

E c h o l o c a t i v e
C r i s i s
O p e r a t i o n s

by
Kurt Wimmer

"He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast ... "

Coleridge



Type of Material **SP** Title **RONIN**
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 Publisher/Date **Draft, 8/21/95** Author **J.D. Zeik**
 Submitted by **Toby Jaffe**
 Submitted to **Thomas Levine** Circa **Present** Location **France**
 cc: **Michael Hackett**
 Analyst **Alan Ehrlich** Drama Category **ACTION**
 Date **October 2, 1995** Elements

LOG LINE **A group of international mercenaries is brought together by an unknown leader in order to retrieve an attache case worth billions.**

COMMENT SUMMARY **Decent characters and action sequences, but the plotting is not intriguing enough and nothing is superlative enough to warrant making this movie. A decent variation on an old theme.**

SHORT SYNOPSIS **A group of international mercenaries are brought together. They are without ties, similar to the feudal Japanese term, "Ronin," for an ex-Samurai warrior whose master has been killed. Calm, ex-CIA trained weapons specialist SAM is a natural leader, but French VINCENT is also, and this is his home country. There is a mutual respect they share--for now. Ugly American LARRY mouths off in a French bar. He's an expert driver with a motor mouth that doesn't know when to quit. When he starts to degrade soccer at a French soccer bar, only the presence of the feared Vincent saves him. The trio meet Eastern European, ex-KGB GREGOR, explosives expert/techie and sociopath SWEDE, whose main asset is his huge size and tiny brain. No one knows anything, only that they have been brought together, but by whom? Enter beautiful ex-IRA DEIRDRE. One notch above them on the food chain, she knows the first step: Vincent chooses Sam to accompany him to meet French FRANCOIS, who double-crosses Vincent. Sam saves Vincent's life and Vincent is indebted. They bring the envelope they acquired to Deirdre; it contains the plans, which they go over. Deirdre and Sam have sex. Gregor and Swede privately plot to doublecross the team. The following day they execute the pickup to perfection: Larry runs the target car off the road and following the shootout Swede severs a hand in order to get an attache case handcuffed to it. Swede shoots Larry but then is himself doublecrossed by Gregor, who kills Swede and escapes with the case. Sam doctors Larry. Gregor kills his DAPPER CONTACT and phones his boss. Sam, Vincent, Deirdre and Larry trace the call and trail him to Aix where he meets EDVARD. Sam gets the drop on Gregor while Deirdre and Vincent get the drop on Edvard and his GUNMEN. Edvard identifies Sam as a Metropole cop but Deirdre's secret partner, hyper SEAMUS REILLY kills Larry at the wheel of the getaway car and wounds Sam. Sam saves Vincent a second time and Vincent kills Edvard. Unable to go the real cops, Sam is brought to Vincent's contact, JEAN PIERRE, who helps patch Sam. Gregor is captured by Deirdre and Seamus but doesn't have the case, which he mailed to himself in Paris. Sam and Vincent pay African American TONY, information broker, to learn where to find Seamus; they head for Paris. Sam and Vincent spy on Seamus, who accompanies Gregor to the Post Office for the case. Sam gets the drop on Deirdre, but can't pull the trigger. She**

CHECK ONE:

PREMISE

STORY LINE

STRUCTURE

CHARACTERIZATION

DIALOGUE

EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
		X	
		X	
		X	
	X.....X		
	X.....X		

(MORE)

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SYNOPSIS CONTINUED:

escapes, is joined by Seamus and Gregor, who escape from Sam and Vincent after a car crash. Gregor takes the case to his contact, Russian mobster MIKHI, who turns out to be Seamus and Deirdre's partners. Vincent and Sam attack, along with CIA agent JACK (Sam's old friend). Gregor slashes Mikhi. Vincent shoots 4 GUNMEN but is saved a third time by Sam, who himself is saved when Vincent jumps in front of bullet. Deirdre turns on Seamus and kills him, instead of Sam. Vincent kills Jack; Sam shoots the case off Gregor's hand, but the case, which was booby-trapped by Gregor, detonates. Deirdre manages to save what is inside--a priceless disk containing the secret numbers of dozens of numbered accounts. Deirdre, Sam and a recuperated Vincent retire on the billions.

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COMMENTS: This is a slightly better-than-average action piece, aided by slightly better-than-average characters. The plotting slips off somewhat and boils down to a single heist/shootout sequence, followed by a series of chase and escape scenes. The action is slightly better-than-average, as well, making the piece competent in the area where it most needs to be competent. However, nothing approaches the extraordinary level and there is no reason to make this movie. At best it can be seen as a decent variation on an old theme. We've seen these mission movies too many times before: They all begin the same, with a few quick vignettes to capture the individual characterizations of the team. Next, comes the mission itself--which in this case is a simple action sequence, filled with high speed car chase, shootouts, etc. Throw in a few double-crosses and a few more chases following the mission and the plotting is complete. The writer tries to draw out our curiosity by withholding crucial information but after a while we need to know who is who. The answers are left vague but the writer throws up a smokescreen in order to cloud over everything. He patterns the plot with various crosses and double-crosses. The final partnership is between Gregor's boss Mikhi and the Irish (Deirdre and Seamus) but that gets turned around when Deirdre shifts allegiances, having fallen in love with Sam (who is apparently CIA after all, rather than Metropole cop). The various double-crosses are handled well but they are not enough to sustain interest since there is no great surprise in any of them--e.g. THE USUAL SUSPECTS.

SUBMISSION and WRITING: NOT RECOMMENDED

--A.E.



NOTE: With one exception, all the technologies mentioned in this screenplay are actual and in practical or experimental application today.

E C O

FADE IN:

CARD: GULF OF MEXICO - 4:30 A.M. THIS MORNING

EXT. GULF OF MEXICO - DAWN

The blackest dawn, over the blackest sea, made blacker by the supernova light given off by the catastrophic carnage of a BURNING OIL PLATFORM.

Ten stories of flame. A raging inferno so intense that it creates its own wind systems that fiercely buffet the helicopter JOHN LANE sits in.

His blue eyes stare down at the flaming waves crashing hypnotically against the rig's monstrous legs.

JOHN

How long's it been burning like this?

The EXXON EXEC seated next to him shifts anxiously.

PRATT

Half the night. The gas main exploded at 1:30 A.M. close as we can tell.

JOHN

Casualties?

PRATT

We're not sure. Hundreds.

John nods. Looks back. For a quarter mile around the monstrous 12 story platform of fire the water is saturated with BURNING OIL. A LAKE OF FIRE with 10 foot waves.

His partner, HARVEY, up in the co-pilot's seat, comments:

HARVEY

She's a wing-dinger, all right.

JOHN

Where are they?

PRATT

Just under the Northeast leg. They were down doing some welding work at about 300 feet out of the saturated environment

when she blew. A crane toppled off the top deck. Pretty likely, they're dead, but ...

John nods again. Opens his yellow hazard suit, revealing the DIVE SUIT beneath it. Shoulders his tanks, checks his gauges.

Harvey squints against the waves of heat gusting off the flaming platform.

HARVEY

Good news is fire's probably raised water temperature 15, 20 degrees.

JOHN

Better'n Club Med ...

He reaches for his equipment trace in the open doorway. Stops short.

A SEABIRD has alighted there. COVERED WITH OIL. Dazed. Confused. Dying. Mechanically trying to clean its feathers.

Gently, John picks the bird up. Dazed and exhausted from its ordeal, it doesn't resist. John strokes it's head.

JOHN

(whispers)

Hey, big guy, it's okay ...

In John's hands the big bird seems to relax, to calm, its ragged breathing leveling out, as if it finally feels safe.

crack! a quick motion and the bird's neck is broken. A mercy killing. He gently sets the bird down into his bag.

Looks to Pratt, eyes ablaze in the reflected firelight.

JOHN

When are you bastards going to learn?

The Exxon Exec starts to protest, but John just turns his back on him. Speaks to the Pilot:

JOHN

Take me in over the fire.

PILOT

Over the fire???

JOHN
That's right. Over the fire.

The Pilot shakes his head, but obeys.

EXT. NORTH SEA - DAWN

The copter swoops down across the raging lake of flames.

INT. COPTER - DAWN

The heat shoots up like a frying pan. PRATT holds on, terrified - suit drenching through with sweat.

HARVEY
Don't worry, Mister. We must'a done this
a hundred times in the Gulf of Arabia
after Sadaam torched the place.

He produces a GRENADE, yanks the pin out with his teeth. Pratt blanches. Harvey tosses it nonchalantly out the door.

EXT. AIRSPACE

At water-level the grenade *EXPLODES*, creating an atmospheric concussion vacuum that *extinguishes* the flames for 100 yards in every direction.

INT. COPTER

Below, *the flames immediately begin racing back across the water, closing the circle.* John looks to Harvey.

JOHN
Musketeers good to go?

Harvey gives him a big thumbs up.

HARVEY
Come back alive. Miami's playing this
afternoon.

JOHN
Hell, you know we'd never miss a Dolphin
game.

John steps out of the copter. Harvey yanks back on a lever.

EXT. AIRSPACE

JOHN plummets towards the water, fire racing in beneath his feet. Behind him, a CHUTE opens in the back of the chopper.

THREE DOLPHINS drop into freefall ...

SHOOT DOWN beside him ...

The circle of fire closes, WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! they strike simultaneously, shooting through the flames.

And into the blackness below...

INT. COPTER

Looking after them, Harvey comments casually to the petrified Exxon Execs.

HARVEY

Now, that's an act of faith for ya.

EXT. OCEAN

The LAYER OF OIL is fifty feet thick on top of the water. John and the dolphins swim down through it until, mercifully they emerge out into the clear black water beneath.

John flicks on his helmet light. The dolphins engage THEIR OWN LIGHTS, mounted on nylon traces they wear around their midsections.

Above them, eerily, is a wavy ceiling of oil that stretches into the blackness. And bobbing in it are THE BODIES OF THOUSANDS OF DEAD FISH. John closes his eyes. Deep breath.

His voice crackles over the radio that connects them all.

JOHN

Okay People, we've got work to do. Echo, re-con us in.

The LARGEST DOLPHIN of the three, ECHO, turns with a flick of his powerful tail and darts away into the darkness below.

JOHN

Jet, Lucy, let's take it slow. We don't want to lose anybody down here.

The dolphins may not understand every word he says, but this

JOHN

Hey! Hey, hey, hey, it's okay, Girl ...

He speaks soothingly to the squirming dolphin. Whispers:

JOHN

We've seen this plenty of times before.
Right?

And like the Seabird, in his grasp, the dolphin calms.

LUCY

Giiii ...

JOHN

All right. Let's everybody keep it
screwed down tight.

They continue.

#

EXT. BOTTOM

Huge pieces of steel loom up at them from the bottom.

JOHN

Looks like the crane. Be careful. Could
give at any time ...

They swim down through its massive, monumental wreckage.

To the spot where ECHO swims circles, waiting for them.

The CRANE rests on top of the SATURATED HABITAT. A habitat
that commercial divers live in at the bottom while working on
extended construction projects.

The habitat's metal shell has been half-crushed by the
massive tonnage of the crane. John swims its circumference
with the dolphins. Inspecting the damage.

JOHN

What do you hear, Echo? Anybody still
alive in there?

ECHO

Jiiiiiiijikikiiii!

John nods. Swims beneath the structure to the WELL-HATCH.
It is completely BLOCKED by steel debris.

JOHN

We're going to have to blow it. Let's get the structure points.

At the key words "STRUCTURE POINTS" the three dolphins streak towards each other, plucking a MAGNETIC DEMOLITIONS CHARGE out of each other's trace.

Dive into the twisted mass of metal. A dolphin's sonar is so sensitive that it can density-discriminate between a nickel and copper plate at 100 yards by sonar alone.

Sonar ranging, like dogs sniffing out drugs, the dolphins locate the optimal structural blast points in the wreckage.

John, off in another area of the wreckage is setting his own demolition charge. Sensing a PRESENCE, he turns his head.

ECHO has found him.

JOHN

Oh, hey. We good to go?

ECHO

Kiiiiii!

JOHN

Roger that.

He turns to swim out but the REMOTE DETONATION DEVICE on his belt dislodges. It spirals away flashing towards the bottom.

JOHN

Oh shit ... BOMB!

Instantly, Echo grabs John and SHOOTs out of there 20 times faster than John could ever move by himself.

The device hits bottom, activates, **KAPUCKINGBLAM!** a massive explosion sends a concussive shockwave through the water.

INT. SATURATED ENVIRONMENT HABITAT

The FIVE HAGGARD MEN inside the environment, go SPRAWLING with the blast.

EXT. OCEAN

Made it. John, heart pounding, closes his eyes, tilts his head against Echo's.

JOHN
Good man, Echo. Good man.

INT. SATURATED ENVIRONMENT

The Commercial Divers, pick themselves warily up off the floor. Exchange a glance. A HEAD pops up through the now clear moonpool.

JOHN removes his helmet, thrusts his hand up.

JOHN
John Lane, Salvage Rescue Operations.

A stunned commercial diver reaches down and mechanically shakes the hand. Behind John, the THREE DOLPHINS burst up into the water.

JOHN
And these are Lucy, Jet and Echo. They work for me.

The dolphins power-tail up out of the water.

ECHO, LUCY & JET
Chiiiiiiiiiiichichichichi!

JOHN
Say, you wouldn't happen to have any halibut or something lying around? They like a good snack after an operation.

EXT. OUTER ATMOSPHERE

A SATELLITE in geosynchronous orbit. Imprinted on the side in block letters "SKYWATCHER".

The SPACE SHUTTLE ATLANTIS cranes the satellite into its cargo bay while another crane arm simultaneously cranes an IDENTICAL REPLACEMENT SATELLITE into SkyWatcher's orbit.

CARD: *GOTHAB, GREENLAND, JUST OUTSIDE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE.*

EXT. AIRPORT - DAWN

The SHUTTLE glides in for an easy landing on our northeastern quadrant runway in Greenland. Back on Earth.

INT. HANGAR - DAWN

Inside a massive hangar, a series of CRANES place the Shuttle onto the back of a NASA BOEING 747. An awesome sight.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

The 747, piggybacking the Atlantis on its broad back, roars down the runway. Lifts into the air.

CARD: NORTHERN CANADIAN AIRSPACE; 9:38 A.M. THIS MORNING

EXT. AIRSPACE - DAY

The BOEING 747 with it's piggybacking NASA passenger, flies. Ten miles below, the patchwork of Canadian lakes and forest.

INT. 747 COCKPIT - DAY

The 2nd CO-PILOT happens to glance out his peripheral window.

2ND CO-PILOT

What the hell ...

FLYING 100 yards off the starboard wing is a KC-135 "Flying Texaco" AIR-TO-AIR RE-FUELING PLANE.

CAPTAIN POWERS picks up his radio-mike.

CAPTAIN POWERS

Local aircraft, local aircraft - please fall away. This is a restricted flight and violation of our airspace is contrary to international flight codes C381.6 thru 17. Please fall away immediately.

With a Doppler whine the KC-135 banks sharply, disappearing above them.

2ND CO-PILOT

(straining to see)

Where the hell did they go?

WARRROOOMMM!!! the KC-135 roars over their upper window into a holding pattern *not 20 feet in front of their nose!*

The plane's BACK RAMP hydraulics down. Standing in the howling maw, a TEAM OF HEAVILY ARMED AIR-ASSAULT COMMANDOS.

EXT. AIRSPACE - DAY

The space between the two planes is a howling hurricane. The Air-Assault Commandos raise their tactical rifles. Fire under-mounted GRAPPLE LINES *punching* wire-streaming bolts across the airspace ...

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM! the pilots hear the grapple bolts punching into their plane's fuselage above them ...

They stare, astounded as, in rapid succession the Air-Assault Commandos *step* off their plane's ramp into the void.

SHOOTING past the cockpit windows ...

EXT. AIRSPACE - DAY

SNAPPING WHIPLASH! taut at the end of their grapple cables.

Harnessed into the cables, the Air Assault Commandos surf a wild ride in the sky alongside the Boeing - buffeting madly in the air vortices whipping off the plane's fuselage.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

Captain Powers grabs his radio-com. Screams into it.

CAPTAIN POWERS
*OVERLORD - THIS IS MOTHER BIRD! WE ARE
BEING BOARDED!!!*

EXT. AIRSPACE

AIR ASSAULT 1 airsurfs over *WHAM!* hits the Shuttle, *grabs* on.

His name is GRUNIER. 40's. Determined. He does not under any circumstances, fuck around. His Comrades follow suit.

INT. COCKPIT

All hell is breaking loose in here.

CAPTAIN POWERS
*Can you see anything! Can you see
anything!!!*

The Co-Pilot strains to see back out his peripheral window. His blood *chills*.

The KC-135 is flying directly above them just off port, a "FUEL UMBILICAL" the thickness of a man's body is strung between it and the Shuttle.

CO-PILOT

My God ...

He whips back, eyes wide.

CO-PILOT

They're fueling the Shuttle!

EXT. AIRSPACE - DAY

They sure as fuck are.

Like a well-oiled machine the most amazing air to air fueling is underway as 400 metric liters of rocket fuel per second is hyper-pumped down from the "Flying Texaco" into the Shuttle.

Meanwhile a PAIR OF AIR ASSAULT COMMANDOS are at work springing the SHUTTLE'S MAIN ACCESS HATCH.

GRUNIER
(tense)

When!

AIR ASSAULT 2 (PRADO)
(working on door)

Any second! Any second!

INT. BOEING COCKPIT - DAY

Captain Powers growls ...

CAPTAIN POWERS
- We'll see about that ...

He banks the plane HARD to starboard...

EXT. AIRSPACE

With a buzzing whine, the 747 under them dips hard left.

The FUELING LINE SNAPS taut with incredible torque as the KC-135 above dips with it - trying to keep up.

Grunier screams at his men on the door.

GRUNIER

When goddamit!

PRADO

Any second! Any second!

YEEEEEEOW!!! the Boeing banks sharp to port. *TSCHINK!* the fuel umbilical connecting them TWISTS as the KC-135 banks with it.

GRUNIER

NOW! IT'S GOTTA BE NOW!!!

PRADO

Got it!

The access hatch BURSTS open and they are in as the Boeing dives.

The Fuel Umbilical SNAPS! like a cannon shot. Whipping like a decapitated snake. *Drenching* the Shuttle and 747 in ROCKET FUEL ...

... its own spewing end *IGNITING* as it slaps through the Boeing's super-heated turbine exhaust ...

VVVVVVOOOWW! the self-oxidizing propellant combusts up the fuel umbilical like a raging flame-thrower fuse ...

KABLAMMM!!!! BLOWING the fuel-heavy KC-135 into an atomized MEGA-FIREBALL ...

IGNITING the fuel-soaked 747 and Shuttle into a hurtling meteoric torch ...

INT. COCKPIT

Everything goes orange as they fly through the fireball.

INT. SHUTTLE

The Air Assault Commandos that made it in, go flying headlong with the concussion ...

Grunier leaps to his feet.

GRUNIER

Ignition sequence blue-red - go!

They rush for the cockpit ...

INT. COCKPIT

Captain Powers fights with the avionics.

CAPTAIN POWERS
Oh my God! Oh my God! We've lost all
power! We've lost everything!

The 747 tilts WEEEEEEEOOOOWWWW! into a nosedive.

CAPTAIN POWERS
We are going down!!!

EXT. AIRSPACE

The flaming Boeing 747 and Shuttle go into a howling inferno
dead nosedive.

INT. SHUTTLE COCKPIT

Air Assault 3 whips to Grunier.

PRADO
Ignition prep complete!

Grunier grabs a trio of red switches.

GRUNIER
We have ignition.

He flicks them **VAVOOM!** a jolting EXPLOSION ...

INT. BOEING COCKPIT

The Pilots feel it. Stare at one another. Horrified ...

EXT. AIRSPACE - DAY

The Shuttle's primary thrusters IGNITE in a maelstrom of
flame, INCINERATING the tail of the 747 as ...

The Shuttle *shatters* its moorings, **BLASTING** forward off the
back of the 747, **DISINTEGRATING** the major portion of the
plane into **DEBRIS** with its massive forward thrust fire...

INT. 747 COCKPIT

The pilots scream as the cockpit fills with flame - windows
blowing out as the Shuttle's **THRUSTERS** firestorm by above...

EXT. AIRSPACE - DAY

Fiery wreckage of the 747 plummets away towards the forests below. The SHUTTLE levels, accelerating erratically.

EXT. ATMOSPHERE

The Shuttle, still on fire, like a comet, blasts through the sky, gathering immense speed.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

The Air Assault Commandos, sweating it, work the avionics.

GRUNIER

(holding tight)

I'm telling you, this thing is not made
for this!

EXT. ATMOSPHERE

The Shuttle buffets wildly through the atmosphere envelope...

Goes into a flaming dive ...

INT. SHUTTLE COCKPIT

Their stomachs rise into their hearts as they go in steep.

Grunier fights with the controls as they careen wildly towards the MASSIVE CONTINENT OF ICE racing upwards at them.

The Arctic Polar Cap ...

GRUNIER

Coming in! Coming in!

EXT. ATMOSPHERE - DAY

VAROOOSH! the Shuttle fires down through the atmosphere.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

The Air Assault Commandos vibrate wildly with the massive air turbulence as they pull frantically back. Trying to bring the nose up. Trying desperately to level the horizon of ice.

GRUNIER

Coming in hard!!!

EXT. POLAR CAP - DAY

The Shuttle comes in sharp, *blasting* above the ice. 100 feet.

50 feet ...

10 feet ...

1 foot ...

TOUCHDOWN landing gears ...

SMACK! the front wheel strikes a shift-fault in the ice and sheers off. The Shuttle SCHEEEEEOWWWW!!! gouges forward across the ice tilted on its nose.

Three miles of plowed ice later... it comes to a silent, ponderous, creaking halt. Fires out. Steaming ...

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

The Air Assault Commandos look at one another. Hearts pounding. They're alive.

EXT. POLAR CAP - DAY

The Shuttle sits alone amidst a great wasteland of ice. Steam boiling up around its super-heated nose, tipped into the ice.

KaRUNCH! the ICE a hundred yards away KRASHES upward as a GREAT BLACK BEHEMOTH breaks up through the surface.

A BLACK SUBMARINE. COMMANDOS in WHITE-ICE CAMOUFLAGE stream out from it onto the ice.

WHITE ICE 1

Move! Move! Move! Get this bird unloaded!

A MAN, clearly in charge, appears on the fairwater.

His features are sharp, eyes fiercely intense with the focus of a Zeiss scientific lens. He is QUENTIN PUCK.

Seeing the Shuttle, he cannot help whispering to himself.

PUCK

Happy birthday, Mr. President . . .

He COUGHS. Leaving BLOOD spattered on his lambskin gloves.

Ignoring it, he wipes the blood away onto his military overcoat, raises bionoculars to those smoldering eyes.

EXT. SHUTTLE

At the base of the Shuttle, White-Ice 1 stares at the grapple rope he has thrown over the craft ...

WHITE-ICE 1

What the ...

It has burst into fire. An abrupt OMINOUS CREAK. Everyone's eyes shoot up. The Shuttle rear landing gear suddenly GIVES way, *SLAMMING the Shuttle down onto the ice.*

CRACKS shoot everywhere. creeeeeeeak ... But the ice holds.

WHITE-ICE 1

(heart pounding)

(into radio)

It'll hold. I think it's gonna hold ...

Then - a HORRIBLE HISS

With explosive force, the ice begins to MELT beneath the super-heated shuttle, sending up gushing GEYSER-FUNNELS of white hot steam SPEWING in every direction.

COOKING the white-cloaked men surrounding it in an instant.

The Shuttle begins to sink. Through the ice.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

Panic shoots through the Air Assault Commandos. Prado jumps for the escape hatch but ...

PRADO

- *Agh! Jesus!*

It's RED hot.

EXT. ICE - DAY

Like a molten critical nuclear reactor, the Shuttle sinks right through the 20 foot ice cap, strikes the arctic water in a HUGE hissing cloud of steam ...

EXT. OCEAN

SCHINKKK!!! a massive WEBB OF CRACKS *shoots* through its fuselage as super-hot meets super-cold ...

Sinks like a fucking stone. Dropping silently away from the crystalline underbelly of the ice, flying on silent aquatic wings towards the black arctic bottom unknown below.

EXT. ICE CAP - BLACK SUB - DAY

PUCK'S triumph dissolves to astonishment as he stares at the place where the Shuttle was just a moment before.

He jumps down through the hatch.

INT. BLACK SUB

Goes careening down the corridors, screaming into his radio:

PUCK

DIVE! DIVE!

EXT. OCEAN - BENEATH ICE CAP

The Black Sub blows all ballast tank and goes into a forced dive. Steep.

EXT. OCEAN

The Shuttle sinks and sinks. The only sound, it's creaking, popping hull as the external pressures build ...

INT. SHUTTLE COCKPIT

The Air Assault Commandos, not even breathing, watch the walls apprehensively.

INT. BLACK SUB CONTROL DECK

The PLANESMAN is calling it and the numbers are falling fast from here.

PLANESMAN

700 feet ... 800 feet ...

The walls and hull are *POPPING* and *PINGING* all around them.

CHIEF OF BOAT

(to Captain)

Admiral Puck! 1000 feet is crush depth
for this boat!

Puck's jaw tightens. Trembling ...

PUCK

We keep going.

EXT. OCEAN

The Shuttle heads ever downward, the Black Sub diving down
after it.

INT. BLACK SUB CONTROL DECK

Sweat has burst out on the Planesman's brow.

PLANESMAN

One thousand feet! ...

Everyone holds their breath.

PLANESMAN

Eleven hundred feet!

INT. SHUTTLE COCKPIT

The Air Assault Commandos eye the walls and ceiling, hearts
stock still in their chests.

PRADO

(whispers)

Christ ... subs *explode* at this depth ...

GRUNIER

You think I don't know that! Shut up!

INT. BLACK SUB CONTROL DECK

All is silence in here. As everyone listens to the walls.

PLANESMAN

Thirteen hundred feet ...

CHIEF OF BOAT

With all respect, Colonel - we here have
a lot more to lose than you two do ...

PUCK

You think I don't know that! *Shut up!!!*

SONAR OPERATOR

It's hit! It's hit bottom! 1700 feet.

EXT. BOTTOM

With a shuddering *KAKRUNT!* the Shuttle settles onto a massive shelf of ice.

INT. BLACK SUB CONTROL DECK

The Planesman swallows:

PLANESMAN

1500 feet ...

No one even moves. Tight:

PLANESMAN

1600 feet ...

Dead silence. Finally ...

PLANESMAN

1700 feet. (swallows) We're there ...

Everyone looks at the walls. Not a heart beats. Not a breath is drawn ...

Nothing. Nothing happens.

The Planesman breathes a profound sigh. Smiles.

PLANESMAN

We made it.

Puck releases his caught breath. A CHEER goes up in the sub.

EXT. BOTTOM

The massive sub hovering next to the Shuttle *IMPLODES!!!* into a self-sucking burst of oxygen and flame that is extinguished in a single instant.

Gone. Just like that.

INT. SHUTTLE COCKPIT

GRUNIER stares out at the place where their SALVATION WAS just an instant before. Now just a billion bubbles. Whispers:

GRUNIER

Quentin . . .

EXT. THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

The WHITE HOUSE. The central power-base for the most powerful country in the world ...

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

A half-eaten BIRTHDAY CAKE sits on the Oval Office desk. The PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, JAMES MORGAN stares at his two MOST TRUSTED ADVISORS - Siegenfeld & Stern.

Finally, voice dry as dust...

PRESIDENT MORGAN

Is it possible whoever's behind this will attempt to retrieve?

STERN

It's difficult to say, Sir. The Makarov Basin is one of the most treacherous areas of water on the planet.

MORGAN

(stunned)

Christ Almighty ... this is an election year.

SIEGENFELD

And Sir, there's something else ...

He shakes his head gravely.

SIEGENFELD

NASA had people aboard that Shuttle.

INT. SHUTTLE CARGO BAY

GRUNIER and the Air Assault Commandos stand around the SKYWATCHER SATELLITE - looming over them in the Cargo Bay.

Water is dripping down everywhere, like rain, the seawater pressure-forcing its way in through microfissures in the hull.

GRUNIER

What about the Shuttle cockpit?

PRADO

No good. The ejection procedure can't be initiated until the emergency systems computer is brought on-line. You need a special computer punch-key to do that. But this satellite has a fuel bay that can hold us all.

GRUNIER

What about the pressure? You saw what it did to the sub.

PRADO

We flood it. The interior and exterior pressures become equal.

GRUNIER

Great. Then how do we breathe?

PRADO

The space suits.

GRUNIER

(ponders)

Will it work?

PRADO

I don't think we have much choice.

Grunier nods. Good enough for him. Turns to the others.

GRUNIER

Find those suits.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE

A DOOR. Marked "ZERO PRESSURE EXPOSURE SUITS".

INT. EXPOSURE SPACE SUIT CLOSET

A high-tech closet hung with a half dozen NOMEX EXPOSURE SUITS.

SIX NASA TECHNICIANS are crowded together inside here.
Hiding. Hardly breathing. Staying very, very quiet.

They picked the wrong place to hide.

EXT. GULF OF MEXICO - DAY

Blue skies, aqua water. JOHN LANE, OFF WORK, sits on his FISHING BOAT moored just off his modest Florida beachfront house. Painted on the boat's bow, SEA BEE.

Feet up on the transom. MIAMI GAME on a small color TV on the bow. BEER in hand. John is screaming at the TV.

JOHN

Go!!! Run you cheap, slacking bastard!
I've got money on y... oh, for God's ...

He throws up his hands, exasperated. Looks to LUCY, ECHO and JET watching in the water just off the boat.

JOHN

Did you see that??? Did you see that? He fumbled that on purpose! That's it. That's it. From now on we're SeaHawks fans.

LUCY

Kiiiiikikiki!

JOHN

Aw, what the heck're you talking about, Lucy? You're a girl. What do you know about football? Right guys?

ECHO & JET

(complete agreement)

Chiiiiichichichichi!

LUCY

(insistent)

Kiiiiikiki! Kiiiiikiki!

JOHN

(glancing at T.V.)

Huh? Oh! Right - commercial. Sorry.

He fishes a FISH out of a cooler at his feet. The three dolphins powertail up in the water. Clapping and chirping excitedly.

JOHN

All right, all right, let's see, whadda we got here? Looks like... a sea bass,

minus an eyeball. Anyone want a sea bass?

The dolphins send up a *storm* of chittering. They want it bad.

JOHN

Okay, okay. This one eyeballed sea bass appears to be a popular item. We'll start the bidding for this fine ripe fish at one back-flip. Do I hear a back-flip?

ECHO

Keeeeeeerkikikiki!

The BIG DOLPHIN sounds, a moment later bursting back through the surface, soaring into the air, arcing gracefully over backward and slipping back into the water with a perfect, splashless 10 point dive.

JOHN

Oh, that's going to be tough to beat.
Going *once*, going *twice* ...

JET

Giiiiigigigi!

Jet quickly sounds, *bursts* back out of the water, does a double back-flip, splashes back down. He power-tails up.

JET

Giiiiigigigi!

JOHN

(tosses the fish)

Sold! To the man in the dolphin suit.

ECHO

(broods/miffed)

Kreeeeorrrr!

JOHN

Echo, quit your sulking. You don't have to get every fish. Let's see, what do we have next. Looks like ... perch? Naw... I dunno - herring maybe...?

He trails off, staring at the horizon. Coming at him fast and low across the water are THREE BELL 209 NAVY CHOPPERS.

Within seconds, the black beasts have pulled to a hover fifty feet off his boat, whipping spray off the top of the waves.

John deflates.

JOHN

Please God - not during the 4th quarter.

EXT. HELICOPTER - DAY

JOHN stares at the cityscape of Washington D.C. racing by 800 feet below. Looks up to the gunship chopping tandem with them thirty yards away.

Through its doors he can see ECHO, LUCY and JET in their transport slings.

The PENTAGON looms into view.

INT. PENTAGON - DAY

John is quickly escorted by a full MILITARY POLICE contingent down the broad corridors. People stop and watch, wondering what the hell is going on.

John himself wonders what the hell is going on.

INT. CAUCUS ROOM - DAY

He is led through tight security into a room. LOT of important looking people here. John double-takes. Hey, that's the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES sitting over there!

NAVAL SECRETARY CHANNING, obese but acutely intelligent.

SECRETARY CHANNING

Mr. Lane, please step forward.

John does. The Secretary picks up a file.

SECRETARY CHANNING

You run deep salvage and rescue operations all around the globe. Army Corps of Engineers used you extensively for clean-up operations in the Gulf ...

JOHN

(uncertain just what
the hell's going on)

Uh, yes Sir ...

SECRETARY CHANNING

I'm sure you're wondering why you've been brought here under these circumstances. Major Price will explain.

MAJOR DIANE PRICE stands. Dark hair, dark eyes. Drop dead, conk your head gorgeous. John almost does just that. But, all business, she doesn't even begin to notice.

MAJOR DIANE PRICE

I won't waste any time because there isn't any time to waste. At 0938 hours an aborted attempt to hijack the Shuttle Atlantis was made. Details are sketchy but there is documented significant loss of life and equipment including a 747 transport carrier and the Shuttle itself which ditched at the 1st parallel.

JOHN

That's the North Pole.

MAJOR PRICE

Correct. The polar cap. Satellite reconnaissance tells us the Shuttle went through the ice. Which leaves it almost half a kilometer down in the vicious convection currents of the Makarov basin.

John absorbs this.

JOHN

Pressure's 900 pounds per square inch at that depth. Anything down there not on neutral or positive pressure'd be flat as a pancake by now.

MAJOR JAMAL WYANS, COLD, BLACK, and the Navy's foremost technical expert speaks up.

MAJOR WAYANS

The Shuttle is constructed to withstand enormous stresses from launch to re-entry. It's entirely probable that the Atlantis is intact at these depths. The scientific bathyscaphe Trieste which was under the cap taking current and salinity readings at that time, has confirmed via synthetic aperture sonagraphy that there is an uncompromised

airspace somewhere on the bottom.

John assimilates this information. Shakes his head.

JOHN

I don't get it. What do you need me for? A salvage? Because, if that's what this is all about, you're wasting your time. At those temperatures and depths I wouldn't even attempt it.

SECRETARY CHANNING

When the Shuttle was hijacked there were six NASA technicians aboard running routine maintenance diagnostics.

MAJOR DIANE PRICE

We believe these men may be alive, Mr. Lane.

John hesitates, off-balanced by the information.

DIANE

Our best calculations indicate that ambient oxygen in the Shuttle will be exhausted in ...

She consults her DIVE WATCH.

DIANE

5 hours, 33 minutes.

John wavers. Torn ...

MAJOR WAYANS

Mr. Lane, the Trieste has picked up encrypted radio transmissions. Very likely from the hijackers themselves and probably an SOS. I recommended you be brought in here because the fact of the matter is we owe it to these men to locate them and get down there before whoever the SOS is being sent to does.

JOHN

What about some kind of submersible?

MAJOR WAYANS

We have negative pressure submersibles that will operate at those depths, but

none that can onload passengers. We need you to guide an equalized-pressure team down that can initialize the emergency systems aboard that craft and E-vac those men via the Shuttle's ejection cockpit.

Beat. Deep, deep breath. This isn't easy ...

JOHN

Look. I ... I'm sorry ... but what we're talking about here is suicide. No hijacker rescue team's going to make it down there and having me and my team die down there isn't going to help these men either. There's a maze of lethal convection currents lying over the Makarov Basin more complex and dangerous than Gordian's knot.

He shakes his head.

JOHN

There's not a team on earth that can make it through.

MAJOR WAYANS

Except yours, isn't that right, Mr. Lane? That you've trained your dolphins specifically for this task? For advanced sonar navigation through black current. That in August of 1992, you took them down into similar conditions in the Tonga basin ...

JOHN

I ... I lost two dolphins in that operation. I consider myself extremely fortunate that any of us made it out alive. My team relies on me, trusts me to choose these missions wisely. I can't do that to them again.

Silence around the room. Major Wayans pushes the file to Diane who reads from it.

DIANE

On August 13th, you returned from an oil fire off the coast of Brazil to your home base in Ft. Meyers, Florida. Is this information correct?

John chills. These people know too goddam much.

JOHN
(cold)

I'm not sure about the date, but it sounds about right.

DIANE
You brought your animals back with you?

JOHN
(colder)

Of course.

DIANE
Did you process these animals through exotic animal immigration?

JOHN
(coldest)

They're not animals, they're dolphins and I have my own sea-plane. We routinely land directly in the water behind my house. It's never been a problem before.

DIANE
It's a violation of Federal law, Mr. Lane. Which gives the government the right to confiscate these animals under the RICO statute.

John stares at her. Anger starts to boil up. But he bites it back. Pushes it back down. Below freezing.

JOHN
Why don't you get to the point.

PRESIDENT MORGAN pulls forward his microphone.

PRESIDENT MORGAN
I think, Mr. Lane, what is attempting to be conveyed to you here, is that, with or without you, your dolphins are guiding a team down into the Makarov basin.

EXT. MAKAROV BASIN

The SHUTTLE. A derelict ghost ship at the bottom of the sea.

INT. SHUTTLE

PRADO is standing outside the closed hatch door marked EXPOSURE CLOSET when Grunier arrives.

GRUNIER
You can't get it open?

PRADO
(shakes head)
Locked from the inside.

Grunier's eyes narrow. What the fuck? He gives the door an experimental tap. It rings hollow.

INT. EXPOSURE CLOSET

Inside the closet, the NASA TECHNICIANS don't move, don't breath. One, who clearly has been INJURED in the crash landing, semi-conscious, opens his mouth. NASA 1 quickly slaps his hand over it ...

But in the process, a WRENCH drops out of his pocket CLANGING onto the floor. A sharp glance between all of them.

INT. SHUTTLE

Outside the door, Grunier exchanges a surprised glance with Prado. Realization. There're people in there.

He steps back. Looks to his men - grim.

GRUNIER
Cut it open.

He COUGHS briefly into his hand. Wipes the BLOOD off onto his dark uniform.

CARD: 7:48 P.M. GREENWICH MEAN TIME - ARCTIC CIRCLE

INT. C-130 AIR TRANSPORT - DAY

Eternal daylight here.

Underway. A C-130 aero-transport. The walls literally shake with the vibrating roar of the four massive 35,000 horse turbo-prop engines.

And the open "belly button" door ROARING wind right there in

the floor of the plane doesn't help matters much either.

JOHN sits on a crate, staring out the hatch at the Arctic Sea shimmering below. His DOLPHINS in saline baths in the b.g..

Three miles ahead he can see the edge of the WHITE SHELF of pack ice that forms the endless continent of crystallized water covering the top of our planet.

For as far as the eye can see. Nothing but white.

JOHN
(mutters)

Mare concretum ...

A voice at his shoulder.

VOICE
Pliny. The Elder.

Sharply turns his head. DIANE. He looks at her. How did Captainess America know that? She nods to THREE TECHS who move in, begin fitting John into a Nomex DIVE SUIT.

One *inserts* an I.V. into John's carotid artery ...

JOHN
Ouch! Hey, you son of a...!

He *grabs* the man's hand. Diane intercedes.

DIANE
Relax, Mr. Lane. Completely necessary, I assure you.

A miffed beat. John releases the man. Diane activates an electric pump that begins circulating his blood supply through a filter system.

DIANE
Winter's just kicking in up here. Ice coagulating at the cap edges at about 20 square miles a second. Before it's over we're going to be operating under a 5.4 million square mile ceiling of ice.

JOHN
Tell me something I don't know. Like, how the hell we're going to get out, assuming we're even remotely alive.

DIANE

Once the mission profile has been completed, the sub will extract.

JOHN

The *Trieste*? That's a scientific sub. It's nowhere near equipped to transport my dolphins.

DIANE

Negative. We are importing our own platform.

She points through the rectangular hatch cut into the belly of the plane.

DIANE

This is worth seeing.

A MASSIVE ROAR like a hydro-electric plant. They fly over a DOZEN MASSIVE CH-53 JOLLY GREEN GIANT "FLYING CRANE" HELICOPTERS, hovering 6-on-6 formation 400 feet beneath them.

John, astonished, looks back as they pass over the twin prop earth-mover copters - now caught silhouetted between the shimmering arctic sea and the eternal winter sun.

Suspended by cables between them is a *SUBMARINE*.

DIANE

SeaWolf. The most powerful weapons platform on Earth.

EXPLOSIVE BOLTS blow! the cables around all 12 copters ...

... the SUB drops fifty feet into the sea with a TREMENDOUS tidal concussion of water.

DIANE

Anyway, now it's on Earth.

The Techs complete the installation of John's BLACK NOMEX HOSTILE EXPOSURE SUIT with its deep satin sheen.

Diane begins debriefing a SUCCESSION OF DEVICES.

DIANE

The I.V. in your throat is filtering your blood through a nitrogen-wash.

She pops open a "pill box", holds it up.

DIANE

No masks. Contact lenses. Each contains a small air bubble that will allow you to see just as if you were wearing a full mask. Like a seal's eye.

The Techs install one lens in each of John's eyes. He blinks, adjusting.

JOHN

Golly, don't you have them in green?

DIANE

Very humorous, Mr. Lane. Head-up display mobile data transfer.

The Techs clamp a stainless steel BRACE onto John's neck. It places a MICRO-COMPUTER SCREEN, about the SIZE of a POSTAGE STAMP, three inches in the periphery of his vision.

Diane flicks it on, FULL COLOR. Cycles through the screens for him.

DIANE

Depth, O2, NavStar GPS, Sonar, video downlink. It's all there.

She holds up a SLENDER POLYURETHANE CANISTER.

DIANE

Your O2.

He eyes the almost minuscule container.

JOHN

That's my air?

She nods, screwing it into a hose dangling from the brace.

DIANE

Pure oxygen. You'll feel a small prick...

She nods to the Tech who punches a button on the brace around John's neck. A hydraulic whoosh! as a NEEDLE *sinks* into his carotid artery.

His hands leap to his throat. *Whirls* on the Tech:

JOHN

Ow jeez! You do that one more time and I will knock your eyeballs into orbit!

DIANE

Mr. Lane - please. We're all on the same team here. We're trickle-feeding pure oxygen directly into your bloodstream. Standard SCUBA respiration leaves a sonar signature a mile wide on top of being nitrogen heavy. With this system you won't need to decompress. It'll also inject CO2 into your vocal chords when it senses electrical activity in the flexor muscles of your larynx. So you can talk.

JOHN

Super. I do always get to feeling chatty at about 500 feet. So who all's going on this clam bake?

DIANE

(simply)

Just you and me.

JOHN

That's it?

DIANE

The larger the team, the larger the sonar signature. Don't worry, Mr. Lane. This is what I'm trained for. I've gone solo into tougher situations than this.

JOHN

How reassuring. How long will we have?

DIANE

We should arrive on site and deploy within 20 minutes. Figure 10 minutes down to the deep scattering layer, leaving approximately 26 minutes for your team to locate the Shuttle.

She nods through the glass wall to ECHO, LUCY and JET in saline-bath tanks.

DIANE

You just get me where I need to go - I'll cut you loose.

INT. C-130 - DAY

At the DOLPHIN TANK. Echo, Jet and Lucy are *suited in their own neon neoprene wetsuits.*

ECHO in brilliant electric BLUE, LUCY in PINK and JET in a screaming YELLOW.

JOHN reaches in, scratches Jet's nose.

JOHN
How's everybody doing? Okay?

JET
Kiriiiikikikiki!

John straightens.

JOHN
The big one - his name's Echo. The faster, smaller one, I call him Jet. And the girl's Lucy. She's the smart one. No offense guys, but it's true and you know it.

He turns brightly to the dolphins.

JOHN
And this, boys and girls, is Major Price. She's a first-class bitch.

DIANE
Mr. Lane, there are human lives at stake and I am doing my *job*.

Okey-dokey. Whatever you say. Aaaaaanyway ...

JOHN
What you see here is our North Sea rig which we use to work on platforms just outside the Arctic Circle. Neoprene suits good to minus 30 degrees with flippers exposed to take advantage of their own counter-current self-heating system.

He indicates the VIDEO CAMERAS and NIGHT VISION PERIPHERY SCOPES mounted on the dolphins' suits.

JOHN

Video cameras and night-vision for deep water sonar-silent operation.

DIANE

Why would you would you be concerned about sonar security in a commercial venture?

JOHN

Listen, don't think the only thing I get hired for is rescues and putting out fires. You can learn a whole helluva lot from swimming around the bottom of your competition's rig.

He shakes his head.

JOHN

You think the CIA has the corner on the espionage market? Try the oil companies. There's a lot more at stake and they're a heck of a lot better financed.

He moves on, pointing to the RESPIRATOR PLATES clamped over Echo, Lucy and Jet's blow-holes.

JOHN

Self-contained breathing apparati to sustain four plus hours on an 80% efficiency gas exchange model.

DIANE

How deep can they go?

JOHN

It's a rare gas mix. Deep. Video cameras, undermounted, microwave up-linked. And don't be surprised if you hear them say a couple words.

Diane looks at him, surprised.

DIANE

You're kidding, right?

John only raises his eyebrows. Oh Ye of Little Faith. **SPLASH!** Echo swats Lucy next to him with his tail.

DIANE

What's with him?

JOHN

Oh, he's just trying to get her attention. Dolphin thing. Got the hots for her, I think.

DIANE

I thought they were siblings.

JOHN

Nope. Lucy and Jet are, but Echo was a wild dolphin.

DIANE

Where did Lucy and Jet come from?

JOHN

You guys.

DIANE

Us guys?

JOHN

Yep. When you scrapped your dolphin program back in '92.

His features cloud.

JOHN

At the end of the Cold War you retired your Marine Mammal Program. Actually, terminated would be a better word. By the time I got to court most of the animals had already been destroyed. Lucy and Jet were the lucky ones ...

Diane looks at him, her tough defenses down for an instant.

DIANE

That was you?

He nods. Diane looks down. There is a dark side to the people she works for. It's hard for her to acknowledge.

DIANE

(ventures)

Probably sub dolphins. We used them to locate downed submarines and disarm

warheads.

John looks at his kids. Feels a twinge. Sighs. Back.

JOHN

How do we deploy?

EXT. CARGO BAY DOORS - DAY

Slipstream. They stand on the roaring maw of the plane's OPEN CARGO RAMP. A mile below is an eternity of ice.

On it, the shadow of the C-130 circles the mild SHUTTLE-SHAPED DENT in the ice where the Atlantis melted through. Frozen back over hours ago.

Two Techs are ratcheting a CHUTE HARNESS onto John. Diane yells over the wind.

DIANE

It's not a parachute, so don't expect it to be. It's just a decelerator. Altitude activated. We'll hit the water doing about fifty.

John looks off the ramp. Nothing but ICE as far as the eye can see.

JOHN

What water???

Abruptly *WHOOSH!* five NAVY F-14 ATTACK FIGHTERS scream past beneath them. Bank in FORMATION down towards the ice cap...

Phoenix system "Bunker Buster" missiles *light* beneath their wings. *Launching!*

Streaking like two five-taloned claws down towards the ice.

KABLAM!!! 10 SQUARE ACRES OF ICE erupt into a Krakatoa of white real estate lifting 300 feet into the air. Vaporizing in the heat under this awesome display of air fire-power.

When the arctic winds clear, a near-perfect amphitheater of diamond blue ice-water a quarter mile wide remains.

DIANE

That water.

JOHN

Oh. Right.

DIANE

Water will begin to re-coagulate in 72 seconds. We don't have time to waste.

She nods to the DOLPHINS in their neoprene suits.

DIANE

What about them? Are they going to be all right?

He looks at her like she's nuts.

JOHN

Are you kidding? They're *pros*.

He hits the lever that unhooks all their tethers and, as one, they SUCK into the void.

EXT. AIR - DAY

The five of them slide off the back of the plane.

EXT. ATMOSPHERE - DAY

Diane fires downward, 9.8 meters per second squared. Next thing she knows ...

VOICE

Riiii! Kikikikikik!

The THREE DOLPHINS blast down beside her - *loving it!*

LUCY

Tiiiiiiyyyyy!!!

Clearly, they have made dozens of jumps before, practicedly adapting their fins and flukes as elevons.

Diane watches astonished as they indulge in the most delightful air acrobatics while hurtling towards earth ...

ECHO tumbles a slow endless turn of somersaults, his perpetual grin spreading ...

LUCY goes into a downward spin, revolving so fast she *blurs* like a drill-bit ...

LUCY

Tiiiiiiyyyyy!!!

JET, swoops cutting back and forth all around Diane, flitting like a swallow.

JET

Jiiiiiii!!!

DIANE

(mutters)

I don't fucking believe this ...

She sees JOHN, falling several feet away. Grinning.

Lucy, the joker, grabs hold of Echo's tail with her beak, refuses to let go. Irritating the hell out of Echo who tries unsuccessfully to contort around and bite her ...

JOHN

(yells/exuberant)

Flying fish, how 'bout it, huh?!?

She looks at him like he's crazy. Then happens to notice ...

DIANE

Oh *shit!*

The WATER.

WHUMP! as one, their altitude-activated drag chutes burst open. **WHAM!** they hit water.

#

INT. WATER

In a wash of bubbles, the Five shoot into the blue. Dolphins using razor sharp blades sewn into their wetsuits at the pectoral fin to sever their chute lines in one fluid motion.

29 degrees Fahrenheit. John's LIFE SUPPORT COLLAR *clicks* on at water-contact. Humming in his ears, heating the water that circulates through the radiator filaments in his wetsuit.

As Diane struggles to cut her lines, ECHO, the guarded one, suspicious of strangers, watches her from a distance.

The water goes GREEN in a CRYSTALLINE WAVE as he bounces high-frequency noise off her.

Dolphins can focus sonic "noise" through their acoustic lens with such intensity that they can stun fish.

Now, as the wave travels back, the green turns to RED as a SONOGRAPH is painted in Echo's mind's eye and we see Diane's movements in pure sonic reality. DOLPHIN-VISION.

Her skeleton articulates beneath her skin in a great segmented ballet. Her lungs, air-filled sacks, bounce back the most sound - like drums. Her tendons and ligaments click and clack, working together.

All this Echo "hears" on a visual level. And now, emerging from the chaos of sonic information, an anchoring backbeat. Diane's heart which Echo sees beating in her chest.

Diane sees him watching her.

DIANE

What's with him?

JOHN

Oh, he's the protective one. Doesn't like strangers too much. Don't worry though, he doesn't bite.

DIANE

That's good. Because I do.

Some distance off, Lucy, ever in a mood to play, grabs Jet's tail and begins pulling him backward through the water.

JET

(pissed)

Guuuugyy! Guuuugy!

He manages to wriggle free. Lucy tries to grab his tail again, but he flits effortlessly away with every try, as agile as an aquatic humming bird - laughing at her.

JET

Giiiiigigigigi! Giiiiigigigi!

Lucy proceeds to pout. John's voice is radio-transmitted.

JOHN

All right People, get serious. We've got work to do!

Chastened, the dolphins drift into rank and file.

JOHN

(to Diane)

Okay, this is how this works. I did a little stint in the Marines. Echo, Lucy and Jet are trained to respond to the same hand and voice signals that I got trained to respond to at Fort Bragg. Go ahead, why don't you give it a shot.

She looks at him a moment. The dolphins. Queued up in front of her. Raises her hand. Palm outward. Turns it right.

As one - the dolphins turn right.

Turns it left. The dolphins turn left.

Down. They swim downward.

Up. As if invisible strings connected them to her hand, they swim back up.

She shoots a glance at John who can't conceal his pride.

JOHN

Go ahead. Try voice.

Diane turns back to the dolphins.

DIANE

Two o'clock. Go.

They turn in perfect synchronicity, humping powerfully off at 2 o'clock. She radios them via her throat-mike ...

DIANE

Back ...

They swiftly return. She glances at John. Back.

DIANE

Defend.

To John's total surprise, *they streak out, assuming outward-facing positions on the points of an equilateral triangle around them. Combat-ready.*

John blinks.

JOHN

Christ, I ... I didn't teach them that.

Diane glances at Lucy and Jet - the ex-military dolphins.

DIANE

Maybe your dolphins've been teaching each other, Mr. Lane. Give them some credit.

John frowns. The ice is rapidly suturing shut above them. In a few seconds there will be only one way to go. Down.

DIANE

Minus 33 minutes. Let's move out.

INT. SHUTTLE

The ARCING FLASH of an arc welder as it cuts the THICK HATCH of the EXPOSURE CLOSET.

PRADO examines a halimeter which measures the ratio of O2 molecules in a given atmosphere. He's worried.

PRADO

Oxygen content's dropping a lot faster than we figured. We've got a half hour at the most.

Grunier, chewing his lip, stares distractedly at the door.

GRUNIER

It's them. Scared. Using more oxygen. Breathing faster. Keep cutting.

INT. CLOSET

The NASA TECHNICIANS, now in the NOMEX SUITS, exchange a glance. They are scared.

EXT. ARCTIC SEA

John and Diane dive down deep, riding the POMMEL on Lucy's suit as she sounds.

They level off at five hundred feet where ECHO and JET already wait, swimming lazy circles in the thermocline.

Below - an infinite, impenetrable blue.

Diane keys her sonar-silent throat-mike.

DIANE

SeaWolf - you with us?

EXT. OCEAN

Beneath the blue diamond ceiling of the polar cap, the SEAWOLF CLASS SUBMARINE, now crewed, silently cruises.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

MAJOR JAMAL WAYANS picks up the radio mike

WAYANS

Roger that, AQUATIC. This is Major Wayans. I am here with mission oversight Admiral Tyne.

He exchanges a glance with ADMIRAL TYNE, trim, proper, Washington's career Navy man.

WAYANS

We are crewed and underway. State your position.

EXT. OCEAN

Diane consults her postage stamp head-up computer screen.

DIANE

GPS puts us at 32 degrees 18 minutes on an interaxis. We are behind projected schedule. Going to drop into the River, try to make up some time.

WAYANS/SEAWOLF (O.C.)

Roger that. Will meet you in the middle.

Diane clicks off.

JOHN

The deep-scattering layer of zooplankton completely snafus the dolphins' sonar. One of them'll have to go down beneath it to guide us into the drop zone.

Diane looks to Echo.

DIANE

How about you, big guy? Re-con us in?

The big animal regards her a moment. Then turns and humps down into the blue with powerful strokes of his tail.

DIANE

Dropping into the River now, SeaWolf.

John hand-signals Lucy and Jet - they grab pommels and enter the River.

INT. SEAWOLF

ADMIRAL TYNE looks to WAYANS at the computers on the bridge.

ADMIRAL TYNE

And what exactly is the "River"?

WAYANS

Horizontal column of separate salinity and temperature, Sir. Acts exactly like a river inside the ocean.

INT. RIVER

LUCY, JET, DIANE and JOHN ride the warm current at 40 knots.

LUCY & JET

Kliliiiiiiiiir!!!

They love this free ride as they blast by the MASSIVE SCHOOLS of COD and HERRING and SQUID that the icy waters of the Arctic, the most fertile spawning ground for marine life on the planet, breed in masses numbering in the billions.

And if a STRAY FISH happens to be in their path as they shoot by, the dolphins happily scarf him up.

Jacques Cousteau has referred to the underwater world as the "silent world" but, in this moment, as he listens intently, John is struck by how loud it is here beneath the ice cap. Every sound preserved, bounced back as if by acoustic tile.

Everywhere he can hear the noise from ice floes breaking, grinding and compacting, the collective movement of enormous schools of fish, the plaintive, echoing cries of marine mammals ...

He looks to Diane, also caught up in the beauty of it. Takes the opportunity to study her. Her features. Olive eyes. Dark hair alive in the current. Ventures ...

JOHN

So, what's your story? Married?

DIANE
(blinks/looks over)
Is it important, Mr. Lane?

JOHN
Not really. Just like to know who I'm
working with.

DIANE
(beat)
No. I'm not.

JOHN
Career military woman.

DIANE
Something like that.

JOHN
Never even wanted to be married?

DIANE
I really don't see where this is all
going, Mr. Lane.

JOHN
(shrugs)
Told ya I get chatty at 500 feet.

Diane glances into the HEAD-UP MICRO DISPLAY mounted three inches from her left eye. Sees via Echo's video feed microwave-linked to her in liquid crystal definition from his shoulder-mount camera - the SEAWOLF passing in the murk.

DIANE
Alpha-designated dolphin passing you now,
SeaWolf.

WAYANS (O.C.)
Roger that, AQUATIC. We're picking him
up on navigation and ranging.

Diane clicks off. Assesses for a moment the beautiful crystal clear, ice-covered, fish-filled world they cruise through.

DIANE
And you? You're married?

JOHN
Actually - no. The dolphins pretty much
take all my time. They require a lot of

attention. (half smiles) Besides, no one really wants a guy with three kids ...

She glances over at him. Not the kind of comment she'd expect from a dull-witted civilian. Almost half smiles herself. Almost.

But her attention is suddenly diverted as up ahead, hanging in the River, taking advantage of the constant current to pump their gills, is a *MASSIVE SCHOOL OF WHALE SHARK*.

And they are headed right for it.

DIANE

Oh shit! Jet! Dive!

Too late! She holds on for her life as Jet *dodges* narrowly through the shark school, laughing his dorsal off ...

JET

Giiiiiiiigigigi! Giiiiiiiigigigi!

... as he scrapes her within inches of the massive 25 foot gape-mouthed monsters.

A moment later they are through and clear. Diane looks back. Heart pounding. School diminishing rapidly in the distance.

DIANE

Jesus Christ!

JET

Giiiiiiiigigigigi! Giiiiiiiigigigi!

LUCY

Kiiiiiiiikikikiki! Kiiiiiiiikikikiki!

If she didn't know better, she'd think they were laughing at her. She notices John trying to conceal his own smirk.

DIANE

I suppose you taught them that lovely little trick?

JOHN

Well, first-off, whale shark are plankton eaters and second, gee Major, maybe they're teaching each other.

EXT. OCEAN

Down beneath the deep scattering layer - a sonar-scattering layer of zooplankton, ECHO cruises 400 feet above the ocean floor - invisible in the gloom beneath.

But klicking like a klaxxon, he uses his sonar to range the invisible bottom. His burst-pulses, emitted at a frequency of 300 clicks and whistles a second, bounce back to him creating a vivid, colorful image of the bottom's icy topography in his mind's eye.

Searching for the Shuttle.

INT. SHUTTLE - EXPOSURE CLOSET

The AIR ASSAULT COMMANDOS each draw a STRAW from Grunier's closed hand. Profound silence.

One by one, each puts his hand forward. Opens it. TWO have SHORT STICKS. GRUNIER draws his gun.

AIR ASSAULT 5

Wait! I have an idea...

BLAM! Grunier shoots him pointblank. POW! he shoots the other with as little fanfare.

GRUNIER

How much oxygen did that buy us?

PRADO

(glances at watch)

Fifteen minutes.

GRUNIER

(nods to door)

Keep cutting.

EXT. OCEAN

JOHN, DIANE and the two DOLPHINS cruise at speed in the River. Diane consults her head-up display. Shakes her head.

DIANE

17 minutes. We are tight.

John nods. Notices Diane has, slung into her harness, what looks like a HI-TECH PULLOUT CAR RADIO.

JOHN

What's with that?

DIANE

Computer punch-key. We'll need it if we're going to bring the Shuttle's emergency systems on line.

Abruptly, a MASSIVE FORM cruising through the blue murk 200 feet beneath catches their eyes. The SEAWOLF SUBMARINE.

DIANE

Passing you now, SeaWolf.

WAYANS (O.C.)

Roger that, AQUATIC.

John notices a SILENT WHITE FORM *humping along beside the submarine.*

Jet and Lucy begin chittering anxiously as the eerie 30 foot creature begins *swimming up towards them* - BELLOWING sonorously as it comes.

John tenses - ready for fight or flight.

DIANE

Relax. It's a Beluga. We replaced the dolphin program with them because they're indiginous and self-sufficient in these waters. His name's Charlie.

JOHN

You know this whale???

DIANE

(hesitates/then)

I worked in the military marine mammal program for about three years under Major Wayans during the transition.

John looks at her. He didn't know she had ever worked with marine mammals. Or Major Wayans for that matter.

JOHN

Then ... do you know Lucy and Jet?

DIANE

I ... I'm not sure. There were a lot of young dolphins in the program.

John studies her.

JOHN

And you were going to take them from me?

DIANE

(can't look him in the eye)
I'm doing my job. There're human lives
on the line here.

The WHITE BELUGA WHALE enters the current, cruising along
with them. Jet and Lucy go directly up to him, rubbing up
against the larger creature.

LUCY

Karrrrrr!!!

JET

Girrrrrr!

CHARLIE

WHHHHHHHNNNNN!

DIANE

Looks like Charlie remembers them.

She strokes the creature's broad nose.

DIANE

Hey Kiddo ... long time no see ...

She looks to John. The guilt she feels for bringing him down
here doing an end-run around her defenses. Ventures ...

DIANE

Belugas are pretty sensitive, Mr. Lane.

Relenting, John gives the whale's nose a scratch.

JOHN

Hey ya, Charlie.

CHARLIE

WHHHHHHHNNNNN

John notices the STAINLESS STEEL BAND around the whale's
chest. Attached on top, on his back, is a THIN STEEL DISK.

JOHN

What's his payload?

Diane responds quickly. Maybe too quickly ...

DIANE

Sonar dish. Like the AWACS carry.

John studies her closely for a moment.

JOHN

I heard a rumor once that the Navy was training its marine mammals to be pelagic torpedos. Kamikazi suicide runners with bombs strapped to their backs.

DIANE

(hesitates)

I can't believe the Navy would do that, Mr. Lane.

Abruptly, over their headsets ...

HEAD-SET

Kaaaaaak!

ECHO. John glances into his HEAD-UP DISPLAY. Examines the feed from Echo's pectorally-mounted camera. Very murky ...

ECHO (O.C.)

Kaaaaaak!

DIANE

He may have located.

JOHN

Echo! Gain!

The screen begins to brighten as Echo adjusts the gain on his dorsally-mounted VIDEO CAMERA. A DUSKY SHAPE emerges on the bottom of the arctic ocean. The ATLANTIS.

JOHN

Wow ...

DIANE

My GPS puts us right on top of it. You ready, Mr. Lane?

JOHN

(shrugs)

Does the government screw its citizens every chance it gets?

DIANE
Are you ever serious, Mr. Lane?

JOHN
Do you ever smile?

She balks, flustered for an instant. An awkward moment there between them. Keys her radio by way of changing the subject.

DIANE
Dropping in, SeaWolf.

WAYANS/SEAWOLF (O.C.)
Roger that, AQUATIC. Be careful. No sense losing more lives than we have to.

DIANE
Roger that, SeaWolf. Lucy. Jet.

The Dolphins drop their horseplay, swimming swiftly over. Diane takes hold of their pommels. Looks to John.

DIANE
Let's go.

INT. SHUTTLE - EXPOSURE CLOSET

Breathing heavy and ragged, Prado suddenly looks sharply up from cutting at the sturdy hatch with the arc welder.

PRADO
(eyes shooting up)
My God - the torch ... I just realized - it's eating up oxygen. That's why our levels are dropping so fast ...

GRUNIER
(shakes his head)
Doesn't matter. Just keep going. Or we're all dead.

EXT. OCEAN

Amidst a symphony of clicks and choruses, John and Diane dive with Jet and Lucy down into the increasing pressure of the bathysphere.

The dolphins' ribs are jointed for high-pressure diving and the blood to their brain feeds through the spinal canal as opposed to the carotid membrane as in other mammals, preventing circulation cut-off in high-pressure dives.

Because they're going in deep.

A FORM resolves out of the gloom as they pass. A SMALL SUBMARINE. The scientific bathyscaphe TRIESTE.

Diane keys her mike.

DIANE

Ahoy Trieste. Are you on this frequency?

INT. TRIESTE

Inside the narrow sub crewed with YOUNG SCIENTISTS, marine biologists and oceanographers doing post-graduate work.

The thirty-something Expedition Leader, dashing in his ragged beard and thick-knit turtleneck, takes the mike.

HARVARD

We sure are, AQUATIC. We've been monitoring you all the way in. We've identified an uncompromised airspace 500 feet directly below.

DIANE (O.C.)

Roger that. We've identified too. Where's the subduction layer begin?

HARVARD

Right here. It's serious business after this.

It's been an uncommonly exciting day. The rosy-faced group of young scientists crowds round, listening with interest to this rare transmission from the outside world.

DIANE (O.C.)

Roger that, Trieste. Will see you on the way back up.

HARVARD

Can you tell us what's going on, AQUATIC? Gets mighty dull down here.

Clearly, curiosity is eating them up.

EXT. OCEAN

Diane smiles.

DIANE

Sure, but I'd have to kill you, Trieste.

TRIESTE (O.C.)

(laughs)

Roger that, AQUATIC. Good luck.

They enter the subduction currents.

INT. SHUTTLE

TCHINK!, PRADO snaps off the arc welder. Removes his helmet
- sweating, sucking air. They all are.

PRADO

(pant)

Got it ...

Grunier grabs the hatch latch. Doesn't budge. Pauses a
quiet moment. Goes furios, kicking it.

He abruptly stops. Coughing and gasping for air. Leans on
his knees. Wipes SPECKS OF BLOOD from around his mouth.

GRUNIER

They're (pant) holding it from the
inside. Everyone get on it and pull.

INT. EXPOSURE CLOSET

The NASA TECHNICIANS, sucking air like fish, all watch the
door as it strains from the outside. The WRENCH they have
jammed it with, *flexes* ...

INT. OVAL OFFICE - WHITE HOUSE - DAY

PRESIDENT MORGAN considers SIEGENFELD and STERN standing
before his desk.

SIEGENFELD

The computers are telling us that the
submarine that imploded under the ice cap
has to be the Ohio class SSN 376 LIBERTY.

STERN

It was supposed to be on patrol in the
Black Sea.

He slides a photo of deceased ADMIRAL PUCK across the desk.

STERN

Admiral Quentin Puck. Fortune 500 family. Fourth generation Navy. Grandfather was Admiral Tacitus Puck, responsible for winning the two decisive sea battles that turned World War I in our favor. Father was Admiral Lionel Puck who practically invented the modern submarine; a class of them is named after him. (shakes his head) And now Quentin, who had a lot to live up to. 2nd in his class at Annapolis. Pathologically ambitious.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

(getting a bad feeling)

Puck ... why do I know that name?

STERN

The Puck family contributed significantly to your campaign, Sir.

Morgan's eyes narrow as it begins coming back to him.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

Who was first in that class?

Siegenfeld and Stern exchange a glance. They slide another PHOTO across. Of GRUNIER.

SIEGENFELD

His fraternal twin. Colonel Grunier Puck. Navy Pilot.

STERN

And a NASA Astronaut.

SIEGENFELD

For a fleeting instant there, the two of them had the two ingredients for holding the entire world hostage. A nuclear class submarine ...

STERN

And the SkyWatcher chip.

INT. EXPOSURE CLOSET - SHUTTLE

The NASA TECHNICIANS huddle together in the narrow space, watching the straining door - hearts in their throats.

The first technician, BRADY, swallows. Scared. Whispers ...

BRADY

When the door opens - make a break.

PATTERSON

They'll gun us down. Like animals...

BRADY

I know, but ... if we can just ... just make it to the radio. Get a message to our wives, anybody ...

CRACK! the DOOR *flies* open.

GRUNIER stands there with his Air Assault Commandos. Everyone panting. Like a pack of predators. No one moves.

EXT. OCEAN

Whistling and clicking, LUCY guides the team down on a twisting, turning journey through the invisible spider's web of deadly currents.

The friction of currents fighting each other roars in their ears.

Constantly the dolphins shift and turn, feeling their way through an invisible maze John and Diane can't even see.

Occasionally Lucy stops, backtracks - a dead-end.

DIANE

Watch yourself, Lane. I don't want to lose any civilians.

Abruptly, *she* slips - varying just slightly from Lucy's path, getting CAUGHT in the magnetic pull of a phantom current ...

DIANE

Ngh!

John *grabs* her leg, yanking her back inside the current tube. Just in the nick of time. Her coil of ROPE, wrenched off her equipment trace by the sucking black water, goes spinning off into the black nothingness - lost forever.

They look at each other, hearts pounding.

JOHN

Let's not lose any military personnel either, Major Price.

DIANE

(heart pounding)

Roger that.

She gives him a big thumbs up. They continue on.

EXT. SHUTTLE

The SHUTTLE lies, isolated, totemic, majestic, on the barren ice ledge at the edge of the Eurasian shelf.

John, Diane, Lucy, Echo and Jet descend into view of the sunken behemoth. All is deadly quiet.

EXT. BOTTOM

They swim quickly through the WRECKAGE of the BLACK SUB, lying twisted and flattened on the bottom.

LUCY and JET swim ahead into the wreckage, nosing curiously around, *searching for something*. John cocks his head at this unusual behaviour.

DIANE

They're looking for an uplink.

John looks at her.

DIANE

It's what they were trained for. Locating downed subs like this one and disarming any armed warheads.

A FIGURE materializes suddenly from the wreckage. Diane's CO2 Gun comes flying out!

JOHN

No! It's okay!

It's ECHO. Diane relaxes, reholsters the gun.

DIANE

Let's go.

INT. SHUTTLE

The group of NASA TECHNICIANS is on their knees, hands in the air. GRUNIER PUCK and his AIR ASSAULT TEAM have suited into the remaining Nomex Space Suits.

They are now pressure-charging the suits' air packs from 50 lb cannisters of SUPER-FLUID OXYGEN they have pulled out of the Shuttle life support system.

BRADY

Look, please, we've all got families ...

GRUNIER

That's nice. Why don't you spend your last minute thinking about them instead of running your mouth because, have no delusions, we're at the bottom of the ocean and no one's going to save you down here.

EXT. SHUTTLE

The TEAM speeds down beneath the length of the ship, reaching the REAR UTILITY HATCH.

Diane digs in, securing herself against the current.

Strips the METAL-LIQUID CAULKING GUN out of her equipment trace. Glances at John as she works.

DIANE

Go on. I'm cutting you loose. Take off.

JOHN

But ...

She *fills* the hatch's hermetic seam with mercury/manganese liquid metal compound.

DIANE

You got me here. You did your job. I can handle the rest.

He hesitates. Clearly, he does not want to leave her here.

JOHN

How will you evacuate?

She yanks out a thermite flare.

DIANE

With the Technicians. It's covered, don't worry. The Pentagon planned this from the ground up. Now get out of here.

JOHN

There's no way I'm going to let...

DIANE

Mr. Lane, this is a Naval operation and I said *go*. (calming) That's an order.

JOHN

(hesitates/then)

Good luck then ... Diane ...

A beat. He turns. To his dolphins ...

JOHN

Come on guys ...

They swim slowly off. Diane looks after them. Then draws her Nvardik Norwegian-made close-quarters combat machine pistol.

Ignites the high-temp self-oxygenating flare.

Applies it to the liquid metal which *FLARES* searing around the hatch, weakening the ferrous material ...

INT. SHUTTLE

The hatch *BLOW!S* inward.

A WHALE SPOUT of water boils in. DIANE comes spewing up through the floor with it, landing on her feet with trained precision, quarter-gun in hand.

Two AIR ASSAULT COMMANDOS spin, caught completely by surprise. *BLADADADAM!* she guns them down in their tracks.

They pitch forward into the rising water, she moves out.

INT. SHUTTLE

Deeper inside the Shuttle, GRUNIER, space-suited, finger whitening on the trigger to blow the brains out of the first NASA TECH, spins at the sound of gunfire.

SEAWATER comes ROARING through the hatchways.

GRUNIER

King fuck-all ...

EXT. SHUTTLE

John pauses to look back at the Shuttle. Tiny port windows

lighting up with distant echoing gunfire. Exchanges a concerned look with his dolphins ...

JOHN
What do you think, guys?

ECHO
KI!

LUCY
GIKIKIK!

JET
JER!

JOHN
Aw ... hell ... how did I know you were going to say that ...

INT. SHUTTLE

Through the rapidly water-rising corridors, DIANE comes on, unstoppable. Moving through the bulkheads, gunning down anyone one who gets in her way.

Three Air Assault Commandos float in the rising corridors behind her.

She *snaps* around a corner, catches an Air Commando by surprise. Freezes in her sights.

DIANE
(demands)
How many are you?!?

AIR ASSAULT 4
E ... eight, I mean ... n...nine ...

DIANE
Are you lying to me?

AIR ASSAULT 4
N ... no ...

His eyes shift to the gun in his belt. Diane sees it. Shrugs.

DIANE
Better than suffocating.

An instant. He goes for it. *BLAM!* she blows him back over.

A GUN MUZZLE in her own ear freezes her.

Turns. Slowly. GRUNIER, PRADO and two other assault commandos - all wearing NOMEX EXOSURE SUITS, toughly designed for the rigors of spacewalking where there is a 400 degree difference between light and shadow and the slightest leak causes the wearer's blood to boil.

GRUNIER holds a gun in her face.

GRUNIER

Hello, Major.

RECOGNITION floods across Diane's features.

DIANE

(astonished)

Grunier Puck ...

She looks at the faces of the others. Realizes. *Hardens.*

DIANE

You're the last person I would have expected to see here, Colonel.

GRUNIER

After the way the White House hypocrites you work for fucked me and my brother? You always were naive, Major.

DIANE

(cold)

They're not hypocrites. They're trying to make a complex machine work. What happened to you wasn't personal and you know it.

GRUNIER

- Of course it wasn't personal. It's never personal with them because they can't *comprehend* the concept of a person, an individual. *Masses* are the only thing they understand. Voting precincts. Constituencies. All the lip service paid to humanity and the inalienable rights of individuals and life when the life of individuals has no value to them.

DIANE

That's not true, Grunier. But if you really believe it is, why don't you teach

them the value of life? By stopping this insanity. Right now.

GRUNIER

Oh, I'm going to hammer home the value of life to them all right. In terms they can understand. Now, how'd you get down here? Submarine?

DIANE

(beat/shakes her head)

Go to hell, Puck.

WHAM! Grunier *smacks* her across the face with the gun. BLOOD begins flowing copiously out of her BROKEN NOSE.

GRUNIER

Sorry Price, but I wasn't meant to go out without having had my say. Who's running the sub's command? Major Wayans?

She looks at him, eyes blazing.

DIANE

No.

GRUNIER

Whaddaya know, we've found something Major Price isn't good at - lying. They sent you down here for the Skywatcher chip, didn't they?

Diane hardens. The WATER RISES OVER THEIR HEADS.

INT. CARGO BAY

JOHN, LUCY, JET and ECHO swim past the SKYWATCHER SATELLITE. John is suitably impressed but ...

JOHN

Later. Come on.

He swims on but JET LINGERS. When they are gone, the DOLPHIN pulls open a panel on the satellite with his beak. Unscrews a cylinder. Extracts what appears to be a COMPUTER CHIP.

INT. SHUTTLE CORRIDOR

Blood from Diane's nose inks away green into the water that now covers them. Diane stares Grunier down.

DIANE
(ice cold)
We came for the technicians.

GRUNIER
That's a laugh. Our government doesn't
give a *fuck* about human life - we've
established that. If they sent you down
here for anything - it was to keep the
chip from falling into the wrong hands.

Grunier cocks Diane's CO2 GUN, aims it at her heart ...

GRUNIER
Sorry, Price ...

VOICE
Hey ...

He spins. JOHN stands at the other hatch-way.

In his arms he cradles one of the canisters ear-marked
"SUPER-FLUID OXYGEN"

JOHN
Know what this is?

With a swift motion, he cracks the VALVE, sends the canister
rolling towards them, it's cryogenic near-zero contents
spewing milky into the 33 degree water.

GRUNIER
Oh shit!

Oh shit is right. Diane *kick's* out the bulkhead, *slamming*
the hatch shut behind as JOHN dives out on the other side,
the water temperature in the room plummeting in an instant.

GRUNIER and PRADO dive. Several other Air Assaults *scream*.
The water in the room *TSCHINK!* FREEZES SOLID, trapping them
like a mosquitoes in amber as they try to flee.

INT. SHUTTLE

John and Diane meet up, breathless, in the CARGO BAY. The
entire shuttle is flooding over their heads.

DIANE
The NASA techs ...

John spins to the dolphins.

JOHN

Survivors! Go!

The dolphins turn tail, hump powerfully off.

INT. CORRIDOR

On the other side of the wall of ice, GRUNIER, PRADO and the remaining Air Assault Commandos in the BULKY NOMEX SUITS.

PRADO
(panting)

We're cut off.

GRUNIER

Forget it. I've got a bigger fish to fry.

Prado's eyes light as he realizes.

PRADO

The submarine!

INT. SHUTTLE CORRIDORS

ECHO swims through the corridors, moving on Dolphin-Vision. All the shuttle around him shimmering green-red as he "sees" directly through doors, walls and bulkheads.

INT. CORRIDORS

LUCY swims cautiously. Her own SONAR is going wild in here, ricocheting off thousands of metal surfaces.

The world goes ULTRA-VIOLET as *whir!click!* she switches to her NIGHT-VISION SCOPE.

INT. CARGO HOLD

PRADO spins from the open panel on the SKYWATCHER SATELLITE.

PRADO
It's gone! The chip's gone!

Grunier stares through the glass of the Nomex suit's helmet. Wheels spinning. Shakes his head.

GRUNIER
I know exactly where it went. Set the charges, let's get the fuck out of here.

INT. SHUTTLE

ECHO is waiting at the door of the Exposure Suit Closet when John and Diane arrive.

JOHN
You're sure, Echo?

ECHO
Kiiiiiii!

John and Diane spin the wheel, *haul* the door open. The six, suited, frightened TECHNICIANS are huddled inside. Terrified.

Diane's voice soothes them over their suit radios.

DIANE'S VOICE
We're here to take you home.

INT. SHUTTLE CORRIDOR

John, Diane, the dolphins and the immensely relieved Nasa Techs move fast - Tech's helping along their injured comrade.

BRADY
How are we evacuating?

DIANE
Forward fuselage ejection.

The NASA Techs exchange a glance. Of course!

PATTERSON
But cockpit ejection can't be enabled until the emergency systems computer is brought on-line and that can't be done without a computer punch-key.

Diane holds up the PUNCH KEY. Winks.

DIANE
That's why they gave me this.

INT. CARGO BAY

PRADO floats up against the flooded cargo bay CEILING, planting a CHARGE on the inside of the SHUTTLE BAY DOORS.

INT. SHUTTLE CORRIDORS

Dolphins forging ahead, John, Diane and the Techs swim quickly down the crew transfer tunnel.

DIANE

What do you know about something called the SkyWatcher Chip?

PATTERSON

Satellite primary chip. We just pulled the satellite itself out of orbit, put an identical one in its place. We do it every 6 months as a failsafe measure.

BRADY

It's the chip the President broadcasts his encrypted codes through when he arms the nuclear submarine fleet.

DIANE

So ... if someone got their hands on that chip, could they work backwards, decipher the President's codes?

BRADY

Maybe. If they had the right algorithms.

John and Diane exchange a glance.

INT. CARGO HOLD

PRADO swims down from the bay doors to the satellite.

PRADO

Sixty seconds!

GRUNIER

Let's go.

They swim swiftly into the satellite's open FUEL BAY.

INT. COCKPIT

The hermetic airlock hatch connecting the COCKPIT to the transfer tunnel manually cranks open. The rescue team steps in. The last remaining unflooded space on the ship.

DIANE

I'm going to bring the emergency systems on line. Give me two minutes.

Dripping, the Techs all nod. Diane looks to John.

DIANE

You should extract with us, Mr. Lane.

JOHN

(dry)

I'll stay with my dolphins, thanks.

INT. SKYWATCHER SATELLITE FUEL BAY

The cramped fuel bay. GRUNIER, PRADO and the TWO OTHER surviving Assault Commandos are crammed inside it.

Grunier watches his watch.

GRUNIER

Thirty seconds!

INT. TRANSFER TUNNEL

John and Diane make their way with all haste down the flooded transfer tunnel with Lucy and Echo blazing the trail ahead.

DIANE

As soon as you clear the subduction zone, radio the SeaWolf. She'll on-load you and your team via the torpedo tubes.

INT. COCKPIT

The team of NASA TECHNICIANS somberly shakes hands amongst themselves. Relieved to have come out of this alive.

INT. SHUTTLE MID-BODY

The brains of the Shuttle located in the mid-body. DIANE quickly unslings the PULL-OUT CAR RADIO SHAPED PUNCH-KEY ...

DIANE

Okay, okay, okay ...

Locates the interface port ... aligns the computer key ...

DIANE

Emergency systems power should be enabled...

Punches it in.

DIANE

Now.

They wait for something to happen. John cocks his head.
Diane cocks her head. The only thing that's happening ...

Is that an LED on the Punch Key face is flashing! Counting
down from 10 ... 9 ... 8 ...

JOHN

Aw no

... 7 ... 6 ...

JOHN

It's a BOMB!

At the word "bomb", LUCY and ECHO, jump instinctively into
action, *grabbing* John and Diane by their equipment traces...

DIANE

No!

And power off!

INT. SKYWATCHER SATELLITE FUEL BAY

Grunier thrusts his head between his knees, crash-style.

GRUNIER

Now!

INT. CARGO BAY

The CHARGE Prado set under the bay doors clicks to 0.

EXPLODES! ripping a huge hole through the bay doors over the
satellite

SMALLER CHARGES blow around the base of the satellite where
its legs are bolted to the Shuttle floor ...

BLAM! the final shape-charge, blows under the satellite,
focusing all its energy downward ...

INT. SHUTTLE CORRIDORS

Like Indy 500 drivers the dolphins zigzag through the aquatic
corridors of the shuttle at blinding speed, their human cargo
buffeting along beside ...

Diane *screams* into her radio ...

DIANE

Eject! Eject!

INT. COCKPIT

The TECHS exchange a glance. Eject without her? What's she talking about?

EXT. SHUTTLE

The SKYWATCHER SATELLITE shoots through the ragged hole in the back of the shuttle and up into the subduction layer ...

INT. MAINTENANCE TUNNEL

The numbers are falling fast from here. 4... 3... 2... The DOLPHINS veer up into the maintenance tunnel ...

JOHN

GO!GO!GO!GO!

... fire down it to the open maintenance hatch ...

DIANE

EJECT! EJECT NOW GODDAM IT!!!

INT. COCKPIT

Realizing, the NASA Techs all go white. BRADY *throws open* the ejection control box, punches the button. *Nothing.*

Looks horrified to his comrades.

INT. SHUTTLE MID-BODY

BOMB. 0 ... *click!* EXPLODES!!!

INT. SHUTTLE CORRIDORS

KABLAN!!! A monstrous concussive fireball rides its own shooting shockwave buffeting through the corridors.

INT. COCKPIT

The hatch explodes inward in a ball of flame and water, atomizing the NASA Technicians ...

INT. MAINTENANCE TUNNEL

The two DOLPHINS streak ahead of the explosion, diving through the open maintenance hatch ...

EXT. SHUTTLE

Punching with the pressure wave out into the open sea as the Shuttle ~~EXPLODES!!!~~ behind them.

Powerdiving down behind the wreckage of the Black Sub. A moment later, it is over. The world is composed of a blizzard of microscopic bubbles. Heart slamming, John looks to Diane.

JOHN

(panting)

Well, that's one way to make damn sure the SkyWatcher chip doesn't fall into the wrong hands.

A long beat from her. This is very hard for her to accept. Looks to the wreckage of the ATLANTIS. Jaw trembling. The technicians are dead. She failed. John reads her thoughts.

JOHN

Bullshit. I know what you're thinking. This was never about saving NASA personnel. Not for a single second. You couldn't have done anything for them.

She closes her eyes. Nods. Then, it hits John. He pales.

JOHN

Oh my God ... Jet!

It's true, *JET is nowhere in sight*. Instantly, John begins swimming all out for the wreckage of the Atlantis!

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

PRESIDENT MORGAN's team of ADVISORS is before his desk.

SIEGENFELD

We've received transponder confirmation. The device we sent down with the team has successfully detonated.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

(deep sigh)

So that's it? The SkyWatcher chip is

molecules? I'm not going to have to worry about it again?

Siegenfeld and Stern exchange an uneasy glance.

SEIGENFELD

We hope so, Sir, but ...

PRESIDENT MORGAN

But what? You told me this was the path of least resistance.

STERN

Well Sir, we've had the computers on it. We crunched this thing til the blood ran. The thing is, the only person with all the pieces, all the access, the only person that could have done the necessary stateside coordinating with the Pucks ...

He takes a deep breath. Slides a PHOTO across the desk.

STERN

Is this man.

A COLD BLACK MAN stares back at the President from the picture.

STERN

Major Jamal Wayans.

SIEGENFELD

Interesting fellow. Accomplished in every field. A brilliant planner, tactician, military historian. A world chess grand master. Navy psychological profiles state he has emotion pathology. Which is a nice way of saying he doesn't have any.

STERN

And he's on the SeaWolf right now.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

The SeaWolf Sonar Operator looks up from his console.

SONAR OPERATOR

Getting a reading, Sir. Big explosion at the bottom.

ADMIRAL TYNE closes his eyes.

ADMIRAL TYNE

God forgive me for having been part of this.

A GUN clicks in his ear. Tyne's eyes open. WAYANS says:

WAYANS

Why not ask him in person, Sir?

BLAM! he blows Admiral Tyne over backward. **BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!** he turns, peremptorily shoots all the petty officers on deck.

Speaks to the OPERATIONS OFFICER who seems unmoved by the murder of his commanding officers.

WAYANS

Open all four torpedo tubes.

INT. SKYWATCHER SATELLITE FUEL BAY

Grunier & Co. shoot for the surface in the fuel bay. Prado watches the atmospheric pressure gauge on his suit.

PRADO

1000 feet! 900 feet! 800 feet! 700 feet!

GRUNIER

Coming up! Get ready!

PRADO

600 feet! 500 feet!

Grunier hits a panel. The fuel bay door bursts open, blowing! them out with their greater water pressure.

EXT. ATLANTIS WRECKAGE

John tears desperately through the wreckage of the Atlantis. He turns to his dolphins, eyes full of fear.

JOHN

Echo! Lucy! Find Jet!

Diane catches up to him, breathless.

DIANE

John wait! Look at your head-up display.

John looks at her, his head-up display. He is receiving

VIDEO FEED from JET'S VIDEO CAMERA. He stares ...

JOHN

Christ ...

EXT. OCEAN

A LONE DOLPHIN wet-suited in screaming yellow swims upward towards the SEAWOLF SUBMARINE. In his mouth he clutches the SKYWATCHER CHIP.

EXT. OCEAN

As the SKYWATCHER SATELLITE begins sinking back down, Grunier and his team swim ponderously for the SEAWOLF, hovering at regulation depth ...

EXT. ATLANTIS WRECKAGE

JOHN and DIANE watch stunned on their head-up displays as JET'S POV swims into the WAITING BLACK MAW OF TORPEDO TUBE 1.

INT. TORPEDO ROOM

WAYANS stands in the torpedo room.

WAYANS

Evacuate the tubes, open the doors.

With a *whoosh* the tubes evacuate, the doors open. GRUNIER steps dripping out of torpedo tube 3. Shakes Wayan's hand.

WAYANS

Colonel - glad you made it.

GRUNIER

Glad you got my SOS. How many men do we have on board?

WAYANS

Two dozen. Didn't have much time to stack this deck.

PRADO

Hey - check it out ...

All look to Prado who stands at the mouth of TUBE 1 where JET lies. Prado takes the SKYWATCHER CHIP out of the dolphin's mouth, tosses it to Grunier, who looks accusingly to Wayans.

WAYANS
(shrugs)

In case you didn't make it.

Uh-huh. Grunier slaps the chip into the black man's chest.

GRUNIER

How long?

WAYANS

30 minutes to break the code.

GRUNIER

You've got ten. Meantime, let's get something in the air, discourage any busybodies.

Prado snaps out his pistol, *points it at Jet's head*. **BAM!** he fires.

EXT. ATLANTIS WRECKAGE

JOHN and DIANE's video screens *go dark*. Through Jet's camera, *they saw it all*. John stares into the blank screen, ashen ...

JOHN
(whispers)

Jet . . . ?

Diane's heart curls up inside her as she watches him. It's the worst feeling she's ever felt. She blinks down ...

DIANE

Wayans ran the military marine mammal program for a while. It was his idea to bring you in. He must've known you had some of his old dolphins.

It is a long beat before John actually returns to earth and connects with what she is saying. Anger is beginning to replace sadness. Trembling ...

JOHN

So while I was getting the big patriotic song and dance about saving civil servants he had Techs tasking my dolphin.

Diane does not reply. John sits there for a moment. Comes to some inner decision. Looks to Lucy and Echo. Quietly ...

JOHN

Come on, you two.

DIANE

Where are you going?

JOHN

Home. Are you coming?

DIANE

I ... can't. I was sent here to do a job. It's not done yet.

JOHN

(suddenly)

Why?!? Because you're not dead yet?!
They sent us down here on a suicide mission! They tried to *kill* you!

DIANE

(shakes head)

I was sent down here to save lives.
That's the way I look at it. That job's not done yet.

A beat between them. Deep breath. John nods.

JOHN

I lost Jet. I can't let anything happen to Echo and Lucy.

DIANE

(shakes head)

It's not your fight, Mr. Lane.

She removes her EQUIPMENT TRACE. Hands it to him.

DIANE

Explosive charges. You can use them to blow through the ice.

He accepts it. A moment between them. Then, he turns, swims off with his two remaining dolphins.

INT. SEAWOLF TORPEDO ROOM

Empty now. Except for JET, who lies in the open mouth of TUBE 1. *ALIVE!* The only thing that Prado shot is his video camera.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

WAYANS is at the commandeered computers, rapidly typing.

WAYANS

Target?

GRUNIER

I'm not trying to be subtle. Just blow something up. Anything.

INT. OVAL OFFICE

PRESIDENT MORGAN stares out the window. Turns back to his Advisors. His voice comes out a whisper, dry as dust.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

What are the armaments on that platform?

SIEGENFELD

12 surface-to-surface Tomahawk
air-breathing nuclear missiles, Sir.

Morgan stares at them. This is not supposed to be happening.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

Wayans pushes back from the computer.

WAYANS

We have ...

He *slaps* a final key.

WAYANS

Ignition.

A rumbling shakes the sub.

EXT. SUBMARINE

Vertical Launch System tube 1 bursts open in a cloud of bubbles.

The whole submarine RECOILS as a massive TOMAHAWK SURFACE TO SURFACE AIR-BREATHING CRUISE MISSILE surges upwards ...

EXT. POLAR CAP

Blue skies. A white endless expanse of ice. Abruptly KAKRACK! the ice HEAVES upward, the Tomahawk punches through, lingers

for a moment in the air above the ice as its booster rocket sheds, its tail fins deploy, the turbofan engine *kicks* in, driving it upward with terrific force.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - WHITE HOUSE - DAY

MORGAN, STERN and SIEGENFELD spin as an AIDE bursts in.

AIDE

Mr. President, Sir! COMTRAC is tracking a Tomahawk nuclear missile in flight over the polar cap!

INT. BLACK SUB

GRUNIER plucks the MIKE up out of ADMIRAL TYNE's dead hand.

GRUNIER

(into radio-mike)

Watson, come quickly. The Tomahawk missile you're watching is the tip of the iceberg. If you deploy any hunter-killer submarines or A-14 sub hunters into the area, your radar is going to light up like a Christmas tree on the 4th of July with the eleven nuclear warheads raining down into eleven heavily populated metropolitan areas.

EXT. ATMOSPHERE

The Tomahawk *flies*. Burning through the skies. Vaporizing entire clouds in its wake.

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM - DAY

MORGAN, SIEGENFELD and STERN skid into the Situation Room. A half dozen TECHS are already assembled and sweating it.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

Holy Christ on a moped, what's the trajectory on this thing?!!

TECH

Continental North America.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

Christ Alfuckmighty God!!!

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

GRUNIER watches the ranging scope over Wayan's shoulder.

WAYANS

Falling fast from here ...

EXT. SKY

The TOMAHAWK blasts out of the clouds into clear sky over the patchwork quilt of KANSAS below. Streaks downward.

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM - DAY

Everyone draws a deep breath, holds it.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

If God owes you a favor, call it in now...

EXT. KANSAS - DAY

A sunny day on the farm. A FARMER AND HIS FAMILY are out harvesting the crops. The Farmer pauses to wipe the sweat off his brow.

His eye is caught by a BLACK OBJECT hurtling down at them from the heavens at a terrific rate ...

FARMER

What the ever-loving ...?

BOOM! the concussive shock-wave of the broken sonic barrier knocks his hat off, TOMAHAWK *screaming* past not 15 feet over their heads.

It STRIKES the field a hundred feet behind them, *BURSTS* into wreckage that goes tumbling flaming across the field, colliding with the farmhouse, reducing it to rubble.

The Farmer and his family stare. Finally ...

FARMER

Mabel ... I think maybe you better turn on that radio ...

INT. SITUATION ROOM

Hearts pounding. A TECH shakes his head.

TECH

It definitely doesn't look like it was

nuclear. Just an unarmed missile. They may not have nuclear capability.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

At the computers, WAYANS gives Grunier thumbs up.

WAYANS

We are decoded and ready to rumble.

Grunier keys the microphone.

GRUNIER

Good morning, Vietnam. I know what you're thinking. The fact of the matter is that I have decoded the SkyWatcher chip and I can arm the remaining warheads. So don't get any cute ideas or I'll pulverize you and ten more cities like you into dust.

EXT. SEAWOLF SUBMARINE

A lone figure swims along the submarine's spine. DIANE.

She swims to one of the escape hatches (American subs have two). Dials it open, drops down into the airlock.

INT. SEAWOLF

A hatch in the ceiling opens, two hundred gallons of seawater and Diane come crashing in. The AIR ASSAULT COMMANDO on patrol here spins.

She is up, *snapping!* his neck in the flash of an eye. Strips his gun. Moves through a door marked AUXILIARY RADIO.

INT. AUXILIARY RADIO ROOM

She quickly keys the radio in here. Whispers.

DIANE

Trieste ... this is AQUATIC. Are you out there, Trieste ... ?

INT. SITUATION ROOM - WHITE HOUSE - DAY

The PRESIDENT'S ENTIRE CABINET is gathered into this smallish communications room in the basement of the White House.

The President picks up the microphone. Coldly:

PRESIDENT MORGAN
This is President Morgan.

GRUNIER (O.C.)
Happy birthday, Jimmy. I hope this little nuclear episode doesn't spoil the mood for you. Especially considering it's an election year and all.

INTERCUT.

PRESIDENT MORGAN
(cold)
What can we do for you, Colonel?

GRUNIER
Exactly what I tell you, you self-serving prick.

Morgan reins in his temper. Self-serving?

PRESIDENT MORGAN
(icy)
And that is?

GRUNIER
A billion dollars, watertight, marked with a 500 megahertz transponder, dropped through the polar cap at 39'46'07.

The Naval Secretary covers the mike.

SECRETARY CHANNING
They recover the money under the polar cap and escape clean. We can't track them, no way, no how.

Morgan nods, speaks back into the mike.

PRESIDENT MORGAN
If we don't?

GRUNIER
You know the drill. I annihilate a U.S. city an hour for eleven hours.

PRESIDENT MORGAN
You're talking tens of millions of lives, you son of a bitch.

GRUNIER

Look who's calling who a son of a bitch.
Since when do you give a damn about human
life? Oh wait, I'm sorry, you must've
meant tens of millions of voters.

Siegenfeld shakes his head. Whispers:

SIEGENFELD

Something's wrong. He's enjoying himself
way too much.

STERN

He's right. Any normal person in his
position should be nervous, tense.
Something's wrong.

SIEGENFELD

The Puck's are Rockefeller rich - what
would they need to extort money for?

An AIDE skids in.

AIDE

We're getting an urgent communication
over the scientific band from the
bathyscaphe *Trieste* a half mile off the
SeaWolf.

A beat around the room. Morgan picks the mike back up.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

We'll get your money, Puck. Just don't
do anything unnecessary.

GRUNIER

Don't worry, Mr. President - I won't do
anything you wouldn't do.

Everyone around the room exchanges a chilly glance. What the
hell does *that* mean?

MORGAN

Let's talk to this *Trieste*.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

GRUNIER twirls the mike.

GRUNIER

Now he knows what it feels like to have

hope, something to live for. We'll give him a while. Then I'll pull the rug out from under him. Let him know what that feels like too.

INT. TRIESTE

BILLINGS, a handsome young Marine Biologist, is at the radio.

RADIO

Trieste - are you still with us?

Billings quickly hands the radio over to the EXPEDITION LEADER, HARVARD. INTERCUT.

HARVARD

We're here, Washington.

RADIO

Hold for President Morgan.

Morgan comes onto the radio.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

Trieste, you're in the vicinity of our SeaWolf submarine?

HARVARD

Yes Sir. I'm sorry, Sir, but we've been monitoring the radio conversation.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

Is there anything you can do to help us?

HARVARD

Well, no Sir, not personally. But ... we thought maybe the team you people sent down here could do something.

Morgan, Siegenfeld and Stern exchange an alarmed glance.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

(tentative)

I'm sorry, *Trieste*, we've received indications that there was an explosion. The team perished.

EXPEDITION LEADER

Well, yes Sir, we read the same explosion. But the thing is - we just spoke to one of them.

The President and his advisors exchange a shocked look.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

Clear the room.

A surprised beat from the room. Then everyone quickly exits. Only Siegenfeld and Stern remain. Morgan flicks on the mike.

PRESIDENT MORGAN (O.C.)

Relay us through to this team.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

DIANE comes stumbling onto the deck. PRADO emerges behind her, gun in hand, smirk on his lips.

PRADO

Looky what I found in the aux radio room.

Grunier's astonishment gives way to a small smile.

GRUNIER

All right, Major, I'm impressed. Now, what have you done to fuck me up?

DIANE

I guess you'll find out.

Grunier studies her for a beat.

GRUNIER

You really think I'm scum, don't you?

DIANE

Lots of people get a raw deal, Grunier. What separates them from you is how they choose to deal with it.

GRUNIER

I very much doubt anyone would react any differently than I did.

EXT. UNDER ICE CAP

OXYGEN ticking down, JOHN, LUCY and ECHO are beneath the silvery surface of the ICE CAP quickly working, planting DEMOLITION CHARGES into the underside of the ice.

Their radios crackle.

RADIO

AQUATIC, this is Trieste. Are you out there?

John just keeps working.

RADIO

I repeat, Mr. John Lane, extremely urgent, are you out there?

JOHN

(grudgingly)

I'm here, Trieste.

TRIESTE (O.C.)

Patching you through to Washington, AQUATIC.

John exchanges an alarmed glance with his dolphins. What???

Morgan's voice crackles broken and distant into his ears.

PRESIDENT MORGAN (O.C.)

AQUATIC, this is President Morgan in Washington, D.C.. Are you picking me up?

JOHN

(cold)

I'm reading you.

INTERCUT.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

We registered an explosion down there. I can't tell you how glad I am you're okay.

JOHN

I'm running out of air and I can't
- breathe bullshit. Can we cut through it,
please?

Morgan exchanges a glance with Siegenfeld and Stern.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

That wasn't my decision, AQUATIC.

JOHN

I'm about to end this conversation.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

You have to understand. Too much was at

stake. We couldn't leave anything to chance.

JOHN

That fucking chip was *unretrievable* and no harm to *anyone* without my team!

Morgan hesitates.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

I can see we have some things to work out, AQUATIC. But the fact of the matter is that right now we have to put our ... differences aside. There's a greater enemy to unite against.

He shakes his head.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

The Seawolf submarine in your arena has been sieged and taken. The perpetrators have nuclear capabilty.

JOHN

How is that my problem?

PRESIDENT MORGAN

You're right, Mr. Lane. It's not. It's the 75 million other people's problem.

John closes his eyes. Here they go again.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

(intuitively)

And Major Price is aboard that sub.

Deep breath. John sighs. They got him.

JOHN

I'm listening.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

How many in your team?

JOHN

Four including Major Diane Price, myself and two dolphins.

#

INT. WHITE HOUSE

Morgan exchanges a raised eyebrow with those around him.

PRESIDENT MORGAN
Did I hear correctly? Your entire team
consists of a woman and two *fish*?

EXT. OCEAN

John keys back dryly.

JOHN
You got it.

PRESIDENT MORGAN
All right, then ...

Intensely ...

PRESIDENT MORGAN
Can you take that sub?

John looks to his dolphins.

JOHN
We'll see what we can do.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

WAYANS peers over the shoulder of the operator on the sonar
screens. Eyes narrowing on a cluster of blips on-screen.

WAYANS
What is that?

OPERATOR
Well, it's moving like a school of fish.

EXT. OCEAN

JOHN cruises at speed with LUCY and ECHO.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

Wayans chills.

WAYANS
That's no school of fish. Those're
mammals, every one.

He *whirls* to GRUNIER.

WAYANS
We've got company.

INT. SEAWOLF - CORRIDORS

WAYANS is hot on GRUNIER's heels as he slams through the sub's corridors.

WAYANS
I'm telling you, Puck - I worked with these dolphins. This is not the way to deal with this.

GRUNIER
Shut up. I know what I'm doing.

He slams through a door into the galley where his ASSAULT COMMANDOS are gathered.

GRUNIER
Suit up. You're going fishing.

EXT. OCEAN

JOHN, ECHO and LUCY speed through the bethos. LUCY and ECHO suddenly pull up short.

JOHN
Lucy! Echo! Let's go!

But the dolphins don't respond. Instead remaining nervously focused into the fading blue.

Nervous. Skittish. Like spooked horses.

JOHN
You're reading something ...

He waits. Listens ...

Beside him ECHO watches intently into the void below. He turns on his dolphin-vision sonography. The water red-shifts. A MONSTROUS SHAPE begins to emerge ...

Now John sees it too.

The SEAWOLF hoves out of the gloom. They must scramble to avoid being run over by its massive fairwater.

Subs displacing this kind of water generate something like 100,000 shaft horsepower but only radiate noise equal to a 20 watt lightbulb into the surrounding water. They are silent!

EXT. SEAWOLF SUB

Every American submarine is equipped with a full compliment of SCUBA gear for inspection of the massive hull.

Ten Assault Commandos are hydraulically *SHUMP!!* shot out the four torpedo tubes into the surrounding sea.

All are heavily armed with lethal CO2 spears. The instant they hit the water, they swim aggressively towards John and the dolphins.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

GRUNIER leans over the sonar, watching intently as TEN BLIPS converge on FOUR. DIANE watches, tense ...

GRUNIER

You a gambling man, Wayans?

WAYANS

(sullen)

I'm working for you on credit, aren't I?

EXT. SEAWOLF

Grunier's men, out for blood, CONVERGE. John tense, ready for a fight in which they are seriously outnumbered ...

JOHN

(mutters)

I sure hope this works for me like it worked for her ...

Before Grunier's people can lay a hand on them ...

JOHN

Defend!

Like magic, ECHO and LUCY streak out, hitting the Commandos with the impact of a hurricane, ripping into them with stunning force.

ECHO snatches the respirator out of an attacking aquanaut's mouth, WRAPS it around his throat, *spins!* him out like a top with such force the knife in the man's hand SLICES through one of his comrades' air hoses in a gushing spray.

LUCY hits a man with her fluke so hard the sharp snap of his ribs shoots through the water. She GRABS the knife-hand of the next diver, performs a LIGHTNING ROLL that *twists!* it

back behind him with a resounding krack!.

John is *astonished*. But not more astonished that the Assault Commandos who are getting their *asses kicked*.

INT. SEAWOLF SUB

GRUNIER watches, jaw slowly dropping as the blips on the sonar screen slowly fall away. Wayans sighs ...

WAYANS

Told ya.

EXT. OCEAN

Only the original four are left. John, panting, regards the the assault commandos drifting away down into the murk. Astonished at the dolphins' efficiency ...

JOHN

Washington - we are on our way.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

WAYANS looks sharply up from the deck computer.

WAYANS

Found it! He's transmitting to Washington through the *Trieste* on the scientific band.

Grunier looks to DIANE, still at Prado's gunpoint, stomach in knots watching all this go down.

GRUNIER

I know just how to fix your boyfriend.
Two birds with one stone.

EXT. OCEAN

The SeaWolf hauls by JOHN, displacing millions of cubic tons of water. TORPEDO TUBES *grinding open*.

JOHN

Aw Christ ...

Eyes shooting into the blue, he realizes ...

JOHN

The *Trieste* ...

Instantly, he is into his mike.

JOHN

Trieste! Get out of here! Immediately!

TRIESTE (O.C.)

But AQUATIC, you'll lose radio contact...

JOHN

Trieste - you must evacuate now!

INT. SITUATION ROOM - WHITE HOUSE

Those in the room exchange an alarmed glance. Fat NAVAL SECRETARY CHANNING grabs up the mike.

SECRETARY CHANNING

Negative, negative - it is imperative that we keep an open line to our insurgency team. We must have command capability!

EXT. OCEAN

John is stunned.

JOHN

Washington! *Trieste* is a scientific sub! It is defenseless against the SeaWolf!

INT. SEAWOLF

Grunier digs something out of his teeth. Examines it.

GRUNIER

Fire.

Wayans *slaps* a trio of switches.

EXT. OCEAN

WHOOSH!, inches from John's face, an ADCAP SEEKER-HEAD TORPEDO launches from the SeaWolf's tube. 3400 pounds of aquatic death with a 438 kilogram warhead.

It *cuts!* a sharp right-hand turn, *shooting* off into the blue.

JOHN

Aw no ...

INT. TRIESTE

The YOUNG BIOLOGIST at the Sonoscope's eyes narrow.

BILLINGS

Hey Bob ...

HARVARD looks over from the radio.

BILLINGS

We're getting something coming right at us. Real fast.

HARVARD

Something like what?

BILLINGS

Well, if I didn't know better, size and shape, the way it's moving - hell, I'd say it's a torpedo.

Harvard is at his shoulder in an instant.

HARVARD

(paling)

Oh my God.

He spins.

HARVARD

Turn it around! Turn this fucking thing around!

EXT. OCEAN

Over his open mike, John can hear the Trieste RED-LINING.

BILLINGS (O.C.)

500 yards! Coming in fast!

TRIESTE PLANESMAN (O.C.)

It's too fast! It's too fast!

John snaps on his mike.

JOHN

Washington! The dolphins - they can stop that torpedo!

A stunned silence from the other end. *What???*

JOHN

It's a herding response. I've seen 'em do it with sharks and seals a million times!

SECRETARY CHANNING (O.C.)

Negative! Negative! You must continue as instructed, AQUATIC. Time is of the imperative!

JOHN

Sir, the people aboard *Trieste* will die!

INT. TRIESTE

In the *Trieste* the YOUNG SCIENTISTS listen horrified to the on-going conversation - their lives hanging in the balance.

SECRETARY CHANNING (O.C.)

They can evade!

JOHN (O.C.)

They're too close to evade!

INT. SITUATION ROOM - WHITE HOUSE - DAY

PRESIDENT MORGAN takes the mike. Jaw tight. *Intense.*

PRESIDENT MORGAN

This is President Morgan. SeaWolf is priority. Continue with planned action. That is an order.

EXT. OCEAN

John exchanges a glance with his dolphins. This is crazy!

TRIESTE (O.C.)

500 yards!

JOHN

The hell with this. I'll do this sub thing by myself. You two ...

He looks to Lucy and Echo, eyes ablaze.

JOHN

Shark! Go!

Without an instant's hesitation, the dolphins TAKE off into the blue after the submersible missile.

INT. TRIESTE

Sweat pouring off his brow, Billings tracks the pulsing blip coming towards them fast on his screen.

BILLINGS
400 yards!!! Closing!

PLANESMAN
We are not going to make it!

BILLINGS
Wait ... there's something else ...

On his screen two *smaller blips* are RIGHT BEHIND THE TORPEDO. Harvard's eyes narrow over his shoulder.

HARVARD
What the fuck is that ... ?

EXT. OCEAN

LUCY and ECHO, pushing it hard are right *on the torpedo's ass* as it enters a BENTHIC MAZE of BUTTE-LIKE ICE-COLUMNS rising up from the invisible ocean floor below.

As the torpedo, on auto-guidance, dodges in and out of the aquatic towers of ice, the pelagics hang tight ...

Into a SUBTERRANEAN CANYON of ice. Frozen fresh water, absorbed over tens of thousands of years from the surrounding sea, crystalline walls rising hugely upward on both sides...

EXT. OCEAN

John swims the spine of the sub, laying Diane's MAGNETIC MINES. Video relay from Echo and Lucy's cameras feeds back to him in real time...

JOHN
(under his breath)
Come on . . .

INT. TRIESTE

All hell is breaking loose. Billings whips to Harvard.

BILLINGS
Bob! If... if we launch the R.O.V..

HARVARD

Goddamit Billings, we are about to die here! This torpedo is going to hit us!

BILLINGS

T...that's what I'm trying to say! If we cut our engines and launch the R.O.V. ...

His heart is pounding.

BILLINGS

It could divert the torpedo.

Harvard stares at him. Wheels turning. *Whirls* to the YOUNG WOMAN at the remote operations board.

HARVARD

Launch it! Launch the R.O.V.!

EXT. OCEAN

Dolphins hang tight as the "wish me dead" torpedo breaks out of the aquatic canyon, streaking through open water towards the *Trieste* ...

EXT. TRIESTE

From its attachment beneath the *Trieste* the REMOTE OPERATED VEHICLE deploys - it's propellor kicking in and whirring off into the blue ...

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

The SeaWolf Sonar Operator spins, calls out.

SONAR OPERATOR

They've launched some kind of counter-measure!

Grunier, kicking it on the bridge, snorts.

GRUNIER

For all the good it'll do 'em.

INT. TRIESTE

Billings heart is slamming inside his chest.

BILLINGS

100 yards! Coming right at us!

Harvard spins to his planesman.

HARVARD

Cut the engine!

PLANESMAN

But if we cut it we may not be able to restart...

HARVARD

Do it!

EXT. OCEAN

The engines cut. Spinning to silence.

The torpedo, headed directly for the *Trieste*, executes a sharp turn, *diverted* by the R.O.V..

Lucy & Echo, monuments to hydradynamic perfection, stick like white on rice.

But this is the ADCAP computer-guided seeker-head torpedo. The "world's smartest torpedo". It *shoots* a loop around the R.O.V., quickly realizes it has been tricked ...

ARCS tightly, heads back for the *Trieste*.

Lucy & Echo, who as dolphins can execute water-turns at 30% of their body length with no reduction of speed, hold tight.

INT. TRIESTE

Billings's face goes sheet-white.

BILLINGS

It didn't take the bait ... it ... it's coming back!

The crew of young scientists, pale, terrified, eye the ceiling, hearing the torpedo's seeker head active sonar signals through their acoustic intercept speakers. *PING! PING!* Knowing damn well what's coming.

Billings, jaw trembling, ventures again ...

BILLINGS

B... Bob ...

All eyes turn to him.

HARVARD

What goddamit ...

BILLINGS

T... the torpedo - it's working off
sonar. If we b...blast out the band ...

Harvard stares at him a beat. Processing ... SNAPS round to
the radio operator.

HARVARD

Dial in the bandwidth - blow it out!

The Radio Operator jumps to it, calculating and blasting the
torpedo's own sonar frequency back into the water, jamming
the bandwidth and, hopefully, confusing the torpedo.

EXT. OCEAN

The water goes high-pitched with the agonizing high-
frequency buzz of the sonar jamming.

EXT. SEAWOLF

John looks up sharply as the ear-piercing pitch blows out the
water. What the hell's going on?

EXT. OCEAN

The ADCAP plows through a SCHOOL OF FISH a million strong.
Lucy and Echo dart after it through the impenetrable forest
of flashing scales ...

But, when they break through the other side, the Torpedo is
gone! They spin, trying to regain visual contact.

EXT. OCEAN

Beyond the fade, the TORPEDO buzzes back and forth like an
angry wasp. Searching, searching. Narrowing the field ...

INT. TRIESTE

Billings' clothing is soaked through with sweat.

BILLINGS

It's jammed. But it's getting close!
It's searching! It's dialing out the
frequency! I think it's gonna find us!

EXT. OCEAN

JOHN is *swimming* all out. On his head-up screen he can see Lucy and Echo's camera POV's swimming aimlessly, confused.

He knows something is very wrong.

INT. SEAWOLF

GRUNIER, WAYANS listening ...

WAYANS

(whispers)

The Demon waits. He *will* be satisfied ...

EXT. OCEAN

John breaks out of the aquatic canyon into open water. He can clearly see the Trieste three hundred feet ahead.

ZZZZZZEOW! the massive TORPEDO *buzzes* right past his face zigzagging back and forth, searching for the sub.

The dolphins are nowhere in sight!

JOHN

My God ...

He suddenly REALIZES! SNAPS on his radio.

JOHN

Trieste! Cut the sonar-jamming!!!

TRIESTE (O.C.)

Negative, AQUATIC! It's the only thing keeping it off us!

JOHN

- You're *jamming* my dolphins! They can't find the torpedo!

TRIESTE (O.C.)

Dolphins! I can't put the lives of my team into the hands of dol...

JOHN

They can stop the torpedo!!!

INT. TRIESTE

The seeker-head's pinging is getting closer, louder ...

Harvard wavers ...

HARVARD

W...we can't do it. I can't take the risk.

JOHN (O.C.)

Goddamit, you have to! That torpedo's going to find you! It's your only chance!

Harvard hesitates - sweat pouring off his brow.

BILLINGS

50 yards!

Then *whirls* to the Radio Operator.

HARVARD

Kill it! Kill the sonar jamming!

RADIO OPERATOR

But...

HARVARD

Kill it, goddamit!

EXT. OCEAN

The high-frequency jam abruptly *stops*, the water RED-SHIFTS in Lucy and Echo's dolphin-vision as their sonar kicks back in. They are on it. SHOOTING off towards the *Trieste*.

EXT. OCEAN

John can only watch as the Torpedo, sonar-enabled, makes a sudden about-face and *rockets* back for the *Trieste*...

INT. TRIESTE CONTROL DECK

Everyone's sweating in here.

BILLINGS

It's coming! 75 feet! 50 feet!

EXT. OCEAN

The Torpedo speeds directly for the *Trieste's* guts. An arrow to its heart.

EXT. OCEAN

Dolphins can move faster than is mechanically possible through a process of energy recovery from the hydrodynamic vortices that spin off their bodies ...

Lucy and Echo streak down through the water ...

INT. TRIESTE CONTROL DECK

All knuckles go white ...

BILLINGS

25 feet!!!

EXT. OCEAN

The ADCAP makes the final surge for the *Trieste* ...

SZHEEEEEOM! at the last instant, LUCY and ECHO shoot up into frame beneath the torpedo and, pressing upward with every ounce of hydramatic power they can muster ...

INT. TRIESTE

Billings crosses himself.

BILLINGS

Impact ...

EXT. OCEAN

John tightens ...

EXT. OCEAN

Lucy and Echo PUSH the torpedo upward, diverting it *scraping* over the crest of the sub in a hideous grinding. It spirals forward, DETONATING on a ice wall five hundred yards away.

INT. SUB

The crew grabs hold as the blast rocks the sub.

EXT. OCEAN

JOHN breathes a huge sigh of relief.

INT. TRIESTE

A massive cheer of relief goes up around the small sub as

everyone hugs each other. The Young Woman running the radio kisses Billings. He BLUSHES.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

They are picking up the *Trieste* in here too. The sound of cheering. GRUNIER is trembling, he's so angry.

But DIANE closes her eyes. *Relieved.*

EXT. OCEAN

LUCY and ECHO come chittering back, like excited children. John puts his arms around them. *Relieved to see them alive.*

JOHN

Good work, guys. Damn good work ...

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

WAYANS turns to GRUNIER.

WAYANS

They used their marine mammals. Like I said they would.

GRUNIER

Well, I guess they're in for a surprise, aren't they?

EXT. OCEAN

John looks up from his dolphins, smile dropping off his lips. A WHITE FORM is humping in the distance towards the *Trieste*.

CHARLIE, the BELUGA.

JOHN

(realizing)

Oh no . . .

Too far, too late. The Beluga reaches the bathyscaphe ...

INT. TRIESTE

CHEERS as the Harvard pop's a bottle of CHAMPAGNE.

HARVARD

I was going to save this for when we got back home, but ...

EXT. OCEAN

The UNWITTING WHITE WHALE sounds beneath the Trieste. KLINK! attaches the MAGNETIC PLATE on it's back ...

JOHN

CHARLIE! NO!!!

Tick! KAPUCKINGBLAM! the Trieste blows to quantum particles.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

Grunier, meanwhile, is on to other things. Says to WAYANS:

GRUNIER

How accurate are these missiles?

WAYANS

Two points every time.

GRUNIER picks up the microphone. Growls ...

GRUNIER

I told you not to fuck with me, Mr. President. Now, I am arming and launching the Tomahawk nuclear warhead in tube 2 and this time I'm hitting you where you live. The White House.

He replaces the mike. Turns to Wayans.

GRUNIER

I want this one right through his bedroom window.

INT. WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM

Everyone stares at one another - horrified. Only Morgan remains halfway calm. Fatalistic ...

PRESIDENT MORGAN

We can't wait any longer. Start evacuating the city.

EXT. OCEAN

JOHN swims dazed through the wash of bubbles where the Trieste was. Everywhere, white bits of WHALE drizzle down.

LUCY and ECHO follow John, regarding him curiously, as though he will somehow produce the whale that has disappeared.

LUCY

Gaaaaaaarl?

JOHN

(hesitates)

I... no, Girl, it's not Charlie, it's ...

He trails off. What can he say to them? He looks through the fade in the direction of the SeaWolf. Anger welling ...

JOHN

Let's get these bastards.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK.

PRADO doesn't look so sure about this.

PRADO

Launching!?! But what about our money???
I seriously doubt they're gonna give us a
billion dollars or anything like it if we
blow up Washington D.C.!

But Grunier, distracted, has more important things on his
mind.

GRUNIER

Don't worry. You'll get your share. If
I have to pay it out of my own pocket.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - WHITE HOUSE

Everyone looks up as an AIDE *slides* in.

AIDE

(breathlessly)

Turning's Lymphoma!

PRESIDENT MORGAN

Turing's Lymphoma? What the hell's that?

AIDE

Rare congenital blood disease. Both
Quentin and Grunier Puck have it.

Morgan looks to Siegenfeld and Stern.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

Why the hell does this sound so familiar?

STERN

(clears his throat)

Perhaps, Sir, because you scrapped very promising cure research for this disease, trying to make your election year budget.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

Oh.

AIDE

(ashen)

And Sirs. It's terminal. Doctors had given the Pucks three months to live.

Uh-oh.

AIDE

(swallows)

It's a particularly agonizing death.

A silent pall falls over the room.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

Okay, then what the hell do two dead men need a billion dollars for???

SIEGENFELD

That's just it. They don't.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

Then what do they want?

SIEGENFELD

Two things, I would imagine. Revenge. And to go out in a blaze of glory. Clearly, Puck perceives you as betraying him and wants to launch bombs. That's all this was ever about. If he has to go, he wants to go down in the history books with his father and grandfather - as the man who took you and eleven American cities with him.

INT. SEAWOLF

Wayans, at the computers ...

WAYANS

Tomahawk in tube 2 is warhead-hot and will fly in T minus ...

He smacks return.

WAYANS

Three minutes.

Grunier eyes the ceiling.

GRUNIER

No point wasting any more time. Pull the rug out. Initiate launch sequences on Houston, New York, Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, Miami, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Phoenix and New Orleans.

INT. FAIRWATER

John, in the SeaWolf's dorsal Fairwater, drops the manganese caulker. Keys a REMOTE DETONATOR. Looks to the dolphins.

JOHN

Let's rock this boat.

LUCY

Kerrrrr kikeki!

ECHO

Gek!

John punches the flashing red key ...

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

Wayan's computer screen flashes ...

WAYANS

Remaining warheads ready to be armed ...

He reaches to do just that ...

EXT. OCEAN

KABLAIAAAAAAAAAAN!!! the spine of the sub BLOWS, ripping up like a sardine can in a huge gasp of released oxygen.

INT. SEAWOLF

Everyone goes sprawling. Finding his feet, Wayans screams:

WAYANS

He blew the upper ballast tanks!

GRUNIER

Upper ballast tanks! Why the hell would he do that???

Almost as if in answer, the sub begins to ROLL. Everyone goes diving headlong into the walls.

EXT. SEA

The massive 350 foot sub ponderously goes belly-up in the murky blue.

INT. FAIRWATER

Back in the Fairwater, as the behemoth rolls over ...

John *ignites* a THERMITE TORCH.

WHOOSH the mercury metal manganate *flares!* around the circumference and the HY-80 hi-tensile steel hatch ...

INT. SHUTTLE CARGO BAY

*BLOW!*s inward with EXPLOSIVE FORCE.

A WHALE SPOUT of water boils in. John spews up through the floor with it. Landing on his feet. Machine-pistol blazing.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

WAYANS struggles back to his feet. Lunges back for the computer to initiate the launch sequence ...

Diane *grabs* the pistol out of PRADO'S holster. *SHOOTS* Prado, *spins.* Blows the keyboard away under Wayans' very fingers.

Wayans *dives* Ducking out with GRUNIER through the water-rushing bulkhead. *POW!POW!* she fires after them, bullets sparking off the metal walls. No good.

INT. SUB CORRIDORS

JOHN, LUCY and ECHO, meanwhile, take the flooding sub. Corridor by corridor. Bulkhead by bulkhead.

DORSAL FINS cut through the water-rushing corridors, like sharks. Gunning down, running down all who oppose them.

INT. SUB

GRUNIER and WAYANS fight their way down the rapidly flooding

corridor.

GRUNIER

The other eleven warheads - you initiated the launch sequences???

WAYANS

That bitch shot the keyboard.

GRUNIER

You idiot!

Wayans pulls up an abrupt halt.

WAYANS

Let's get something straight. You don't talk to me like that. You haven't paid me yet, Jack - and that entitles you to *nothing*. I'm the one that brought you this far. Because of me you're a) still alive and b) have a 375 kiloton warhead that's going to launch and annihilate half of Washington D.C. in three minutes.

Opposite him, Grunier Puck's eyes burn. He'd forgotten about that one.

WAYANS

Yeah, I *thought* you'd like that. It may only be 3 or 4 million people - but it'll still qualify you for the history books.

Wayans dives down under the water, opens the HATCH to the ESCAPE POD.

Grunier jumps into the whirlpool washing into the pod. Wayans follows. Pulling the hatch *clanging* shut after himself.

#

INT. ESCAPE POD

They splash down inside the POD, full of freezing seawater.

Grunier *hits* the ejector button.

#

EXT. SEAWOLF

BLAM! the pod blows downward out of the outer hull, spirals back up with its buoyancy, STRIKES the sub, goes tumbling towards the icy ceiling of the surface.

EXT. OCEAN

The pod gathers speed as it races towards the surface ...

EXT. ICE - DAY

BURSTING up through the ice. TWO BLACKHAWK CHOPPERS come swooping in. Skidding across the ice on their runners in a spray of loose snow.

INT. SUB CORRIDOR

JOHN, separated from Echo and Lucy, bursts around another corner, *POW!* kills an assault commando dead to rights ...

VOICE

Hey ...

He spins. A COMMANDO has him dead in his sights. The man relishes the moment as he pulls the trigger ...

COMMANDO

As we say in France - au revoir, asshole.

But a FORM OF NEON YELLOW flashes like a bolt beneath the water between them, slices out airborne ...

JET shoots like an organic missile down the length of the corridor, *connecting* with the commando's sternum with such pure kinetic force he *CRACK!* SMACKS back into the water.

John's heart surges.

JOHN

JET!

The dolphin practically throws himself into the man's arms.

JET

Kiiiierrr!!!

JOHN

Jet!!! You're alive!

He hugs his dolphin, deliriously happy. But feeling something on the dolphin's back, he separates. A *STEEL DISC* has been strapped to Jet's back. John's face clouds. A BOMB.

JOHN

Oh Jet ... what've they done to you ...

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

John and Jet flank the bulkhead to the control deck, his gun leading. He hand-signals Jet, count of three ...

GO! They burst around.

Find themselves staring down the barrel of DIANE'S GUN. ECHO and LUCY are there. Bodies bob in the rising water. Looks like Diane's been busy too.

Everyone relaxes. An awkward beat between them. As if they don't know whether to hug or shake.

John settles for ...

JOHN

Sub's flooding fast. We gotta move.

Nodding, she moves quickly to the computers.

DIANE

This is all manufactured to water resistant specifications so that even if the sub is sunk, it will still launch initiated missiles.

John grabs the RADIO-MIKE. Keys it ...

JOHN

Washington, this is AQUATIC. Seawolf is back in U.S. possession.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - WHITE HOUSE - DAY

A HUGE sigh of relief travels around the room. Thank God. CHANNING takes the mike.

SECRETARY CHANNING

Good work, AQUATIC. You now have ...

He glances at the clock.

SECRETARY CHANNING

Good Lord... one minute, 34 seconds to cancel the launch.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

Diane spins from the computers. REALIZING.

DIANE

The keyboard!

It's in tatters. They stare at each other. How are they going to stop the launch?

Diane, in a moment of sudden realization, *whirls* to the dolphins ...

DIANE

Lucy!

The dolphin swishes over. Diane points to a UNIVERSAL CAVITY - like the rubber phone modem couplers.

DIANE

Interface!

Lucy pushes her beak into the mold up to her frontal forehead where the acoustic lens that generates her burst-pulse ultra-sonic clicks and whistles is located.

John watches, astonished.

DIANE

(intense)

Lucy was trained to locate subs sunk in combat and disarm any hot warheads.

John stares at her - getting it ...

JOHN

So all American subs ...

DIANE

Have interfaces for the dolphins.
Dolphins can whistle 300 times a second.
Train them in the right frequencies and
- you've got a 300 baud computer modem.

JOHN

Like a fax.

DIANE

Precisely.

Lucy's high-pitched clicks and whistles fill the flooding room as she routinely "talks" to the computer. Diane glances at the computer screen above their head.

DIANE

She's inside the encryption files ...
That's it, she's in.

John snatches up the mike.

JOHN

Washington, this is AQUATIC. We are in
the launch command.

John looks to Diane who nods.

DIANE

In the menu now and preping to disarm ...

EXT. POLAR CAP AIRSPACE - DAY

In one of the Blackhawks, GRUNIER and WAYANS listen in on the
transmission. GRUNIER blinks.

GRUNIER

He's fucking up everything ...

Looks to Wayans.

GRUNIER

One man and a bunch of *fish* are fucking
up my *legacy*.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

Diane gives John the high-sign. John keys the mike.

JOHN

We are disarming now, Washington.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

MORGAN takes the mike.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

This is President Morgan and that is a
negative. Do not disarm the warhead. I
repeat - do not under any circumstances
disarm the warhead.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

John is stunned. Lucy withdraws from the Dolphin Coupler,
chirps at John.

LUCY

Kiiiiiii?

John puts the mike back to his lips.

JOHN

I'm sorry, I ... I don't understand ...

But Diane, who has been staring at the screens, does.

DIANE

I do.

She looks at him.

DIANE

Subs operate on distributed processor architecture. A safety feature. Several computers can handle separate tasks faster than one.

She shakes her head.

DIANE

The launch sequence and the arming sequence are controlled by two separate computers. When a submarine goes down, the dolphins are tasked with the submarine specific codes. But without them we can't alter one computer without shutting down the other.

LUCY

Kiiiiiii? Kiiiiiii?

They both look at her - regarding them querulously.

DIANE

That's what she wants to know. Which sequence to stop. The warhead or the launch ...

INT. SITUATION ROOM - WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

The Secretary of the Navy takes the mike.

SECRETARY CHANNING

She's right. You're technically operating on unauthorized emergency access. The second you change anything in one computer, all other computer systems shut down.

INT. SEAWOLF CONTROL DECK

John is shocked. INTERCUT. Over the roar of water pouring into the sub ...

JOHN

Are you saying ... we have to choose between launching a missile with a dead warhead or letting that warhead explode underwater?

PRESIDENT MORGAN

There's no choice to make. If the missile flies, even with the warhead disarmed it will hit the White House and impact alone will reduce it to rubble. Cancel the launch, let the bomb explode. I'm told the lethal radius is five miles but with the dolphins you can make the distance.

John looks to Diane with utter disbelief. Rekeys mike ...

JOHN

But ... with all respect, it's more complicated than that. This is an eco-system here. You're talking five cubic miles of some of the most densely populated ocean on the planet.

He shakes his head.

JOHN

Detonating a nuclear device here will create an environmental disaster that will make the Exxon Valdes look like a grease spot.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

Mr. Lane, I'm giving you a direct order. The White House is the symbol of a nation, the most powerful nation in the world. The lives of fish are not a comparable issue.

The sub creaks unsteadily as the water gets dangerously high around their throats. Water is spraying down everywhere.

DIANE

(whispers)

This sub's gonna roll ...

JOHN

(intense)

It's fish, yes, and it's also thousands of sea mammals including seals and whales. The loss of life would be catastrophic.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

I won't say it again, Mr. Lane. *Cancel* the launch and evacuate the area.

John looks to Echo. To Jet. To Lucy. Hesitates ...

DIANE

(urgently)

Whatever's going to be done needs to be done now. When this thing rolls, it's gonna sink like a stone.

He looks to her. Shakes his head.

JOHN

I'm sorry.

DIANE

You don't have to ask my forgiveness. By this point, I'm with you all the way.

The sub groans unsteadily. John re-keys the mike.

JOHN

I'm sorry, Mr. President, life isn't a commodity you can barter for political ends. I recommend you evacuate the White House and surrounding grounds.

PRESIDENT MORGAN

What!!! Listen to me, you...

John *rips* the radio out of the wall in a spray of sparks. On the computer the counter is counting down ...

JOHN

Lucy - Warhead. Disarm.

Lucy jams her beak back into the coupler, races clicking and whistling through the menus. A COMPUTERIZED VOICE INTONES...

COMPUTER

Warhead - disarmed. TLAM launching, T

minus 43 seconds ...

John quickly activates the TIMER on his dive watch. There is a tremendous groaning.

DIANE

We're rolling!

JOHN

Come on!

Too late! The sub lurches, performing a barrel roll. Righting itself. The world spins around them.

The sub begins absolutely FLOODING with water.

DIANE

The Skywatcher chip!

JOHN

Forget it! You don't have any SCUBA.
We've got to get you out of here!

He's right. They took Diane's O2 cylinder.

He *grabs* her as the dolphins forge ahead. They swim for everything they are worth through the corridors, MACHINERY secured behind the bulkheads EXPLODING in their wake.

Just ahead, the steam exchanger DETONATES! under the flooring, sending flame shooting through the water.

John and Diane sprawl back as, for an instant, the surrounding water comes to a boil.

A moment later it is clear. But all power is gone in the sub. Pure blackness. Just the roaring sound of water.

JOHN

Echo! Lucy! Jet!

An instant later, they hear the cetaceans clicking and whistling back beside them. Returning for their sonar-blind human friends.

John grabs a pommel with one hand, Diane's hand with the other ...

JOHN

Surface!

The dolphins take off down the blind corridor, pulling their human cargo with them.

EXT. OCEAN

Belching air in huge gulps through the fairwater, the Seawolf SSN 486 plummets like an anvil down towards the irretrievable arctic depths.

John and Diane, borne like the Phoenix, are carried out the torn explosive gash in the sub's side by Echo and Lucy.

The pelagics hump powerfully towards the surface with their human passengers.

EXT. ICE CEILING

The underside of the polar cap. A glass world that looks with hazy translucence to the blue world above. Five feet of ice through which the soon-to-be dead can view the living...

Diane has no SCUBA gear. Nothing. She hasn't take a breath in at least a minute.

Going into overdrive, John POUNDS the underside of the ice, the dolphins RAM it with their beaks. No fucking way.

Abruptly, through the ice, TWO HUGE BLACK FORMS swoop to a soundless hover above them. The 2 BLACKHAWK ASSAULT CHOPPERS!

Silent flash of flame, ice *splinters!* pounding distantly above them. 30mm gatling cannon fire.

INT. BLACKHAWK

John, Diane, the dolphins are quite visible through the ice.

GRUNIER

- I would love for him and Flipper to stick their heads out of that ice.

EXT. UNDER ICE CAP

Ghosted by the deadly Blackhawks following them above, they feel their way along the underside of the ice, looking for a crack, a fissure, anything.

But, in his heart, John knows its fruitless. That even if they find a way through the ice, they'll be turned instantly to hamburger by the BlackHawks following them above.

Suddenly, Diane's grip *tightens* on his arm.

He spins. He can clearly see her suffocating to death in front of him.

The sea goes silent as they look into one another's eyes.

Then, over her shoulder, his eyes are caught by the SILVERY TRICKLE OF AIR BUBBLES dribbling up from the black depths. From the SEAWOLF. Invisible on the bottom a kilometer below.

Gathering into a mercury pool on the bottom of the ice.

Eyes *flash!* to the SHADOWY CHOPPERS hovering above.

To his DIVE WATCH. The TIMER is counting down on the Tomahawk missile. 7 ... 6 ... 5 ...

He *grabs!* her hand.

And swims for the bubbles. Above the ice, the Blackhawks *follow* eating up the ice with 30mm cannon fire.

EXT. ICE CAP - DAY

In the Blackhawk, Grunier curses ...

GRUNIER

Stay on top of them. If they get through, I want to be there.

EXT. UNDER ICE

John pulls up short, the SEAWOLF'S BUBBLE TRAIL breaking over them. Diane fading eyes dim on the minuscule mercury pool of air gathering on the ice above ...

John shoots a last glance upward. Yes, the Blackhawks have followed them. Perfect. To his watch. 2 ... 1 ... 0!

EXT. BLACKHAWK

Simultaneously, Grunier's eyes light. His quarry has stopped.

GRUNIER

Bring the other copter in. We'll shoot through the ice!

The 2ND BLACKHAWK pulls parallel. Both rain fire down into the ice. Rapidly eating a pit towards those beneath.

EXT. OCEAN

The SEAWOLF. It's Vertical Launch System TUBE in position 2 bursts open, the TOMAHAWK is SHOT! out, propelled upward by its booster rocket.

It *ROCKETS* upward towards the surface.

EXT. UNDER ICE

John *spins!* Down! Rising TITANIC directly for them out of the depths, is the TOMAHAWK MISSILE.

He *grabs* Diane back as the huge missile BRUSHES past them ...

Striking the underbelly of the ice ...

EXT. ICE CAP - DAY

Crashing through, towards the astonished expressions of Grunier and Wayans in the copters directly above it.

The air-breathing cruise missile pauses an instant above the ice. It's booster rocket jettisons. Its wings and tail deploy. Its turbofan engine flames to life THRUSTING it roaring upward ...

... *STRIKING* Blackhawk 2 with such terrific force they BOTH EXPLODE into a monstrous ball of flame.

INT. BLACKHAWK 1 - DAY

WAYANS and GRUNIER throw their arms up for protection as the fireball from the other copter rips through their chopper.

Their pilot screams through the smoke.

PILOT

I'm blind! I can't see!

Wayans fights his way up to the shattered cockpit, finds the controls.

EXT. POLAR CAP

As the burning wreckage of the Tomahawk and Copter 2 rains down in steaming masses onto the ice, Wayans battles to bring the injured Blackhawk down.

INT. BLACKHAWK - DAY

Full of black smoke, its skids touch the ice. In back, Grunier is having a massive hemorrhaging coughing attack.

WAYANS

Get out! Get out!

WHAM! JOHN LANE comes flying through the bay door, *slamming!* into Grunier ...

Sending both launching out the other side ...

EXT. ICE

Slamming into the ice. John grabs Grunier's gun out of his holster. *Aimed* down at Grunier. The gun trembles in John's hand. He's spent his whole life *saving* lives.

GRUNIER

Think about it. You and I are the same.
They fucked us both.

BAM! out of nowhere, WAYANS tackles John. Grunier hits his feet. *Grabs Wayan's sidearm* out of its holster, leveling it down on John as Wayans jumps off.

GRUNIER

The difference is in the way we deal with
people who fuck us.

EXT. ICE HOLE

20 yards away, at the edge of the jagged hole the Tomahawk punctured into the ice, Diane has is on all fours, gasping in great gulps of air.

ECHO, having thrust himself half up onto the ice, watches the action by-the helicopter with deep concern.

EXT. BLACKHAWK

On his back on the crisp ice, John stares up the barrel of the Colt Government .45 Grunier holds.

GRUNIER

See ya in three months.

JOHN

I doubt it.

Grunier shrugs, finger tiiiiightening the trigger ...

ECHO *throws!* himself back into the water, pinpoint turns, SHOOTs back under the ice, snaps back round...

CATAPULTING himself forward through the water with all impossible force ...

FIRING like an arrow through the medium, breaking free at the surface ...

SAILING through the air ...

HITTING the ice. Doing fifty. *TSHEOWW!* he shoots across ...

Grunier's finger whitens on the trigger ...

SCHRRAPPP! everyone spins. ECHO - 600 POUNDS OF SOLID PELAGIC MAMMAL BULLDOZES across the ice at them at terrific speed.

GRUNIER *snaps* his gun around *POW!POW!POW!* Echo STRIKES him with bone-crushing force. Grunier *crunch!* goes flying.

John bursts to his feet, recovering Grunier's gun, whipping it around to BLOW Grunier and Wayans away. *Too late!*

Wayans's own gun is trained on Diane.

WAYANS

Go ahead.

Mexican stand-off. The Commando who has taken over in the Blackhawk's cockpit yells:

COMMANDO

Oil pump's shot and core temperature's red-lining here! If we're going to make the boat we have to leave now.

Wayans, keeping the gun trained on Diane, pulls the dazed Grunier up off the ice, drags him back towards the copter.

Gives John a crooked smile.

WAYANS

I think if you stroll east, in four thousand miles or so you should hit Vladivostok. Good luck.

He backs climbing into the copter. Gives the pilot thumbs up. The copter lifts sputtering off. Sweeps off to the

south. Trailing an acrid tail of black smoke.

John and Diane rush to Echo's side. *All three of Grunier's wild shots found their mark.*

The big dolphin is fading fast. John throws his arms around him.

JOHN

Oh Jesus, Echo ...

The dolphin blinks at him. *Weakly ...*

ECHO

Kak

At the crater's edge Lucy and Jet have bellied up onto the edge. Sensing what is happening, they wriggle up onto the ice next to Echo.

Lucy places her beak against his. *Plaintively coos ...*

LUCY

Jaaaaayj ...

ECHO

Kuuuuuk ...

Jet bites gently at Echo's pectoral fin.

JET

Giiii ...

ECHO

Rekkk ...

He closes his eyes. And dies. John closes his own eyes. Quiet tears freezing on his cheeks.

Diane, batting back her own tears, stands a respectful distance back. John puts his arms around Lucy and Jet ...

Then, rising, he walks a distance from the group.

Stops at edge of the ice crater. Stands there, staring into the icy blue water.

Looks off across the white wasteland to the COPTER traveling away with its tail of smoke.

They've won ... Grunier won ...

He abruptly *whirls* to the others who have come up behind him.

Looks at JET, who is watching him expectantly. As if waiting for something.

Looks to the STEEL DISC that Grunier's people attached to Jet's back. A MAGNETIC BOMB - like Charlie's. Whispers ...

JOHN

Go.

He doesn't have to say it twice. With a twist ...

JET

KO!!!

Jet *throws* himself back into the water, streaks away under the ice.

#

INT. BLACKHAWK

The de facto Pilot speaks urgently into his radio ...

PILOT

We are coming in, Stalwart. Have a fire crew ready because this baby is hot.

Grunier, coughing blood, gasps ...

GRUNIER

We'll get another helicopter. Go back.

WAYANS

Wrong. This place is going to be red hot with U.S. military. We're getting out of here and going straight to a fucking ATM so you can pay me. Then you can commit suicide any way you want.

Out the bay doors, neither of them is aware of a NEON YELLOW SUBMERSIBLE SELF-PROPELLED WAR MACHINE WITH PROGRAMMABLE ON-BOARD COMPUTER blurring along beneath the ice below them...

#

EXT. OCEAN - UNDER CAP

Doing close to fifty miles an hour, like a bolt from the blue, JET *streaks!* beneath the ice, tracking the helicopter as it shimmers through the translucent ceiling above him.

EXT. ICE BORDER

The southern edge of the continent of ice where it meets the lapping blue of the East Siberian Sea.

The Blackhawk sweeps off landbreak and out over the sea where the waiting STALWART stands at anchor near a MASSIVE ICEBERG.

... shoots over the helideck designated by a pentagon of billowing red smoke flares ...

Banks sharply back towards the ship and the signalman.

Inside the copter, the Pilot's eyes narrow on the far bank of ice shelf ...

PILOT

Fuck me ...

Something in his voice. Wayans and Grunier's eyes snap after his. Movement. Under the ice. Approaching the sea. Fast.

KASPLASH! Jet breaks out from under the ice-shelf, shooting low and fast a dozen yards across the tops of the first waves

Disappears back beneath, a shadowy yellow form coming at them at light speed. Grunier coughs blood, staggers up.

GRUNIER

Consolation prize. Give me that rifle.

Wayans looks at him like he's crazy.

WAYANS

We have to put this bird down.

Grunier snatches the rifle out of the web himself.

GRUNIER

I'm the one paying the tab here. (to Pilot) Hold this thing steady.

He steps into the bay door. The ICEBERG, a massive white mountain beside them. Shoulders the rifle. Sights the yellow form shooting beneath the waves towards them.

KRACK! he fires. The water sprays! just ahead of Jet. **KRACK!** But Jet just keeps coming.

GRUNIER

Keep coming you stupid fish.

Wayans watching Jet speed towards them, begins to get uneasy.

WAYANS

Uh ... Puck . . .

GRUNIER

Shut up! You're ruining my concentration.

KRACK! he just keeps methodically firing.

WAYANS

I really think we ought to take this
copter up higher ...

GRUNIER

Negative. The sun'll be in my eyes.

Jet catches the waves that roll in for a quarter mile towards
the iceberg, begins *surfing* them, picking up speed ...

WAYANS

(tight)

Puck ... I'm telling you, I've worked
with these dolphins ...

GRUNIER

And I'm telling you no!

Fifty feet below them Jet reaches the copter and, nothing
more than a FLASH OF YELLOW now, LAUNCHES out of the water.

SOARS upward fifty feet through the *KRACK!KRACK!* hail of
gun-bucking bullets in this slow-motion moment ...

Reaches the perihelion of his kinetic energy just beneath the
chopper ...

WAYANS

(closes eyes)

Hell, I just *knew* this was gonna happen.

KACHINK! the MAGNETIC MINE on his back attaches to the belly
of the copter ...

Disconnecting, he power-dives back down into the sea, faster
than he could ever move in one second under water as ...

Grunier stares ...

GRUNIER

Hey, did that fish just ...

KAFUCKINGBLAM!!!! the helicopter blows into sub-atomic particles. Debris rains flaming down onto the iceberg and the deck of the Stalwart.

EXT. ICE CAP - DAY

John, Diane and Lucy silently watch the black ball of smoke on the distant horizon.

It begins to drift and disperse with the gentle wind.

EXT. DOCK - MARATHON KEY - FLORIDA

WHITE sand, GREEN water, BLUE sky. A lot warmer down here.

Holding hands, JOHN and DIANE walk from their little BEACH HOUSE down through the sea oated sand dunes out onto the rickety creosote dock.

Sun is setting. Golden. They kiss.

WHOOSH! a FORM flies right over their heads, scaring the shit out of them. And soaking them in the process.

John whirls ...

JOHN

Goddammit Jet! I've told you about that.

JET, laughing, clapping his fins, power-tails backwards in the water.

JET

Guuuuuuuuuuigiiiiii!!!

Both John and Diane have to smile. LUCY appears, swimming shimmering in the clear water beneath her brother. Nips at Jet's tail.

Swimming in her pressure wave, hugging close are A TINY DOLPHIN. Her calf.

She pokes her head out at the dock. Diane scratches her nose.

DIANE

Well, if it isn't Momma and Little Echo.

JET

Peeeeiyyyyy!!!!

He drops back into the water, taking off a streak. Falling back in after him, Lucy follows with her darling offspring.

Jet leaps out of the water, Lucy follows, and Little Echo after her.

John and Diane watch the Dolphins as they frolic, getting further and further away over the reef towards the sunset.

Diane puts her arm around her husband's waist. Fading ...

DIANE

I thought you said these dolphins said words.

JOHN

They do. Dolphin words.

Arms around each other, they walk back up towards the house.

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All creatures both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

Coleridge

T H E E N D



Paramount Pictures

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124pp

Title ECO

Author Kurt Wimmer

Submitted by Tom Strickler

Submitted by Don Granger
cc: M. Hackett
Analyst Norm Saulnier

Circa Present Location Arctic Circle/DC/
Gulf of Mexico/Fla.
Drama Category ACTION/animal/terrorism

Date October 30, 1995

Elements

LOG LINE An undersea rescue ace, his team of dolphins and a can-do femme soldier stop space-shuttle/sub hijackers from nuking America.

COMMENT SUMMARY

Much of the story seems preposterous, but dolphin-technology and stunts are spectacular. Mega-expensive but worth a look for its highlights.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

After saving an oil rig CREW trapped neath the Gulf of Mexico, Salvage Rescue Ops ace JOHN LANE and his miraculous dolphin team (ECHO, JET and LUCY) are raced to see PRESIDENT MORGAN. Renegade U.S. AIR-ASSAULT COMMANDOS led by GRUNIER and PRADO have hijacked Space Shuttle ATLANTIS near Greenland and landed on Arctic ice, where it falls through 1700' to sea bottom. In cahoots, a renegade sub under ADM. PUCK dives too low to check the shuttle and explodes from pressure. Asked to rescue the 6 NASA TECHS aboard the shuttle before their oxygen runs out in 5 hours, John says its suicidal but is blackmailed to team with MAJ. DIANE PRICE anyway, lest he lose his dolphins (who were originally trained by the military).

So, after the nuke sub SEAWOLF is airlifted and dropped into the Arctic Ocean, John's team (all 5 in wetsuits) drops in (no chutes) from a C-130 after missiles blow a hole in the ice. While the dolphins use sonar to lead the bickering human duo to the shuttle, Grunier and Prado try to cut open a chamber holding the NASA exposure suits they'll soon need to survive (NASA Techs have locked themselves in there and Grunier knows it). En route to Atlantis, John and Diane talk with SCIENTISTS aboard the near-by submersible, TRIESTE. Once Diane sees Atlantis, she orders John's team to leave, their job done. Blasting into Atlantis alone, she kills a few COMMANDOS but is captured by bitter ex-astronaut Grunier Puck (whose twin brother was Adm. Puck, commander of the renegade sub that exploded).

Grunier guesses Diane's come for the crucial "Skywatcher" chip in the satellite just retrieved from space by Atlantis. She says no, she's here to rescue the NASA techs, but Jet cleverly retrieves said chip outside as she speaks. Having doubled back, John surprise-rescues Diane, so Grunier and Co. bolt. While sending the Techs into the shuttle's ejector pod, Diane powers up Atlantis' computer, not realizing her superiors have conned her into activating a bomb meant to blow up Atlantis and stop the chip (which can decipher nuke launch codes) from being stolen. The Techs are blown up, but the dolphins evacuate John and Diane pre-blast. What the duo doesn't realize is that ruthless/crazy MAJ. WAYANS (black) aboard SEAWOLF has just killed ADM. TYNE in order to take over the sub and replace Puck as Grunier's rescuer.

MORE

CHECK ONE:

PREMISE

STORY LINE

STRUCTURE

CHARACTERIZATION

DIALOGUE

EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
	X		
	X	----	X
	X		
	X	----	X
	X	----	X

Riding halfway to the surface inside the Satellite's fuel bay, Grunier and Co. eject and enter SEAWOLF through its torpedo tubes. Incredibly, Jet precedes them and hand-delivers the crucial chip to Wayans (who worked with the dolphins pre-John). Via video on Jet, John knows this has happened, so he's ready to bail and go home, but Diane refuses to quit and infiltrates SEAWOLF solo. Meanwhile, Grunier taunts DC by using the chip to launch one of the 12 Tomahawk nuke missiles aboard SEAWOLF at rural Kansas. Grunier wants a billion in cash dropped into the Arctic or he'll launch the other 11 at major cities, including DC.

Contacting TRIESTE, DC learns John and Co. are alive (though John thinks Jet has been killed aboard SEAWOLF), so President Morgan obliges them to go back and help Diane. Due to the nuke threat, John accedes, despite hating Morgan for his double-cross re: the earlier bomb. Aware of John's approach, Grunier sends 10 COMMANDOS out, but the dolphins use military skills to wipe them out in short order. Undaunted, Grunier launches a torpedo at TRIESTE, which takes evasive action but then trusts John enough to relax and let the dolphins push the torpedo wide of the mark.

Furious, Grunier programs missile #2 to launch at DC in 3 minutes (Grunier doesn't care about money, he's from a mega-rich family, he just wants to nuke America and DC in particular, because Morgan cut funding to research the cancer that will kill Grunier in 3 months). John counters by blowing the ballast tanks, which makes SEAWOLF go belly up and flood. Exploiting the chaos, John enters firing, wiping out the computer keyboard before Wayans can launch the last 10 missiles. Wayans and Grunier, however, abandon their CREW and eject to the surface in an escape pod.

As it happens, Lucy can interface with the Sub's computer like a fax/modem using her vocals clicks, but Morgan orders John not to let her shut down the Sub because it'll cancel out both key computer systems. So, they can shut down the warhead but it'll still launch at DC as a non-nuke, or they can stop the launch but the nuke will explode undersea. Morgan orders the latter, claiming John and Co. could get 5 miles clear in the 90 seconds before launch and save themselves (and the White House).

Outraged at Morgan's arrogance and the oceanic devastation an undersea nuke will cause, John and Diane refuse the order. They'll let the non-nuke hit DC, so they tell Morgan to evacuate the city. With the sub flooding, John and the dolphins escort scuba-less Diane toward the surface as the countdown nears zero. As it happens, Grunier and Wayans are now aboard Blackhawk CHOPPERS over the ice, waiting to kill John and Co. as they surface. Knowing this, John positions himself in the launch path, so the Tomahawk just misses his team but downs chopper #2 and saves DC.

The blast forces Wayans and Grunier down to the ice in chopper #1, but they get the drop on John. To save John and Diane, Echo launches across the ice to jar Grunier but dies of shots absorbed en route. In a standoff, Grunier and Wayans flee by copter again, but upon seeing Jet has been outfitted with a back-bomb, John has Jet give chase under-ice to clear waters, where she leaps 50', attaches the bomb to the chopper and dives safely while Wayans and Grunier blow up! Rescued soon (o.s.), John and Diane are newlyweds in the tag and enjoy seeing Lucy give birth to deceased lover Echo's CALF at the fade....

ECO

screenplay by Kurt Wimmer
October 30, 1995

- 3 -

COMMENTS

Simply as a story, this shuttle-hijack turned nuke-terrorist undersea thriller is so crammed with outrageous plot twists that one is often inclined to break into hysterics over what seems to be the sheer preposterousness of the tale as a whole. On the other hand, the audacity of the author to throw every last ounce of narrative caution to the wind in fashioning his yarn as a near non-stop action-fest for its last two acts leaves one loopyly admiring the effort despite its considerable excesses.

Purely from the action freshness standpoint, this has much to offer if you're not hung up on credibility issues. The preface page suggests all of the dolphin technology and stunts (save one, not identified) are currently in use (at least experimentally), and if that's true, dolphins have come a long way since Flipper. The manner in which John's trained trio responds brilliantly to every order is actually breathtaking at times in its creativity and break-neck choreography.

At the human core, John and Diane have a fairly standard love-hate relationship, but she's a great can-do heroine as an action figure, every bit the equal to tough/resourceful John. Villains Grunier, Prado and Wayans are fairly standard-issue renegade psychos (not close to the Alan Rickman standard set in DIE HARD), but are decent enough to propel the wild plot.

Clearly, this will cost a small fortune to produce, particularly since water shoots are famous for going way over-budget, but for the sheer brilliance of some of its action stunts (both human and dolphin), this extravaganza warrants a look, if only for its ballsy scribe.

SUBMISSION: CONSIDER
WRITER: CONSIDER

--NES--