

**THE ABYSS**

**AN ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY**

**BY**

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Director's Revision

**THE ABYSS****OMITTED** 1**OMITTED** 2**TITLE: THE ABYSS -- ON BLACK, DISSOLVING TO COBALT BLUE****EXT. OCEAN/UNDERWATER -- DAY** 3

Blue, deep and featureless, the twilight of five hundred feet down. PROPELLER SOUND. Materializing out of the blue limbo is the enormous but sleek form of an Ohio-class SSBN ballistic missile submarine.

**INT. U.S.S. MONTANA -- DAY** 4

In the attack center, darkened to womb-red, the crew's faces shine with sweat in the glow of their instruments. The SKIPPER and his EXEC crowd around BARNES, the sonarman.

**CAPTAIN**

Sixty knots? No way, Barnes... the reds don't have anything that fast.

**BARNES**

Checked it twice, skipper. It's a real unique signature. No cavitation, no reactor noise... doesn't even sound like screws.

He puts the signal onto a speaker and everyone in the attack room listens to the intruder's acoustic signature, a strange THRUMMING. The captain studies the electronic position board, a graphic representation of the contours of the steep-walled canyon, a symbol for the Montana, and converging with it, an amorphous trace, representing the bogey.

**CAPTAIN**

What the hell is it?

**EXEC**

I'll tell you what it's not, it's not one of ours.

**BARNES**

Sir! Contact changing heading to two-one-four, diving. Speed eighty knots! Eighty knots!

**EXEC**

Eighty knots...

**BARNES**

Still diving, depth nine hundred feet. Port clearance to cliff wall, one hundred fifty feet.

**FRANK**

(simultaneously)

Still diving, depth nine hundred feet. Port clearance to cliff wall, one hundred fifty feet.

Tension builds in the attack room as the Montana surges to intercept the intruder. The exec tensely watches the vector-graphic readout for the side-scan sonar array. The sub is running uncomfortably close to the cliff walls.

**EXEC**

(low, to Captain)

It's getting tight in here.

**CAPTAIN**

We can still give him a haircut. Helm, come right to oh six niner, down five degrees.

**HELMSMAN**

Coming right to oh six niner, sir. Down five degrees.

**NAVIGATOR**

Port side clearance one hundred twenty feet narrowing to seventy-five. Sir, we have a proximity warning light.

**EXEC**

That's too damn close! We've gotta

(MORE)

**EXEC (CONT'D)**

back off.

**BARNES**

Range to contact, two hundred.  
Contact junked to bearing two  
six oh and accelerated to... one  
hundred thirty knots, sir!

**EXEC**

(really freaked now)  
Nothing goes one thirty!

Suddenly the control room lights dim almost to blackness.

**EXT. U.S.S. MONTANA**

5

We see only the effect, not the source, as a large diffuse light passes rapidly under the sub's hull. Moments later a shockwave, like an underwater sonic boom, impacts the sub, slamming it sideways.

**INT. U.S.S. MONTANA**

6

The bridge crew are knocked off their feet, as the ship is buffeted.

**EXEC**

Turbulence! We're in its wake!

SIRENS. Everyone shouting at once. The power flickers low.

**CAPTAIN**

Helm, all stop! Full right rudder!

**HELMSMAN**

All stop. Full right rudder.  
Hydraulic failure. Planes are not  
responding, sir!

Power returns in time for the sonarman to get a glimpse at the side-scan display... AS THE SHEER CLIFF WALL LOOM BEFORE THEM.

**HELMSMAN**

Hydraulics restored, sir.

**EXT. U.S.S. MONTANA**

7

The cliff wall materializes out of the blue limbo off the port bow with nightmarish slow-motion. The sub slams into it with horrific force, scraping along and bouncing off. One tail stabilizer is sheared off and the big screw prangs the wall with an earsplitting K-K-KWANG!

**INT. PORT TO TORPEDO ROOM**

8

With the outer tube-doors torn off, seawater slams in, busting the inner hatches. Two-foot thick columns of water, like fire-hoses of the gods, blast into the room. Everything vanishes instantly in white spray.

**INT. CONTROL RM/ATTACK CENTER**

9

Everyone is hurled off his feet. The planesman flights to recover control of the yoke.

**CAPTAIN**

Collision alarm! Collision alarm!  
Lighten her up, Charlie!

**NAVIGATOR**

The torpedo room is flooded, sir!

**CAPTAIN**

Blow all tanks! Blow everything!

**HELMSMAN**

Passing twelve hundred feet...

**EXEC**

Blowing main tanks!

**HELMSMAN**

Twelve hundred fifty feet...

**EXT. MONTANA**

10

The great sub is being hauled down by the mass of its flooded bow section, its flanks rushing past us like a freight train headed for Hell.

**INT. MONTANA CONTROL ROOM**

11

The command crew fights futility for control, everyone shouting and terrified.

**EXEC**

Main forward tanks ruptured!

**HELMSMAN**

Passing thirteen hundred feet...

**EXEC**

Too deep to pump auxiliaries!

**CAPTAIN**

All back full! All back full!

**HELMSMAN**

Answering all back full. Passing thirteen hundred fifty feet... fourteen hundred... fourteen fifty...

The Captain locks eyes with the Exec amid the din...

**CAPTAIN**

We're losing her. Launch the buoy!

The Exec opens the door to a small box and punches a button. A red light comes on. The Captains takes a deep breath.

**EXT. MONTANA**

12

A tiny transmitter is ejected from the sub's hell and begins its long ascent to the surface. A second later the sub slams down like a piledriver onto a ledge, tearing open its pressure hull.

**INT. MONTANA**

13

VARIOUS QUICK CUTS, just flashes and impressions, as...  
Seawater blasts down the corridors --  
Explodes across the control room, hurling men like dolls --  
Floods the cavernous missile bay in seconds --  
Bursts through hatches into the reactor room --  
Blasts men OUT OF FRAME in a micro-second.

**EXT. OCEAN/UNDERWATER**

14

In the cobalt twilight we see the Montana slide down the sea cliff, its hull SCREECHING like the death agonies of some marine dinosaur. Descending in an avalanche of silt, it finally disappears into the blackness below... a blackness which continues almost straight down, 20,000 feet to the bottom of the Cayman Trough. The abyss.

**EXT. OCEAN SURFACE -- DAY**

15

Above, in the world, the Caribbean rolling gray under a stormy sky. The Montana's emergency buoy pops to the surface, transmitting.

**CUT TO:****EXT. OCEAN/20 MILES AWAY -- DAY**

16

LONG LENS SHOT: three massive Navy Sea King helicopters thundering straight at us, FILLING FRAME.

REVERSE, as they barrel OVER CAMERA toward a lone civilian ship... an ugly but very sophisticated deep-sea drilling support ship, the BENTHIC EXPLORER. It is a twin-hulled monstrosity with a central opening in its deck, around which crouch enormous cranes, winches and other arcane equipment.

The first Sea King settles onto the helipad, disgorging a contingent of Naval officers, technicians, and a squad of armed seamen. A pantomime in the rotorwash, we see the Benthic Petroleum "company man" KIRKHILL greeting COMMODORE DEMARCO, the on-scene commander.

**INT. BENTHIC EXPLORER/BRIDGE -- DAY**

17

The bridge is state-of-the-art, with computers and sophisticated navigation and communications gear, looking like mission control with its bank of video monitors. The Drilling Operations Supervisor, LELAND MCBRIDE, and BENDIX, the crew chief, watch the invaders swarming the deck below.

**MCBRIDE**

Does not look good at all.

TIGHT ON VIDEO SCREEN (MINUTES LATER) showing divers working in total blackness around some sort of installation on the bottom of the ocean. They move through the harsh floodlights in dreamlike slow motion, looking like space-suited figures with their helmets and umbilical hoses.

**DEMARCO (V.O.)**

No light from the surface. How deep are they?

**MCBRIDE (V.O.)**

Seventeen hundred feet.

WIDER, showing the Navy contingent crowding the control room. DeMarco is hardcore military, brusque and efficient. Kirkhill is a small man with pinched features, wearing a shirt and tie, which on a drill ship means company man and/or dickhead.

**DEMARCO**

I need them to go to over two thousand.

**KIRKHILL**

They can do it.  
(to McBride)  
Get Brigman on the line.

**CUT TO:****EXT. UNDERWATER -- DAY (TOTAL DARKNESS)**

18

1700 FEET BELOW. A submersible oil-drilling platform, DEEPCORE II, an island of light in the vast blackness. Its



main framework connects two "tri-modules" consisting of three cylinders each. These contain living and work areas in a pressurized environment. An umbilical cable, thick as a man's thigh, runs up from the oil rig into the darkness, to the Benthic Explorer at the surface. In a bubble-like dome port window we see the rig foreman, or "toolpusher," BUD BRIGMAN. He's talking (via headset) with two divers working outside... 'CATFISH' DE VRIES, AND LEW 'BIRD-DOG' FINLER.

**BUD**

Hey, you guys are milking that job.

**CATFISH**

(Kentucky drawl)

That's cause we love freezin' our butts off out here sooo much, boss.

**OMITTED**

19

**INT. DRILL ROOM**

20

Bud turns from the window and crosses the drill floor. The working heart of the rig. THUNDEROUS MECHANICAL ROAR. The drill crew, in hardhats and mud-plastered overalls, tend the massive spinning turn-table in the center of the chamber. The semi-automated system requires only five men to operate. The others are LUPTON MCWHIRTER, DWIGHT PERRY, JAMMER WILLIS, and TOMMY RAY DIETZ. Bud hears his names called above the din by Jammer, a massive roughneck/diver who stands a good head taller than the rest.

**JAMMER**

(yelling)

Bud! Hippy's on the bitch-box.  
It's a call from topside. That new company man.

**BUD**

Kirkhill? That guy doesn't know his butt from a rathole. Hey, Perry!

One of the roustabouts, a wiry Texan, turns to him.

**BUD**

Do me a favor and square away the mud hose and those cable slings. This place is starting to look like my apartment.

Perry chuckles and sets to the task cheerfully. Bud EXITS, ducking his head through a low watertight hatch.

**INT. CORRIDOR/TOOLPUSHER'S OFFICE**

21

Bud tromps down the narrow corridor, his work boots gonging on steel.

**P.A. (HIPPIE'S VOICE)**

BUD, PICK UP THE TOPSIDE LINE  
URGENT.

**BUD**

I'm coming. Keep your pantyhose on.

He enters his office, a tiny cubicle with stacks of paperwork, dust-gathering tech manuals and waterstained Penthouse fold-outs. He picks up the phone... punches down a line.

**BUD**

Brigman here. Kirkhill? What's going on?

(pause)

I am calm. I'm a calm person. Is there some reason why I shouldn't be calm?

HOLD ON Bud's expression, darkening, as he listens.

**INT. CORRIDOR/CONTROL MODULE**

22

The control module is a long narrow cabin like the inside of a Winnebago, packed with instrumentation. At the end is a small bay with multiple viewports. Outside, at a 'Christmas tree' pipe installation, a lone diver can be seen welding. He is accompanied by a large submersible, FLATBED, and by a Remotely Operated Vehicle, or ROV, call LITTLE GEEK. Little

Geek is an underwater robot which operated on the end of a cable-like control TETHER. It has a single video 'eye' in front, by which the operator pilots the little machine. The rig's ROV pilots is ALLEN 'HIPPY' CARNES, who stands by the window twiddling his joysticks and drinking coffee. His pet white rat, BEANY, crawls contentedly around his shoulders. The door BANGS OPEN.

Hippy jumps, slops his coffee. Bud strides in. Not calm.

**BUD**

Son of a bitch.

He kicks a chair out of the way and slams his palm down on a switch marked DIVER RECALL. A SIREN, blasting through the water from a big hydrophone loudspeaker.

**BUD**

All divers. Drop what you're doing. Everybody out of the pool.

**EXT. DEEPCORE/CHRISTMAS TREE**

**A22**

Flatbed's pilot, LISA 'ONE NIGHT' STANDING, can be clearly seen behind a bubble canopy. She is a no-nonsense lady who holds her own in the mostly male environment by being one of the best submersible drivers in the business. She controls a hydraulic manipulator arm, assisting the diver, ARLISS 'SONNY' DAWSON, in his work. Little Geek hovers around them like a tiny helicopter. One Night moves the Flatbed arm to Sonny and hands him the pipe.

**ONE NIGHT**

Here you go, hon'.

**SONNY**

Just in time, sugar.

They react to Bud's recall, looking toward him up in the control module.

**ONE NIGHT**

Dammit, we just got out here.

**SONNY**

There was a time when I would have asked why.

One Night makes a grab for his butt with the manipulator claw, which he narrowly avoids.

**CUT TO:****EXT. DEEPCORE/UNDER SUB-BAY****23**

Flatbed moves underneath the rig, a few feet above the seafloor, with Sonny riding on its top deck. It passes under a lit opening and rises toward the surface of the water in the chamber above. Little Geek follows like an obedient dog.

**INT. SUB-BAY/MOONPOOL****24**

The opening is called the moonpool, and Deepcore's submersibles are launched through it. From inside the sub-bay it looks just like a swimming pool. Flatbed surfaces, nearly filling it. The chamber also contains CAB ONE, a similar submersible. Jammer, Perry, and some of the other drill-room boys are helping the divers out of the water. The water at this depth is only about six degrees above freezing, and these folks are cold and prune-fingered. Finler pulls off his demand-helmet, revealing a round, boyish face.

**FINLER**

What's goin' on? How come we got recalled?

**SONNY**

Hell is I know.

One Night jumps 'ashore' from Flatbed's broad deck and joins them. Catfish is unzipping his bulky dry-suit.

**CATFISH**

Just follow standard procedure, will ya... flog the dog till somebody tells us what's happening.

**JAMMER**

Hey, Catfish, I'll sell you my  
October Penthouse for twenty bucks.

**ONE NIGHT**

Save you money, darlin'... the  
pages are all stuck together by  
now.

Bud enters, approaching the group.

**JAMMER**

What's goin' on, Boss?

**BUD**

Folks, I've just been told to shut  
down the hole and prepare to move  
the rig.

**SONNY**

She-hit.

**BUD**

We're being asked to cooperate in a  
matter of national security. Now  
you know exactly as much as I do.  
So just get your gear off and get  
up to control. There's some kind  
of briefing in ten minutes.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. DEEPCORE/COMMAND MODULE**

**25**

The whole rig crew is somehow jammed into the room for the  
video briefing. DeMarco is on the main monitor, with his  
aides and Kirkhill visible b.g.

**DEMARCO**

At 09:22 local time this morning,  
an American nuclear submarine, the  
USS Montana, with 156 men aboard,  
went down 22 miles from here.  
There has been no contact with the  
sub since then. The cause of the

(MORE)

**DEMARCO (CONT'D)**

incident is not known.

PAN AROUND the reactions of the various drill crew members... shocked, hushed, curious.

**DEMARCO**

Your company has authorized the Navy's use of this facility for a rescue operation. The code name is Operation Salvor.

**ONE NIGHT**

You want us to search for the sub?

**DEMARCO**

No. We know where it is. But she's in 2000 feet of water and we can't reach her. We need divers to enter the sub and search for survivors, if any.

Bud's scowl has been deepening since DeMarco started to talk.

**BUD**

Don't you guys have your own stuff for this type of thing?

**DEMARCO**

By the time we get our rescue submersible here the storm front will be right on us. But you can get your rig in under the storm and be on-site in fifteen hours. That makes you our best option right now.

Hippy, born suspicious and recently graduated to paranoid, leans forward...

**HIPPY**

Why should we risk our butts on a job like this?

**KIRKHILL**

I have been authorized to offer you all special-duty bonuses equivalent to three times normal dive pay.

**CATFISH**

Hell, for triple time I'd crawl through razor blades and shower off with lime juice.

**FINLER**

I'm here to tell ya', you could set me on fire and call me names.

**BUD**

Look, I don't know what kind of a deal you guys worked out with the company, but my people are not qualified for this... they're oil workers.

**DEMARCO**

A four-man SEAL team will transfer down to you to supervise the operation.

**BUD**

You can send down whoever you like, but I'm the toolpusher on this rig, and when it comes to the safety of these people, there's me... then there's God. Understand? If things get dicey, I'm pulling the plug.

**KIRKHILL**

I think we're all on the same wavelength, Brigman. Now let's get the wellhead uncoupled, shall we?

**CUT TO:**

**INT. DEEPCORE/COMMAND MODULE AND CORRIDOR**

26

Bud stands beside the hatchway as the others file out toward their tasks. They comment gravely as they pass...

**JAMMER**

When Lindsey finds out about this,  
it's not gonna be a pretty sight.

**ONE NIGHT**

They're going to have to shoot her  
with a tranquilizer gun.

**CUT TO:****EXT. OCEAN -- DAY**

27

A single Navy Sea King churns through the rain under massive thunderheads. The sea below is whipped by the storm.

**INT./EXT. SEA KING**

28

PANNING ALONG BOOTED FEET, four pairs of black military size twelves line up, onto... a pair of Charles Jourdans fives under shapely ankles. WIDER, revealing the four-man team of Navy SEALs. And a slender woman in her early thirties. She's attractive, if a bit hardened, dressed conservatively in a skirt and jacket. Meet LINDSEY. Project Engineer for Deepcore. She's a pain in the ass, but you'll like her. Eventually. She's holding on grimly, sitting crammed in with the SEALs and a bunch of gear, getting tossed around by the storm. The SEALs are dressed alike in black fatigues. They are muscular, finely-tuned and extremely dangerous special-forces types. The leader of the SEAL team, LIEUTENANT COFFEY, makes his way forward to the cockpit.

The pilot is white-knuckling his stick, trying to hold the great beast of a helicopter in position. Through the windshield, the deck of the Benthic Explorer can be seen below, pitching in a violent sea.

**PILOT**

No way I'm putting her down. I  
shouldn't even be flying in this  
shit.



**COFFEY**

(cool)

Just hold it over the deck.

Coffey goes back to the crew deck, moving easily in the bucking craft. He nods to the others SEALS, MONK, WILHITE, and SCHOENICK. In the open side door, Wilhite clips a 100 foot nylon rope to the airframe and throws out the coil. One by one the shoulder the gear-bags, grab the rope, and step out. Lindsey stands swaying in the chopper door, watching the SEALS fast-roping to the deck. One, two, three. Coffey looks at her.

**COFFEY**

You want to be on that ship,  
there's only one way it's going to  
happen.

He's sure she won't go for it. It's his certainty that gets her. She sets her jaw. Opening her purse she takes out a small plastic bag, puts her shoes and purse in the bag, and grips the bag in her teeth. Then grabs the rope and slides down.

**EXT. BENTHIC EXPLORER/HELIPAD****29**

Swinging wildly in the wind like a human pendulum, Lindsey fast-ropes forty feet to the deck. She steps away an instant before Coffey hits behind her. Lindsey crosses the rainswept deck with athletic strides. Her nylons are ruined. An air-crewman in the chopper lowers two additional equipment cases using the rescue sling. The SEALS catch them as they swing radically across the deck. They Navy chopper banks and seems to scurry away before the mounting storm.

**CUT TO:****EXT. OCEAN BOTTOM****30**

BLACKNESS. Then shafts of light become visible, above a ridge of rock. Flatbed appears, trailing two heavy two cables. Behind it, the mass of Deepcore emerges from the darkness, its forward lighting array blazing. Flatbed is towing it like a tug, aided by Deepcore's own mighty stern

thrusters.

**INT. DEEPCORE/CONTROL MODULE 31**

Bud, his feet propped up, uses joystick controls to 'fly' Deepcore, maneuvering against currents and around seafloor obstacles. He is guided by the side-scan sonar display, with Hippy assisting in the sonar shack. Through the front viewport, Flatbed can be seen out ahead.

McBride appears on the bridge monitor, holding a sheet of weather-fax.

**MCBRIDE (on screen)**

Well, it's official, sportsfans.  
They're calling it Hurricane  
Frederick, and it's going to be  
making our lives real interesting  
in a few hours.

**INT. EXPLORER BRIDGE -- DAY 32**

Bud responds via video.

**BUD**

Fred, huh? I don't know.  
Hurricanes should be named after  
women.

McBride looks up as the bridge door opens. Lindsey enters in a blast of wind, wet as a wharf rat and twice as pissed off. Maybe Bud is right.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. DEEPCORE/CONTROL MODULE 33**

Bud is surprised to see Lindsey's face appear on the monitor screen.

**LINDSEY**

I can't believe you let them do  
this!

**BUD**

(unpreturbed, almost  
cheerful)

Hi, Lins. I thought you were in  
Houston.

**LINDSEY**

I was, but I managed to bum a ride  
on the last flight out here. Only  
here isn't where I left it, is it,  
Bud?

**BUD**

Wasn't up to me.

**LINDSEY**

We were that close to proving a  
submersible drilling platform could  
work. We had over seven thousand  
feet of hole down for Chrissake. I  
can't believe you let them grab my  
rig!

**BUD**

Your rig?

**LINDSEY**

My rig. I designed the damn thing.

**BUD**

Yup, and Benthic Petroleum paid for  
it. So as long as they're hold the  
pink slip, I go where they tell me.

**LINDSEY**

You wimp. I had a lot riding on  
this. They bought you... more like  
least rented you cheap--

**BUD**

I'm switching off now.

**LINDSEY**

Virgil, you wiener! You never  
could stand up to fight. You--

Bud hits the switch and the screen goes dead.

**BUD**

Bye.

Hippy looks over him, trying very hard not to crack up.

**HIPPY**

Virgil?

**BUD**

God, I hate that bitch.

**HIPPY**

Yeah, well you never should have married her then.

Bud nods fatalistically.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. EXPLORER DECK/LAUNCH WELL**

**34**

Ten foot waves crash through the launch-well, sending up geysers of spray. Next to the launch-well, crewman have attached a lifting cable to CAB THREE, eighteen feet of ugly yellow submersible. It slams violently in its steel cradle as the drill-ship rolls. Coffey and Schoenick hand the gear bags in to Wilhite and Monk though the hatch under the rear of the submersible.

Lindsey approaches, wearing a borrowed roustabout's coverall.

She looks down at the larger of the two equipment cases brought by the SEALs, lying on the deck. Stenciled on it are the words: F.B.S./DEEP SUIT/MARK IV. Coffey and Schoenick push past her to pick it up.

**LINDSEY**

Let's go, gentlemen! We either launch now or we don't launch.

Coffey looks up in surprise as she nimbly climbs the side of Cab Three and grabs the lifting shackle, circling her raised

hand to signal the crane man.

**LINDSEY**

Take her up, Byron!

Cab Three, with Lindsey riding its back, is pulled up out its cradle and starts to swing violently as Explorer pitches. The submersible is then swung out to the center of the launch well. It sways and gyrates above the furious water below. Lindsey drops into the upper hatch.

**INT. EXPLORER BRIDGE/D.O.C.**

35

Kirkhill leans suddenly over the console to look out the window.

**KIRKHILL**

What the hell is she doing out there? Son of a bitch...

(into microphone)

Lindsey... get out of Cab Three.  
Bates is taking her down.

**INT. CAB THREE**

36



































(MORE)





























