK
Go back, Nathan!

NATE
I have no intention of leaving.

Nate jerks Intrepid downward and rages back into the water.

EXT. OCEAN - SAME

Whales swim about the abyss in confusion.

Intrepid darts past Moby at breakneck speed to lure him away
from the pod and instigate a game of 'cat and mouse'.

Moby takes the bait.

They bounce and fly over natural rises in the terrain.

INT. INTREPID - SAME

Nate - exhilarated - elegantly swings over Moby, circles about, and idles on the sea floor. Focused. Waiting.

Frank, Vala, and Ko don't appreciate his free-spirited panache.

FRANK

Nathan!

Moby's charging straight at them. Head on.

NATE

I've got it.

FRANK

That whale's twice our size!

NATE

Vala, don't shoot unless I say.

Vala reluctantly agrees. Frank hovers over Nate like a hawk.

Moby's picking up speed -- coming in fast.

FRANK

Nathan, ascend.

There's a flare of excitement in Nate's eyes that makes Frank cling to a bucket seat for dear life.

FRANK

ASCEND!

As Moby slides in - mouth wide open to gobble them up:

NATE

No risk, no reward.

Nate evades - dramatically rolling over Moby in a great arc.

FRANK

What the hell are you doin'!?

NATE

Playing.

Moby and Nate come at each other. A risky game of chicken.

Seconds from impact, Nate spins Intrepid on her side and slides past the leviathan like just another fellow, frolicking whale.

NATE

Now, we surrender.

Nate rolls Intrepid backside - submissive.

Moby nudges the ship - testing them - bemused and curious.

NATE
No one move.

Moby's mammoth round head emerges at the prow - red rimmed eyes with deep intelligence narrow in - rattling nerves.

The chill of uncertainty -- then the whale strangely swims off.
Exhales of relief. Frank's astonished and slaps Nate proudly.

KO
(laughing)
The man pisses excellence! What can I say?

VALA
(in jest)
Nothing. Nate's ego is plenty full.

NATE
(smiling)
Now, we finish and call it a day.

Nate powers closer to Sea Wolf - destroyed beyond recognition.

KO
Sea Wolf's a goner.

FRANK
The V.T.S?!

Ko tests a few more systems on the computer.

KO
Salvageable. Barely.

FRANK
Tow in the hovercraft.

Ko tries to jettison the TOW but it only emits a CLANKING sound.

KO
Cable's jammed.

FRANK
Try again.

Ko does as he's ordered to no avail as the CLATTERING continues.

FRANK
Again. Try again!

NATE
The noise -- it'll provoke the whales.
We need to dive for the V.T.S. or nix
this mission and come back later.

Ko settles back, agreeing with Nate.

Frank cuts between them - stubborn and frantic - trying to fix the tow - emanating MORE NOISE - without a clue what's he doing.

PING! PING! PING!

WHAM! Moby appears out of nowhere to buck Sea Wolf into the abyss with a sated ROAR before vanishing in darkness once again.

FRANK
(re: sonar)
Sea Wolf's free fallin' 500 meters,
700, 1,000...

Frank's white as a ghost, knowing he should've listened to Nate.

FRANK
The V.T.S. - gone.

Nate gapes through the periscope at his only way home sinking into the deep abyss forever.

CUT TO:

INT. MILITARY COMPLEX, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Frank forces Nate down the hall by the scruff of the neck.

NATE
I'm still useful!

FRANK
Now you wanna be one of us?!

Frank tosses Nate off to a hefty GUARD.

FRANK
My *nephew* wants to be useful.

NATE
Frank!

The hefty Guard shoves Nate inside BIO-FUEL as Frank rounds the corner without a word or a glance back.

INT. LARDER - NIGHT

BAKED BEANS dominate the scarce remains of canned foods.

Gunnar takes inventory of military food rations.

GUNNAR
We have enough rations to survive
another two weeks at best.

Ko closes an empty freezer.

KO
Three, living on beans.

GUNNAR
You live on beans. Why do so many
resource missions result in beans?

Gunnar grimaces and doubles over.

KO
A little high maintenance, don't you
think? Beans aren't so horrible.

GUNNAR
It's not that.

Gunnar pulls up his pant leg, revealing his affliction:

The VULTURE SCRATCH - infected now - secretes blood and pus with
a thin LINE OF POISON racing up the boy's leg.

Sudden CONVULSIONS OVERTAKE Gunnar and he falls to the floor.

INT. INFIRMARY - MOMENTS LATER

Gunnar convulses on a cot. It takes Vala and Ko to secure the
boy for a DOCTOR - tense and urgent - to sedate him.

DOCTOR
What happened?!

KO
Vultures.

VALA
(emotional)
This is my fault. He said he was fine.
I should've made sure.

The DOCTOR finds the POISON making its way to Gunnar's heart.

DOCTOR
We're out of anti-venom. There's no
time to make more.

Vala grabs the Doctor's shirt in her livid fist.

VALA
Try! Do something!

DOCTOR
There's only one person who can.

The Doctor's idea lingers for a heated moment.

INT. BIO-FUEL/SEWER - NIGHT

Nate takes out his anger on the many buckets of sewage he dumps
into the methane GENERATOR.

The TEENAGERS who bullied Gunnar bitterly toil away, too.

SID - the other "outsider" - keeps a watchful eye on Nate. He's exhausted and frazzled. He's been working all night.

CORRIDOR

Nate follows a MOAN and a FLICKER of yellow light to a rusted IRON GATE that blocks off the sewer system and he gazes through.

NATE

Anyone down there need help?

A moaning RAT swoops down, clinging to the bars with dozens of jagged teeth, and a few sticky glow-in-the-dark antennae that whip past the iron to coil around Nate.

SID yanks him back just in time.

NATE

Thanks.

SID

Be careful. These sewers lead beneath the complex and beyond. Anything can get in - or out - if strong enough.

The expectant look in Sid's eyes piques Nate's curiosity.

NATE

Sid, isn't it? You don't look so good. Maybe you should sit down.

Sid rests on a slab of cement as content as a madman.

SID

At first, I thought you double-crossed me. Now, I know. He's dead, isn't he? Ashburn. They killed him. You're from the other side. Same as me.

NATE

Ashburn's death was -- an unfortunate accident.

SID

You sound just like them.

Sid rolls up his sleeve, showing self-inflicted SCARS.

SID

A mark for everyday. Over a month they've kept me locked up. I want out. Ashburn promised.

(pacing, weepy)

I'm a physicist, not a foot soldier. I want to go home.

NATE

(sympathetic)

Best we accept that can't happen now.

NATE
I lost the V.T.S., Sid. There is no
way home. This is our home, now.

SID
You're wrong.

Sid peels off his constricting rubber overalls and Nate suddenly realizes the man's wearing a familiar U.S. NAVY UNIFORM.

NATE
How did you get here?

SID
(recollects a hard memory)
A storm hit. Chaos on the deck. I
didn't realize where I was running. I
have a family. A wife. Two boys. It
was just a job.

Sid looks Nate straight in the eyes.

SID
Ashburn's dead for trying to stop it.
It should be stopped.

NATE
What should be stopped? What are you
talking about?

SID
A sustainable vortex.

Sid's honest face gives Nate a sparkle of hope.

KO (O.S.)
Ash!

They're startled by Ko suddenly standing at the corridor's end.

KO
Get to the infirmary. It's Gunnar.

By the look on Ko's face, Nate knows the prospect isn't good.

Sid grips Nate's shirt. A frail fist. A low, urgent tone.

SID
Don't go. I can get you off this
planet if you get me off the base.

Nate contemplates escape versus helping Gunnar.

KO
(approaching)
Ashburn! Pronto!

NATE
Sid, I'll be back. I'll help you.

After Nate darts around the corner, Ko stares down at Sid with an intimidating presence....

INT. INFIRMARY - LATER

Nate stirs with troubled thoughts while giving blood to:

GUNNAR -- unconscious but stable.

Vala rewraps her son's wound, grateful he's alive.

VALA
He tries to be so brave. Thank you for saving him -- again.

The DOCTOR interrupts to check Gunnar's vitals and pull the needle from Nate's arm, having collected enough blood.

DOCTOR
Your son will be fine by morning. You two; get some rest.

Vala kisses Gunnar -- noticing Nate's lost in thought again.

VALA
You okay?

NATE
Vala, if there was a way off this world, would you come back with me?

VALA
As a planetary lab rat? No thanks. Maybe for a cheeseburger and a beer.

Nate's frowning and gets to his feet and she realizes:

VALA
You're serious.

NATE
You, me, Gunnar; we could leave. Tonight. All of us. Everyone.

The notion throws Vala out of sorts.

FRANK
(stomping over)
That easy, is it?

NATE
There's a sustainable vortex. Somewhere on this planet.

VALA
Sustainable vortex? That's impossible.
It's against every law of nature.

NATE
Sid knows where to find it.

FRANK
Sid? Sid?!

Frank's ready to explode with anger then laughs instead.

NATE
He's a scientist. For the U.S. Navy on
my side. Ashburn gave them a V.T.S.
They perfected it.

Frank and Vala look taken aback.

FRANK
For what? Why would my nephew do that?

NATE
He planned on leaving this place. I
think he was going to take Gunnar.

Vala sits -- almost sick at the thought.

FRANK
I can't believe that. I won't.

NATE
Sid couldn't make it five minutes on
this hostile Earth without help. He
wasn't found in an abandoned house and
he's not crazy. He's traumatized.

Nate's logic makes sense and Frank toys with the notion.

NATE
Earth is a death trap. It's time to
cut your losses. Relocate. There's
still hope for my world.

FRANK
You're an idealist, Nathan.

Vala - distressed - throws on her bomber jacket to leave.

VALA
We have a moral obligation to this
community; to our planet.

NATE
Staying here is racial suicide.

Nate stops Vala. His heart goes out to her. She's just scared.

NATE
Come with me; where a boy can be a
boy. Where he can sleep in peace.

This hits Vala. Hard.

Frank strikes a surgical tray with his fist.

FRANK
This is our home!

NATE
What kind of home is this?

Frank faces a window that's being assaulted by torrential rain
starting to lift -- Nate's words penetrating.

FRANK
All we know.

Nate treads lightly but there's weight behind this offer:

NATE
Sid and I will lead you to the vortex.
You decide what you want after that.

INT. BIO-FUEL, CORRIDOR - NIGHT

SID floats face down in the sewer.

Frank and Vala flip him over and check for signs of life.

FRANK
Sid's dead.

NATE
Dead?!

Nate checks for himself - refusing to accept this - and Frank
glares up at Ko for answers.

FRANK
Dammit, what happened?

KO
I don't know. I left him a while ago.
Reprimanded him for slacking off. He
was upset. Nothing unusual.

Bruises on Sid's forehead match the shape of the iron bars
blocking off the sewer and satisfy Frank. Case closed.

FRANK
Looks self-inflicted.

NATE
That's insane. He was going home. He
wouldn't have killed himself.

FRANK

No one said it was intentional.

NATE

We can still find the vortex. It has to be somewhere close.

FRANK

Or nowhere at all. We don't have resources to waste on a wild goose chase. Our priority is survival.

(rallying)

We'll branch out till we find food. No one comes back empty-handed. We'll-

Nate's desperately trying to resuscitate Sid.

FRANK

He's dead, Nathan.

Nate only works harder. Frank pulls him back, empathetic.

FRANK

He's dead. It's time you accept your role here.

Nate's beside himself, putting pieces together in his mind.

FRANK

(to Ko and Vala)

Get that corpse outta here. The smell of death will only invite more.

NATE

Why all the secrecy with the vortex? Why not just ask for help?

FRANK

You're workin' yourself up on an assumption. Sid-

NATE

-Not Sid. You. Why the covert operations for food and supplies? Why not just ask my world for help?

Nate's in Frank's face and he takes it personally, as he should.

FRANK

Ask heathens who value power and money over anything else? Your world's lazy, greedy; condemned to make our mistakes no matter what warnin' comes their way; and they deserve it. Like we did. It's the only path to redemption.

NATE

Not true. You're a perfect example.

FRANK

They won't help themselves. They can't help us. They can only exploit us.

NATE

You never had any intension of sending me home, did you? It was a ruse. You could've fixed the V.T.S. on your own.
(off Frank's hard silence)
The truth. I want to hear it.

Vala and Ko stand waiting for an answer as well.

FRANK

I said get that corpse outta here!

Ko sullenly drags off Sid's dead body but Vala remains - arms crossed - and Frank slowly looks to Nate, nodding.

FRANK

I hoped you'd wanna stay, Nathan, given enough time.

Nate's brimming with anger; feeling betrayed.

NATE

I'm not your nephew. I will never be your nephew. Your nephew's gone. It's time you accept that.

Nate storms off leaving Frank with a glint of guilt and Vala's grievances staring back at him.

INT. ASHBURN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

In a fit of rage, Nate tears apart the room until everything's destroyed and he slumps on the bed with a racing heart and mind.

VALA (O.S.)

If you've finished redecorating....

Nate looks up at Vala in the doorway, carrying a heavy BOX, trying to cheer him up, but he responds with a cold shoulder.

VALA

I had no idea the captain would keep you here. Other than Sid we've never had an outsider on base.

Vala tosses a few animal trophies off the bed to sit with him.

VALA

I brought you some things from your ship -- if you want them?

Nate rises, tending to old wounds, and Vala stacks his clothes and a few toiletries, from the box, neatly in the closet.

VALA
Life takes us where it takes us, Nate.
You can only fight a river's current
for so long.

NATE
You mean give up. Let us all die.

VALA
Not give up. Never give up. If a
vortex is out there, we'll find it
eventually. You and me.

The gesture gives Nate pause.

VALA
But consider the river knows something
you don't. Let the current take you...

Words from the heart fall unexpectedly off her lips.

VALA
...like I am with you.

A moment between them. Nate leans in with a PASSIONATE KISS that
has no shame and they fall on the bed together, intertwined....

INT. ASHBURN'S QUARTERS - LATER

Vala's sleeping soundly -- naked under sheets.

Nate's restless - on the floor - sifting through familiar items
in the BOX Vala brought him from a life long gone.

He finds his VIDEO CAMERA - gets comfortable - hits PLAY.

VIDEO: The chaos of Sea Wolf chasing down Asanebo in the storm.

He hits fast-forward -- stopping and starting again and again.

TAO (O.S.)
Navigation's out.

FRANK (O.S.)
Mayday! Mayday!

Nate hits fast-forward again and hones in on FOOTAGE he's never
seen until now that fills him with a quiet intensity.

INT. KO'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Ko digs through a toolbox, making adjustments to his I.C.

Nate startles him - sitting on the bed - thoughts spiralling.

KO
You look ready to hemorrhage. Shit
man, have a drink.

Ko pours them each a shot of vodka.

KO
Lets kill it.

They down it and slam the glasses on the table simultaneously.

Direct eye contact. Ko senses something's up; even more so when he notices Nate's wearing an armored suit and he feels it out.

KO
Kanpai.

NATE
Cheers.

Nate eases back - gazing around the room's decor of skulls and claws and tusks from successful hunts - quelling Ko's wariness.

NATE
The night I came to this purgatory, I was hunting a cold-blooded murderer. Looking for proof to shut him down.

KO
Not to be an ass, but, how about we trade war stories another time?
(re: I.C)
Resource mission at first light. I need to finish this.

Nate pours them each another shot.

NATE
In a matter of months, he went from just another vile whale poacher to head of the International Whaling Commission with a U.S. Navy Admiral as his personal watchdog.

KO
How 'bout that.

NATE
Couldn't figure out what they were doing together -- till now. This place is just full of surprises.

Nate slides Ko's I.C. ammo out of reach. Ko shifts "hackles" up.

NATE
There's only one of you. One Sinar Ko.

A flicker of a response from Ko tells Nate he's hit his mark.

NATE
The vortex. Where is it?

KO
 (feigns a chuckle)
 You lunatic. Have another drink.

Nate grabs the VIDEO CAMERA behind him on the bed. Hits PLAY.

VIDEO: Asanebo's assaulted by the storm. KO and ASHBURN argue on deck. It's heated. Escalating. A sparking VORTEX behind them.

NATE
 Charade's up.

Ko downs another shot - deliberating options.

KO
 Ash and I set up Asanebo to hunt for food. Not an easy task 7 minutes at a time. One of us had to remain here on Earth to make it work. We had a run in with your Admiral a while back for illegal whaling. Made a deal. A V.T.S. for a new life. Can you blame us?

Nate stops the video - seemingly satisfied.

KO
 You were a real pain in the ass. That's a compliment; if it means anything. What happened between us; it was never personal.

NATE
 It's always personal.

Nate's eyes find 2 more I.C.'s in a duffle bag on the floor.

NATE
 What does Admiral Jensen want with a sustainable vortex? More technology?

KO
 I just want off this hellhole. Same as you. We can slip away on tomorrow's resource mission. Frank isn't going.

NATE
 Leave all your friends here to die?

KO
 They want to be martyrs. Let them.

A deal's been struck. Ko reaches for his I.C. ammo.

Nate's iron grip unexpectedly stops him.

NATE
 What's that old adage? Three people can keep a secret if two are dead?

KO

What?!

NATE

Ashburn's death was no accident.
Neither was Sid's.

Nate aims his own I.C. at Ko and hits PLAY again on the VIDEO.

VIDEO: The argument between Ko and Ashburn spirals into a merciless brawl until Ashburn shoves Ko back through the vortex.

NATE

Ashburn forced you back here and you
killed him; you killed him and you
killed Sid to hide whatever it is
you're really doing on my side.

Ko's seething in silence.

NATE

I'm taking you to your "captain."

Ko nods defeat only to lower Nate's guard so as to surprise him with a fist in the gut and a whack over the head with his I.C.

Nate raises his own I.C. to fire on Ko but collapses out cold, feeling the pain of the hard hit, as Ko dashes out of the room.

INT. DOCKING BAY - NIGHT

SOLDIERS wash down Intrepid -- clearing away seaweed.

Ko runs in shooting them dead before they see him.

He climbs inside INTREPID - starts the ENGINE - rolls out FIRING MISSILES that flatten enough of the PERIMETER WALL to escape.

EXT. MILITARY COMPLEX - SAME

The missiles' BLAST INCINERATES over half the PLATOON on guard duty, torches others fleeing, and DEMOLISHES most of this ecofriendly COMPLEX that catches fire quickly.

INT. MILITARY COMPLEX, ASHBURN'S QUARTERS - SAME

Smoke rolls in from air vents. Flames out the window close in.

VALA

(snaps awake)

Gunnar!

She's up. Throwing on her armored suit. Armed and out the door.

HALLWAY

Vala rushes down smoke filled halls - past falling timbers and corpses and desperate people escaping with whatever valuables they can carry. Food, clothing, etc....

Nate staggers out of Ko's quarters, half-alert.

SOLDIERS whisk past him, helping recovering PATIENTS from the infirmary, as Vala races in for Gunnar.

NATE

VALA!

She can't hear him over all the commotion.

Nate shoulders past the mayhem to go after her when Frank yanks him into the:

DOCKING BAY

Flames engulf air and land vehicles and spread to the walls.

Frank ushers Nate to a slew of SOLDIERS piling PEOPLE safely into the few MILITARY HELICOPTERS they've managed to salvage.

NATE

(shrugs free)

Vala and Gunnar are still inside.

INFIRMARY

Fire creeps rapidly across the ceiling and down the walls.

Vala helps Gunnar off his cot. He's disoriented and weak.

GUNNAR

What's going on?

She helps Gunnar slip on his armored suit and I.C.

VALA

You need to be strong. We need to get out of here.

Sudden BURNING BEAMS collapse, blocking the only doorway out.

HALLWAY

The infrastructure crumbles: steel beams, wood, solar panels...

Nate and Frank dart left then right -- averting death.

NATE

They're in the infirmary.

A steel BEAM FALLS straight down above Nate. Frank sees it.

FRANK
Nathan, watch out!

Frank shoves Nate from harm's way, haphazardly taking the hit.

NATE
Frank!

Nate frantically tries to free Frank from the steel across his chest but it seems too heavy a feat for one man.

Fire closes in on the walls and floor from both directions.

FRANK
(accepting defeat)
Nathan, go. While you can.

NATE
You're coming, too.

Nate refuses to lose another life. He musters all his strength and manages to slide the beam just enough to pull Frank out.

Hands clasp in camaraderie.

NATE
C'mon.

As Nate helps Frank stand, the burning CEILING CAVES IN on them.

Complete silence. No movement. The fall was tremendous.

Then:

Nate slowly pushes out from fallen timbers with minor wounds.

NATE
(searching)
Frank? Frank!

Nate finds FRANK's BLOODY HAND and digs him out, sadly realizing life has drained from the man completely.

Too much time has passed. FIRE now blocks any hope of saving Vala and Gunnar; let alone himself.

Nate's trapped. Sweating for an out. An opportunity appears:

A SCREECHING RAT -- clinging to a FLOOR VENT.

INFIRMARY

A violent inferno. Down the walls. Cornering Vala and Gunnar.

They're madly throwing rubble atop a floor vent aside to escape the flames inching closer and closer.

GUNNAR
Mom! The fire.

VALA
I see it.

NATE (O.S.)
Down here.

Nate's voice. Under the rubble.

Vala tosses the last of the debris away and helps Nate pry open the floor vent that leads to the sewer. She's happy to see him.

NATE
Everyone okay?

VALA
(light)
A little warm.

Vala and Nate help Gunnar down first.

INT. BIO-FUEL/SEWER - SAME

Drain pipes burst. RATS scurry out of cracked cement walls.

Wooden beams above catch fire -- falling one by one.

Nate helps Vala down from the infirmary with no time to spare.

VALA
(re: fire)
I don't know what happened.

NATE
Ko. He murdered Sid.
(delicate)
He murdered your father, Gunnar.

There's barely a moment to absorb the horror of this when:

BURNING BEAMS set the METHANE GENERATOR behind them AFIRE.

NATE
Methane!

VALA
The exhaust fans. Follow the rats!

They race for their lives alongside a HORDE of scurrying RATS.

The METHANE GENERATOR EXPLODES, bursting into thousands of fiery pieces, and the flammable sewer water goes up in instant flames.

NATE
GO! Faster!

WHOOSH! One enormous GUST of FIRE at their backs.

A large EXHAUST FAN at the corridor's end - a few strides ahead.

In unison, Nate, Vala and Gunnar BLAST it open mid-run.

EXT. MILITARY COMPLEX - SECONDS LATER

They dive for the dirt. Nate and Vala huddle to protect Gunnar.

The fireball rolls over their armored suits.

EXT. ROSS SEA, ANTARCTICA (NATE'S WORLD) - NIGHT

A cold, foggy night.

NAVY SOLDIERS - aboard the whaler ship ASANEBO - cart STEEL BOXES to the stern where a VORTEX skims the ocean just off the ramp built for hauling up whales.

EXT. ASANEBO, DECK - SAME

Unexpectedly, INTREPID zooms through the vortex and lands. Ko opens the door appearing a bit rattled, greeted assertively by:

KO
Admiral Jensen.

ADMIRAL JENSEN
I thought you'd never return.

KO
There were complications.

EXT. ALASKA (EARTH) - NIGHT

An assortment of five armor-plated HELICOPTERS flee the distant military complex as it burns to the ground....

INT. CHINOOK MILITARY HELICOPTER - SAME

Despondent faces tightly packed. Many tend to the wounded.

Vala and Gunnar recover with bandages and water.

Nate finishes suturing a man's leg before joining them.

NATE
Frank's dead. He died saving me. I
thought you should know....

Vala and Gunner take the news with heavy hearts. She hugs her son close with loving arms. They've lost so much.

VALA
There's a bunker in an old fishing
village further south. We'll regroup
there.

Nate nods in agreement and moves to clean soot from his face when he's drawn to GYRATING BLADES of another helicopter - a FAN on the dash - Gunnar fiddling with his slow SPINNING COMPASS.

Nate's dejected eyes brighten as he's hit with a revelation.

NATE

The compass. Give it to me.

GUNNAR

(passes Nate compass)

What for?

NATE

It's spinning. The compass is spinning.

(off their confusion)

Vala, when you activated the V.T.S to cross over to my world, our compasses went haywire. From the electromagnetic interference. From the vortex. It's how we'll find it now.

Faces light up with hope and a surge of enthusiasm.

The further they travel, over the Alaskan Peninsula, the faster the COMPASS WHIRLS. Nate loops it on the dash for the PILOT.

NATE

We're heading the right way. Stop when the compass spins out of control.

(grabs radio)

This is Captain Nate Ashburn. Frank's dead. I'm taking command. Follow me to your new home.

The Pilot takes the lead and all the aircraft follow.

The COMPASS SPINS RAPIDLY as they fly over the coast of a once thriving ISLAND reduced to muck and densely wooded, bare trees.

NATE

We're close.

VALA

King's Cove. Another Dead Zone. We should find somewhere safe to land.

They cross a CLUSTER of large CAVES hidden by PATCHES of FOG and the COMPASS SWIRLS wildly.

NATE

This is the place. Stop!

(to pilot)

Stop! Take us in. I'll check it out first. Everyone else wait here.

VALA

You mean us. Don't argue.

GUNNAR
 (passing Nate rope)
 It's a losing battle. Trust me.

NATE
 So I'm learning....

INT. CAVE, KING'S COVE - NIGHT

3 ROPES DROP down holes of the enormous honeycomb cave.

Nate, Vala, and Gunnar slither down, awestruck by the miracle illuminated by soft moonlight before them:

- Cheerful SUNFLOWERS tucked between deep, green hills.
- Trees and shrubs are just starting to bloom.
- A family of UNTAINTED DEER - drinking from a fresh water spring - flee when Nate's flashlight finds them.

VALA
 Earth is regenerating.

NATE
 This cave gave it a fighting chance.

Vala takes a device from her satchel and bends for a soil check.

Gunner plucks wild BERRIES off a bush to eat them.

VALA
 Gunnar, wait.

GUNNAR
 They don't look poisonous.

Nate stuffs a handful of sweet, juicy berries in his own mouth.

NATE
 They're not. El Viejo doesn't protect
 poisonous fruit.

Nate and Gunnar trade a smirk and the boy drops to the ground making "grass angels" with a mouthful of berries and laughter.

VALA
 Why would anyone hide this -- utopia?

Nate shares her confusion as he follows the SPINNING COMPASS, twirling faster and faster as he leads the way out of the cave.

EXT. UTOPIA CAVE - SECONDS LATER

A rocky 4ft wide RAVINE separates the thriving "utopia" from the foggy, dismal DEAD ZONE where a HILL of reddish-brown mud gushes into it, rising dangerously close to overflowing.

Nate, Vala, and Gunnar find their way to the edge.

VALA
Dead Zone mud. A river of it.

STEEL BOXES tumble downhill, bursting open with Dead Zone "mud".

Nate narrows on them. He's seen them before. Aboard Asanebo.
With a closer look he realizes the boxes are marked BIOHAZARD.

NATE
Not mud. Toxic waste. From my world.

The river of toxic waste pops - burning a swath of grass.

NATE
That's what Ko's hiding. That's what
he's doing with the military.

GUNNAR
Using Earth as a dump site?

NATE
Killing one planet to save another.

They trail the river of toxic waste to where it plunges into a
COVE, like a waterfall, and bleeds into the SEA.

The cry of a distant whale - MOBY perhaps - breaching for air.

NATE
(realizing)
Ashburn figured it all out. Tried to
pull the plug. He wanted to leave
Earth; not destroy it.
(to Gunnar)
Your father died honorably.

The news puts Gunnar's heart at ease.

VALA
We need to stop them, Nate.

NATE
(re: compass)
The vortex is up that hill.

Vala's digging through her duffle bag of equipment.

VALA
There could be a hundred guns waiting
for us. Let's think this through. Come
up with a solid plan. We need to-

NATE
-Jump!

To Vala's dismay, Nate's jumping across the ravine and he climbs up the Dead Zone hill with Gunnar fast on his heels....

EXT. KING'S COVE/DEAD ZONE - SAME

Hidden amongst thick fog and a forest of stark, ancient trees and saturated earth of toxic waste, lies a:

VORTEX: a sparking, horizontal sliver of light resembling a lightning bolt. It rips open the night sky every few seconds to spew STEEL BOXES of toxic waste.

Nate reaches the hilltop - covered in muck - and dives into it.

INT. VORTEX - SAME

A DRONING SOUND echoes inside a throbbing, luminous "net" of white energy that encompasses Nate and expands as he moves.

A sudden blinding burst of light flashes before him as the "net" widens to accommodate something larger flying his way:

BAM! Nate's hit in the gut with a STEEL BOX - then another.

He collects himself. Flat on his stomach. Staring out the opposite side to his world, where SHADOWS of PEOPLE move about.

Vala and Gunnar rush up behind Nate when another STEEL BOX flies through. This time, he's ready.

NATE

DOWN!

They drop to their knees instantly.

NATE

On three....

With I.C.'s locked and loaded, they time it out.

EXT. ROSS SEA, ANTARCTICA (NATE'S WORLD) - NIGHT

Heavy fog. High winds. Strong swells.

NAVY SOLDIERS aboard Asanebo slide STEEL BOXES of toxic waste down the whale RAMP and through the sustainable vortex.

They turn their backs to gather another round as:

The VORTEX opens for Nate, Vala, and Gunnar to leap through.

SPLASH!

They plummet into the water - unnoticed - and come up for air starboard. Cold water and large waves test their vigor.

EXT. ASANEBO, DECK - SECONDS LATER

A GRAPPLE HOOK catches the railing behind stacked crates where Gunnar and Vala scale a rope and duck behind them, unseen.

Nate climbs up last and casts out at the Navy's covert operation. It's worse than he imagined:

EXT. ROSS SEA - SAME

2 U.S. MILITARY CARGO SHIPS hold an organized maze of THOUSANDS of STEEL BOXES of TOXIC WASTE across their wide decks.

A CRANE on each of them hauls one steel box after the next, onto Asanebo flanked between them, to be dumped through the vortex.

INTREPID and 2 COBRA HELICOPTERS arm each cargo ship.

EXT. ASANEBO, STERN - SAME

NAVY MEN cross a makeshift bridge to Asanebo - approaching Nate.

VALA
(heated whisper)
Nate!

Nate jolts from his outward gaze and camouflages in shadows, joining Vala and Gunnar, seconds before the navy men pass.

VALA
The V.T.S. will be integrated with
this ship's mainframe.

Vala retrieves a palm-sized handheld computer from her satchel.

VALA
We'll download it onto this handheld.

NATE
C'mon.

Under the cover of night, they furtively make for the bridge.

EXT. MILITARY CARGO SHIP 1, DECK - SAME

Admiral Jensen struts down aisles of steel boxes, superior and enjoying it. Ko's at his side, disgruntled, mid-argument.

ADMIRAL JENSEN
You'll be paid handsomely for that
fine ship but we're not relocating and
no delays. Not after all I've done to
keep this operation hidden.

KO
You don't know Nate Ashburn.

ADMIRAL JENSEN
The man's a menace. Nothing more.

KO
He's unrelenting.

ADMIRAL JENSEN
Calm yourself. The U.S. Navy can
handle your little scavenger crew if
they find their way here.

Ko grits his teeth, finding it difficult to acquiesce.

ADMIRAL JENSEN
We're saving the world. Put a smile on
your face.

Admiral Jensen gives Ko a condescending pat and heads up a
flight of stairs to the landing pad. Ko hesitantly follows.

Nate, Vala, and Gunnar sling back to hide as they pass.

INT. ASANEBO, BRIDGE - SAME

CREWMEN entertain themselves with an Asian game show on TV when:

Nate and Vala surreptitiously sneak in and knock them out.

Gunnar hurries in after and gets straight to work, prying apart
the mainframe, digging into its many confusing wires.

GUNNAR
This computer's ancient. I'm going to
need more power.

Gunnar removes his I.C. and wires it to Asanebo's mainframe and
the handheld to give the latter a power boost.

GUNNAR
It might take a while.

EXT. MILITARY CARGO SHIP 1, LANDING PAD/INT. INTREPID - SAME

Ko's replacing blown fuses when Admiral Jensen approaches with a
studious PHYSICIST.

ADMIRAL JENSEN
Ko, meet our new physicist. You'll be
assisting him with replication of the
V.T.S.

KO
Hope you live longer than the last
one, friend.

A V.T.S WARNING LIGHT blinks on Intrepid's computer console.

ADMIRAL JENSEN
What's wrong?

INT. ASANEBO, BRIDGE - SAME

Gunnar's on the floor -- engrossed in tangled wires.

The HANDHELD computer adorns a line of HORIZONTAL LIGHTS slowly rising - indicating the V.T.S. download's PROGRESS.

GUNNAR
V.T.S. download at 32%, 47...

Nate and Vala finish binding the unconscious crewmen to a chair.

Admiral Jensen's alarming threat blares over a PA.

ADMIRAL JENSEN (O.S.)
This is Admiral Jensen of the United
States Navy. Cease all activity and
surrender immediately.

ARMED NAVY SOLDIERS storm Asanebo from both CARGO SHIPS.

NATE
Party's over.

GUNNAR
I need more time!

Nate starts the ENGINE - cranks up the ANCHOR.

NATE
Not a problem.
(re: weapons)
Vala!

VALA
On it.

Vala flicks a switch -- FIRING 2 remote high-pressured WATER
CANONS across the deck -- HOSING NAVY SOLDIERS OVERBOARD.

NATE
(fierce, energized)
Game on!

Nate pulls back a lever and the whaler ship takes off.

EXT. ROSS SEA - SAME

ASANEBO picks up speed - pitching hard - slamming over swells.

Both CARGO SHIPS pursue - maneuvering to intercept - gaining.

Asanebo shoots WIRE NETS in their paths to stop them.

It takes 3 SHOTS before nets entangle a rudder, making CARGO SHIP 1 IMMOBILE.

An ICE FIELD ahead. Massive swells toss around huge GROWLERS.

INT. ASANEBO, BRIDGE - SAME

Nate sails into the dangerous ice-locked waters with purpose.

VALA
Are you crazy?!

NATE
The kid needs more time! I'm giving it to him.

VALA
One hit, we'll hole and sink!

NATE
So will they!

EXT. ROSS SEA - SAME

Nate uses all his experience and instinct, carefully threading the cement reinforced bow between buckling chunks of lethal ice.

The remaining cargo ship's not equipped. Backs off. Deploys:

2 COBRA HELICOPTERS -- FIRING WARNING SHOTS at Asanebo.

Vala responds - shooting more WIRE NETS at their ROTORS that send COBRA 1 spinning out of control - CRASHING at sea.

COBRA 2 deflects the nets and circles around, laying down 50-caliber BULLETS that rip through Asanebo's deck.

INT. ASANEBO, BRIDGE - SAME

Nate and Vala dive for cover as ARMOR-PIERCING SHELLS demolish the cabin's steel canopy.

The onslaught mutilates the tied up crewmen.

Gunnar's tucked under the console - terrified - weaponless and feeling exposed for the first time.

NATE
Don't stop working. A vortex is our only way out of this!

V.T.S. PROGRESS LIGHTS slowly begin DIMINISHING one at a time.

GUNNAR
We're losing the V.T.S. to Ko.

NATE
 (wrestling helm again)
 They'll blow us out of the water.
 Override him!

COBRA 2 swings back with reinforcements - 2 more COBRAS.

VALA
 Three Cobras - at 4, 6, and 8 o'clock!

Gunnar snaps back to work but now the V.T.S. PROGRESS LIGHTS
 FADE AWAY at a faster rate and he's unable to counter it.

GUNNAR
 The V.T.S.; I can't get it back!

NATE
 Keep trying!

The 3 COBRAS zigzag overhead -- dangerously close.

Vala targets COBRA 2's PILOT with the ear-splitting SONAR WEAPON
 and the helicopter somersaults into ice.

COBRA 3 blows away the SONAR WEAPON, in kind, and rages in
 alongside COBRA 4 -- GUNS A BLAZING.

VALA
 Two cobras! On our aft!

A MAZE of PRODIGIOUS GLACIERS nearby catch the RISING SUN with a
 blaze of intense, blue light - giving Nate an idea.

NATE
 Hang on!

Nate thrusts forward and COBRA 4 OPENS FIRE! COBRA 3 darts off.

EXT. GLACIER MAZE - DAWN

Asanebo weaves around massive ice blocks in close proximity to
 dodge COBRA 4's UNRELENTING FIRE that shatters and shaves ice.

SWELLS STEEPEN. One wrong calculation, they'll crash.

COBRA 3 sneaks in with a head on attack of RELENTLESS FIRE as
 COBRA 4 launches ruthless MISSILES on Asanebo's tail.

Vala lets loose a fusillade of energy coils with her I.C. on
 both helicopters that BLOWS COBRA 3 to smithereens.

Asanebo escapes COBRA 4 with one ice grinding, sharp turn after
 the next - a testament of Nate's impeccable skill - as the
 Cobra's projectiles EXPLODE GLACIER after GLACIER in their wake.

Suddenly, Asanebo sails out into foggy, open waters....

INT. ASANEBO, BRIDGE - SAME

Nate spins - I.C. ready to assist Vala - but COBRA 4 RETREATS, leaving them with exchanged looks of uncertainty.

VALA
Why would they just stop?

GUNNAR
They need us.

Gunnar shakes out his sore fingers from working overtime.

GUNNAR
I locked them out. Ko has 87% of the
V.T.S. program. We have the rest.

FLASH! FLASH!

Both CARGO SHIPS flip on blinding lights. Ready and waiting.

INTREPID and COBRA 4 linger above them -- armed and eager.

ADMIRAL JENSEN (O.S.)
(via PA)
Stand down. You will surrender
yourselves as prisoners of war.

NAVY SOLDIERS target Nate, Vala, and Gunnar with ASSAULT RIFLES as both CARGO SHIPS navigate to commandeer the whaler ship.

VALA
Nate, surrender.

It's just not in him. She sees it clearly on his face.

VALA
They can't control the vortex without
our 13%. It's leverage.

NATE
We surrender, they win.

VALA
They'll kill us if we don't.

The cargo ships - on the move - faster now - getting closer.

Nate contemplates a difficult decision. The lives of Vala and Gunnar weigh heavy on his shoulders....

NATE
Ready a Zodiac.

Vala and Gunnar start for the door -- but Nate's not following.

VALA
Nate?

He looks in her eyes deeply, knowing he may never see her again.

VALA
You're not coming.

NATE
Someone has to finish this.

Nate passes Gunnar the handheld computer.

NATE
I'll distract Intrepid. Be ready to
unlock the V.T.S. Upload it as fast as
you can. Go back for the others.

It's not vengeance in his eyes or anger, but responsibility.

NATE
Got it, kid? I'm counting on you.

Gunnar nods bravely.

A RUMBLING across the dawning sky: INTREPID and COBRA 4 speed in
ahead of the cargo ships - expecting submission.

NATE
Go, now!

Nate powers up - a captain ready to go down with his ship.

VALA (O.S.)
Prevail or perish, Captain.

Nate frowns back at Vala re-loading her I.C. and Gunnar assuming
the water canons as if they're a new toy.

NATE
I said abandon ship!

VALA
Not without you.
(re: out the window)
INCOMING!

Nate tosses Vala his I.C. and she slips it on with zeal. Now she
has two - one each forearm.

NATE
No surrender.

Nate charges Asanebo forward. Full force. Provoking battle.

EXT. ROSS SEA - SAME

Intrepid and Cobra 4 make a dramatic run in, FIRING down on
waves as they sweep in for a brutal, close range assault.

Vala and Gunnar strike back with a team effort of equal verve:

Lashing water canons distract as I.C. energy coils fire.

The battlefield becomes severely overcrowded as Asanebo, Intrepid, and Cobra 4 evade and attack.

Asanebo rocks violently as a few bombs hit, igniting the BOW.

I.C. COILS eventually send COBRA 4 on a nose-diving death spiral, CRASHING aboard CARGO SHIP 2 as the massive vessel attempts to cross Asanebo's path to block it.

TOXIC WASTE vehemently EXPLODES, leaving no survivors.

COBRA 4's FIERY PROPELLER cuts through the sky like a boomerang, straight at the oncoming CARGO SHIP 1.

INT. MILITARY CARGO SHIP 1, BRIDGE - SAME

Admiral Jensen and the Physicist stagger in terror as:

The burning cobra PROPELLER THUDS into the bridge - killing them, along with everyone else.

EXT. MILITARY CARGO SHIP 1/ROSS SEA - SAME

The cobra PROPELLER breaks into FIERY PIECES upon impact, violently igniting the entire deck of toxic waste and SCORCHING MEN as they leap into the frigid water, trying to survive.

Intrepid flies off -- but not too quickly -- cutting past fog.

INT. ASANEBO, BRIDGE - SAME

Nate clears the debris with a flaming bow intensifying and he bears down on Intrepid - increasing velocity.

VALA
Ko's baiting you.

NATE
I know.

The smoking whaler ship rattles and hisses - overexerted.

WARNING LIGHTS blare. The engine will plunk at any moment.

VALA
We can't keep up this speed.

Nate pushes the ship just a little farther, a little faster.

NATE
NOW!

WHAM! Gunnar slams down on a lever to EXPEL:

EXT. ROSS SEA - SAME

A HARPOON rockets over the water. BOOM! Direct hit! The GRENADE TIP pierces Intrepid's hull - DETONATING instantly.

The explosion plummets Intrepid into the sea and skidding backwards as the harpoon cable drags it towards Asanebo's ramp.

Vala's devastating volley of I.C. COILS hinders retaliation.

INT. ASANEBO, BRIDGE - SAME

Nate reels Intrepid in as fast as he can, feeling triumphant.

NATE
Got him! The V.T.S.-

GUNNAR
(downloading again)
-Unlocked. 20% and rising...

Intrepid recovers - adapting to the water - thrusting forward.

NATE
Make it fast!

The HARPOON CABLE goes TAUT. Nate can't loosen it.

NATE
(grabs helm)
Hold on!

Intrepid - more powerful - yanks Asanebo on a wild, rough ride.

Vala and Gunnar are thrown back.

Nate struggles to keep the whaler ship from toppling as it drags behind Intrepid at high, rocky speeds.

The VORTEX comes into view. Intrepid speeds through it.

VALA
(recovering)
We're going in too strong!

Nate hits reverse - a maneuver to yank Intrepid back - but Asanebo lacks the power and he loses control of the whaler ship as it careens through the vortex in flames.

EXT. ROSS SEA - SAME

The water is quiet and calm if not for the crackling vortex and the distant glow of both CARGO SHIPS burning in muddled chaos.

EXT. ALASKAN PENINSULA, KING'S COVE (EARTH) - MORNING

The VORTEX tears opens to the dystopian planet spewing shattered wreckage across the foggy Dead Zone forest of toxic "mud".

A moment or two passes....

Asanebo bursts through - blazing deck - bridge barely intact - plowing uncontrollably downhill - past tightly lined trees - leaving patches of fire in its wake....

Nate, Vala, and Gunnar cling on until what's left of the vessel comes to a jolting stop just shy of the river of toxic waste.

They roll out almost as fast, relatively unscathed, immediately scanning the vicinity for danger.

NATE

Intrepid. Over there.

INTREPID - crashed beyond repair - into a tree near the ravine.

EXT. INTREPID - SECONDS LATER

Blood taints cracked glass.

Nate pries open a crushed door expecting to find Ko dead but the cockpit's empty and the side windows are broken.

NATE

Ko escaped.

Vala casts out on high alert. It's eerily quiet.

GUNNAR

We should finish the V.T.S. download with Intrepid's computer. Before it dies. It'll be faster with your thumbprint, Nate.

INT. INTREPID - SAME

Nate crawls in to download the V.T.S. with his THUMBPRINT.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Ashburn, Nathan. Commander. Recognized.

Gunnar leans over Nate to connect the handheld computer to Intrepid's mainframe computer and type in a few commands.

AUTOMATED VOICE

V.T.S. download initiated.

The progress lights on the handheld taper and disappear.

AUTOMATED VOICE

Download complete.

NATE

Eject program.

The computer ejects the V.T.S. on a palm-sized disc.

Nate grabs it with an eager glance at the VORTEX up the hill.

NATE
We've got the V.T.S. Lets rally
everyone; get back to my-

He turns mid-sentence only to find:

EXT. KING'S COVE, DEAD ZONE - SAME

Vala - standing anxiously with her hands in the air and:

Gunnar - restrained with an I.C. HUNTING KNIFE at his THROAT by:

Ko - at wits end - shaken from the crash - all patience lost.

KO
You can have the boy. All I want is
the V.T.S. and you out of my way.

Nate's heated and plotting and he lurches out of the ship.

KO
Or I kill you all and just take it.

Nate dangles the V.T.S. over the river of toxic waste with a
deal of his own.

NATE
Let the kid go.

Ko tightens his grip on Gunnar's neck and FIRES on Vala. TWICE.

GUNNAR
MOM!

Vala falls to the ground, stunned unconscious by the might of
the I.C. ENERGY COILS, as her ARMORED SUIT ABSORBS their BLAZE.

KO
You're out of options, *friend*, and I'm
done playing 'nice guy'.

Ko takes aim on Vala's head before Nate reluctantly complies.

NATE
The V.T.S. Take it.

The nemeses stand vis-à-vis. Ko's hubris kicks back into gear.

KO
We're extremists, Ashburn. Both of us.
Reality's lost somewhere in between...

As if that justifies it all.

Nate lets out a thin grin to hold back fury as he passes Ko the
V.T.S. An honest trade. Not an easy one.

Ko shoves Gunnar to run after Vala and Nate whirls with concern that seizes his wits; inadvertently playing into Ko's plan:

THUD! Ko stabs Nate in the gut with his I.C. KNIFE.

KO

...But you never know when to quit.

POP! Ko twists Nate's bad arm behind his back, DISLOCATING his SHOULDER once again to force him to his knees, then digs his knife into Nate's throat to slice it and end his life.

Gunnar - tending to Vala as she slowly comes to - gapes over.

GUNNAR

Nate!

NATE

Run.

Sharing Nate's vim; his defiance, the boy charges Ko instead; for the death of his father and to save his new found friend.

GUNNAR

No more!

Ko punches down to fire -- taking perfect aim to kill Gunnar.

NATE

(distracting, vehement)

KO!

CRACK! Nate twists, BREAKING his DISLOCATED SHOULDER to jab KO with a HARD LEFT HOOK that throws him down flat, saving the boy.

With no thought to his injury, Nate wrestles Ko for the I.C.

They grapple with fiery passion and equal ruthlessness.

The V.T.S. goes flying into the river of toxic waste.

Gunnar dives to save it - landing hard - sliding forward on his stomach. It's all their lives.

Nate gets the I.C. free from Ko's forearm but it slips from their fingers. Too far to grasp as they tumble across the mud.

RAVINE

Ko strikes Nate mercilessly - edging the river of toxic waste.

He grabs a ROCK to BASH Nate's HEAD in but Nate catches Ko's hands as they come down in a battle of wills....

An inner strength empowers Nate. He's a force of nature; not for himself but for humanity. It's not about winning anymore.

Nate pins Ko over the bubbling toxic waste.

Ko tries his hardest but can't push Nate off and he pales at his reversal of fortune. His eyes flash with something new: FEAR!

NATE

End game.

Nate forces Ko's head back steadily under the scalding waste.

Ko howls a tormented cry as he catches fire in maddening pain.

Nate releases his grip on Ko as the toxic waste sets fire to the sordid man's entire corpse, devouring it within seconds.

It's finally over. Nate stands exhausted - but free.

A soft breeze draws him to look across the ravine into:

INT. UTOPIA CAVE - SAME

The WHITE DEMON DOG Nate saved from the science facility drinks from the fresh water spring with a few pups.

She meets Nate's gaze once again but, this time, she doesn't run, she just calmly returns to drinking the water.

EXT. KING'S COVE, DEAD ZONE - SAME

Nate observes the Demon Dogs for another peaceful moment as he gathers himself. His KNIFE WOUND is superficial. He'll be fine.

Sudden panic overtakes him and his eyes find:

The VORTEX - UP THE HILL - sputtering and sparking - fading away to oblivion as the V.T.S. begins SINKING into the toxic waste.

He'll make it home if he runs right now; if he runs fast enough.

Nate looks out in quick contemplation:

VALA - struggles her way to Gunnar with injured ribs.

GUNNAR - never more determined - stretches dangerously over the toxic waste to lap up the V.T.S with scrap metal from Intrepid. He's a hair away from succeeding - but a hair away from death.

Nate reaches out with a gentle hand on Gunnar's shoulder.

NATE

Gunnar, let it go.

GUNNAR

I can get it. I've almost got it.

Nate draws Gunnar back as the V.T.S catches fire and sinks.

NATE

The war is over.

The VORTEX behind them disappears forever with a burst of light.

GUNNAR
The vortex?!

NATE
We don't need it anymore. Earth can
finally heal. We all can.

Gunnar follows Nate's gaze to "utopia" where the dogs frolic. He
cocks his head curiously, grins. He's never seen such a sight.

Vala marvels radiantly beside them at nature starting anew.

Nate takes her hand in his with total love she reciprocates.

The echo of AIRCRAFT lingering above.

VALA
We should get the others.

GUNNAR
Then, what?

NATE
See where the current takes us.

Nate tussles Gunnar's hair then wraps his arm around Vala.

Together, they walk across a fallen tree to "utopia", under a
stream of glimmering sunshine, to join their cadre above.

Behind them, vibrant ORANGE BUTTERFLIES flutter about the river
of toxic waste, feeding....

FADE OUT: