

THE ARRIVAL

An Original Screenplay

by

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The Arrival

On the dawn of July 4, 1054AD Chinese astronomers gazing into the eastern sky noted the presence of a new star, brighter than any ever seen before.

For 653 days this "guest star", shining with the brilliance of a full moon, remained in the sky before finally fading from sight for all eternity.

FADE IN

EXT: SPACE

A sea of stars, like white pinholes in the black curtain of space, fills the frame.

PAN DOWN as distant and right of centre the spectacular crab nebula (M1) rises into view. A small dark gray form emerges from the blackness in the centre of the screen and approaches. The outlandish object appears almost cylindrical, like the well weathered barrel and slide from a Colt 45. The object runs about a kilometer in length. A pocked and cratered impact shield protects the front of the ship, showing the wear from thousands of years of impacts with interstellar debris. Billions of tiles compose what appears to be an ablation shield, smoothly covering its underbelly.

TRACKING SHOT as the object passes. A moon, Europa, and a distant Io enter into the frame followed by a very large Jupiter. The gas giant dominates the screen as it eclipses the distant sun. The object continues on a trajectory that will carry it towards the sun, into the inner solar system.

INT: AUDITORIUM - DAY

CLOSEUP on a hand holding a piece of chalk as it writes out an equation on a chalkboard. $N = R^* \times f_p \times n_e \times f_l \times f_i \times f_c \times L$ from top left to bottom left.

CRANE BACK revealing an attractive man in his mid 30's, STEVEN ANDERSON, wearing a brown suit. Sporting a full head of messy brown hair that's in need of a

cut, he turns to face an auditorium which is sparsely populated with university students.

STEVEN

Can anyone tell me the origins
of this equation on the board
behind me?

Several students raise their hands, most of which wear a look of indifference upon their faces.

STEVEN (cont'd)

Uh, Susan.

SUSAN

I believe that's the Drake
Equation. It's been used to
calculate the number of
possible civilizations in
our galaxy, but it's my
understanding that there are
too many variables for it to
really tell us anything.

STEVEN

That's right. The equation was
developed by Frank Drake in the
early 60's as a way of
assessing the odds that other
intelligent civilizations might
exist in our galaxy. As for the
variables, there are several.
Only the first three terms of
the equation are really
measurable directly.

Steven turns to the black board and begins filling in the first three values of the equation while continuing to address the class.

REVERSE ANGLE as Susan, looking across the lecture hall, meets the eyes of a female friend. She makes a slight, knowing, smile while raising eyebrows, giving a hint of nefarious thoughts regarding her professor. Her friend, responding with rolling eyes, wears a look of disdain that doesn't reciprocate the sentiment.

STEVEN (cont'd)

R^* is the rate at which new stars are born in our Galaxy and we know this to be about 10 stars a year... F_p is the fraction of stars with planets.

In recent years we've learned that almost every star has a planetary system so $f_p=1$, and n_e is the number of earth-like planets in a planetary system.

If a planetary system is present, an earth-like planet will form 1 in 10 times. $N_e = 0.1$.

Turning away from the blackboard, Steven addresses the class with passionate eyes.

STEVEN (cont'd)

The remaining values in the equation are a bit more controversial.

f_l : what are the odds that life will arise on a planet, f_i : what are the odds of that life becoming intelligent, f_c : what are the odds that they will communicate with technology, and L : what's the average life expectancy of a civil...

SUSAN'S FRIEND

(Blurts)

If the equation is controversial and full of variables why would anyone bother using it?

STEVEN

Well, the equation makes for a good thought experiment.

If you make some optimistic assumptions with the equation you'll get a figure that tells us that there are possibly millions of communicating civilizations among the four hundred billion or so stars in our galaxy. With more conservative figures you see numbers in the thousands.

Ultimately, the equation allows us to make some educated guesses about the possibility of extraterrestrial life in the universe.

An awkward beat.

The class is silent and it becomes apparent that several students have begun gathering their belongings.

STEVEN (cont'd)

Ok, well I think we're out of time.

The suddenly animate students quickly rise and head for the exit.

Steven holds up a textbook, a picture of the Andromeda galaxy gracing its cover, and waves it in the direction of the students.

STEVEN (cont'd)

(Raises his voice)

Read chapters three and four for next week please, and don't be late. I know how much you all hate to miss any of my lectures.

Steven pulls a cell phone out of his front pocket and looks down at the small display.

INSERT Steven's cell phone screen which reads "7 missed calls".

INT: RADIO ASTRONOMY LAB - UC BERKELEY - DAY

SUPER: RADIO ASTRONOMY LAB, UC BERKELEY

About 500 square feet of space is lined with cluttered tech benches sporting an assortment of computer terminals. Rat's nests of cables are visible behind and in front of most computers connecting switching devices along with an assortment of unidentifiable jerry-rigged hardware. The computers are attached to a medley of ancient 15 and 17 inch CRT monitors. Several server racks line one wall along with UPS hardware. The area can't seem to decide whether it's work space or a server room.

PETER CROWLEY, a large balding man in his late 40's peers intently at the only LCD screen in the room. His garish Hawaiian shirt tells you the story of a kid who never grew up. MATTHEW GRAY, a scrawny kid who couldn't be much older than 20, is looking over Peter's shoulder. At a glance Matthew fits a certain stereotype; probably never kissed a girl, let alone had a girlfriend, yet would probably give you the solution to most equations before you could get a calculator out of your pocket.

PETER

Well, this is certainly the most anomalous signal to date.

Peter makes a few mouse clicks.

MATTHEW

According to the data there's nothing in the vicinity that would explain a signal at all, let alone a signal of this magnitude.

PETER

And you checked all the charts, the Palomar Sky Survey?

MATTHEW

Yeah, by all rights, there's nothing out there.

Peter and Matthew scrutinize a new window that just popped up.

PETER

It spent all night repeating at
1420 Mhz.

A beat as Peter clicks the mouse a few more times bringing up a new screen.

PETER (cont'd)

There's a secondary pulse here
at 29.9 Hertz also.

MATTHEW

I can't help but wonder if it's
some sort of residual signal
from M1? It's really not far
off from the pulsar.

PETER

At 1420 Mhz there's no way this
is coincidence. We need to get
this signal analyzed.

The muffled sound of a climactic moment in "The Ritual Ancient Battle" by Alexander Courage suddenly sounds in the room and Peter digs into first a shirt pocket and then into a pants pocket before producing a cell phone. Matthew appears unfazed by the ring tone and continues to stare at the LCD as Peter answers his phone.

PETER (cont'd)

Peter here...Steven! Yes, I've
been trying to get a hold of
you since I got in this
morning...We had a signal come
in last night and it's a
repeater at 1420 Mhz.

INT: HALLWAY - USF CAMPUS - DAY

DOLLY BACK as Steven briskly walks down a campus hallway with a leather briefcase in one hand and cell phone in the other. Students look unimpressed as he

appears oblivious to the idea of sharing the hallway with them.

STEVEN

A signal via the ATA?
Whereabouts?

INT: RADIO ASTRONOMY LAB - UC, BERKELEY - CONTINUOUS

Matthew reaches over Peter's shoulder and presses a button on the keyboard. Coordinates appear on the display screen.

PETER

Right ascension 5 hours, 34
minutes, 44
seconds...Declination plus 22
degrees, 1 minute, 14 seconds.

INT: HALLWAY - USF CAMPUS - CONTINUOUS

Steven accidentally bumps a female student into her open locker door. The sound of two pieces of sheet metal crashing together resonates momentarily in the hallway followed by the sound of a textbook or two falling to the floor.

STEVEN

(speaking to the girl)
Oh, sorry, sorry...

Steven has an apologetic look but continues hurriedly down the hallway.

STEVEN (cont'd)

Uh, isn't that the crab nebula?
Is it possible that you're
getting something from the
pulsar?

INT: RADIO ASTRONOMY LAB - UC, BERKELEY - CONTINUOUS

Peter and Matthew continue to watch the display.

PETER

Well, here's the thing, it's a
pretty weak signal, but the

fact that it's coming in at 1420 Mhz is unlikely coincidence. There's a secondary pulse at the same frequency as the pulsar, but it could be some sort of echo.

INT: HALLWAY - USF CAMPUS - CONTINUOUS

Steven pushes the slam bar on a pair of fire doors at the end of the hallway and a sun filled blue sky greets him on the other side. He descends a trio of steps and begins to navigate his way through a parking lot half full of vehicles.

STEVEN

Ok, um that's not the pulsar then. I'm on my way to you. Have you got Dimitri tracking this for us through the day?

INT: RADIO ASTRONOMY LAB - UC, BERKELEY - CONTINUOUS

Peter turns away from the display, focusing more on the conversation.

PETER

Russia is on it now and I haven't notified anyone else.

EXT: PARKING LOT - USF CAMPUS - DAY

Steven makes his way to a 1991 burgundy Honda Accord. His car stands out as an antiquated relic next to several of the student's more current automobiles. He unlocks and opens the driver side door, throws his briefcase onto the passenger seat and gets into the car while continuing the phone conversation.

STEVEN

Ok, contact Ferris as well and see if you can get a visual observation on those coordinates and Peter, let's keep this under our hats until we've ruled out interference.

INT: RADIO ASTRONOMY LAB - UC, BERKELEY - DAY

Peter puts his free hand on top of his head and slowly moves it backward; an old habit that speaks of a time when he had a full head of hair.

PETER

You've got it boss.

Peter closes his cell and drops it into his shirt pocket. A moment passes and the voice of DIMITRI comes in over a conferencing phone to the right of the LCD screen that Peter and Matthew have been looking at.

DIMITRI

Peter or Matt, are you there?

Matthew reaches over and toggles a mute button so that Dimitri can hear them.

MATTHEW

Hi Dimitri, we're here, go ahead.

DIMITRI

Hi guys, I've been keeping an eye on your contact here and, well, it appears that it's got some creep to it.

MATTHEW

What do you mean it's got some creep to it? Like as in it's moving?

Matthew and Peter give each other a questioning look.

DIMITRI

Yeah, that's it. I recalibrated the equatorial mount for the dish here just in case and it's checking out fine on other objects. Polaris is right where it should be.

PETER

Dimitri, can you please double-check and let us know?

DIMITRI

I already have Peter. We've definitely got a moving contact here.

PETER

Ok, thanks Dimitri. Let us know if anything else turns up.

DIMITRI

Peter... I'm keeping tight lipped on this, but we need to get the scientific community involved in analyzing and confirming this.

PETER

I know Dimitri. Thanks again.

Peter toggles the mute button again and looks over at Matthew.

PETER (cont'd)

Let's get Ferris on this ASAP.

EXT: AN OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

SUPER: 50KM NORTH OF EL GOLEA, ALGERIA

A gravel road leads up to a quasi-professional observatory that stands alone in an expansive open stretch of desert. The Atlas Mountains can be seen on the distant horizon, silhouetted by the starry night sky. The dome is open and a dim reddish glow emanates from within. A jeep is parked outside.

INT: OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

An enormous 1.8m telescope peers out from an opening in the dome. A few computer terminals circle the perimeter of the observatory and an open control room lies off to one side. The dim reddish glow originates here.

INT: OBSERVATORY CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The control room is illuminated by the dim red light. FERRIS FREEMAN, a slight man in his 40s, sits in front of a computer monitor watching a video of a blurry white object the size of a pea on a black background. Ferris clicks a button and the message "Do you really want to stack all frames and auto adjust?" appears on the screen. Buttons "Yes" and "No" appear below the text and Ferris clicks "Yes". The video plays again momentarily at double speed and then a single image jumps into the middle of the display.

We see an object, still the size of a pea, in the centre of the image. It has some geometry to it that could only be the result of intelligence.

FERRIS

(speaking to himself)

What the fuck is that?

Ferris makes a couple of mouse clicks and the object doubles, and then triples in size. Although the monochromatic white image is poorer quality with each enlargement, you can see the telltale geometry that alludes to this being something other than an asteroid.

INSERT a close up of the object on the display screen.

INT: UC BERKLEY CAMPUS - DAY

PROFILE SHOT of Steven briskly walking down a campus hallway again with his leather briefcase in one hand and cell phone to his ear in the other. He still appears oblivious to the idea of sharing the hallway with others, although there are far fewer students and faculty to get in his way at this hour.

STEVEN

Do you know why there's a news crew outside...Nobody else has been alerted other than you, Matt, Ferris, and Dimitri, right?

Steven opens a door at the end of the hallway.

INT: RADIO ASTRONOMY LAB - BERKLEY CALIFORNIA - DAY

Peter is on a cell phone monitoring events at a workstation and talking to Steven as Steven enters the room. Matthew is at the same workstation as before staring at the display intently while talking to someone else on a land line.

PETER

Ferris had to pull some strings to get time on the scope, but I was less specific on the "1420 Mhz resonant frequency of hydrogen" part.

Peter hangs up his phone realizing that Steven has just entered the lab and Steven does likewise as he approaches Peter. Matthew covers the receiver of his phone and looks over to the other two.

MATTHEW

Guys, Ferris has an image from his observations that he's faxing through to us right now.

PETER

Well, what's he got?

Steven walks toward the fax machine.

MATTHEW

He says we need to see it and that he has no idea.

The fax machine chirps to life and spools up.

STEVEN

Put him on speaker.

INSERT an image of the geometric shape that Ferris had photographed earlier as it begins to slowly feed out of the fax machine.

PETER

What the fuck is that?

STEVEN

We need to get a trajectory on this thing right now. We've confirmed that it's in motion right?

MATTHEW

Taurus should be rising in about 40 minutes. We can get new coordinates on observations then and use last night's signal to come up with a trajectory.

FERRIS

Due to the extenuating circumstances here I took the liberty of contacting Kharkov and they were able to do some preliminary radio-interferometry on our bogie.

PETER

And the cat's out of the bag...

STEVEN

(impatiently)

And!?

FERRIS

Well, the results aren't fully in yet, but this thing is not an earth orbit object. It's currently about 43 million miles out and moving deeper into the inner solar system, towards us. Movements over the last few hours have us clocking it at around 38,000 mph.

Peter and Matthew gather their thoughts for a moment in light of this new information.

PETER

At that speed it will be here inside a couple of months.

MATTHEW

...Roughly 48 days.

FERRIS

The photographic evidence that
I just faxed you there puts the
object at about a km in length.

Steven looks a bit shaken as he sits down, first on
the arm of an office chair, and then into the seat of
it. He stares at the faxed picture again for a brief
moment.

INSERT completed picture.

CLOSE ON Steven's eyes as they rise from the picture
looking toward Peter and Matthew.

STEVEN

Well, I think it's time to make
some phone calls.

INT: ANDERSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSEUP on the television as a White House press
conference is taking place. The Press Secretary steps
aside and the PRESIDENT moves to the podium to address
the nation.

PRESIDENT

I would like to make some
comments on today's
announcements by SETI and the
ATA team.

This discovery is a product of
the vigilance of some of the
world's most distinguished
scientists. In the coming days,
the American space program will
put its full intellectual power
and technological prowess
behind further study of this
finding and what it represents
to the world's people.

I have asked the Vice-
President, along with my
scientific advisers, to convene
at the White House, a bi-

partisan summit. The significant purpose of this summit will be to discuss the execution of a scientific mission to intercept and study this object as it passes near the earth.

Although this object is currently on a trajectory that will bypass us, we have to assume that the level of technology represented here opens the possibility that a course change could occur that would have our visitor arriving here. As part of our summit agenda, we will also be discussing a contingency should this occurrence come to pass.

This is the most stunning discovery in the history of science. Its implications are as far-reaching and awe-inspiring as can be imagined. Even as it creates uncertainty for us now, it may possibly answer some of the oldest and most fundamental questions ever posed. We will continue to listen and watch closely as we search for answers and for knowledge as to what this means for our people's future.

PULL BACK FROM THE TELEVISION SET

A young girl, SARAH ANDERSON, barely in her teens, watches the television despondently from a sofa. Her mother, SUSAN ANDERSON, sits beside her, watching the press conference intently. The sound of a door opening prompts a look of subdued excitement from Susan and she leaves the room to investigate while Sarah promptly changes the channel.

INT: ANDERSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Steven enters the kitchen and lays his briefcase on a stool at the breakfast bar. As he removes his jacket and tosses it over the backrest of the stool Susan enters the kitchen. She approaches Steven, wraps her arms around his shoulders, and kisses him on the lips.

SUSAN

Guess what?

Susan leaves her arms around his shoulders as she looks him square in the eye.

STEVEN

You've been waiting impatiently for the last few days thinking that your neglectful husband should really get his ass home and spend some time with his family?

SUSAN

Actually, no, there was a call from the White House this afternoon and apparently, they would like you to fly into Washington to act as a scientific advisor for the President.

Steven raises his eyebrows in surprise. He takes a step away from his wife and leans against a kitchen counter gathering his thoughts for a moment.

STEVEN

Wow...

SUSAN

I gave them your cell, but I guess they were having the same problems getting through to you that I was.

STEVEN

Yeah, I really need to carry my charger with me.

A beat.

STEVEN (cont'd)

Well, I think that I need to go
- that I would like to have a
voice in what goes on with all
this - but you and Sarah should
come with me.

Susan smiles sadly.

SUSAN

Steven, I think that could be
great, but Sarah has school
right now, we have family here,
and we really need to be here
on familiar ground - have some
stability - while this whole
weird thing takes care of
itself.

Steven looks a bit uncertain as he lets out a
stressful sigh.

SUSAN (cont'd)

You should go though. I think
that your input should be
there. You're a very smart and
wise man and there aren't
enough of those traits in
politics. You're needed.

Susan grabs a sheet of paper from beside the
telephone, and holds it out for Steven.

SUSAN (cont'd)

They said to call at any time.

INT: ANDERSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah is in the living room watching the game show
"Distraction" on television where a contestant dressed
in a dog bite suit is attempting to answer general
knowledge questions while being mauled by a German
Shepard. Steven enters from the kitchen and moves
toward the sofa that his daughter is sitting on.

STEVEN

Hello princess.

Steven looks bemusedly at the television set as the show's host, Jimmy Carr, humiliates the contestant further as she's dragged to the floor by the attacking dog.

SARAH

Hi Dad.

Steven sits down on the couch beside his daughter, puts his left hand around her neck and gives her a firm kiss on the forehead. Sarah seems oblivious to the affection as she continues to stare at the TV.

STEVEN

Isn't this the show with the naked people that your mom says she doesn't want you watching anymore?

SARAH

Yeah, it was just kind of on. I don't know what the big deal is though, it's not like seeing naked people is going to make me want to run through the streets naked or something.

Steven picks up the remote control from the coffee table and with the same hand pushes the button to turn off the television. He turns to Sarah.

STEVEN

I don't know if mom mentioned this, but I had a call today from Washington and I need to head there for a little while.

SARAH

She said that you might be going to see the President to talk about the space ship. That's really cool.

STEVEN

Yeah, that's right honey. I'll be heading out tonight, but when I get back, I promise that you, your mom and I are going to take a little vacation together for a while.

SARAH

Oh! Disneyland, Disneyland...

STEVEN

Well, you work on your mom for that while I'm away and we'll see what happens. Now young lady - I think it's time for you to be off to bed.

Sarah rises and moves toward the hallway. She stops suddenly and takes a step back to give her dad a kiss on the cheek. She then leaves the room and the sound of her footsteps ascending a staircase can be heard emanating from down the hall.

EXT: WEST WING OF THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

SUPER: WASHINGTON DC, THE WHITE HOUSE

FADE TEXT OUT

INT: THE WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM - NIGHT

The President is meeting with his Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST). The discussion is an open forum that's simmering and working toward heated. Steven and Matthew are both present. Matthew looks out of his element, wearing a suit that's a bit too new and a bit too cheap.

JIM HALLAWAY, a grey haired man wearing a formal white shirt, appearing slightly disheveled, addresses the council. Hi shirt is a bit wet around the armpits and he wears a tie that's been loosened more by the hours spent in this room than by any willful effort to do so.

JIM

...There's no way that a mission of that magnitude can be executed within a 44 day timeframe.

TOM SEARS, a man in his 30's wearing a NASA golf shirt speaks a bit more evenly. He looks towards Jim, and then in the direction of the President.

TOM

Atlantis is already prepped for the launch pad. We could dump the science payload and have her rigged for a nuclear response.

JIM

That would involve transport of nuclear materials to facilities unequipped to receive and deal with them.

Steven, looking like he hasn't slept for some time suddenly becomes more animated.

STEVEN

Are we seriously considering a nuclear response to a course change here? If this probe, or craft, does change to an earth-bound trajectory I think we can safely assume that it won't just want to plow into us.

MATTHEW

(coolly)

You wouldn't send a technological marvel like this through interstellar space - to another planet - without the capacity for either a controlled landing, or insertion into orbit.

The President's National Security Adviser, KEVIN MARTIN, looks toward Steven wearing a somber expression.

KEVIN

I don't think that we can make any assumptions here. If this craft does hit the atmosphere and come down unassisted, the consequences would be catastrophic.

JIM

(addressing the President)
We'd be looking at an impact crater the size of Manhattan.

A beat.

JIM (cont'd)

The resulting explosion would be upwards of a hundred thousand megaton and would be at the threshold for global catastrophe. A quarter of the world's population could perish in the aftermath.

STEVEN

(slowly, deliberately)
If we launch a nuclear attack on this craft, and its intention is to make a controlled landing or orbital insertion, we could destroy its capacity for control and end up causing a disaster instead of preventing one.

KEVIN

(turning to Steven)
The truth of the matter is that we don't know what the intentions are of the intelligence that we've encountered here. They could be malevolent in nature and we need to take that possibility into consideration.

STEVEN

(looking evenly at Kevin)
It is highly unlikely that a civilization comprised of a race of conquerors would achieve interstellar travel...

PRESIDENT

(interrupting)
Where are we with the radio signal we're receiving from the craft? How close are we to deciphering this thing?

Steven squirms uncomfortably at the direction change in the conversation and tries unsuccessfully not to show it.

STEVEN

The signal from the craft is cyclic in nature and broadcasting at 1420 Mhz.

MATTHEW

(interrupting)
This is the resonant frequency of hydrogen. This is significant because it's the most common element in the universe and thus the most likely frequency to be explored by curious observers.

The President develops a few questioning wrinkles in his forehead. Brian attempts to clarify.

STEVEN

Any radio capable civilization that has a curiosity about our universe, like them or us, would be primarily exploring the universe at 1420 Mhz. If they wanted to get a signal out with the highest probability of being detected, it would be at this frequency.

MATTHEW

Whoever built this craft had the intention of communicating with anyone out there that might be listening.

KEVIN

So how close are we to discerning the content of the signal?

PRESIDENT

(looking towards Steven)
And if it's cyclic in nature do we have a discernible stop and start point to a message?

STEVEN

We do have a momentary delay of about half a second between when the signal stops and then starts again. We're using that increment along with the duration of the message as a possible key to deciphering it.

MATTHEW

We've also picked up a repeating 29.9 Hertz secondary pulse that's the same frequency as the M1 pulsar. We think that this is likely their way of telling us where they originated.

JIM

That star went supernova in 1054 AD. That would be one hell of a trip.

MATTHEW

Actually, the star went supernova about 6300 years before that. Chinese astronomers observed the supernova in 1054 AD but the light from the explosion would

have traveled 6300 light years before arriving here.

TOM

If a civilization were forced to flee their dying star, that would explain the need for building a ship of this scale, but the distance traversed here is staggering.

STEVEN

Spectroscopy, conceivably, may have yielded earth as the closest planet with chemical composition and physical properties comparable to their own.

MATTHEW

We do seem to be an oasis in a very desolate universe.

TOM

They would have to have spent the majority of their interstellar sojourn at near the speed of light to get here in that sort of time frame. And surviving for 7200 years on a spacecraft? Does this seem very doubtful to anyone else?

STEVEN

Well, according to general relativity, the closer you come to the speed of light, the more slowly time travels for you relative to those at more modest speeds, such as us on the planet earth.

ANGLE ON the President as he raises an eyebrow curiously.

ANGLE BACK ON Steven as he gains some momentum and continues.

STEVEN (cont'd)

If they were traveling at a high fraction of the speed of light, time would travel much more slowly for them relative to us here on earth. Although from our perspective 7200 years have passed since their star went nova, only several hundred years may have passed for them. The trip we're talking about suddenly seems much more viable taking this relativity shift into account.

JIM

If your theory is correct, traversing such a distance in a matter of several hundred years would still involve travel above light speed - theoretically impossible.

The President gestures with his right hand, palm turned outward, a signal to stop.

PRESIDENT

Gentlemen, with all due respect, I need less speculation here and more factual material.

The President looks around the table wearing a somber expression.

PRESIDENT (cont'd)

Without further information here - solid information - we have to put the welfare of the world population first and foremost. We need to have a contingency in place to avert any potential catastrophe.

There's a moment's pause as the President looks toward Jim and Tom.

PRESIDENT (cont'd)

Jim and Tom, there are no road
blocks here. You'll have your
nuclear materials - Atlantis
will be that contingency.

INT: RADIO ASTRONOMY LAB - BERKLEY CALIFORNIA - DAY

EXTREME CLOSEUP a bobble head of the Black Knight from
Monty Python's "The Holy Grail" standing on its last
remaining limb. His helmeted head sways lightly to the
rhythm of typing at a frenetic rate.

PULL BACK as a monitor to the right of the bobble head
is being filled with programming code and a keyboard
emerges; fingers hammering away it.

CONTINUE PULL BACK AND PAN LEFT as an alert, yet
somehow weary looking Matthew is seated in front of
the computer. Peter is visible in the background
hunched over another terminal holding a single
earpiece from a set of headphones to his left ear
while looking at a display.

ANGLE ON Peter looking at a waveform graphical
representation of the radio signal on the display in
front of him. He presses a key and the waveform
recreates itself over the course of several seconds.
The slight sound of radio noise can be heard emanating
from the loose right headphone as the signal rewrites.

Peter sits down in the vacant chair, crosses his arms,
and lets out a stressful sigh.

A beat.

The slight din of typing suddenly stops, prompting
Peter to glance over to Matthew's desk.

CUT TO Matthew looking toward Peter with the usual
somber look before his face erupts into a smile that
he likely hasn't worn for several days.

MATTHEW

Matthew's Hi Res Radio
Frequency Analysis Application

is ready for some alpha testing.

PETER

All Right!

Peter turns to his computer and tabs to his email. He clicks the "create mail" button, attaches the waveform file, and clicks "send". He speaks as he does so.

PETER (cont'd)

I'm sending you the worked file right now.

CUT TO the two men as they congregate at Matthew's computer. Matthew clicks a button and a progress bar appears on his screen which promptly runs its course. An "installation complete" message appears on the screen.

MATTHEW

Now let's fire this thing up.

Matthew clicks an icon and an instant later a window proclaiming that an error has occurred appears on his screen with an "ok" button under it. Matthew clicks the button and the same message appears again.

MATTHEW (cont'd)

This shouldn't be a problem, there are a few lines of code that I need to get rid of.

Matthew clicks an ok button for the third time and his rudimentary user interface window finally appears on the display. He opens the wave form file that Peter sent him and the computer analyzes it for a moment before producing a very large graphic.

PETER

This is great Matthew. Look at the detail.

Peter reaches over Matthew's shoulder and scrolls through the waveform in its entirety.

PETER (cont'd)

(pointing)
There are distinct breaks here
- binary digits.

Matthew minimizes the waveform so it fits on the screen.

A beat.

MATTHEW
...Hundreds of them.

ANGLE ON the screen as another brief analysis of the waveform runs and the message "Count 1679" appears on the display.

PETER
1679, why does that number seem familiar?

MATTHEW
The Drake-Sagan Arecibo message sent out in the '70s consisted of 1679 bits.

There's a sense of excitement as Peter and Matthew continue.

PETER
That's right, 1679 was chosen because it's the product of two prime numbers and therefore could only be broken down into 23 and 73.

MATTHEW
The assumption was that whoever received the message would arrange it as a quadrilateral and break it down into 73 rows and 23 columns or vice versa.

Matthew makes a few mouse clicks and a blank window appears on his screen. He drags the waveform to the window where it abruptly disappears, filling the window with unformatted ones and zeroes.

MATTHEW (cont'd)

Let's try 23 columns first...

Bringing the margin in so that the lines are 23 characters wide, Matthew lets go of the mouse button and the jumble of ones and zeroes suddenly arrange in an orderly fashion.

The top of the message appears to be some sort of data. Toward the middle can be seen the double helix structure of a DNA strand, a graphical representation of a humanoid being, and a row representing a planetary system of a star and six planets. Finishing the quadrilateral is an image of a star and the alien craft with additional data beside it.

EXT: THE RITZ CARLTON, WASHINGTON DC - DUSK

ANGLE ON the Ritz-Carlton from 22nd and M streets in Washington's West End. Traffic is cruising by.

SUPER: WASHINGTON DC

INT: ELABORATE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Steven Anderson sits on a luxurious bed, clothed, with a notebook computer in his lap. His suitcase sits at the foot of the bed opened, and its contents lay about the room in haphazard fashion. Both Steven and his belongings seem rather out of place here.

His cell phone is pinched awkwardly between his shoulder and his ear as he works on the notebook. We come into the scene mid-conversation.

STEVEN

...yes, I understand that, but
you've been mandated to
dedicate all available
telescope time to watching the
ETC.

A beat as Steven listens to the other end of the call.

STEVEN (cont'd)

(becoming agitated)

Yes ETC...Extra-Terrestrial
Craft...I appreciate that
Magnetar bursts are a very rare
event but I think we can agree
that first contact with an
extraterrestrial civilization
should take precedent over all
other science.

Another beat.

STEVEN (cont'd)

Thank you, I have to go, I have
another call coming in.

Steven disconnects from his current call and answers
another one. As he does this a new mail alert sounds
on his notebook.

STEVEN (cont'd)

Peter, hi. I just received your
email

He clicks the attachment on his mail message.

STEVEN (cont'd)

Yeah, I'm opening the
attachment now...

Steven wears a look of shocked surprise as the
attachment opens.

STEVEN (cont'd)

You've got to be kidding! 1679
bits? A product of two primes
just like the Arecibo message.

Scrolling through the entirety of the graphic, Steven
continues on the phone.

STEVEN (cont'd)

There's info on their ship here
it looks like, and their point
of origin, the star. Have you
decyphered anything alpha-
numeric yet? I'll bet that top
data line is the key.

A beat.

STEVEN (cont'd)
 We'll need to inform the media
 before the bueraucrats get a
 hold of this. We have a
 presedential briefing tomorrow
 afternoon which means full
 disclosure, so we need to get
 this out tonight.

Another beat as Peter speaks.

STEVEN (cont'd)
 Matthew got lost at Dulles for
 two hours last time so tell him
 I'll be there to pick him up.

EXT: WEST WING OF THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY (RAINING)

INT: THE WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM - DAY

Steven is handing out paperwork to the congregation. JIM, TOM, KEVIN, MATTHEW, and THE PRESIDENT, are all present along with DEFENSE SECRETARY JOHN MEYERS, and the JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF. Matthew is plugging his laptop into a large LCD display mounted on a wall opposite the President.

JOHN (to Steven)
 ...because of the sensitive
 nature of the situation I would
 have expected a certain degree
 of discretion before presenting
 the content of the signal to
 the media.

STEVEN
 SETI protocol dictates that new
 information be disseminated
 promptly, openly, and widely
 through scientific channels and
 public media. Government
 receives no special treatment
 here.

As Steven finishes handing out the last of the pages he takes a seat.

KEVIN

This is a matter of national security now and every act, every step we take here, has immeasurable consequences...

STEVEN

Actually, it's a matter of global security, and the rest of the world needs to be made aware of what's going on here here just as certainly as the United States does.

Matthew finishes with the wiring on the notebook and the 23x73 graphical representation of the signal appears on the screen.

THE PRESIDENT

Gentlemen, please. I'd like to get started here. Steven?

STEVEN

Matthew, If you're ready.

MATTHEW

Yeah, I'm ready.

There's an awkward moment before Matthew realizes that he should continue.

MATTHEW (cont'd)

Ok, we were able to discern the content of the message and the format is strikingly similar to the Drake-Sagan Arecibo message that we broadcast in 1974. Whether this is coincidence, or they received our message and altered the format for a response is difficult to say.

Matthew pushes the space bar on his notebook and a marker appears beside the first line of information on the graphic.

MATTHEW (cont'd)

This first row of information, from right to left, represents numbers 1 through 10 in binary format. Using these numbers we can extrapolate vital information through the rest of the graphic.

Pressing the space bar again produces a marker on the second row of information.

MATTHEW (cont'd)

Again, from right to left, if we use the numeric information from the first row we have numbers 1, 6, 7, 8, and 15. These numbers have significance in that they are the atomic numbers of hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and phosphorus. These are the building blocks of DNA and this tells us that they are ultimately made up of the same stuff as life here on earth.

JIM

Fascinating. Below that appears to be the double helix of DNA and the bar through the middle there would likely be nucleotides.

MATTHEW

That's right. There are no differences in the nucleotides, so they would likely be very similar to us, or at least life here on earth.

Matthew presses the space bar again.

MATTHEW (cont'd)

The next element is a rudimentary graphic representing their appearance. As you can see they have two arms, two legs, a head - they're much like us.

To the right of this we have a number which happens to be the wavelength of the message multiplied by 14. We believe that this gives us a height in the number of wavelengths on the figure at approximately 1.764 meters.

JIM

Pretty much the same size as us.

MATTHEW

To the left of the graphic we have a number of 10,356,420,000. We believe that this number represents what their population was.

THE PRESIDENT

Was?

MATTHEW

Well, Sir, that brings us to the next several lines here.

We have, from right to left, a block followed by six markers, the third of which you can see is offset. This represents a star and six planets. The third - the offset one - we believe would represent their planet of origin.

Now more importantly, below this, we have a graphic of a star, and an image of their

ship, followed by further data to the right of this.

Embedded in the graphic of the star is the number representing a fraction of the message wavelength which works out to 29.9Hz.

This is the frequency of the pulsar at the centre of the crab nebula and this would be their way of telling us that their star of origin, was this star, before it went supernova.

TOM

A tragic end to their civilization.

MATTHEW

The data to the right of the ship graphic gives us another number representing it's dimensions, about 1000m x 300m x 300m, along with another population figure.

A beat.

MATTHEW (cont'd)

Seven thousand six hundred and twenty four. We believe this number is what remains of their civilization on board that ship.

JOHN

Assuming that you're correct, and that these beings are similar to us from a DNA standpoint, they must be coming here to earth.

STEVEN

There are no other planets in the solar system that would be

hospitable to any life other than maybe the most robust extremophiles, so it would be a safe bet.

THE PRESIDENT

(grimly)

The knowledge that they are poised to arrive here makes for some very hard, very difficult, decisions.

VICE CHAIRMAN, JCS

Sir, as you know, despite mixed sentiment at the UN, we are very concerned that extra-terrestrial contact here might result in a world wide pandemic.

CHAIRMAN, JCS

The immune system of human beings would be incapable of fighting off extra-terrestrial bacteria, so any kind of "extra-terrestrial exposure" needs to be taken very seriously.

JOHN

There's also a possibility, however paranoid it might sound, that by giving these highly advanced extra-terrestrials asylum here, we could become their subjugates in a new world order.

Steven stares with a look of incredulity towards the Secretary of Defense, and then to the President.

STEVEN

I can't believe that we're actually having this conversation sir.

JOHN

We're recommending that you proceed with Operation Earth Shield.

There's a moment of shocked silence in the room. Steven stands from his chair and leans over, palms down on the table, addressing the President.

STEVEN

Operation Earth Shield!? What the hell is that!? Sir, you cannot seriously be considering a strike against this ship. We're talking about the last remnants of an alien civilization. They may bring medical technology that makes the idea of a pandemic laughable...

The President rises from his chair giving a sense that the meeting is about to adjourn.

THE PRESIDENT

Steven, gentlemen, please, we have not come to any decisions here, and we need to consider very carefully, how we proceed. I will take this under further advisement before making any decisions.

Kevin also rises from his chair.

KEVIN

Please be reminded that everything discussed here today is strictly confidential.

A pair of doors toward the back of the room open and those still seated rise from their chairs. Tom looks toward Steven with a grim expression and shakes his head left to right, subtly, knowingly, as a few individuals file out between them.

ANGLE ON the doorway as seen from the hallway. As Matthew and Steven exit the situation room, the Joint

Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense can be seen settling back into their chairs as the doors close once again. Steven and Matthew watch this with some surprise.

DOLLY AHEAD as the two men proceed down the hallway.

STEVEN

(speaking softly)

Kharkov has a transmitter at the RT-70 facility that they use to refine asteroid coordinates right?

MATTHEW

(speaking softly)

Yeah, that's right. There are only two telescopes with transmitters, Kharkov is one of them.

STEVEN

I think it's time to pull in a few favors.

INT: RENTAL CAR (MOVING) - DAY (RAINING)

ANGLE ON the passenger side of the car. Matthew is driving and Steven is in the passenger seat with a cell phone to his ear. The sound of a quick HONK prompts Matthew to crane his neck and peer into his unadjusted rear view mirror. A car WHIZZES past them.

STEVEN

Ferris, hi, it's Steven.
Listen, I need a favor.

There's a moment of quiet as Matthew rounds a corner.

STEVEN (cont'd)

In the next few days I need a few minutes of telescope time from your friends at Kahrkov and I'm hoping that there can be some discretion as to what we're doing.

Matthew looks over his shoulder, overly focused on driving, through another pause in the conversation.

STEVEN (cont'd)

Sorry, yes I know it's odd, I can't really explain but I can tell you that lives depend on it...Thanks Ferris.

Snapping the cell phone closed, Stephen places it in his inside coat pocket.

MATTHEW

You know, we have no way of discerning whether or not they have a receiver.

STEVEN

And even if they can receive, we need to find a way to convey a message that's easy to interpret.

MATTHEW

Well, we've established a numeric system. The atomic numbers for Plutonium and Uranium would probably get the point across.

STEVEN

...Beryllium and Polonium as well.

MATTHEW

...to trigger the reaction

STEVEN

It couldn't be mistaken for anything else.

EXT: A STRETCH OF BEACH - NIGHT

CLOSEUP on a beach fire as flames and sparks reach for the star filled sky. DOLLY BACK and we see several people in beach attire seated at logs in front of the fire enjoying idle conversation. In the background two

figures can be seen standing on a moonlit private dock where a single sailboat is moored.

EXT: DOCK - NIGHT

Shuttle commander DAVID FAIRCHILD stands with TOM SEARS. They both peer off the end of the dock into darkness.

TOM

We received confirmation today. There will be three warheads on board.

DAVID

One is all we need but I understand the reason for redundancy.

TOM

I'm concerned about Collins.

DAVID

She's the best medical officer in the program Tom. No one is better qualified than her for this mission.

TOM

It's not her qualifications I'm worried about.

DAVID

Tom, I have to tell you... I have serious misgivings about what we're going up there to do, not to mention the clandestine nature of the whole operation...

TOM

I know, I know, but risk assessment shows...

DAVID

(interrupting)

To hell with risk assessment,
the moral and ethical questions
here have gone completely to
the wayside because some
bureaucratic number crunchers
say there's a risk factor.
What's happened to us?

TOM

David, can you do this mission?
I need you - the world needs
you - to come through on this
mission.

DAVID

I'll do what I'm ordered to do
Tom, but I have to live with
that for the rest of my life.
We all do.

TOM

I know David, I know...

EXT: KHARKOV RADIO OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

SUPER: KHARKOV RADIO OBSERVATORY - UKRAINE

INT: KHARKOV RADIO OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

We see the back of a man wearing a lab coat. He
attends to a series of displays and terminals that
line a wall within the observatory. He turns to his
left and speaks in Russian.

SUPER: ENGLISH SUBTITLES

TECHNICIAN

Transmitter is on-line.

A voice off camera responds to the technician.

VOICE (O.C.)

Signal has been uploaded to
terminal four. We're ready to
transmit.

TECHNICIAN

OK, go with transmission.

VOICE (O.C.)

Check, initiating transmission
at 1420 Mhz.

INT: ANDERSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE UP ON TELEVISION SET we see the beginning of scene 11 from Monty Python's "The Holy Grail". Castle Anthrax sits atop a distant hill and we can see the grail shaped beacon glowing in bright contrast against a stormy sky.

Sir Galahad, making his way through deep forest in the middle of a terrible thunderstorm comes across the castle. A wolf howls as he struggles to the door of the castle and hits it with his armored glove.

GALAHAD

Open the door! Open the door!
In the name of King Arthur open
the door.

The door opens, and Galahad falls onto the stone floor of the castle. Looking up, he sees the faces of three young women dressed all in white.

WOMEN

Hello! Hello! Hello!

FIRST WOMAN

Welcome, gentle Sir Knight, to
the Castle Anthrax!

GALAHAD

(confused)

The castle Anthrax?

FIRST WOMAN

Yes, it's not a very good name,
is it? Oh, but we are nice and
we will attend to your every,
every, need!

GALAHAD

You are the keepers of Holy
Grail?

FIRST WOMAN

The what?

GALAHAD

The grail, it is here...

CUT TO the sound of a phone ringing and we see Sarah seated on the living room sofa, transfixed to the television. The sound of the television can still be heard, but only quietly now. Sarah reaches for the cordless phone on the coffee table.

SARAH

Hello?

Sarah covers the mouthpiece on the phone and shouts at the top of her lungs.

SARAH (cont'd)

Dad! Phone!

INT: ANDERSON HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE UP on a white bathroom door. It opens and Steven emerges in a bath robe drying his hair with a towel. DOLLY BACK as he moves to a bedside table where he picks up the telephone and throws the towel on the bed.

STEVEN

Steven here.

Peter can be heard, just audible on the other end of the call.

PETER

Steven, its Peter...I just got a call from Kharkov and the signal is away.

STEVEN

Any response from the ship, or change in trajectory?

PETER

Nothing yet Steven.

STEVEN

OK, thanks Peter. All we can do
now is wait.

EXT: KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - LAUNCH COMPLEX 39 - DAY

SUPER: KENNEDY SPACE CENTRE, FLORIDA

The space shuttle Atlantis stands stoic on launch pad 39B. A clear cloudless sky beckons. Wisps of white cloud swirl just below the shuttle's 3 main engines.

INT: MISSION CONTROL - DAY

CLOSE UP on Tom Sears. He wears a blue NASA dress shirt, black slacks, and his hands rest on his hips. CRANE BACK AND PAN RIGHT we see that he stands on a balcony that resides over mission control; rows of workstations fill a warehouse-like structure where specialists pour over LCD screens before a collection of three mammoth 12' x 18' displays.

The voices of shuttle astronauts and mission controllers can be heard coming in over a loudspeaker.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Medical Officer, report on the
condition of the crew, over.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS COCKPIT - DAY

Helmeted astronauts are strapped into their seats and prepared for launch.

MEDICAL OFFICER

The crew is in excellent
condition and eager to go!

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Roger, Atlantis...H-two tank
pressurization OK. You are go
for launch, over.

The helmeted head closest to the camera brings a gloved hand into frame with fingers crossed.

DAVID

Roger, go for launch, over.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

T-20 seconds, APU start is go...You are on your on-board computer, over.

DAVID

Roger, out.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

The solid rocket booster auxiliary power units have started. Countdown has switched to on-board computers.

DAVID

Roger.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Go for main engine start.

The cockpit begins to shake violently and the astronauts brace themselves.

MEDICAL OFFICER

(shaken)

Here we go.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

We have lift off.

The shaking increases to a point that seems intolerable.

MEDICAL OFFICER

(shaken and slowly)

My father wanted me to be a lawyer...Maybe I should have become a lawyer...

CAPCOM (V.O.)

The tower has been cleared.
All engines look good.
Beginning roll maneuver.

DAVID

(shaken)
Here comes the best part, 120
degree roll into "heads down".

ANGLE ON the astronauts as the shaking continues and slowly ROTATE CAMERA through 120 degrees until the astronauts are almost upside down. Payload specialist YURI PETROV speaks from the rear of the cockpit in a thick Russian accent.

YURI

(shaken)
When I was a kid...I used to
get sick on the fair rides.

MEDICAL OFFICER

(shaken)
First trip is always a bitch
Yuri.

YURI

(shaken)
I've worked with ballistic
missiles all my life, but never
did I think that I might be
riding in one.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Roll maneuver complete
Atlantis, you're looking good.

EXT: THE INNER SOLAR SYSTEM

ANGLE ON the approaching ETC. We see the cratered surface of the impact shield in all its glory, followed by the tiled underbelly of the hull as it passes overhead, filling the camera.

CUT TO the ETC at more of a distance. It slowly approaches as the CAMERA PANS LEFT and we get a view of its port side. Some gasses vent suddenly from the stern of the ship and several panels that run the last

quarter of its length hydraulically move out from the hull. They stop, motionless for a moment, before instantaneous, subdued flashes of light erupt in unison from under them, sending the panels slowly careening off into the blackness of space.

CAMERA CONTINUES TO PAN LEFT and we see the hindquarters of the ship from the rear as it passes. A dark and massive concave dish dominates about 80 percent of the ships aft. We see the centre of the dish illuminate dimly and fade. A moment passes and it illuminates again, and then a third time before erupting with the luminosity of a thousand suns.

FADE IN

INT: RADIO ASTRONOMY LAB - BERKLEY CALIFORNIA - DAY

The door to the lab opens and Peter enters.

PETER

(excitedly)

Hey guys...today's Hubble shots are in and they're getting some great resolution...The ship is a lot closer now so there's much more detail.

We see Matthew at his workstation.

MATTHEW

The NASA intranet site? I have a bum password.

STEVEN (O.C.)

Mine is still good.

The three men congregate around Matthew's terminal as he brings up the most recent Hubble images of the ship.

PETER

OK, this sucks...I'm putting it through to the projector.

Peter reaches for a video switch to the left of the workstation and pushes the third of eight buttons in a

row. The three men then make their way to a side boardroom where one of the Hubble pictures is displayed on a wall-mounted screen.

MATTHEW

Very nice.

Reaching for a keyboard on the boardroom table, Steven begins to tab through the many images. He pauses for a moment on one of the images with a long vertical white line through it. The line passes through the very rear of the ship on the photo.

PETER

I wonder what gimped-up that image.

STEVEN

That looks a lot like pixel bleed to me.

PETER

You'll have to excuse me, but my astrophotography isn't as up-to-speed as my radio-astronomy.

MATTHEW

Where the image is brightest a CCD will sometimes overexpose causing "bleeding". The signal spills into adjacent pixels causing vertical streaks.

STEVEN

That could be the result of an engine burn.

Steven produces a cell phone from a pocket and quickly dials a number before pressing it to his ear.

Once again the muffled sound of an excerpt from Alexander Courage's "The Ritual Ancient Battle" sounds from Peter's pocket. He quickly answers the phone while Steven still waits for a reply on his.

PETER

Hi Ferris...A change in trajectory? You don't say.

Peter begins to smile widely as he looks at his two associates. Steven closes his cell and puts it back into his pocket.

STEVEN

Earth-bound?

PETER

An earth-bound trajectory...Not surprising I guess...We're looking at the latest Hubble images and we're seeing signs of an engine burn on this thing, so that pretty much confirms it.

There's a long pause as Ferris continues.

PETER (cont'd)

Thanks Ferris...Call if you learn anything else.

Peter finishes the call.

PETER (cont'd)

Ferris confirmed it. The ship has changed trajectory and ground based observations picked up another trajectory correction maneuver shortly after the one we're looking at...He says that insertion into orbit is now out for the ship...The new trajectory can only mean entry and descent.

STEVEN

Do we know where it's coming down?

PETER

It'll be in the Pacific. We don't know exactly where...Yet.

EXT: LOW EARTH ORBIT

The Shuttle Atlantis stands silhouetted against a blue-white earth that slowly scrolls past beneath it.

YURI (V.O.)
Warheads and delivery systems
check...guidance systems
check...all systems nominal.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - CARGO BAY

ANGLE ON three fixed Silos which line the inside of the cargo bay. Their domed and sealed openings face the closed shuttle bay doors.

YURI (V.O.)
Routing power to payload
heaters now.

A rectangular yellow LED toward the top of each of the three domed silos illuminates.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

ANGLE ON David as he sits in his flight seat pouring over documentation. The earth and space are visible through several of the flight deck windows.

CAPCOM (V.O.)
Atlantis, this is control, we
have a trajectory change on the
ETC as of 0800.

DAVID
Roger control, where's she
headed, over.

CAPCOM (V.O.)
She's on a course for entry and
descent that'll put her over
the pacific about 1400
tomorrow, over.

DAVID
Roger control.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Intercept data is being prepped
for upload to the orbiter...it
looks like you're going to be
"go" in about 9 hours so get
some sleep in while you can.

DAVID

Roger control, Atlantis out.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - MID DECK

Yuri is looking through the cargo bay windows while monitoring a chest level instrument display. Behind him, Medical Officer AMANDA COLLINS is struggling with a small panel mounted in the hull.

AMANDA

I'd love to have a chat with
the people who designed these
fucking CO2 scrubbers.

YURI

It's not so much the scrubbers
as it is the damn covers. You
need to be a rocket scientist
just to get at them.

David emerges from a circular hatch descending head first into the Mid Deck.

DAVID

I seem to recall that the
Vozdukh scrubber units took all
of about 4 minutes to change...

AMANDA

Oh, don't get me started.

DAVID

Ground control just radioed
up...the ETC initiated an
engine burn earlier today and
it's confirmed earth bound as
of 0800.

YURI

(dryly)
Oh boy, here we go.

DAVID
It's going to be in the
vicinity ahead of schedule.

Amanda finally pulls the panel from the hull and proceeds to swap the CO2 filter.

AMANDA
Do we know if it's on an
orbital trajectory?

DAVID
It's looking like entry and
descent so we're only going to
get one chance at it. New
flight data is being sent up
and we're go to intercept
around 1300 tomorrow.

AMANDA
OK, I guess we'd better get
some shut-eye.

EXT: ANDERSON HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

A blue Toyota 4x4 pick-up truck pulls into the driveway and stops for a moment behind a late model Volkswagen Golf that's parked in front of the two car garage.

A leafy branch protrudes from the bottom of the Golf and shows signs of having been dragged some distance. Another branch, lodged under a windshield wiper protrudes upward like a second leafy antenna. Green stains and a few small dents complete the look of a bush abused vehicle.

The pick-up pulls in beside the Golf and shuts down its engine.

ANGLE ON Peter as he emerges from his truck and walks around to the back of it. He hunkers down, inspecting the golf for a moment before shaking his head and grabbing two paper bags from the back of the truck.

INT: ANDERSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

ANGLE ON Peter as he opens a screen door with his foot and enters into the foyer carrying a loaded brown grocery bag in each arm.

PETER

Knock, knock...

ANGLE ON Susan as she turns off the faucet at the kitchen sink and begins to wipe her hands with a nearby dish towel. In the background Peter kicks off his shoes while still holding the bags and enters the kitchen.

SUSAN

Hi Peter, come on in. The boys are in the living room.

Noticing suddenly that Peter could use some help, Susan turns and grabs one of the bags. She loses about two inches in height as she realizes the weight of the bag before putting it on the counter.

SUSAN (cont'd)

(stressed by the bag)

Oh, my! What have we got here?

Placing his grocery bag beside the other with a lot less effort, Peter begins rattling off an inventory count.

PETER

Well, we have a flashlight, a whole lot of batteries, a transistor radio, water, and enough canned food to last a week or so.

ANGLE ON Steven and Matthew as they enter the kitchen from the living room.

STEVEN

Peter! Am I glad to see you.

MATTHEW

I'm surprised you made it.
Traffic was so bad when I came
up that I needed to go off-road
just to get here.

PETER

Yeah, I couldn't help but
notice the car in the driveway
with the foliage protruding
from it.

MATTHEW

Most roads are blocked.

PETER

Low lying areas look like ghost
towns, but the highways are at
a standstill with traffic.

SARAH (O.C.)

News is coming on...

WIDE ANGLE on the living room as Steven, Matthew,
Peter, and Susan enter from the kitchen. Steven and
Peter move to the couch and plant themselves down on
either side of Sarah. Peter elbows Sarah playfully and
she punches him weakly on the arm for his efforts.
Matthew and Susan sit on an adjacent love seat as a
news broadcast begins on the TV.

CLOSEUP of the television as a picture of the Shuttle
Atlantis appears superimposed over the ETC behind an
anchorwoman and anchorman.

ANCHORWOMAN

Shuttle Atlantis began day 3 of
operations this morning and is
preparing for a rendezvous with
the ETC early this afternoon.
The orbiter carries a
scientific payload that allows
for analysis of the craft and
will yield the highest
resolution images of the object
to date.

There is some speculation that a classified nuclear payload is also on board Atlantis in anticipation of a green light on UN Security Council Resolution 1-9-4-1.

This resolution, presented by the United States, called for a strike against the ETC in the interest of global preservation, but was vetoed this morning by three of the five permanent council members.

ANCHORMAN

The President declared a state of emergency yesterday ordering a mandatory evacuation of all pacific coastal residences below a 50 foot elevation. Not wanting to take any chances, the President ordered the evacuation as a precaution in the event of an unassisted descent by the ETC...

EXT: SPACE

A multitude of stars fills the frame for a moment before the gigantic form of the ETC comes into view, slowly drifting away from the camera. A sliver of earth appears to the left as the ETC continues its drift, traveling perpendicular to the blue-white sphere. As the ETC begins to appear distant we see the belly of the Shuttle Atlantis enter into the frame and also dominate the screen for a moment. It's also traveling perpendicular to the earth, on an identical course.

DAVID (V.O.)

Control, this is Atlantis, we're now inside the 50km mark and closing.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Roger Atlantis.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - CARGO BAY

CLOSE UP on Yuri's face as seen through the cargo bay window. CRANE BACK as we see the domed cargo bay silos come into view and the bay doors slowly open to reveal the earth below.

YURI (V.O.)
Cargo bay doors are fully
deployed...Payload systems
nominal.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

David and Sarah are in their flight seats, piloting the shuttle and monitoring controls respectively as Atlantis makes its way towards the ETC. The earth fills the flight deck windows.

DAVID
48km.

CAPCOM (V.O.)
Roger that.

AMANDA
(to David)
Reaction control system and
propellant pressure nominal.

YURI (V.O.)
Can you two see this thing?
It's absolutely amazing...It's
massive.

Amanda cranes her head to see out one of the ports in the roof of the flight cabin and spots the ETC.

AMANDA
Jesus...I see it Yuri...David
you need to see this thing.

David increasingly concentrates on controls and instrument displays.

DAVID

I'd love to, but I'm kind of busy at the moment...Control, we're at 46km.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Roger Atlantis...ETC is steady at 28,620 km per hour.

DAVID

Roger control.

YURI (V.O.)

Launch control systems are on-line... guidance system diagnostics are running now.

DAVID

44km and closing, control.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Roger that...Atlantis, your window of opportunity here is going to be 36 minutes before ETC is out of range and descending. If you track past that you'll be coming down with her.

DAVID

Roger control, you're running a tight schedule.

YURI (V.O.)

Diagnostic complete, guidance systems nominal.

DAVID

Roger Yuri, go ahead and open up Silo one.

YURI (V.O.)

Roger that David.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - CARGO BAY

The dome on the fist of three Silos opens revealing the customized final stage, of what would normally be, a submarine launched Trident II ballistic missile.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

DAVID

Coming up on 40km control.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Roger that.

DAVID

I'm firing braking thrusters in
3-2-1 firing...

The flight deck shakes mildly as the braking thrusters fire.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Atlantis, we have you holding
at 28,620 km per hour.

DAVID

Roger control...We're at 40km
and holding.

David and Susan begin to undo their seat harnesses.

DAVID (cont'd)

Yuri, go ahead and arm warhead
one.

YURI (V.O.)

Roger that.

Rising from his seat, David looks out of the roof hatch toward the ETC. Susan does likewise through the second roof hatch from where she's seated.

DAVID

Wow, that is amazing...let's
not lose focus here.

David moves back to his seat and Susan focuses her attention back on the instrument displays before her.

DAVID (cont'd)
Yuri, deploy when ready.

YURI (V.O.)
Roger that, deploying now.

EXT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - CARGO BAY

The Trident II missile begins a measured rotation before slowly rising from its cylindrical shell. THE CAMERA PANS as the missile slowly passes by, reaching for space, pointed directly towards the ETC.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

YURI (V.O.)

Warhead one at minimum safe distance.

DAVID
(softly)
Lord, forgive me.

Releasing a long stressed breath of air, David utters the words to complete the mission.

DAVID (cont'd)
Yuri, go with launch.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - MID DECK

YURI
Roger that, go for launch.

Yuri flips the red protective cover off of an I/O switch and places his finger over it. He pauses for a moment, slowly closes his eyes, and flips the switch.

EXT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS

ANGLE ON the slowly spinning Trident II missile as its booster rocket suddenly blazes to life with a brilliant display of pyrotechnics.

TRACKING SHOT following as the rocket accelerates; winding its way ever faster towards the ETC, gaining more momentum with each passing second.

YURI (V.O.)
Thirty kilometers...Twenty
kilometers...Ten
Kilometers...Five kilometers...

CUT TO a view of the ETC from Atlantis. Suddenly, at the last moment before impact, the missile somehow careens off in a direction that sends it over the bow of the ETC and into the emptiness of space.

YURI (cont'd, V.O.)
Guidance system failure...We
have guidance system failure on
the Trident II.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

DAVID
Yuri, abort, abort on warhead
one...Control, we have a
guidance system failure on
warhead one.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - MID DECK

YURI
Roger.

Yuri hurriedly pushes a larger red button to the right of the launch switch.

EXT: ETC

Above and to the left of the ETC we see a small conventional explosion heralding the destruction of warhead one. The ETC stands unharmed, continuing on its course with Atlantis in pursuit.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - MID DECK

YURI
Warhead one has been destroyed.

DAVID (V.O.)

Yuri, what happened? The missile seemed to lose guidance in the last few seconds before impact.

YURI

The guidance system went haywire within the last couple of kilometers. I have no idea why. All systems checked out in pre-launch.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

DAVID

Mission control, warhead one suffered a guidance malfunction and has been aborted, over.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Roger Atlantis. We're looking at the data now.

AMANDA

That was awfully peculiar David.

DAVID

You think the ETC had something to do with the failure?

AMANDA

(over the com-link)
Yuri, is it possible that the ETC had some sort of an effect...a defense mechanism...against the missile?

YURI (V.O.)

Highly unlikely...the MK-6 guidance system on the D-5 Trident II missile is comprised of an inertial measurement unit and an electronics assembly that would be inaccessible

without physically opening up
the missile.

AMANDA

Roger that Yuri.

DAVID

Control, Payload Specialist
Petrov tells me that the loss
of warhead one due to an
intervention by the ETC is a
highly unlikely scenario.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Roger, Atlantis, you are go for
launch on warhead two.

DAVID

Roger control...Yuri, we are go
for launch on warhead two...arm
when ready.

YURI (V.O.)

Roger that...Warhead armed and
we're ready to deploy.

DAVID

Roger, deploy when ready.

YURI (V.O.)

Roger that, deploying now.

EXT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - CARGO BAY

The second Trident II missile begins its measured
rotation and slowly emerges from the second silo. THE
CAMERA PANS as the missile slowly passes by, again
reaching for the ETC.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

YURI (V.O.)

Warhead two is now at minimum
safe distance.

With a look of regret, Amanda turns her head towards
David who reciprocates the gesture with grim resolve.

DAVID

Yuri, go with launch.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - MID DECK

YURI (V.O.)

Roger that, go for launch.

Yuri flips the red protective cover off of a second I/O switch and places his finger over it. He again pauses for a brief moment before toggling the switch.

EXT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS

ANGLE ON the slowly spinning Trident II missile as its booster rocket suddenly fires. The rocket accelerates away, winding towards the ETC.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - MID DECK

ANGLE ON Yuri as he counts down to impact.

YURI

Thirty kilometers...twenty
kilometers...

EXT: TRIDENT II MISSILE

ANGLE ON the Trident missile from behind, engine blazing, as we follow it towards the hull of the ETC.

YURI (V.O.)

Ten kilometers...five
kilometers...

Following the missile, we see the hull of the ETC getting larger, filling the camera. Suddenly, at the last moment before impact, the missile veers off, passing harmlessly under the hull of the ETC.

YURI (cont'd, V.O.)

Unbelievable! Guidance system
failure...again we have
guidance system failure on
warhead two.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

DAVID

Yuri, abort on warhead two...Control, you're not going to believe this, but we have guidance system failure on warhead two.

YURI (V.O.)

Roger, warhead two destroyed.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Roger Atlantis, failure on warhead two...Hold for further instruction Atlantis.

DAVID

Roger control...Please be advised that I'm showing 18 minutes left in our window of opportunity.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Affirmative, we have you at 17 minutes 50 seconds.

DAVID

Roger that...Yuri, what's going on down there?

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - MID DECK

Yuri is standing at his control panel in disbelief as his eyes dart among various gauges and displays.

YURI

Guidance systems on all three warheads checked out pre-launch...it must be something with the ETC. I don't see how it's possible, but there can't be any other explanation.

Hammering the side of his fist into the bulkhead beside his controls, Yuri's expression suddenly changes to one of epiphany.

YURI (cont'd)

David...with the last Trident...we could send it in with the guidance system powered down.

DAVID (V.O.)

That's a good thought Yuri, but at this distance we'd have little chance of hitting the ETC.

YURI

We would have to close our distance with the ETC to about fifteen kilometers. At that dist...

DAVID (V.O.)

Fifteen kilometers!? I don't think that's such a wise idea Yuri.

YURI

We could deploy warhead three at 15 km and use thrusters to move to about 20km where we'd still be in range for remote launch.

DAVID (V.O.)

That's still seems awfully close Yuri.

YURI

The energy from the nuclear detonation will be released mostly in the form of heat and radiation, some EMP...The blast wave you'd associate with a terrestrial explosion is greatly minimized due to a complete lack of air to move. We should be safe assuming no debris hits us.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

David takes a moment to find his thoughts as he runs a hand over his head.

DAVID

Control, based on the assessment of the situation up here, I have to recommend that we scrub the mission at this point.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Roger Atlantis, can you please clarify as to why?

DAVID

Control, we've lost two of three warheads to guidance malfunctions and the third is likely to meet the same fate. We're also cutting this very close with 16 minutes left in our window.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Roger that Atlantis...we'd like you to close distance with the ETC and send in the third missile with guidance system down.

DAVID

Roger that control.

EXT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS

The tiled underbelly of the shuttle fills the screen. PULLING BACK we see the ETC in the distance as the shuttles thrusters begin firing to close the void between them.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

David and Sarah, still in their flight seats, continue to guide Atlantis towards the ETC.

DAVID

Coming up on 15
kilometers...firing braking
thrusters in 3-2-1 firing...

The flight deck rattles momentarily as the brief sound
of escaping gas resonates through the orbiter.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Roger.

DAVID

Yuri, what's our status on the
last warhead?

YURI (V.O.)

Guidance system disabled and we
are good to go, over.

DAVID

Control, we are go for launch
on warhead three...guidance has
been disabled, over.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Roger, Atlantis, you are go for
launch on warhead three.

DAVID

Roger control...Yuri, we are go
for launch on warhead
three...arm when ready.

YURI (V.O.)

Roger that...Warhead armed and
ready

DAVID

Roger, go ahead and deploy.

EXT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - CARGO BAY

The third Trident II missile begins its rotation and
slowly rises from the cargo bay. THE CAMERA PANS as
the missile slowly passes by, drifting toward the ETC.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

YURI (V.O.)
Warhead three at minimum safe
distance

DAVID
Roger Yuri, we're getting out
of here.

David manipulates the control stick in front of him
and the shuttle rattles again as the thrusters fire.

DAVID (cont'd)
Yuri, we're coming up on 20
kilometers from ETC, you're go
for launch.

YURI (V.O.)
Roger that, go for launch.

Yuri flips the red protective cover off of the third
I/O switch and places his finger over it. Without
hesitation he toggles the switch.

EXT: TRIDENT II MISSILE

ANGLE ON the slowly spinning Trident II missile as its
booster rocket erupts into a conflagration. The rocket
accelerates away, directly, deliberately towards the
ETC.

YURI (V.O.)
Ten kilometers...five
kilometers...

A brief, small, point of light flashes on the outer
hull of the ETC an instant before all of space is
flooded with a blinding light of purest white. A pulse
of energy erupts from the point of impact.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

The flight deck is illuminated by the intense light of
the blast which enters indirectly through every
window.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - MID DECK

As the flash subsides, Yuri looks through his window toward the ETC, assessing the situation. A look of disbelief falls across his face as his color drains away.

REVERSE ANGLE we see the ETC is still intact save for several streamers of debris flying into space. One of the jagged metal pieces, about the size of a motorbike rockets straight towards the cargo bay.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

The initial flash has subsided and the shuttle shakes mildly before WHAM, the sound of a brutal impact and a violent jeering of the flight deck ensues.

David, desperately fighting the G-force of a flat spin, attempts to get a hold of the flight stick while Amanda desperately clings to the edges of her seat.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - MID DECK

A terrified Yuri is pinned to the far wall of the mid deck by the G-forces involved in the flat spin. A small amount of blood from a fresh wound covers his forehead. The blood trickles backwards, also a slave to the force of the spin.

YURI

Oh god, oh my god...lord help
us.

EXT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS

ANGLE ON Atlantis as she continues in a flat spin. The right cargo bay door has been destroyed and damage to the wing and cargo bay is apparent, if not extensive.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

ANGLE ON David as he struggles against the G-force reaching for the flight stick.

AMANDA

Control, we're hit, we're
hit...Jesus...flat spin...no
control...Oh dear god...

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Atlantis, you are coming down,
you need to get control of the
orbiter...you need to get tail
first and slow down.

David finally wraps his hand around the flight stick
and thrusters fire. Atlantis slows its spin but still
continues out of control.

EXT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS

Atlantis's spin lessens as she continues plummeting
earth bound. The orbiter, encountering the first signs
of atmosphere, suddenly adjusts itself into a belly
up, nose first descent.

INT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS - FLIGHT DECK

David momentarily looks confused by the cessation of
the shuttle's spin and then realizes what's happening.
He looks at Amanda and reaches over with his hand. She
takes it as a tear rolls down her cheek.

DAVID

(dead calm)

This is it.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

Atlantis, you are coming down
way too fast...you need to get
tail first and fire boosters
now.

A dim and eerie red glow begins to illuminate the
flight deck as the two stare into each others eyes.

EXT: SHUTTLE ATLANTIS

We see the slight red glow of ablation towards the
front and top of the inverted orbiter before it
suddenly erupts into fireball of enormous intensity.

It fades out after a moment, leaving emptiness in its wake.

INT: MISSION CONTROL - DAY

Everyone is working in a panic on the main floor as flight controllers struggle hopelessly to regain communication with Atlantis. ANGLE ON Tom Sears as he stands over the control desk of the capsule communicator.

CAPCOM

Atlantis, control, do you read me...Atlantis, UHF com check, over.

FLIGHT DYNAMICS OFFICER

I'm swapping strings, switching to backup communication in the blind.

TOM

Where's that tracking data!?

FLIGHT DYNAMICS OFFICER

We have a blip but it looks like a bad data point. I don't think it's the orbiter. We're in a search pattern now with C-bands but don't have any valid data.

CAPCOM

Atlantis, control, do you read me...Atlantis, UHF com check, over.

TOM

FDO, get MILA to bring one of their antennas off into a search mode...Are there any other trackers we can go to?

FLIGHT DYNAMICS OFFICER

C-bands are still negative. We're only acquiring false locks.

TOM
(under his breath)
Damn it David...

Tom takes a moment to regain his composure as he accepts what's happened.

TOM (cont'd)
OK everybody, lock the doors,
no data enters or leaves the
room. All flight controllers on
the flight loop, we need to
kick off FCOH contingency plan
procedures...

EXT: ETC

Continuing its orbital descent, the ETC appears mostly intact in the wake of Atlantis's nuclear assault. Its massive engine, now pointing into its fall, illuminates briefly before igniting into a deceleration burn. The engine sputters several times before failing altogether.

Thrusters on the side of the gigantic structure fire to bring it back to a nose first position and the red glow of ablation quickly begins to show on its tiled underside. Plummeting into the earth's atmosphere it closes on the pacific basin.

EXT: USS KITTY HAWK - PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

SUPER: USS KITTY HAWK, 300 MILES SOUTH-EAST OF JAPAN

AERIAL SHOT as we fly by the USS Kitty Hawk and her destroyer escort group.

EXT: USS KITTY HAWK - FORWARD LOOKOUT - DAY

CUT TO the deck of the Kitty Hawk where two officers stand observing the southern sky from the forward lookout. One of them peers through a large pair of deck mounted binoculars while the other holds his hand to his forehead in an attempt to discern any movement.

OFFICER 1

There, at your two o'clock.

Motioning skyward the officer points out a small fiery streak high above the broken white clouds. The officer handling the binoculars swings them about to capture the object.

OFFICER 2

I see it.

Suddenly erupting into a gigantic fireball, the distant ETC thunders through the sky. The second officer now disregarding the binoculars stares open mouthed at the enormity of the event.

OFFICER 1

Oh, shit!

EXT: ETC - PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

WIDE ANGLE on the ETC as it slams hard into the pacific. A plume of vaporized water rockets into the atmosphere as the surface of the surrounding ocean vaporizes. A rolling cloud of superheated steam expands outward from the point of impact, skimming the surface at supersonic speed. A moment later, a 50 foot ocean swell follows in its wake.

EXT: USS KITTY HAWK - PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

WIDE ANGLE on the two officers as they, and several crewmates, scramble to get below deck. The wall of steam thunders toward them in the background before catastrophically engulfing the aircraft carrier.

REVERSE ANGLE as one of the two officers and several of his crewmates are instantaneously blasted from the carrier deck. The second officer, pinned to the control tower, writhes in agony.

AERIAL SHOT as the carrier begins to lean hard from the tempest. All on-deck aircraft, three F/A-18E Super Hornets, along with a squadron of F14 Tomcats, are swept from the deck as though made from paper. Most plummet immediately into the now raging sea, whereas others travel some distance from the force of the surreal windstorm.

ANGLE ON the second officer, pinned to the hull, as he succumbs to the scalding wind. Erupting into boils, his exposed skin vanishes leaving a mass of scalded musculature behind.

AERIAL SHOT as the Kitty Hawk and her escort group, still reeling from the force of the event, slowly rise and fall with the 50 foot swell passing beneath them.

EXT: ANDERSON HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

CLOSEUP as Steven lies on his back in an awkwardly contorted position. Surrounded by leaves, branches, and steel he moves one arm rhythmically above his head. The sound of saw at work is the only noise for a moment before it stops abruptly.

STEVEN

OK, pull!

ANGLE ON Peter as he stands behind Matthew's Volkswagen grasping the mass of leafy branches lodged beneath it. He gives a pull and the remnants of the tree come free from the car along with the vehicle's muffler. Peter throws the sawed off remains to the side of the driveway revealing Steven's shoed feet protruding from under the rear of the car. A few other pieces of wood fly from under the vehicle as Steven clears away the rest of the branches.

STEVEN (Cont'd, O.C.)

Jesus, Peter. How he drove any distance with this forest under him is beyond me.

Emerging from under the car Steven brushes away a few leaves and twigs.

STEVEN (cont'd)

He'll need a new muffler and tail pipe but it'll drive for now.

Rounding the side of the house with some urgency, Matthew makes his way towards Peter and Steven.

MATTHEW

(imperatively)

Guys, Contact with the shuttle has been lost and the ETC just splashed down off of Japan.

STEVEN

Oh, no.

PETER

Has there been any word on the severity of the impact?

MATTHEW

It came down hard but nobody's sure of the details yet.

Steven begins moving towards the house.

STEVEN

Let's get inside.

EXT: PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

ANGLE ON a red and white buoy bobbling in the open ocean. A metal structure atop it resembles a bar stool and the words TSUNAMI and DART are visible at its base.

Behind the buoy a swell in the sea approaches. Looming large, the surge passes under the buoy sending it twenty five feet into the air. The buoy drops back down as the surge passes, revealing an even larger mass of water behind it. Rocketing into the sky, the buoy climbs toward the heavens on the wall of a fifty foot swell before vanishing behind it.

EXT: PACIFIC TSUNAMI WARNING CENTER - HAWAII - DAY

HOLD ON a white cinderblock building with "Pacific Tsunami Warning Center" painted in blue on the side of it.

INT: PACIFIC TSUNAMI WARNING CENTER - HAWAII - DAY

Three men and a woman, casually dressed, preside over walls lined with computer workstations in the PTWC

control room. A table in the centre supports a Large LCD monitor displaying a world map; continents show no detail whatsoever, whereas the oceans are highly detailed with labeled faults and ridges.

ZOOM SLOWLY IN on TARA FARTHING as she leans over one of the workstations. Straight blonde hair falls over her shoulders and her spectacled eyes study the screen before her. JACK DALLY, a scruffy looking man in his mid forties is visible in the background moving in her direction. There's an air of excitement in the room.

JACK

The Navy is reporting some serious activity close to the epicenter of impact but they aren't giving any specifics.

TARA

There's no data from any of the buoys yet.

A BEEPING sound emanates from a workstation a few feet away. TARA and JACK move quickly to investigate while the other two gopher for a moment before moving closer.

TARA (cont'd)

Buoy fourteen just jumped twenty four feet...no wait...holy shit...fifty two feet.

JACK

That's going to triple when it hits shallower waters.

TARA

Fourteen is east of the epicenter. That would put the opposite side hitting Japan right about now...Tony, we need to get this data out ASAP.

TONY

I'm on it...

JACK

There goes buoy nine
now...forty nine feet.

TARA

(speaking to herself)
Buoy nine? What the hell...

JACK

Crap that's moving fast.

TARA

(addressing the room)
This is hitting everything in
the western basin, like, now.
Philippines, Taiwan, China, the
Indies...We're looking at less
than two hours for North
America, a little longer for
South.

EXT: JAPANESE COAST, SHIZUOKA - DAY

WIDE ANGLE on the quiet city streets in the downtown core. Looking more like a deserted ghost town than a bustling centre of industry, Shizuoka is devoid of life. A few pieces of trash blow across a sidewalk.

EXT: SHIZUNAMI BEACH - DAY

WIDE ANGLE on the vacant beach at high tide. The incessant barking of a dog is heard off camera.

ANGLE ON a stray golden lab defiantly barking toward the ocean as it huddles close to a garbage receptacle. A Japanese advertisement on the side of the receptacle begins to flap vigorously, signaling a gust of wind erupting from the ocean air. The sea slowly begins to recede from the beach and a gaggle of distant birds take flight as the dog's tirade reaches a fever pitch.

WIDE ANGLE on the rising fifty foot swell as it approaches the Japanese coast. The shallow waters of the beach drive the surge to a staggering height of a hundred and fifty feet as it closes. The surge becomes an enormous wave as fifty foot whitecaps begin frothing upon its crest.

INT: ANDERSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

WIDE ANGLE on Peter, Matthew, and the Anderson family gathered around the television where an Anchorman stares back with grim eyes. A banner at the bottom of the screen reads CATASTROPHE IN THE PACIFIC.

ANCHORMAN

In the wake of the impact,
tsunami waves have devastated
the eastern coasts of Japan,
China, and Taiwan, as well as
the northern coasts of many
nations in the Indies.

The sound of thunder rolls in from beyond the bay windows that overlook the pacific. DOLLY SLOWLY AHEAD as Steven and Matthew rise, moving to the French doors that open onto the balcony. ANGLE BEHIND Peter and Matthew as they look out at cobalt clouds moving in from the ocean. Another flash of light is followed a moment later by a renewed rumble. The sound of the anchorman's voice is still heard O.C..

ANCHORMAN (cont'd, O.C.)

Waves registering as high as
150 feet have been reported,
and although casualty figures
are not yet in, it's hoped that
due to advanced warning that
most have managed to attain
higher ground prior to the
arrival of the tsunami waves.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning
Centre has advised that the
pacific seaboard will be hit by
the tsunami wave in the coming
minutes and any residents still
in areas under the 200 foot
level are advised to seek
higher ground immediately...

TRACKING SHOT as Steven opens the French doors and steps out onto the balcony with Matthew. A calm wind blows in from the direction of the ocean, drowning out

the sounds from inside the house. Another flash of light illuminates the distant and dark pacific as the two men stare out beyond it.

EXT: SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

WIDE ANGLE as dark clouds begin moving in over the deserted city blocks of San Francisco. ANGLING DOWN one of the streets, a flash of lightning reveals a monolithic wall of water advancing from the sea. It disappears as the flash subsides and the accompanying thunder resonates among the buildings.

EXT: GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - BAY AREA - DAY

WIDE ANGLE on the Golden Gate Bridge as a 200 foot supersonic wave is being funneled up and in toward the bay. Lincoln Park and Baker Beach are completely consumed as the tsunami closes on the bridge.

EXT: SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

AERIAL SHOT as buildings in the downtown area are hammered by the force of the tsunami wave. Everything shy of a skyscraper is completely engulfed by the torrential sea and some of the larger buildings lean hard before surrendering altogether to the force of the ocean shear.

EXT: GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - BAY AREA - DAY

WIDE ANGLE as the tsunami hits the north and south towers of the bridge simultaneously. The crest of the wave passes just below the main span causing it to arc in wildly toward the bay. The force of the impact along with the pull of the main span proves too much for the south tower and it comes down, taking the span with it as it disappears below the sea.

EXT: ANDERSON HOUSE - BALCONY - DAY

ANGLE BEHIND Peter, Matthew, and the Andersons on the balcony, peering down in disbelief at the distant scene of destruction as the wind continues gusting around them.

STEVEN

Good lord...

FADE TO:

BLACK

FADE IN:

EXT: PACIFIC OCEAN - RYUKYU TRENCH

Three lights in a triangular pattern emerge from darkness and descend silently towards the camera.

WIDE ANGLE as we see a slow falling research submersible, dimly illuminated by its own ambient light, falling toward the ridge of an alien ocean trench. As it approaches, turbines fire to halt its descent, turning up a cloud of silt from the ocean floor.

INT: SUBMERSIBLE

SHAWN JENKINS, sitting at the controls of the cramped submersible, stares ahead through a small porthole. Behind him, KEITH MARTIN, a weathered man in his late 30's, sits in an equipment laden niche, monitoring a display.

SHAWN

We are on the bottom.

KEITH

(excitedly)

Alright, Shawn, time to rock and roll.

EXT: RYUKYU TRENCH

The submersible turns, hovering forward along the ridge as the sound of its side-scan sonar begins resonating through the trench. A robotic arm deploys outward and forward from the vehicle supporting a device that resembles a microphone.

INT: SUBMERSIBLE

ANGLE ON Keith as he watches the readings from the side-scan sonar on his display.

KEITH

I can see it just ahead, you
can't miss it...It's huge.

ANGLE ON Shawn as he strains to resolve something through his navigational porthole at the front of the sub.

EXT: RYUKYU TRENCH

The submersible continues along the trench with its lights straining to penetrate the ocean murk when suddenly, towering out of the darkness, the monolithic starboard bulkhead of the ETC emerges into view. Like an impenetrable wall, the hull seemingly stretches infinitely from where it lies on the ocean ridge.

SHAWN

(excitedly)
Holy shit!

INT: SUBMERSIBLE

Keith, no longer satisfied with his view of the sonar display, is struggling to see through his side mounted porthole.

SHAWN

Can you believe the size of
this thing?!

KEITH

I can't see shit through this
porthole.

The intermittent clicking sound of a Geiger counter prompts Keith to curiously look at his display again. He taps his finger on the touch-screen interface several times.

KEITH (cont'd)

She appears to be hot...we're
looking at 15 R/h right now but
that won't be a problem for us.

Keith abandons his niche in favor of crowding Shawn and peering through his front port hole.

KEITH (cont'd)

Wow...it's as though there's no beginning or end to it...makes Bismarck look small in comparison. Let's follow the hull up the incline there as best we can.

EXT: RYUKYU TRENCH

Tracking alongside the starboard side, the gigantic ship appears mostly intact despite its violent descent. Approaching the midsection of the hull, first impressions quickly fade as the lights of the submersible fall upon the damage caused in the wake of Atlantis's nuclear assault. A crater of twisted wreckage some 200m across and 100m deep scars the side of the ETC.

EXT: DSV SEAWAY EAGLE

ESTABLISHING SHOT of a white and yellow hulled advanced diving vessel, the name DSV Seaway Eagle adorning its bow, anchored on calm pacific waters. A battery of cranes and a two story tall spool of cable dominate the stern of the ship whereas a Doppler array and a helipad rise prominently toward the bow. The submersible is being hauled up to the deck towards the rear of the ship with the help of several crewmen.

INT: DSV SEAWAY EAGLE - LAB DECK

INSERT a 19 inch LCD monitor displaying the video footage recorded earlier from the submersible. The concave wound on the hull of the ETC fills the display.

PULLING BACK we see Keith and Shawn, still wearing dive gear from earlier, huddled around the display with MADISON FOWLER and GAR RICHARDSON. Madison, a woman in her forties, wears a white lab coat and black rimmed eyeglasses too small for her face. Gar, also

sporting a lab coat, has the look of a young Woody Allen.

KEITH

(pointing)

Radiation topped out at 30 R/h when we arrived at the damage site there.

GAR

Must be where Atlantis hit her.

KEITH

Yeah, exactly...Fortunately for us the gamma radiation from the nuke has dissipated to workable levels...Can you bring up the footage of the hatch?

Madison moves a mouse and makes a few clicks at the workstation. INSERT the LCD display showing footage from the submersible of what appears to be a circular hatch mounted horizontally to the bulkhead. A robotic arm holds a long red and white marked ruler over it for measuring purposes. Etched alien characters are visible at points along the perimeter of the hatch.

SHAWN

That looks great.

KEITH

Awesome, the engineers are going to want this for fabrication of the air lock mount.

ANGLE on the open lab doorway as one of the crewman pokes his head into the room for a moment before continuing down the hallway.

CREWMAN

Navy bird is incoming.

EXT: DSV SEAWAY EAGLE - DECK

DOLLYING AHEAD of Keith and Shawn, they make their way along the starboard side of the deck, towards the

helipad. Crew men are busy in the background inspecting one of the submersibles as the two men pass by.

SHAWN

Who do we have this time boss?

KEITH

Two guys coming in from the west coast as communications advisors; Steven Anderson and Matthew Gray.

SHAWN

Those are the guys responsible for the initial discovery right? What the hell do we need them for?

KEITH

Steven's an astrophysicist and I think Matthew is a mathematician. They deciphered the radio signal so the big wigs want them on hand in case there's contact of some sort.

SHAWN

Well, deciphering a radio signal and shaking hands with ET are two very different things.

KEITH

Yeah, nothing is going to be left alive in that thing anyways.

EXT: PACIFIC OCEAN

TRACKING SHOT as an MH-60S Sikorsky Seahawk helicopter skims along above the open ocean. PANNING SLOWLY the chopper pulls away and INTO FRAME the Nimitz class aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt becomes visible in the distance.

INT: MH-60S SIKORSKY SEAHAWK

Two military officers flank either side of Steven Anderson who's seated on the rear bench of the helicopter. Two men, JOHN HADDAWAY, a graying Englishman of about fifty years, and EDVARD SEDIN, a fair haired Norwegian of about thirty years, shout in his direction from the opposite bench. Matthew Gray, seated beside the two civilians, quietly clings to his seat, devoid of color, as his bench mates address Steven.

JOHN

Your quarters will be aboard
the DSV Seaway Eagle.

STEVEN

Seaway Eagle?

EDVARD

She's a Norwegian diving vessel
primarily used by the offshore
oil industry, but was an
integral part of the Kursk
recovery effort back in 2000.

STEVEN

(peering out the window)
Oh, wonderful...why the big US
military presence?

JOHN

Well, you know the
Yanks...these are international
waters, and this may be an
international effort, but I
think the Chinese and the DPRK
are putting a scare into them.

OFFICER 1

Actually, the Navy has a team
of engineers and specialists
that will be assisting with the
recovery.

STEVEN

Well that's good, I thought
maybe you were going to depth

charge it or maybe fire some
more nukes at it.

EXT: MH-60S SIKORSKY SEAHAWK

ANGLE ON the Sikorsky Seahawk helicopter as it makes
its landing approach towards DSV Seaway Eagle.

EXT: DSV SEAWAY EAGLE - HELIPAD

ANGLE ON the helipad. Keith and Shawn stand awkwardly
to one side, fighting against the torrent of wind
caused by the incoming chopper.

The wheels of the helicopter touch down on the helipad
and the Crew Chief emerges followed by Steven and
Matthew. The two men approach Keith and Sean as the
Crew Chief unloads luggage.

KEITH

Steven Anderson, I recognize
you from the news, hello, and
welcome aboard the Seaway
Eagle. I'm Keith Martin.

SHAWN

Shawn Jenkins, Hi.

MATTHEW

(shaken)
Matthew Gray. Pleased to meet
you.

STEVEN

Have you located the ship yet?

KEITH

Yeah, she's below us on the
edge of the Ryukyu trench about
two and a half kilometers down.

The men move toward the side of the chopper and
collect two suitcases and two laptop bags.

KEITH (cont'd)

(motioning to the luggage)
Let me give you a hand there.

STEVEN

I've got it, thanks though.

Steven and Matthew pick up their respective luggage and Keith waves them over.

KEITH

I'll show you to your quarters.

EXT/INT: DSV SEAWAY EAGLE - DAY

DOLLYING AHEAD, Keith and Steven are followed closely by Matthew and Shawn as the four walk along the deck engaged in conversation. Entering the ship they continue through tight corridors before finally arriving at Steven and Matthew's quarters.

STEVEN

What condition is she in?

KEITH

Well, we haven't had a chance to fully explore the exterior yet but she seems to be, surprisingly, intact...There's a crater in her starboard side about 200m wide where the nuke from Atlantis hit her, and what I assume was the bow of the ship has seen better days.

STEVEN

That's amazing. Solid rock probably wouldn't stand up to an impact like that yet this thing somehow survived...I'd imagine there's residual radioactivity from the nuke. Are we going to be able to get at her?

KEITH

Yeah, it shouldn't be a problem. 30 R/h was the highest reading and that was at the impact site.

SHAWN

You wouldn't want to vacation down there, but we'll be fine for the duration of our visits.

MATTHEW

Have you found a way to get access yet?

SHAWN

We've located a hatch atop the bow of the ship that we're going to try to get in through.

KEITH

We already have an airlock fabricated so we just need to get it down to the hatch and secure it. We should have it in place in the next few days.

SHAWN

Once in place we'll still need to figure out the mechanics of the hatch. We've determined that there's atmosphere behind it but anything beyond that is conjecture at this point.

Arriving at a white doorway, Keith opens the hatch and introduces his guests to their quarters with a sweeping hand gesture. A 7x7 room greets them behind the door featuring a small bunk bed with a tiny desk and chair to one side.

KEITH

(gesturing)

Take a few minutes to get settled in and I'll be back for you shortly. We have a briefing on the Roosevelt in about an hour.

EXT: USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - DUSK

AERIAL SHOT of the Theodore Roosevelt as the familiar Sikorsky Seahawk helicopter lands on its deck.

INT: USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - BRIEFING ROOM

ANGLE ON SYLVIA SANDERS, an attractive woman in her late 30's, as she leans against a table curiously handling a dark green helmet from an environmental suit. A dozen or so upholstered seats are mounted to the floor, theater like, in front of a podium. The table stands in front of the podium and the remainder of the environmental suit sits atop it. The usual assortment of flags is visible behind the podium.

A door to the back of the room opens, prompting Sylvia to put the helmet back on the desk. Steven, Matthew, and Keith enter the room and Sylvia's face illuminates with recognition as she sees Steven. She laughs lightly.

SYLVIA

Who the hell thought it was a good idea to bring you two here?

KEITH

Ah, I see that you're already acquainted, isn't that nice.

STEVEN

Yes, Sylvia Sanders, astrobiologist, whose work, although compelling, tends to fall a bit outside of the mainstream.

SYLVIA

Pulling microbes from the perennially ice-covered lakes of Antarctica to study as an analog to ET proved a bit too cold, so I decided to spend more time writing on the subject instead.

STEVEN

I would have thought the cold would be agreeable for you.

MATTHEW

Ouch.

VOICE (O.C.)

Children, please have a seat.

ANGLE ON COLONEL SAMUEL HIGGINS, a middle aged man of African American descent, as he enters the room from a door near the podium and moves over to it. A pair of men entering behind the Colonel, CORPORAL NATHAN TYLER and UN OBSERVER TOM HENDERSON, wearing an overly formal suit, takes a seat with the others.

HIGGINS

My name is Colonel Samuel Higgins. You can call me Colonel. The two men entering behind me are Tom Henderson and Corporal Nathan Tyler.

Tom Henderson is a UN Observer. His duties are to simply observe as many facets of this operation as possible to assure that we proceed as dictated by the international community.

The Corporal is a United States marine and a radiation specialist. He will be joining you on your descent to the craft and will be responsible for your safety.

This operation is an international effort, headed by Keith Martin that falls under civil jurisdiction. Your safety however, is still under the jurisdiction of the United States military. The moment that Corporal Tyler deems your safety to be in jeopardy, he will be calling the shots.

STEVEN

You'll have to excuse me sir,
but the last time the US was
calling the shots on this it
put a hole in our visitors and
caused the coastal devastation
of 30 nations.

HIGGINS

If any of you have any issue
with this arrangement please
let me know now so that we can
arrange to replace you as soon
as possible.

Steven begins to object but Matthew interjects.

MATTHEW

(quietly)

It's not worth it...We need you
on this mission.

The room falls silent for a moment before the Colonel
continues.

HIGGINS

I didn't think so.

The green suit in front of you
on the table is an
Environmental suit or EV suit.
This clothing is designed for
protection and life support in
an inhospitable environment.

Corporal Tyler will be spending
the next few days helping you
to familiarize yourself with
these suits.

We do not know what the
atmospheric conditions are
aboard the ship, and we do not
know what risk there might be
for disease or viral infection.
This is why it is imperative
that you implicitly understand
how these suits function.

EXT: DECK OF THE DSV SEAWAY EAGLE - DAY

DOLLYING AHEAD, the five aquanauts are dressed in EV suits as they walk the perimeter of the deck. Corporal Tyler is leading to the front as the remaining four follow in tow. They speak through the RF communications built into their helmets.

SYLVIA

What the hell...my visor will not stop fogging up.

Tyler turns and approaches Sylvia, angling his head down to better see up into her helmet.

TYLER

You just need to regulate your breathing a bit better.
(Addressing the group) If you get excited your visors will likely fog up so everyone needs to get comfortable wearing these suits.

MATTHEW

These suits are pretty heavy. The oxygen tank I can understand but what's with the rest? Bulletproof?

TYLER

There are heavy metals built into the fabric of the suit for radiation protection. If you remember the lead vest that you'd wear at the dentists you can appreciate how light these suits are in comparison.

STEVEN

The compass on my wrist strap here seems to be jumping about a fair bit.

TYLER

Um, I think that Colonel Higgins may have missed that in his briefing.

SYLVIA

Missed what?

TYLER

The ETC is generating a massive magnetic field from somewhere within. Every compass within a five kilometer radius goes erratic and measures a false north.

MATTHEW

That sounds like a rather significant finding.

TYLER

Well, nobody has figured out what might be causing it so it's an interesting, but moot point right now.

MATTHEW

Well, organisms here on Earth are protected from solar radiation by the Earth's magnetic field. If you want to travel through space and still be protected, you could generate your own magnetic field instead of using bulky materials for shielding like we do.

STEVEN

(looking surprised)

That would be a reasonable hypothesis.

Shawn approaches the group from the rear waving in the direction of Tyler to get his attention. Tyler sees him and releases a latch at his neck before removing his helmet. The others do likewise.

SHAWN

Keith, you wanted to know as soon as the air lock was in place. Well, the air lock is in place.

KEITH

Sweet! Corporal, once you feel comfortable that we're ready with the suits we'll be good-to-go.

EXT: DSV SEAWAY EAGLE - DAWN

AERIAL SHOT circling around the Seaway Eagle as it bustles with activity. A submersible towards the aft of the ship is being inspected and loaded while a cable from one of the cranes is being secured to its top. The sun just begins to peak over the horizon casting a crimson glow over the sea.

EXT: DECK OF THE DSV SEAWAY EAGLE - DAWN

WIDE ANGLE on the submersible as Steven, Matthew, and Sylvia, wearing EV suits without their helmets, are assisted into the top hatch by Shawn.

SHAWN

I wish I were going with you guys. This is the opportunity of a lifetime.

INT: SUBMERSIBLE - DAWN

Beginning to settle into the cramped spherical submersible the five of them sit silently for a moment.

SHAWN

Good luck guys I'm securing the hatch.

Keith cranes his neck back from the pilot's seat to meet eyes with Shaun before the hatch is sealed.

KEITH

We'll see you this afternoon
bud.

EXT: DARKNESS

A fathomless blackness persists for a moment accompanied by the unmistakable pinging sound of the submersible's side scan sonar. Its three lights emerge from the darkness and slowly CLOSE ON CAMERA. The submersible becomes recognizable for what it is and the CAMERA PANS 180 DEGREES as it passes by. The side of the ETC comes into view, illuminated by the lights of the submersible.

INT: SUBMERSIBLE

ANGLE ON Corporal Tyler as he sits in his niche monitoring radiological data. The clicks of the Geiger counter are more frequent than before. He places his hands on either side of his nose and mouth for a moment, pulling them downward before speaking.

TYLER

Keith, didn't you say radiation levels were 30 R/h on your last dive?

KEITH

Yeah, 30, but that was at the nuke site. It was 15 further out and 14 when the Navy was assisting with the airlock.

TYLER

I'm reading 32 R/h here.

KEITH

You can't be. We're not at the nuke site and the radiation should be fading not intensifying.

Matthew leans in to the Corporal's niche and has a look at his display.

MATTHEW

It's definitely 32 R/h.

TYLER

It's penetrating radiation. I'm seeing alpha and beta particles, Gamma rays, X-rays...Let's get our helmets on.

Not having to be told twice, everyone immediately begins groping for their helmets.

KEITH

We're coming up on the hatch.

EXT: SUBMERSIBLE

WIDE ANGLE on the submersible as it maneuvers in to dock with the mouth of the robustly built metallic airlock. Deadened by the water we hear the THUD of the submersible locking onto the hatch.

INT: SUBMERSIBLE

Keith rises from his seat and moves to the hatch where he examines an analog gauge.

KEITH

Pressure is good, I'm opening the hatch.

Turning an anachronistic looking wheel on the hatch, Keith opens it and proceeds to climb into the airlock.

KEITH (Cont'd, O.C.)

You'll get chilly in here if we stay for long, but at least we're not wet. Come on through.

INT: AIRLOCK

Keith begins to closely examine the alien portal on the bulkhead of the ETC as the others file into the airlock. CLOSING IN on the well weathered portal, the circular pattern of a mechanism involving two opposed pull handles becomes apparent. The handles are mounted such that by pulling them simultaneously, force would be applied in a clockwise direction.

SYLVIA
(looking all around)
Wow, this airlock certainly
appears rock solid.

KEITH (O.C.)
At this depth the pressure is
so intense that it would
implode if it were any less
substantial.

SYLVIA
That's comforting.

Keith moves back to the hatch on the submersible and seals it tight while Matthew and Steven take his place examining the portal.

TYLER
(holding a Geiger counter)
Radiation is 34 R/h and steady.
The suits will shield us up to
a hundred.

KEITH
(finishing with the sub)
OK, you can have a go at the
hatch.

Matthew grabs for the top handle as Steven pulls on the lower. A swishing sound ensues as the entire hatch quickly rotates 90 degrees clockwise before opening side to side. A very low and ominous thrumming noise emanates from within as Matthew and Steven peer inside.

MATTHEW
I barely saved my hand there.

SYLVIA
Perhaps our aliens are a highly
dexterous species.

STEVEN'S P.O.V. as we see through the hatch. A hexagonal access tunnel descends into darkness at an

angle 20 degrees from vertical. A ladder mounted to the side of the tunnel allows for single file descent.

ANGLE IN the air lock as the Corporal muscles his way in front of the hatch with the Geiger counter.

TYLER

The hatch was acting as shielding from our radiation source. We're at 48 R/h.

MATTHEW

There must be a source other than the residual from the nuke...A nuclear reactor of some sort.

Keith looks at a gauge on the wrist of his suit.

KEITH

The external temperature is rising. It's suddenly 90 degrees out here and I'll bet it's over 100 down there.

TYLER

This is starting to fall within the realm of military jurisdiction. I'm not going to take over entirely, but I am going first down that access tunnel.

STEVEN

I'm OK with that.

ANGLE ON the hatchway as Tyler climbs in and begins his descent followed by Keith, Steven, Sylvia, and Matthew.

KEITH

We're at 108 degrees.

STEVEN

I think I'm starting to feel the heat through the suit.

TYLER

You are. The suits are good thermal protection but you will notice the bigger external temperature swings...I'm starting to see some light below.

INT: ETC - ACCESS TUNNEL

ANGLE DOWN the hatchway as a strobing, blue-white light eerily illuminates a metal grate landing below. INTO FRAME Tyler appears as he continues his descent. Realizing that he's now close enough, Tyler abandons his rung by rung descent in favor of sliding the rest of the distance down the side bars.

INT: ETC - NUCLEAR REACTOR

WIDE ANGLE on the metal grate balcony as first Tyler, and then the remainder of the team gather one after the other along the railing. Staring open mouthed towards the camera the blue white glow plays across their faces. Huge shadows fall over them at a rate of two or three per second causing a strobe like effect.

REVERSE ANGLE reveals a huge, rotating, centrifuge-like structure the size of a football stadium. The solid central core supports giant vertical metallic rings that arc out toward the walls. A horizontal ring of blue-white fiery plasma runs through the series of rings like a river as they circle it, molding it, containing it.

Three columns of water midway across the cavernous chamber, one large and two smaller, fall from the darkness above. Slightly off center and clustered together, the water columns are being perpetually hammered by the rotating rings resulting in a persistent mist cloud.

The sounds within the room combine into an eerie, resonant cacophony.

KEITH

(pointing)

We need to be wary of those water columns. The hull has obviously been compromised and it could fail under the external pressure.

SYLVIA

I think maybe we should get back to the sub.

WIDE ANGLE BEHIND Steven as he begins making his way out along the balcony to the railing, transfixed by the enormity of the reactor. It becomes apparent that the balcony circles the reactor wall with other passageways joining it.

TYLER

This is reminiscent of ITER.

KEITH

What?

TYLER

ITER, it's a thermonuclear fusion reactor being built in Europe.

STEVEN

Right, it magnetically contains a band of super-hot plasma. At a glance, I'd say this is fundamentally similar.

MATTHEW

If that's the case, I'm not quite sure why we're not being roasted alive. The ITER reactor is basically the sun in a room.

TYLER

Radiation is at 57 R/h...Make that 58 R/h.

KEITH

Could this thing blow?

TYLER

If this is a fusion reaction we're talking about, it will likely just fail altogether upon loss of containment...On the other hand, should this be fission, we could be looking at a run-away chain reaction.

SYLVIA

Why does that sound bad to me?

TYLER

If there's enough unspent fuel we could see a thermonuclear detonation.

The sound of metal giving way under tremendous force suddenly thunders through the reactor.

EXT - ETC

Through the murky depths the entire ETC shifts in the trench. The stern of the hull, having taken on too much water, begins falling to the floor of the ridge, slowly bringing up the ruined bow like a giant teeter-totter.

INT - ETC - NUCLEAR REACTOR

SYLVIA

Oh, dear god, no.

TYLER

Drop and hold on tight! We're falling

The party drops to the floor of the balcony just as the stern of the ship lands. CRUNCH, the sound of twisting metal echoes in the chamber as the ETC settles into its new resting place. The deafening sound of a torrential river rises within the reactor as the five aquanauts look at each other with wide eyes.

A fourth column of water, dwarfing the now diminishing three, erupts into the room from above at an odd angle. The giant rings of the reactor now begin to

slow as the raging column blasts them, just missing the plasma stream.

TYLER

(rising from the floor)
Back to the sub, now! Keith,
you're first.

The five of them gather at the foot of the access tunnel. Keith begins to ascend, followed by Sylvia.

INT - ETC - ACCESS TUNNEL

ANGLE ON Keith as he climbs up the access tunnel toward the camera. He stops momentarily, flinching as a small stream of water, falling from above, catches his helmet.

KEITH'S P.O.V. as we can barely make out the now closed hatch of the ETC. Two small streams of water fall toward the camera from it.

KEITH

God damn it! The hatch on the
ETC shut...

ANGLE ON Sylvia's helmet at Keith's feet.

SYLVIA

What do you mean it shut?
Nobody closed it.

ANGLE ON Keith again as he reaches the hatch.

TYLER (O.C.)

It likely automatically sealed
when the ship shifted.

MATTHEW (O.C.)

...Or when the airlock failed.

KEITH

There's water coming in from
beyond the hatch. The air lock
is flooded...The submersible
may have sheared off in the
fall.

SYLVIA

We have to get out of here,
open it!

KEITH

If the air lock is flooded and
I open it, the sea will rush in
and we're done.

TYLER

We don't have a choice.
Radiation is at 74 R/h and
climbing. We don't have time to
wait to be rescued...Is the
opening mechanism the same as
the external one?

KEITH

Yeah, it looks like.

TYLER

OK, everyone back down now!

The corporal swings to the side of the ladder allowing
others to descend past him.

KEITH

I can open it from here!

TYLER

There's no time to argue, we
need you to pilot the sub. I
want everyone to get down to
the balcony and away from the
access tunnel.

INT - ETC - REACTOR BALCONY

ANGLE ON the balcony as Keith drops down from the
ladder and moves aside with the others.

STEVEN

OK, we're clear.

INT - ETC - ACCESS TUNNEL

ANGLE ON Tyler as he interlocks his legs into the ladder and reaches with both arms for the hatch mechanisms. CLOSE ON Tyler's helmet as he clenches his jaw, bracing in anticipation. ZOOM in on Tyler's left eye where we can almost see his now Zen mindset.

ANGLE ON Tyler in the hatchway as he jerks clockwise with resolute strength. The hatch flies open with immense speed and a wall of water rockets through the access tunnel.

INT - ETC - REACTOR BALCONY

ANGLE ON the bottom of the access tunnel as water begins blasting through it.

SYLVIA

No, no, no, no, no...

KEITH

This is it!

STEVEN

(calmly)

I wish I could have said
goodbye...

MATTHEW

Wait! It's subsiding! The
water's subsiding!

KEITH

Boo-yah motherfucker!! We're
not done yet.

The torrent of water subsides to a force akin to that of a fire hose left running somewhere far above.

INT - ETC - ACCESS TUNNEL

ANGLE ON the open hatchway as a stream of water falls into the tunnel. Tyler is nowhere to be seen. The sound of water spraying under pressure resonates from the airlock.

ANGLE DOWN ON Keith as he climbs up the access tunnel. Looking up, his revitalized expression turns to a look of tragedy as he stops his ascent.

KEITH

Oh no.

STEVEN

What is it?

ANGLE UP on Corporal Tyler as he hangs broken from the ladder about 20 feet from the hatch.

KEITH

Tyler...I think he's dead.

STEVEN

Can you pull him up?

KEITH

I'll damn well try.

STEVEN

I'll push from below.

INT: AIRLOCK

ANGLE ON the hatch as Keith emerges from it, somehow pulling up the Corporal with him. Appearing rather winded, he drops to his side and Steven climbs out behind him looking toward the submersibles hatch.

STEVEN

That's not good.

ANGLE ON the hatch where the submersible joins the airlock; the left side of the seal has been compromised and a thin, yet wide, jet of water streams in over the hatch with intense pressure.

KEITH

The airlock filled with water
but wasn't completely breached.

Keith struggles through the sheet of incoming water and spins the wheel on the hatch.

KEITH (cont'd)
Everyone in now, bring Tyler.
This airlock could blow at any
moment.

The group struggles to get everyone into the hatch.

INT: SUBMERSIBLE

ANGLE ON the hatch as Keith enters the sub last and finally seals the submersible. He quickly moves to the pilot's seat and begins manipulating controls.

KEITH
Flooding the airlock...

A muffled swishing and gurgling is apparent as the airlock floods.

KEITH (cont'd)
...and breaking away.

The sound of metal disengaging from metal is dulled somewhat by the sea.

SYLVIA
Can we warn the surface about
the reactor?

STEVEN
Salt water conducts electricity
too well for radio waves to
penetrate by much more than a
wavelength.

KEITH
That would be a "no". We need
to be at the surface.

EXT: SUBMERSIBLE

WIDE ANGLE as the submersible pulls away from the airlock on top of the ETC. Rotating its thrusters a few degrees from vertical, the submersible begins a speedy ascent toward the surface.

EXT: DSV SEAWAY EAGLE

ANGLE NEAR the surface of the ocean where the Seaway Eagle is visible in the distance. A moment passes and INTO VIEW, the top of the submersible bobs up from under the surface.

INT: SUBMERSIBLE

ANGLE ON Keith as he quickly throws a few switches on the control panel in front of him.

KEITH

Seaway Eagle this is Deep II,
do you copy? (a beat) DSV
Seaway Eagle this is Deep II,
do you copy, over?

SHAWN (O.C.)

Deep II we read you. Good to
have you back, over.

KEITH

Shawn, we have an emergency
here. There's a possibility
that the ETC could blow at any
time. We have to clear the
area. All vessels need to clear
the area.

INT: DSV SEAWAY EAGLE - RADIO ROOM

ANGLE ON Shawn as he responds to Keith with a look of astonished surprise. A naval officer and a couple of crewman stand nearby, all of whom exchange glances.

SHAWN

Keith, did you say it could
blow?

KEITH (O.C.)

Affirmative, there's an
unstable nuclear reactor on
that thing that could detonate
at any time.

The Naval officer hurriedly leaves the room.

SHAWN

Ok, we're coming for you.

INT: SUBMERSIBLE

ANGLE ON Keith as he continues the conversation.

KEITH

Negative, we can proceed under
our own steam. Get the ship out
of here.

SHAWN (O.C.)

Roger that.

EXT: PACIFIC OCEAN

AERIAL SHOT as the USS Theodore Roosevelt, her escort group, and the civilian recovery ships slowly move away from the ocean above the ETC in wide arcs.

INT: USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - BRIDGE

The captain of the Roosevelt and Colonel Higgins are having a quiet discussion as several seamen work their stations. One of them raises their head and looks towards the captain.

SEAMAN

Captain, the compass just
returned to normal. We have
magnetic North again.

A low rumbling sounds through the bridge and it begins to shake moderately. The captain and the colonel move to the lookout to get a view behind the ship.

EXT: PACIFIC OCEAN

AERIAL SHOT as the ocean erupts into a thundering white dome two kilometers in diameter. The fleet, just outside the blast radius, appears tiny and fragile in contrast. After a moment the apex of the dome begins to fall in upon itself creating a giant cloudlike torrent of water that rushes outward from the epicenter. Speeding past the perimeter of the initial blast the white wall closes on the fleeing vessels.

INT: DSV SEAWAY EAGLE

The rumbling resonates through the bridge of the seaway eagle as Shawn moves to, and peers through, an open hatch to the port side of the deck.

SHAWN'S POV as the monstrous wall rushes in towards the rear of the ship.

SHAWN

Shiiiiit!!

Shawn desperately grabs the outward opening door and pulls hard as the stern of the ship begins to lift, actually assisting with the door. SLAMMING SHUT the hatch seals and Shawn secures it.

The thunderous roar of falling water, like a hundred simultaneous rainfalls, begins to consume the bridge. The angle of the bridge now reverses as the wall of water pushes the stern back down and proceeds toward the bow.

The bridge crew brace themselves as the light coming in from the front facing window is suddenly blanketed by the falling sea. A crack appears in one window and then another fails altogether. The ocean rushes into the bridge, swamping two crewmen before the assault suddenly ceases altogether. The giant wall, now visibly racing away from ship leaves the Seaway Eagle reeling in its wake.

EXT: DECK OF THE SEAWAY EAGLE - BRIDGE HATCH

The hatch, sealed moments ago, is thrown open and Shawn emerges from it. DOLLY AHEAD and CLOSE ON Shawn's face as he storms along the swamped deck wearing a look of stoic resolve. He stops at another hatch and throws it open.

INT: DSV SEAWAY EAGLE - RADIO ROOM

Shawn enters the room and immediately picks up the radio microphone.

SHAWN

Deep two this is DSV Seaway
Eagle, do you copy?

Shawn, wearing a look of concern, runs his fingers through his long hair while pausing for a moment.

SHAWN (cont'd)
Deep two this is the Seaway
Eagle, do you copy, over?

Madison, Gar, and several other shipmates begin to gather as Shawn continues his efforts to raise the submersible.

SHAWN (cont'd)
Deep two this is the Seaway
Eagle, do you copy, over?

A beat.

SHAWN (cont'd)
Keith, buddy, you can't be
letting me down here.

Hopeful expressions wane into grim ones as silence persists over the radio.

KEITH (O.C.)
Seaway Eagle this is Deep two,
do you copy?

The room brightens and Shawn's expression turns to that of relieved excitement.

SHAWN
Keith! Buddy! We've been trying
to raise you!

MADISON
Thank god.

KEITH (O.C.)
Sorry man, we had to dive when
the ETC blew.

SHAWN
We're coming for ya buddy.

INT: USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - PASSAGEWAY

ANGLE DOWN a door lined passage of the Theodore Roosevelt. The only open door, to the right, stands in the foreground and a bend in the distance is visible at the end of the passageway.

SAME ANGLE as the din of conversation becomes apparent and Steven, Matthew, and Sylvia round the corner followed closely by Shawn and Keith.

Angle on the group as they proceed down the hallway engaged in conversation.

STEVEN

I just can't believe that it's all gone...All the technology - an entire civilization lost - and I couldn't stop it.

MATTHEW

You did what you could.

SYLVIA

You can't beat yourself up about it. Thousands could have petitioned for a safe arrival and I guarantee that we'd see the exact same results.

MATTHEW

Mankind as a species has barely made it out of the cradle. We aren't even able to embrace each other yet so to expect that we'd welcome outsiders with open arms is unrealistic at best.

Arriving at the open door, the group peers apprehensively into it.

INT: USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT - RECOVERY ROOM

ANGLE ON Corporal Tyler, lying in bed as a pained smile animates his face. Sitting semi-upright to take

advantage of a television above him, he wears a fiberglass cast on his left arm and a Philadelphia collar around his neck. The sheets of the bed are pulled up to his mid section.

TYLER

Steven, Sylvia, make that everyone, hi!

STEVEN

Tyler, how are you doing?

Steven and Sylvia enter the room and move over to Tyler's bedside. Keith and Shawn move to a second, unoccupied bed beside Tyler's and sit on the edge of it. Matthew moves to the single chair in the room, at the foot of the bed, and sits himself down in it.

TYLER

Well, the doctor says that I'm not going to be on my feet for a while.

Tyler reaches with his good hand and knocks on his leg through the sheets to the sound of knuckles on fiberglass.

TYLER (cont'd)

I managed to break both my legs but I guess they still somehow prevented me from falling to my death.

KEITH

Your sacrifice saved all of our lives man. We owe you big time.

BEGIN TO ANGLE ON the television screen and slowly ZOOM IN as an anchorwoman stares back at us from behind a desk. Pictures of the nuclear explosion in the Pacific play out behind her and this catches the attention of everyone in the room.

ANCHORWOMAN

...the resulting blast is thought to have been in the 20 megaton range, making it the

second largest nuclear explosion in history.

In yet another staggering development, Peter Crowley of the SETI institute has isolated a secondary, underlying signal in the original radio message received some months ago.

CLOSING IN on the television, the pixilation of the screen disappears as the camera now enters the news room. FAVOR ON an image that appears behind the anchorwoman as the camera continues its slow zoom.

Apparently ready for launch, a pair of vertically standing ETCs tower in stark contrast over a barren alien landscape. Thousands of people stand in the foreground as a swollen red star, nearing the end of its life, dips low on the horizon.

ANCHORWOMAN (cont'd)

The signal, in the form of an interlaced image, shows what appears to be thousands of men, women and children gathered in greeting near the base of two vertically standing ETCs.

This development is raising serious new questions not only about the handling of events over the past several months, but more fundamentally, about the origins of mankind and life in our universe...

FADE OUT the voice of the anchorwoman and HOLD on the image for a moment.

CROSSFADE

INT: RADIO ASTRONOMY LAB - UC, BERKELEY - NIGHT

ANGLE ON a row of workstations in the silent and empty control room. Ambient light from the various monitors dimly illuminates the lab as we SLOWLY ZOOM IN. The

same program runs on each of the desktops sifting through the random haze of RF waveform patterns. Continuing the SLOW ZOOM we begin to single out an individual monitor where a new window appears on the screen. The sound of a HARD DRIVE SPINNING UP breaks the silence and a moment later a repeating waveform pattern begins running autonomously in the window. A familiar signal begins repeating itself with a half second delay. The words "Chirping Data" appear below the signal replaced a moment later by "Searching for Gaussians". All text fades for a moment before "Primary Signal: 1420 Mhz" appears on the screen along with "Secondary Signal: 29.9 Hz"

FADE TO BLACK

THE END