

NEITHER CONFIRM NOR DENY

by

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Based on the book "**The CIA's Greatest Covert Operation**"

by

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TITLE CARD:

"During the early years of the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union had two ways to deploy their nuclear arsenal -- from the ground and from the air. But that changed in the 1960s..."

FADE IN:

EXT./ESTAB. SOVIET NAVAL BASE - PATROPAVLOSK - NIGHT

The middle of nowhere. That's by design -- this is the Headquarters for the Soviet Union's Pacific Fleet.

"February 24, 1968"

Torpedoes and ballistic missiles are loaded onto a 300 foot long Soviet nuclear sub--

-- **The K-129.**

As Soviet sailors head inside, A YOUNG SAILOR lingers, savoring the last cigarette that he'll enjoy for months.

AN OFFICER confiscates the sailor's cigarettes, yells at him to get on the sub. Once he's gone, the Officer lights up a confiscated cigarette.

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD:

"Nuclear-armed subs made it possible to constantly shift the locations of nuclear weapons that could single-handedly wipe out U.S. and Soviet cities..."

EXT. HARBOR - NIGHT

The K-129 descends beneath the water as it leaves the harbor.

INT. BRIDGE - K-129 - LATER

As the sailors go about their business, the RADIOMAN sends an encrypted message:

"Systems Normal. Will report in two weeks."

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD:

"These subs became arguably the most powerful weapons system ever created."

INT. SOVIET NAVAL WATCH COMMAND - DAY

Chyron: "Two Weeks Later... March 8, 1968"

A Young Signalman scans through different radio frequencies, searching for any message from the K-129. Nothing.

CUT TO:

SHOTS OF SOVIET SHIPS -- NAVAL AND CIVILIAN --

-- patrolling the K-129's path in the international waters of the Pacific Ocean. The CAPTAINS radio each other that they're not finding any trace of her.

The SCREEN splits.

The Soviet ships shift to the LEFT HALF.

THE RIGHT HALF shows: **THE US NAVAL TRACKING STATION--**

-- as A YOUNG US SIGNALMAN spins the radio dial, picking up the Soviet Captains' chatter. NAVAL OFFICERS hover next to him.

YOUNG US SIGNALMAN

I've never seen this, where they're talking over open channels so... openly. I think... I think they lost the K-129.

On his superiors' stunned expressions,

DISSOLVE TO:

THE MIDDLE OF THE PACIFIC - DAY & NIGHT

Over the next months, the Soviet ships slowly disappear one by one -- giving up the search. And when the last one vanishes,

THE CAMERA LOWERS BENEATH THE OCEAN, until it finds --

-- "A FISH."

Not a real one. This one is **an aluminum mini-sub** full of audio-video surveillance gear, including a camera that is capturing photos of the ocean's floor.

The "fish" is being towed by--

-- **THE USS HALIBUT.**

The Navy's spy sub. It's distinguished by a giant hump on the front of it, affectionately known as--

-- **THE BAT CAVE.**

Filled with all sorts of hi-tech equipment, including --

-- **A DARK ROOM.**

A SAILOR shuffles through thousands of the "fish's" photos.

Stops. Can barely make out what looks like, what could be...

... **A SUB'S SAIL** (the tower-like structure on the top of the sub).

The sailor jumps up, flings open the darkroom door, races out--

-- and runs into a closed door because his eyes haven't adjusted to the light.

CUT TO:

EXT. / ESTAB. THE PENTAGON - DAY

"February 1, 1969"

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME TIME

Chyrons identify:

- **CAPTAIN JIM BRADLEY (Naval Intelligence)**. He's the Navy's Chief Spy. Mid 30s. His coiled-spring personality at odds with his genteel Southern accent.

- **DR. JOHN PINA CRAVEN (Navy's top scientist)**. And smartest -- according to him.

They stand in front of easels that are filled with a photo collage of the K-129.

They're excited; the smartest kids in class presenting their latest science report to their favorite teacher. The "teacher" is--

-- **REAR ADMIRAL THOMAS MOORER (Chief of Naval Operations)**.

Admiral Moorer (40s) is a towering and voluble personality. Rarely have to guess what's on his mind.

REAR ADMIRAL MOORER

(comes closer)

Look at it! Just sitting there, waiting for us to come and get her.

(looks back)

And the Russians have no idea we've found her?

CRAVEN

(shakes head "no")

Speaking of retrieval, sir... we've come up with a plan.

Craven places photos and drawings of their retrieval plan on the easels. Moorer leans in...

CRAVEN

We'll use a remote controlled mini-sub to go down to the target--

(flips the drawings)

-- then we'll employ small explosive charges to gain access to the sub--

REAR ADMIRAL MOORER

Wait, what? You're gonna blow a hole in the sub?

CRAVEN

Just a small one to gain access--

REAR ADMIRAL MOORER

But I want the whole damn sub! Those Commie bastards got the whole damn *Pueblo*!

Craven and Bradley exchange looks as they face every military officer's worst fear -- how to explain a plan to somebody with a lower IQ, but a higher rank.

BRADLEY

Sir, the *Pueblo* was a surface ship that was boarded by the North Koreans. This is a sub three miles down.

CRAVEN

It's impractical, if not impossible, to bring a sub up from those depths.

REAR ADMIRAL MOORER
Well, what is it? Impractical or impossible?

BRADLEY
Sir, I think what John is trying to say is that the best way for us to proceed is to remove selected material--

REAR ADMIRAL MOORER
"Selected material?!" We've got a chance to pull off the biggest intelligence coup of the Cold War and you want to think small?
(glares at them)
I want everything... Nuclear missiles, logs, cryptographic codebooks. I don't want bacon, gentlemen. I want the whole damn pig!

As he storms out, he tells an AIDE:

REAR ADMIRAL MOORER
Get me some time with Dick Helms at the Agency.
(mutters under his breath)
"Selected materials"

CUT TO:

EXT. / ESTAB. UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA CAMPUS - DAY (MAY 1969)

Students carry signs protesting Vietnam and Nixon ("*Stop the War*"; "*Tricky Dick Has Pulled His Last Trick*") around the Thomas Jefferson statue in front of the Rotunda.

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT - SAME TIME

Empty except for walls of chalkboards and one person...

DAVE SHARP. Late 30s, but still gets checked out by the female undergrads. His dry sense of humor (mostly) masks his intensity.

The chalkboards are filled with equations. Hours, if not days, of work. Dave stares at them...

... then erases it all. Not angry, just methodical.

He restarts, chalking numbers and equations.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Christ Almighty! I thought you
were supposed to be smart!

Dave turns, is stunned to be facing --

-- **JOHN PARANGOSKY. (Assistant Deputy Director of Science & Technology for the CIA.)**

"JP" to friends and foes (often the same person). Mid 40s. Dressed, as always, in a tailored suit. He's short; with a physique that betrays his strong affection for French cuisine. A lifelong bachelor, the CIA is his wife and mistress.

JP
I've got a job for you.

On Dave's stunned expression,

CUT TO:

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

JP and Dave sit at a table in the back. JP sits like a Mafia Don, his back to the wall.

DAVE
(disappointed)
... But I don't know anything about
ocean engineering.

JP shakes his head, annoyed (his default attitude).

JP
Nobody at the Company does. But
the Chief of Naval Operations wants
us to come up with a plan to
recover the sub, so here we are--

JP stops talking as a WAITRESS deposits a couple greasy hamburgers. He starts to speak, then notices some college kids at the next table.

DAVE SHARP
I don't think they're Soviet spies. I
just think they're trying to get laid.

JP
Soviet spies don't like to get laid?

DAVE SHARP

Don't you have anything else for me? Aerospace or satellites?

JP

You wanted those you should've done a better job on Oxcart--

DAVE SHARP

That wasn't my fault.

JP

(hands up in surrender)
I acknowledge that I might have acted rashly by firing you. That's why I'm here--

DAVE SHARP

(laughs)
No, you're here because nobody else is desperate or stupid enough to take this job.

JP

(pushes burger away)
I'm sure as hell not here for the food.

DAVE SHARP

I can't do it. I'm on tenure track--

JP

(scoffs)
You know what they say about teachers?

DAVE SHARP

That they're doing noble work?

JP

Those that can, do. Those that can't, teach.

JP grins as his target finds its mark.

JP

Listen, we both know you're going to do this because it's your way back in.

(stands, puts coat on)

(MORE)

JP (CONT'D)

But even more than that, if you pull this off, you'll prove to everyone that you're the most brilliant engineer in the Company, that you're not that stupid hick from the sticks of Kentucky. Isn't that what your teacher said?
(off Dave's look, smiles)
God, I love psych evals.

As he walks off:

JP

See you Monday.

DAVE SHARP

I'm not doing it.

JP ignores Dave, knows he's got him.

CUT TO:

EXT./ESTAB. SUBURBAN HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING

David pulls up in his boxy Chevy Impala, to what, up until a couple months ago, was his house. As he walks up the driveway, sees his son **WILLIAM** (10) shooting baskets. He's his father's son -- his shot is efficient and repeatable.

DAVE SHARP

'Member, keep that elbow in.

William runs over, hugs his dad.

DAVE SHARP

Ready for a big weekend?

WILLIAM

Does a bear crap in the woods?

Dave laughs; the one good thing about only seeing your kid on the weekend is that they constantly surprise you.

DAVE SHARP

Where'd you hear that?

WILLIAM

School.

DAVE SHARP

You're gonna love military school.
(they smile)
Your mom inside?

William nods. As Dave walks in, calls out to William.

DAVE SHARP
Hey... a bear craps anywhere he wants.

As William grins,

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Dave walks in, greets his ex-wife GAIL (30s; childhood sweetheart from Kentucky) with a kiss on the cheek.

DAVE SHARP
Thanks for keeping him last night.

GAIL
(nods)
I needed to get my clock cleaned in Monopoly anyway. I hope he doesn't grow up to be a banker.

DAVE SHARP
My money's on philosopher.
(off her confused look)
Inside joke.

Gail stands back, appraising Dave.

GAI
What's going on? You're like vibrating--

She realizes that can only mean one thing. And she's not happy about it:

GAIL
What's JP want?

He thinks about denying it, but she knows him too well.

DAVE SHARP
It's just brainstorming something for a couple months. Tops.
(beat)
I haven't said "yes".

She scoffs, wipes chalk dust out of his hair.

GAIL
 Spend all night in your lab, Dave?
 Thinking on this thing you haven't
 said "yes" to?
 (no response)
 And I'm sure it's so part-time that
 it'll allow you to keep teaching.

DAVE SHARP
 I'm not a professor.

GAIL
 Really? 'Cause your paycheck says
 otherwise.

DAVE SHARP
 This is my way back in.

GAIL
 (laughs)
 Back into what? Twenty hour days?
 Never seeing your family? Stress-
 induced health problems?

DAVE SHARP
 It's not gonna be like Oxcart.

GAIL
 Good. Because you don't have your
 marriage to sacrifice anymore.

She glances outside at William -- the one relationship that
 he still has to sacrifice.

GAIL
 You guys should get going. Enjoy
 what little time you have left--

DAVE SHARP
 Gail--

GAIL
 I meant this weekend.

She did (and didn't). As she walks out, Dave calls after
 her:

DAVE SHARP
 I'm just thinking about it.

Like JP, she doesn't look back. Knows that he's doing it.

CUT TO:

EXT. GENERIC OFFICE BUILDING - TYSON'S CORNER, VA - DAY

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - AKA "THINK TANK" - SAME TIME

Dave and his team of eight engineers. Watching--

DR. EARNEST RUGGLES. Late 20s. Optimistic and excitable -- he's a golden retriever in human form. Living out his childhood dream of working for the CIA (even if it is as an engineer).

Ruggles enthusiastically pitches an idea (with diagrams):

RUGGLES

... we use mini-sub^s to attach
booster rockets to the sub, which
will raise it up.

He mimes the sub being raised theatrically.

DR. JACK SPARKMAN (40s; a chain-smoking cynic) interjects:

SPARKMAN

(sarcastic and skeptical)
Like Lazarus?

RUGGLES

(not getting either)
Exactly.

Everybody looks at Dave, who rolls a mini-basketball between his hands as he thinks.

DAVE SHARP

Interesting. But even if we could
get it to the surface, how could we
keep it up there?

RUGGLES

Uh, I'm working on that.

SPARKMAN

I know!
(they all look at him)
Jesus will keep it on the surface.

RUGGLES

(harsh profanity for him)
Screw you, Jack.

SPARKMAN

That's religious persecution.

RUGGLES
You know, at least, I'm trying
here.

SPARKMAN
Hey, I've got a lot of great ideas.

RUGGLES
Name one!

SPARKMAN
(thinks, then:)
I think we should break for lunch.

The other engineers all cheer. Sparkman stands, takes a bow.

CUT TO:

MCDONALDS WRAPPERS

Cover the conference table. Dave and team sit in silence.

CUT TO:

PIZZA BOXES

Cover the table. Dave and team ARGUE at full volume.

CUT TO:

CHINESE TO-GO CONTAINERS

On the table. Complete SILENCE. Hit (yet) another wall.

"Three months (and lots of take-out) later"

Sparkman balances chopsticks on his nose. Ruggles stares at the ceiling tiles.

JP (O.S.)
What the hell is going on here?!

JP strides in, aghast at the inactivity.

JP
Besides nothing?!
(to Ruggles)
How many?

RUGGLES
How many... what, sir?

JP
Ceiling tiles! How many god damn
ceiling tiles are up there!

RUGGLES
Uh... a hundred-and-thirty-nine...
and a half--

JP
Great! Thank you! I'm sure the American
people will be happy to know that after
sixteen weeks, some of the country's
greatest engineering minds finally
figured out that there are a hundred-and-
thirty-nine ceiling tiles in an office
building in Tyson's Corner, Virginia!

A beat.

RUGGLES
And a half.

JP
What?

RUGGLES
(a hesitation)
A hundred-and-a-thirty-nine and a half.

JP doesn't even know what to say to that. Turns to Dave.

JP
You might want to start shopping
for one of those sport coats with
patches on the elbows.

He storms out. Silence. Sparkman points to the ceiling.

SPARKMAN
That's actually more like two-thirds.

The engineers all crack up, minus Dave -- he's worried that
JP's right.

CUT TO:

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - VIRGINIA BEACH PIER - DAY

Families stroll in, ready for a fun Saturday. David and
William are among them. But one thing makes them different:

Dave carries a stack of thick technical textbooks.

DAVE SHARP
Alright, what are the rules again?

WILLIAM
Check in every twenty minutes.

Dave hands him a ten dollar bill.

DAVE SHARP
And?

WILLIAM
And don't tell Mom you worked.

Dave forks over another ten dollar bill.

PICNIC AREA - LATER

David's engrossed in one of his books. Suddenly, he looks up. Checks his watch. Realizes William hasn't checked in.

He jumps up, but he doesn't panic. Instead he goes to the entrance and starts working his way through the park methodically -- front to back.

DAVE SHARP
(calling out)
William! William!

Nothing. Now he starts to panic.

DAVE SHARP
William!--

He stops, sees him in the Penny Arcade. William's oblivious, engrossed in an arcade claw game.

Dave goes to him. Kisses the top of his head. Watches as William manipulates the joystick, lining up the claw above the largest stuffed animal.

He hits the button, the claw drops, and scoops up its prize.

On Dave's open-mouthed stare,

MATCH CUT TO:

JP'S OPEN-MOUTHED STARE

directed at Dave. They're in **JP'S CIA OFFICE.**

JP

A god damn kids arcade game?!
That's your brilliant idea.

DAVE SHARP

The math pencils out--

JP

Well, maybe we need a new pencil.
(beat)
Or better yet, a new lead engineer.

DAVE SHARP

This is the best idea. The only
real idea that we've been able to
come up with after six months.

He waits for JP to bite his head off. When he doesn't:

DAVE SHARP

There's an ocean drilling company
out in LA, Global Marine. They
have the technology to do this.
Their chief naval engineer, John
Graham, he's the best in the field.

JP hesitates for a beat, then reluctantly:

JP

Alright, we'll go out and see what
they have to say.

He waves Dave away, but Dave doesn't leave.

JP

What?

DAVE SHARP

There's just one problem.

off JP's expression,

CUT TO:

EXT. / ESTAB. ART DECO OFFICE BUILDING - LOS ANGELES - DAY

"Global Marine Development Headquarters"

INT. OFFICE - GLOBAL MARINE - SAME TIME

CURTIS CROOKE (40s) is dressed casually with longish hair --
the epitome of California living.

He's the VP of Global Marine -- smart enough to talk engineering with his engineers, charming enough to convince potential clients to write the company large checks...

... which is what he's doing right now.

CURTIS

(to TWO POTENTIAL CLIENTS)

... our technology is cutting edge--

SECRETARY (OVER INTERCOM)

Excuse me, Mr. Crooke. But I have a gentleman who is saying he needs to see you immediately about a job.

CURTIS

Tell him I'm with clients and that I'll get back to him.

(to Clients)

I did not tell her to say that.

(they all laugh)

As I was saying--

SECRETARY (OVER INTERCOM)

He won't give his name.

CURTIS

Tell him to call back after lunch.

(to clients)

Where was I?--

SECRETARY (OVER INTERCOM)

(little concerned)

Sir! That man, he's on his way up--

POTENTIAL CLIENT

(also concerned)

Perhaps we should reschedule.

CUT TO:

CURTIS' OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

JP and Dave walk in. JP immediately shuts the door.

CURTIS

(annoyed)

Who are you?

JP ignores him, goes over to the windows. Pulls the blinds.

CURTIS
 (buzzes intercom)
 Sarah, call security--

JP
 I'm John Parangosky. And this is
 Dave Sharp. We work for the CIA.

CURTIS
 (into intercom)
 Forget about security.
 (to JP)
 The CIA, as in the Central
 Intelligence Agency?

JP
 No. The Culinary Institute of America.
 How were your eggs this morning?
 (hands Curtis a piece of paper)
 This is an NDA that says you're
 committing treason if you divulge
 anything I'm about to tell you.

Curtis is unsure whether to sign it. Curiosity wins out.
 After he signs:

JP
 How's John Graham's drinking?

CURTIS
 (thrown)
 How'd--
 (realizes who JP works for)
 John hasn't had a drink in eight
 years--

JP
 How do you know that?

CURTIS
 Because he told me.

JP scoffs. Curtis gets offended.

CURTIS
 And because in the eight years he's
 been here I've never seen him
 exhibit any signs of being under
 the influence of anything other
 than nicotine and caffeine. That's
 how I know.

JP thinks for a beat, then hits the intercom.

JP
Sarah, get John Graham in here.

Curtis is getting annoyed at the questions and JP's presumption.

CURTIS
(points to NDA)
I signed this thing. So how about telling me why the hell you chased fifty million dollars of business out of my office?

SECRETARY (OVER INTERCOM)
They say he's out.

JP (INTO INTERCOM)
It's three PM. Where is he?

CURTIS
He's probably down at the shipyard--

SECRETARY (OVER INTERCOM)
They said he's sailing.

*

JP looks at Curtis.

CURTIS
He likes to work out problems on his boat.

DAVE SHARP
Well, at least he's not at a bar.

JP doesn't see the humor.

CURTIS
We can always do this another time--

JP
(sitting down)
We'll wait.

Exactly what Curtis was afraid of.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN GRAHAM'S OFFICE - GLOBAL MARINE - DAY

JOHN GRAHAM (50s) walks into his office, clutching a cigarette in one hand, a coffee in the other. A one-two punch that he's perfected so well that he can drink the coffee without removing the cigarette.

John's brilliant, but gruff. He graduated top of his class at MIT. (And didn't receive one vote for "Most Personable.")

John goes over to his drafting table, which is covered with plans for his latest ship, but also with napkins and odd bits of paper on which he's jotted down notes or drawings.

His secretary **CANDY GILLETTE** (late 20s) comes in. Tough and pretty (and there are many men at work who've made the mistake of reversing those two attributes).

Her pay-stub might read "secretary" but she sees her job as John Graham's protector.

CANDY

Curtis has been calling non-stop,
says he needs you up in his office
as soon as you get back.

JOHN GRAHAM

Uh-huh.

He doesn't look up. Continues drawing.

INT. CURTIS' OFFICE - NIGHT

John Graham strolls in, notices JP and Dave.

JP

How was your sail?

JOHN GRAHAM

Delightful.
(to Curtis)
Who the hell is this?

JP

We're from the CIA. Sign this.

As JP hands him the papers, he sniffs at Graham, seeing if he smells of alcohol. Detecting nothing, JP hands him a pen.

Graham looks at Curtis, who nods. Graham signs the papers.

Curtis finally gets to ask the question he's been dying to ask for the past four hours:

CURTIS

So, how can Global Marine help you gentlemen?

JP

We need you to vet a...
 (still doesn't like this)
 ... plan that we've come up with.

JOHN GRAHAM

(surprised)

Why the hell's the CIA's getting
 into the ocean drilling business?

DAVE SHARP

We're not. We're going to pick up
 a nuclear-armed Russian sub from
 the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

As Curtis and John Graham exchange a look of disbelief,

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CURTIS' OFFICE - LATER

Dave finishing his briefing. Leans back. Waits for John and Curtis to recognize his brilliance:

JOHN GRAHAM

It'll never work--

JP

Jesus!

DAVE SHARP

It will. The math works.

JOHN GRAHAM

Yeah, sure if your assumptions are
 made without the benefit of a day
 spent at sea.

He waits for Dave to contradict him, but of course he can't.

Dave gets the sense that, for the first time in a long time, he's not the smartest guy in the room.

JOHN GRAHAM

(begrudgingly)

Though the underlying idea, a grunt
 lift, is sound. In fact, it's the
 only possible way to do it.

The begrudging tone is because he has a hard time when a great idea doesn't originate in his brain.

DAVE SHARP

(brightens)

Okay, so what would we need to change?

JOHN GRAHAM

Alright, first off, you'd need pipe string that has a cross section of...

He pulls out a a bar napkin from his pocket. Starts jotting down computations on it.

JP

(sotto to Dave)

A bar napkin?--

JOHN GRAHAM

-- of about 160 square inches. Problem is that'd have to be custom-built.

DAVE SHARP

Okay. What else?

JOHN GRAHAM

None of our ships can handle that pipe string or the weight you're gonna be pulling up.

JP

Whose can?

JOHN GRAHAM

Nobody. You're going to have to build a ship.

INT. CAR - LOS ANGELES - LATER

Post-meeting. Dave and JP sit in the back of a car. Dave is excited; sees the meeting as a win. JP stews. Then:

JP

When you brief ExCom, let's not bring up the fact that Graham's an alcoholic--

DAVE SHARP

(taken aback)

I'm briefing them?

JP

(laughs)

You think I'm gonna get up there and say we wanna build the world's biggest claw game?

Dave doesn't care. He's thrilled to be back in the game, in the big leagues. JP sees this.

JP

Don't get too excited. I'm pretty sure you'll be back making googley-eyes at coeds in no time.

(mutters)

"Build a god damn ship"

CUT TO:

EXT. / ESTAB. THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

"Excom Meeting - October 30, 1970"

INT. BATHROOM - THE WHITE HOUSE - SAME TIME

"Fifteen minutes before meeting"

Dave's hands grip the sink as he stares into the mirror.

He's sweating, his heart races.

Takes some deep breaths, ready or not...

CUT TO:

INT. CABINET ROOM - WHITE HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Dave, JP, along with **DICK HELMS (CIA Director)** and **CARL DUCKETT (Assistant Director for Science & Technology)** present their plans to--

-- **THE EXCOM**, a committee that advises the president on all intelligence matters. It's populated by some of the most powerful people in the country, and chaired by arguably the most powerful -- **HENRY KISSINGER**.

As everyone drinks coffee and munches on pastries, Dave stands, makes the presentation with a slide-show. (Dave is sharp, confident. No trace of the guy in the bathroom.)

DAVE SHARP

... Global Marine will build the ship.

SLIDE -- a mock-up of the ship John Graham came up with. And it's the strangest ship you've ever seen -- it has a huge moon pool in the middle (essentially a hole in the middle of its bottom) and a giant derrick in the middle.

ADMIRAL MOORER

Impressive.

Moorer's title is chyroned -- **Chief of Naval Operations**. But then "**former**" appears in front of his title. Then his new title is chyroned -- **Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff**.

Other participants are not as impressed. Especially--

-- **ADMIRAL ELMO ZUMWALT (Current Chief of Naval Operations)**. He's mid 40s and a Navy man through-and-through (he's rumored to hum "Anchors Aweigh" when he makes love to his wife).

He puts down his coffee mid-sip -- *what the hell kind of ship is that?*

DAVE SHARP

Lockheed, who we've had great success with in the past, will build the barge and then construct the Capture Vehicle in the barge.

SLIDES -- A huge BARGE (it's covered; resembles a floating soundstage) and the CAPTURE VEHICLE (CV), which does look like a giant version of a kids' claw game.

NOTE: All the slides show how incredibly unique, cool, and complicated this heist will be.

DAVE SHARP

The capture vehicle, enclosed in the barge, will then be towed to Catalina Island, where it will be submerged...

SLIDES -- show the barge submerge. Then its roof retracts.

DAVE SHARP

... The capture vehicle will then be transferred into the ship, invisible to the outside world.

ZUMWALT'S HORROR -- increases with each passing slide.

SLIDES -- as the bottom of the ship hovers over the open barge. The ship's bottom opens and the CV is transferred into it. It's an impressive magic trick.

DAVE SHARP

Based on meteorological data, we'll have an eight week period in the late summer months where the seas will be calm enough for us to operate.

(MORE)

DAVE SHARP (CONT'D)

Automated positioning system will keep the ship in a fixed position as the capture vehicle is lowered, via custom-built pipe string, three miles down to the K-129.

SLIDES -- as the Capture Vehicle (CV) hovers over the sub; the CV's sixteen giant tines (each 60 feet long) spread out.

DAVE SHARP

The tines will then be driven into the seabed and enclose the sub.

(beat)

At which point, it will be raised up into the ship's moon pool... completely invisible to prying eyes.

ON ZUMWALT, still not believing his eyes.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ZUMWALT'S OFFICE - FLASH FORWARD

Craven and Bradley's eyes nearly pop as Admiral Zumwalt debriefs them about the meeting.

CAPTAIN JIM BRADLEY

They think they can keep a ship's location fixed?! In those seas?!

CRAVEN

If that pipe breaks-- which at three miles, it will-- it'll rip the ship apart.

Zumwalt nods along. In total agreement.

CAPTAIN JIM BRADLEY

Jesus Christ, have they lost their damn minds?!

CUT BACK TO:

THE EXCOM MEETING

Most are wondering the same thing.

ASST SECDEF PACKARD

The first question I have is how much is this operation going to cost the taxpayer?

CUT TO:

INT. ZUMWALT'S OFFICE - FLASH FORWARD

As Craven reacts to the budget:

JOHN CRAVEN

Three hundred and fifty million dollars?!

CUT BACK TO:

THE EXCOM MEETING

Everyone digests that number.

ADMIRAL ZUMWALT

Does the CIA even have the funds for this?

DUCKETT

No. In fact, it's close to our entire annual budget. But I've spoken with Senators Stennis and Chafee about alternative sources...

CUT TO:

INT. ZUMWALT'S OFFICE - FLASH FORWARD

Craven and Bradley stare at their boss -- somehow even more shocked.

CAPTAIN JIM BRADLEY

-- Our budget?! They want the Navy to pay for it?!

Zumwalt nods.

CRAVEN

Let me get this straight. The CIA wants to build a ship, even though they've never built one. And they want us, the US Navy -- whose job is to literally build and operate ships, to pay for it?!

ZUMWALT

And that's not the craziest part.

Craven and Bradley exchange a look -- *how can this get any crazier?*

CUT BACK TO:

EXCOM MEETING

JP's standing, addressing the meeting.

JP

... the Russians will naturally wonder what a ship is doing anchored for a month in the general area where their sub went down.
Walt Logan--

JP gestures to **WALT LOGAN** (30s, officious), who sits with lower-level functionaries against the wall.

JP

-- will be in charge of managing the white-world story that this is an ocean mining operation.

SECRETARY OF STATE

What the heck is ocean mining?

Walt stands up.

WALT LOGAN

Well, sir, it's essentially digging for minerals on the ocean floor.

ASST SECDEF PACKARD

And Global Marine does this?

WALT LOGAN

No, sir. They don't. Actually, nobody does. It doesn't exist; one of these things that's always a couple years away.

ASST SECDEF PACKARD

So Global Marine's getting into the non-existent ocean mining business?

WALT LOGAN

(cagey)

Well, not exactly.

ASST SECDEF PACKARD
 (annoyed)
 What exactly does "not exactly"
 mean?

WALT LOGAN
 Global Marine's too small of a
 company to do it on their own, and
 they're also a public one, so
 investors would have to be
 notified. And we obviously want to
 stay within the law--

Laughter at the CIA worrying about staying within the law.

WALT LOGAN
 But we've approached a company that's
 a perfect fit -- private, large enough
 to conceivably fund this, and the
 owner has a reputation for...
 unconventional behavior.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ZUMWALT'S OFFICE - FLASH FORWARD

BRADLEY / CRAVEN
 Howard fucking Hughes?!

They sit there, stunned.

CRAVEN
 (curious)
 They actually met Howard Hughes?

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DESERT INN - LAS VEGAS - FLASHBACK

Curtis Crooke sits across from three men who Hughes' inner
 circle. They're collectively known as **THE MORMON MAFIA**.

CURTIS CROOKE
 ... so Hughes Tool Company would
 only be the buyer of record--

The PHONE rings. **BILL GAY** (head of the Mormon Mafia) silences
 Curtis with a finger, picks up the phone, listens for a beat,
 then hangs up.

BILL GAY
Hughes Tool Company will need to
build the pipe string.

Curtis surreptitiously looks around, wondering how Hughes is listening in.

CURTIS CROOKE
That shouldn't be a problem--

The phone RINGS again. Bill answers, listens, hangs up.

BILL GAY
And the ship has to be called the
Hughes Glomar Explorer, not the
Glomar Hughes Explorer.

CURTIS CROOKE
(leans in, smiles)
Is he next door or does he have the
room bugged?

Bill and the Mormon Mafia don't crack a smile.

BILL GAY
Who?

CUT BACK TO:

THE EXCOM MEETING

Skepticism has been replaced by disbelief -- *a custom-built ship, \$350 million, Howard fucking Hughes?!*

ASST SECDEF PACKARD
(diplomatically)
I think there are just too many
unknowns, too many variables.

SECRETARY OF STATE
(sotto)
And too many dollars.

Murmurs of assent from other members. Zumwalt seems relieved. The CIA team is disappointed -- except for Dave, who is crushed.

Everyone looks at Kissinger, assuming he'll drive the stake through the heart. Then--

BAM! A hand slams down on the conference table. Belongs to:

REAR ADMIRAL MOORER

What the hell are we doing?! We have a chance to land a decisive blow in the Cold War, to finally tilt the balance of power toward good for good!

(beat)

Is it bold? Yes! Thank God! Because gentlemen, we're dealing with an enemy who is bold enough to have the North Koreans commandeer one of our ships. In international waters!

(looks around)

Is it expensive? Hell yes! But if you think it's too expensive, then I ask you, how much would you be willing to pay to get a fully armed Soviet submarine?!

Silence. Then:

KISSINGER

(inscrutable)

I'll take it to the President.

EXT. HALLWAY - WHITE HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

The CIA team exits the meeting.

DUCKETT

What do you think?

JP

(shrugs)

No clue. But if I'm ever on trial for murder, I want Moorer giving the closing argument.

They laugh.

CUT TO:

A TOP SECRET FOLDER

... as it's opened. The title page reads: "**PROJECT AZORIAN.**" It's stamped "**APPROVED.**"

"November 15, 1970"

PRELAP the sound of a RINGING TELEPHONE.

DAVE SHARP (O.S.)

Hello?

CUT TO:

INT. DAVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Spartans would consider the apartment minimalist. Dave dribbles a basketball, phone to his ear. (**INTERCUT** with JP at his home, making an elaborate sandwich).

JP

Congratulations. You convinced them to fund the most audacious covert operation the United States has ever attempted...

Dave pumps his fist.

JP

... audacious enough to cost anyone and everyone associated with it their jobs if it doesn't work.

DAVE SHARP

Don't worry, JP. I'm not going to let you down.

JP

Thank you for that reassurance. I'm sure that I can throw out my sleeping pills now.

JP takes a big bite of his sandwich.

JP

(through full mouth)

The one wrinkle is that the Navy wants to run the recovery. Says we don't know the difference between the stern and the bow. And since I had to look it up, can't argue with them. So we're going to build the ship and the components, test them, and then hand it over.

DAVE SHARP

When do we start?

JP

You move out to LA next week.

DAVE SHARP (INTO PHONE)
 Me? JP, I told you, I can't
 relocate--

JP
 And I don't trust that drunk John
 Graham. So I want someone I do
 trust with their boots on the
 ground out there. And if it's not
 you, Professor, let me know so I
 can find somebody else.

As Dave agonizes over the decision:

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - GAIL'S HOUSE - DAY

Taking a break from their hoops game, Dave informs his son William about his decision. William's now 12 -- he still sees his father as his hero, but the worship is not unconditional.

DAVE SHARP
 ... it actually won't be that
 different. I'll be coming back
 every other weekend--

WILLIAM
 I'll see you half as often as I see
 you now. How is that not
 different?

DAVE SHARP
 I don't like it either, and I
 wouldn't have to go if it wasn't
 important. You understand that,
 right?

William nods. He does get that.

WILLIAM
 How long will you be gone?

DAVE SHARP
 (long beat)
 A couple years.

On William's face falling...

CUT TO:

INT. LA-BOUND JET - NIGHT

Dark except for a solitary overhead light... Dave's.

Dave stares at a photo of he and William on the basketball court. Smiling, arms around each other.

Dave puts the photo in his wallet -- the time for sentimentality over -- and pulls out some work.

CUT TO:

EXT./ESTAB. GENERIC OFFICE BUILDING - EL SEGUNDO, CA - DAY**"Summa Corp Deep Ocean Mining Headquarters"**

A taxi pulls up. Dave, Sparkman, and Ruggles emerge. Under Dave a chyron appears with his cover title: **"Director of Recovery - Summa Corp Deep Ocean Mining"**.

INT. SUMMA CORP HQ- MINUTES LATER

The public office of the cover story. Filled with EMPLOYEES who are "building" the world's first ocean mining company.

Dave and group are led through the office by a burly mustachioed guy in his late 40s. This is **STEVE CRAIG**.

Steve's former LAPD and a current CIA contractor / fixer. His could-give-two-shits attitude separates him from the CIA lifers.

A chyron gives us his cover title: **"Office Manager - Summa Corp Deep Ocean Mining"**.

STEVE CRAIG

So how was the flight?

RUGGLES

Ah, the turbulence over the Rockies was awful. And we were fighting the jet stream the whole way. And--

STEVE CRAIG

Yeah, don't really care. Just making small talk to cover the walk.

He leads them into A REMOTE OFFICE.

STEVE CRAIG

And here's our good friend Harvey Wallbanger.

He pushes open a couple metal storage cabinets, revealing a secret staircase.

RUGGLES

Whoa... that is so cool.

Sparkman shakes his head at Ruggles' gee-whiz attitude. But as the others head down the staircase, Sparkman lingers and checks out the hidden passageway.

SPARKMAN

(under his breath)

Bitchin'.

As the group heads down the staircase, Steve and Dave's real jobs are chyroned: "**Head of Security - Azorian Program**" and "**Director of Recovery - Azorian Program**".

They enter an unmarked door, revealing --

THE HIDDEN OFFICE SPACE.

"Azorian West Coast Program Office"

Steve gives the quick tour. Points to VAULTED ROOM.

STEVE CRAIG

Secure comms in there, including the Donald Duck phone.

RUGGLES

Why do they call it the Donald Duck phone?

STEVE CRAIG

Because it makes your voice sound like Mickey Mouse.

RUGGLES

Then why do they call it the Donald Duck phone?

STEVE CRAIG

(sotto)

Wow. I'm feeling even better than I was yesterday about you guys getting that sub.

(shakes head; points)

Bathroom's there-- gotta jiggle the handle.

DAVE SHARP

Where's John Graham's office?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Down the hall, but he's at the
shipyard.

Candy walks up, introduces herself.

CANDY
Hi, I'm Candy, his secretary.

STEVE CRAIG
And his tamer. But most
importantly, Candy's the organizer
of our weekly volleyball game.

CANDY
Well, we all have to do our part to
keep our part to keep the world
safe for democracy.
(scrutinizes Dave)
So you're Dave Sharp?
(he nods)
Huh. You don't look like a total
asshole.

SPARKMAN
First impressions are often
misleading.

Everyone but Dave laughs.

CANDY
Nice to meet you all.

As she walks away:

SPARKMAN
I love California.

STEVE CRAIG
I'll get you set up in your offices
and then, Dave, I got a little
surprise for you.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - WCPO - DAY

Dave and his team admire a convertible Corvette.

STEVE CRAIG

JP wanted to get you a Pinto to save money, but I convinced him that the head of a Hughes division wouldn't be caught dead driving a Pinto.

Dave climbs in. Turns it on. Revs the engine.

SPARKMAN

What do I get?

STEVE CRAIG

Which one are you again?

SPARKMAN

Jack Sparkman.

STEVE CRAIG

Oh yeah... you got a Pinto.

Everyone but Sparkman laughs.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Curtis addresses a large group of PRESS, most of them who chat amongst themselves and wait in line for an opulent seafood buffet.

CURTIS CROOKE

... On behalf of everyone at Global Marine, I just want to say how excited we are to be working with our new partner, Howard Hughes, on his latest adventure.

It gets pin-drop silent for a beat, then the reporters EXPLODE with questions about Hughes.

CUT TO:

INT. ZUMWALT'S OFFICE - THE PENTAGON - DAY

Zumwalt reads an article in the *Washington Post*.

ZUMWALT

(reading)

"... Howard Hughes latest, and some would say craziest undertaking, was revealed.

(MORE)

ZUMWALT (CONT'D)

With a seafood buffet meant to highlight the riches he hopes to pull from the ocean floor--"

Zumwalt puts down the paper, looks over at Bradley and Craven. Nearly explodes:

ZUMWALT

They're using our money for seafood?!

CUT TO:

INT. CIA DINING ROOM - DAY

As JP, Walt, and Duckett eat lunch they flip through newspapers and magazines trumpeting Hughes' latest adventure.

In the photos, there's a scaled-down version of the machine that Howard Hughes is going to use to scoop up manganese nodules (it looks like a giant vacuum cleaner).

MATCH CUT TO:

ONE OF THOSE ARTICLES

being cut out of the newspaper with an exacto knife. The knife wielder is:

ANATOLIY SHTYROV (40s; Analyst -- Underwater Espionage for the Soviet Union's Pacific Fleet). Shtyrov chomps an apple as he pins the article to a BULLETIN BOARD.

Shtyrov is an iconoclast. His nickname is "Moodozvon" (Russian for "wacko"). And he's probably the smartest person in the Russian Navy, but his inability / refusal to play office politics has guaranteed that he will never get a dacha or earn a promotion.

WIDEN TO REVEAL that the bulletin board is filled with other articles about the venture. Words are highlighted in various articles: "North Pacific", "ocean floor", "one-of-a-kind ship".

Shtyrov steps back, stares at the board. As he finishes the apple (core and all), go--

-- OUTSIDE SHTYROV'S OFFICE WINDOW

His is the only light on in the building. Like Dave Sharp, Shtyrov's also a bit of an obsessive.

DISSOLVE TO:

"June 1971"

INT. ANTEROOM OF JOHN GRAHAM'S OFFICE - WCPO - DAY

Dave waits outside with Candy, John's secretary. They can hear John ARGUING with somebody in his office.

DAVE SHARP
Who's he meeting with?

CANDY
His eleven o'clock.

He gives her a look -- *that's helpful.*

DAVE SHARP
Well, would you do me a favor and tell him that his twelve o'clock would prefer not to become his one o'clock?

CANDY
Oh, he knows you're here.

Annoyed, he taps his foot on the floor. Candy can't help but smile.

CANDY
Could I get you another cup of coffee? Decaf perhaps?

As he gives her a look, the door bursts open and John's #2 **SHERM WHETMORE** (40s; the build and temperament of a bouncer) storms out. John waves Dave in.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN GRAHAM'S OFFICE - WCPO - DAY

Filled with drawings and models of the *Hughes Glomar Explorer*, the ship he's in charge of building.

Dave walks in, taking inventory of the space and John, who looks stressed and fidgets with a small piece of metal.

DAVE SHARP
What's that?

JOHN GRAHAM
A small piece of metal.
(beat)
Glad I could clear that up for you.

He stands, gestures to the door. Dave doesn't move.

DAVE SHARP

John, I've been doing some calculations on the roll stabilization. And I've got some concerns.

JOHN GRAHAM

I don't.
(calls through door)
Candy, how we making out on that coffee?

Candy comes in, curtsies.

CANDY

(sarcastic British accent)
Here you are, M'lord.

John laughs as he takes the coffee.

JOHN GRAHAM

Take a seat. Dave was just telling me how to build a ship. Fascinating stuff.

Candy sits. Dave's annoyed, but soldiers on.

DAVE SHARP

I was suggesting that we need to increase the roll stabilization to eight-and-a-half degrees.

He pulls a thick report out of his briefcase. Puts it on John's desk.

DAVE SHARP

As I point out in my report--

JOHN GRAHAM

The roll's fine at eight.

Dave shakes his head, takes back the report.

DAVE SHARP

Should I throw this away or do you want to?

JOHN GRAHAM

(shrugs)
Up to you.

Dave looks like he's going to leap across the desk. Candy tries to play peacemaker:

CANDY

Don't take it personally. John's too obstinate and egotistical to take suggestions from anyone.

JOHN GRAHAM

She's right.

DAVE SHARP

(loses it)

Well maybe he should! Because then maybe we'd have the damn keel laid like we're supposed to. And maybe I wouldn't be getting my ass reamed out by JP because we're behind schedule--

JOHN GRAHAM

(innocently)

Maybe you should hire somebody else then.

Dave shakes his head at John's ace in the hole.

DAVE SHARP

We can't, John. As you well know.

He paces. Hates the power dynamic between them.

DAVE SHARP

I'm not the enemy, John. And I'm concerned about you--

JOHN GRAHAM

(scoffs)

You've got plenty to be concerned with. Your capture vehicle, the pipe string--

DAVE SHARP

You look like hell--

JOHN GRAHAM

If you think I'm drinking again, stop beating around the bush and just ask me!

DAVE SHARP

Are you drinking?

JOHN GRAHAM
That's a personal question--

DAVE SHARP
Oh god--

JOHN GRAHAM
Listen, I haven't had a drink in
twenty-nine-hundred-and-sixteen
days. I'm hoping when I drive by
my favorite bar on the way home
tonight that I can make it to
twenty-nine-hundred-and-seventeen.
But after the day I've had--
(looks at Dave for a beat)
I'm not so sure.

DAVE SHARP
Glad this is all a fucking joke to
you!

He storms out of the office. Candy shakes her head at John.

CANDY
(a statement, not an indictment)
You're an asshole.

JOHN GRAHAM
(laughs)
Why's everyone acting like that's
something new?

CUT TO:

DAVE IN HIS CORVETTE - DUSK

Doing 100 on the PCH through Malibu. Trying to drive away his
frustration with John Graham. Seems to be working until...

... his vision blurs.

Cars HONK as Dave swerves into oncoming traffic.

He over-corrects and sends the car into the railing. He
doesn't go through it, but scrapes the hell out of the car as
he slams on the brakes.

He takes a couple deep breaths, trying to calm himself down.

He blinks away the blurriness and his vision slowly clears.
As he pulls back onto the road, **PRELAP:**

JP (O.S.)
 Over the past year, Project Azorian
 has made significant progress and
 passed many milestones...

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM - SUBURBAN WASHINGTON DC - DAY

**Project Azorian Briefing
 January 1972**

JP briefs various government entities (Defense Department,
 the Navy, State Department, etc) about their progress.
 Craven and Bradley sit in the front, representing the Navy.

JP
 The submersible barge that will house
 the Capture Vehicle was constructed
 at the National Steel and
 Shipbuilding Company in San Diego...

CUT TO:

INT. SUBMERSIBLE BARGE - DAY - FLASHBACK

It's huge -- 300' long, 100' wide, and 90' feet tall.

Dave stands in the empty barge with the FOREMAN.

BARGE FOREMAN
 ... and this is how you operate the
 retractable roof.

He hits buttons and levers. The roof doesn't retract.

JP (V.O.)
 It's currently undergoing testing.
 (beat)
 We've been building the three miles
 of custom pipe-string...

CUT TO:

INT. HUGHES TOOL COMPANY - HOUSTON - FLASHBACK

Sparkman and Ruggles watch from behind glass as a thirty-foot
 piece of pipe string is inserted into a machine.

Ruggles works the dial, replicating the pressure that they
 will face on the mission.

THE PIPE-STRING starts vibrating and GROANING as the pressure increases. Until--

-- the pipe SHATTERS, accompanied by the most HORRIFIC NOISE.

JP (V.O.)
Testing is under way there as well.

CUT BACK TO:

JP'S BRIEFING

JP (V.O.)
And at Sun Shipyard, the *Hughes Glomar Explorer's* keel was laid and the ship is well on its way toward completion.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUN SHIPYARD - DAY - FLASHBACK

The *Hughes Glomar Explorer (HGE)* is framed out. Even this early in its development, it's clear what an odd ship it is -- mostly because of the huge derrick that reaches 100 feet above the ship's deck--

Suddenly that giant derrick starts tilting. WORKERS scurry out of the way as the derrick SMASHES onto the deck.

John Graham and Sherm Whetmore race out of their construction trailer office. Stare in shock.

JOHN GRAHAM
Is everybody okay?!--

John lurches into an uncontrollable spasmodic cough.

SHERM WHETMORE
John, you okay?--

JOHN GRAHAM
(waves him off)
Go!--
(coughs)
Check--
(coughs)
Everyone.

Sherm races off leaving John coughing.

CUT BACK TO:

JP'S BRIEFING

JP

And most importantly, even with hundreds of people read into the program, our cover story has held up.

Unbeknownst to JP, a WINDOW WASHER appears behind him.

JP

We've detected no breaches...

The crowd starts laughing. JP's confused, but eventually turns around.

The window washer waves to JP. The crowd laughs harder.

JP doesn't.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMS ROOM - WCPO / JP'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Dave argues with JP on the secure line. It's hard to hear and it does make your voice sound like Donald Duck.

DAVE SHARP

... why are you yelling at me? I didn't forget to close the drapes?

Sparkman opens the door, whispers to Dave:

SPARKMAN

Graham's leaving.

DAVE SHARP

JP, I gotta go.

As JP continues yelling, Dave hangs up.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN GRAHAM'S TRUCK - NIGHT

John's at the wheel. It's parked.

As he fidgets with his small piece of metal, we see that--

He's parked outside a dive bar.

CUT TO:

FURTHER DOWN THE STREET

Dave is parked in his car, watching John's truck.

Dave nearly jumps out of his skin when Candy opens his passenger door.

DAVE SHARP

What-- How--?

CANDY

I'm good at tracking people. Part of my training as a Russian spy.

He laughs as she climbs in, carrying a bag of chips.

CANDY

You been following him every night?

DAVE SHARP

Whenever I can. You?

CANDY

Only when he's had a really stressful day. So almost every night on this job.

DAVE SHARP

(points to the bar)

Why does he do it?

CANDY

Said it was like taking a cold shower. But I never got why people did that, so...

She offers him the open bag of chips. He takes some.

DAVE SHARP

Why do you do it?

CANDY

Follow him?

DAVE SHARP

Protect him.

CANDY

(beat)

Because John protected me at a time when I really needed it.

(changing subject)

(MORE)

CANDY (CONT'D)

Now I got a question for you-- how come you never come out and play volleyball with everyone?

DAVE SHARP

Because I'm here to work.

CANDY

Even God took off one day.

DAVE SHARP

Yeah, well, he wasn't trying to do the impossible.

(off her look)

I'm joking.

CANDY

No, you're not.

They both laugh.

CANDY

You know what I think?

(beat)

I think all your worrying, all your hard work, I think it's really about something else. I think it's because there's a little boy inside of you who is scared...

Dave tenses up. Doesn't like where Candy's psychoanalyzing is going.

CANDY

... of me kicking his ass on the volleyball court.

DAVE SHARP

(laughs, relieved)

Well, that's probably true. Besides, basketball's more my game.

CANDY

I'll kick your ass there too.

JOHN'S TRUCK

He watches people walk into the bar.

JOHN GRAHAM

'Til tomorrow.

He drives off... sober for another day.

DAVE'S CORVETTE

Candy starts to get out, stops.

CANDY

How about I prove it to you?

Off Dave's puzzled look,

CUT TO:

EXT. WCPO PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Under the lights, Dave and Candy play HORSE on a basketball hoop. They shit-talk each other good-naturedly. There's chemistry here.

And Dave, for the first time in at least a couple of years, is having fun.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOCKHEED OCEAN SYSTEMS DIVISION - REDWOOD CITY, CA - DAY

"December 1972"

Heavily secured and abuts a harbor. Tied up to a dock is--

THE HUGHES MINING BARGE (HMB-1), the one they built in San Diego.

INT. HBM-1 - SAME TIME

Dave argues with **OSCAR "OTT" SCHICK** (40s), Lockheed's Program Manager about the Capture Vehicle aka --

-- **THE CLAW**. This is what will actually pick up the sub. It's huge -- 180 feet long, 58 feet wide, and 54 feet high and four million pounds.

Or worded differently...

... as long as 4 city buses, as wide as 6 buses, as tall as 4 buses, and weighs as much as 100 buses.

Huge.

Ott points to the Claw's tines (16 of them, each 60 feet tall).

OTT SHICK

... I can't know if these tines
will be strong enough unless we get
core samples.

DAVE SHARP

How close to the K-129 do the
samples need to be from?

OTT SHICK

How close? Right next to the damn
thing.

Seeing Dave's reaction, Ott runs his hand through his
thinning hair. Dave puts his arm around Ott's shoulder.

DAVE SHARP

Relax, Ott, I don't want you to
lose what little hair you have.
We'll get you those samples.

JP (O.S.; PRELAP)

No! We can't get those samples!

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE DINING ROOM - CIA HQ - DAY

Dave sits across from JP and Walt Logan.

DAVE SHARP

Lockheed needs 'em.

JP

And if we alert the Russians,
that's just a happy byproduct?!

They sit there, stalemated. The CHEF brings over three
covered plates.

CHEF

Poulet Basquaise.

He uncovers the plates. JP takes a deep whiff. Dave recoils.

JP

(to the Chef)

Robert, if you were running this
place, the Soviets would all be
speaking English.

(gestures to Dave)

And I'm sorry it's lost on this
philistine.

As the Chef leaves, JP digs in greedily.

WALT

Actually, we could spin a recon mission to enhance the cover story.

JP grunts for him to continue.

WALT

Say Hughes is sending out a ship to survey potential spots for manganese deposits while we wait for the *Explorer* to be finished.

JP

(considers between bites)
Not the worst idea. But we'd have to visit at least half-a-dozen sites so we don't tip our hand.

DAVE SHARP

I'll get a ship from Curtis and send Sparkman and Ruggles out there--

JP

You go.

DAVE SHARP

They can handle it.

JP

(shakes his head)
If this is as important as you say it is, I want you out there.

DAVE SHARP

I'd rather not go...

JP's look -- *why the hell not?*

DAVE SHARP

I, uh, I get really seasick.

Dave says it begrudgingly, as if it's a huge character flaw.

JP stares at Dave in disbelief. Starts laughing at the absurdity of the architect of this mission being seasick.

DAVE SHARP

(defensively)
I was supposed to just design the system, not be out at sea.

JP continues laughing.

DAVE SHARP

(annoyed)

Well, if I'm done amusing you, I'd like to visit my son before I have to go back.

JP

Fine, go. Bon voyage.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL GYM - NIGHT

Dave hustles in, is happy to see that the game's still in the first quarter. As he sits in the bleachers, he scans the court for William. Not there.

Scans the bench. But William's not there either.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAIL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dave argues with William (now 15) as Gail looks on.

DAVE SHARP

... you don't want to play next year, fine. But you can't quit--

WILLIAM

It's done, Dad.

DAVE SHARP

(to Gail)

Would you help me out here please?

GAIL

No. We talked about it. It's what he wants--

DAVE SHARP

I didn't raise a quitter.

William laughs.

WILLIAM

You didn't raise anything. Jesus, get over yourself.

He turns his back to Dave, walks out.

DAVE SHARP
Don't walk away from me.

William ignores him. Dave follows, puts his hand on his son's shoulder.

DAVE
Hey--

William turns around, shoots out the heel of his hand into Dave's chest. Dave's jolted back into the wall.

WILLIAM
Sorry. You okay?

Dave doesn't answer; too stunned. Not by the power of the shot, but that it came from his little boy...

... who, he realizes in a flash, is not so little anymore.

INT. JET - THAT NIGHT

Dave heads back to the West Coast. Staring at the photo of him and ten-year-old William.

Barely resembles the teenager from today. As Dave thinks about the years that he'll never get back,

CUT TO:

"Summer 1971"

EXT. PORT - HONOLULU - DAY

Dave, already looking queasy, stands on the deck of the *Glomar II* (not the ship our guys are building) as it pulls out, bound for the reconnaissance mission.

FURTHER DOWN THE PORT--

-- A RUSSIAN COMMERCIAL SHIP is tied up.

A SAILOR photographs the *Glomar II*.

MATCH CUT TO:

The PHOTO is on the bulletin board in--

SHTYROV'S OFFICE.

All four walls are covered by bulletin boards and they're all filled with information about Howard Hughes' sea adventure and the disappearance of the K-129.

And Shtyrov is pitching his boss's-boss, **REAR-ADMIRAL V. A. DOMYSLOVSKIY (Chief of Naval Intelligence Pacific Fleet)**.

SHTYROV

I believe the Americans are trying to raise the K-129.

DOMYSLOVSKIY

(laughs)
With this ship?

SHTYROV

No. It's much too small. I think they're using it for reconnaissance. This is the ship they're using.

He points to photos of the still-being-built *Hughes Glomar Explorer*. Domyslovskiy shakes his head.

DOMYSLOVSKIY

This is Howard Hughes's ship.

SHTYROV

Supposedly.

DOMYSLOVSKIY

(scoffs; looks around)
I think you've been spending too much time in here, Anatoly.
(beat)
We looked everywhere for that sub--

SHTYROV

But--

DOMYSLOVSKIY

But even if the Americans found it, it would be impossible to raise a sub from those depths.

SHTYROV

I agree, it strains credibility and technically, it appears impossible. But what if it's not? What if the Americans do get it... and Moscow finds out that we knew about it.

Domyslovskiy realizes he's stepped into Shtyrov's trap -- that he can't un-know what he now knows. His plausible deniability is gone.

DOMYSLOVSKIY
You better be right.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE OF THE GIDROGRAF - DAY

A pissed-off RUSSIAN CAPTAIN reads his orders, thrusts them into his XO's hands.

GIDROGRAF CAPTAIN
(in Russian)
Set a new course! Some prick in the Pacific Fleet doesn't think we've earned shore leave.

As the rest of the officers CURSE,

CUT TO:

THE BOTTOM OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

"Recovery Location"

The 10'x'10 intelligence-gathering platform (aka "the DORK") is on the ocean floor. It's filled with cameras and canisters to gather soil samples (and manganese nodules -- the ostensible reason they're out here.)

The platform is close to the K-129, but its weak lights only tease us with a glimpse of the sub.

We WHIP UP the three miles of pipe string that attaches the Dork to --

THE GLOMAR II.

The ship gets tossed around in good-sized waves.

INT. DAVE'S BERTH - GLOMAR II - SAME TIME

Dave's puking his guts into the toilet. (He always pukes in his room, not wanting others to know his "weakness.")

A KNOCK at the door.

CUT TO:

THE BRIDGE - GLOMAR II

CAPTAIN GRESHAM (40s; works for Global Marine) hands Dave a pair of binocs, who tries to steady himself. Gresham does a pretty good job of hiding how unimpressed he is with Dave as a sailor.

Dave binocs--

THE GIDROGRAF.

It's a trawler, an intelligence collection ship that sits a half mile off their bow.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM
It's Russian, but it's commercial.

DAVE SHARP
We're commercial.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM
(laughs)
Good point.

Dave grins at the trawler. He was hoping the Russians would follow them.

DAVE SHARP
Okay, let's show them that we're just collecting samples for Howard--
Shit! Divers.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM
Thought you wanted them to see us pull up the platform, that it works with the cover story.

DAVE SHARP
It does. But picking up a nuclear-armed sub, not so much.

He stares at the divers. They're his worst fear for the real mission.

CUT TO:

RUSSIAN DIVERS

In the water, watching as "the Dork" is pulled into the *Glomar II's* moon pool.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DECK OF THE GLOMAR II - DAY

The crew HOOTS and HOLLERS over their haul of manganese nodules. It's all for the Russians' benefit. It's also a bit over the top.

DAVE SHARP

Alright, let's tone it down a little. It's manganese, not gold.

INT. BRIDGE OF THE GIDROGRAF - SAME TIME

The Captain watches the celebration.

GIDROGRAF CAPTAIN

(to his XO; **in Russian**)

Send a message that they continue to pull up nodules!

(pissed)

We gave up leave for this?!

As he storms off, **PRELAP:**

CURTIS CROOKE (V.O.; PRELAP)

Five short years ago, Howard Hughes devised an audacious plan to mine the ocean floor...

CUT TO:

EXT. SUN SHIPYARD - DAY

**Sun Shipyard
Launch Day
November 5, 1973**

Huge crowd. Tons of Press. Curtis addresses the crowd from a dais (joined by HUGHES COMPANY HONCHOS).

CURTIS CROOKE

... And today, we take a huge step toward realizing Mr. Hughes's dream with the launch of the *Hughes Glomar Explorer*.

He dramatically gestures to the ship behind him.

And now for the first time, we get to see what a remarkable, and odd ship, the *Hughes Glomar Explorer (HGE)* is, with its giant derrick and the two huge docking legs.

As people APPLAUD, John Graham and Candy stand off to the side. Candy squeezes John's hand. He tries to pretend that this isn't a big deal, but we can see how proud he is.

CUT TO:

INT. A RAILWAY CAR THAT'S A MILE AWAY - SAME TIME

JP and Duckett watch the proceedings through telescopes -- -- because of their ranking in the CIA they can't be seen at the shipyard.

Duckett is ecstatic. JP, like John Graham, tries to downplay the moment--

JP

Well, at least it floats.

-- but his pride is clear.

CUT BACK TO:

THE SHIPYARD

Dave approaches John and Candy.

DAVE SHARP

Congratulations, John.

JOHN GRAHAM

Thank you. Couldn't have done it without you.

They laugh and shake hands. Up on the dais, the CEO OF HUGHES COMPANY'S WIFE christens the ship with a bottle of champagne. It doesn't break.

Audible GASPS from the crowd.

CUT TO:

INT. ZUMWALT'S OFFICE - THE PENTAGON

Zumwalt stares at Craven and Bradley in disbelief.

ZUMWALT

The champagne didn't break?! They built a cursed ship?!

CUT TO:

EXT./ESTAB. CIA - DAY

INT. HALLWAY - CIA

Duckett and JP walk down the hall. They stop in front of an office where a Maintenance Worker stencils "**Director William Colby**" onto the opaque glass door.

Before they go in:

DUCKETT
Remember, optimistic.

It's more of a warning, then a reminder. JP nods.

INT. CIA DIRECTOR BILL COLBY'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

JP, Duckett, and Walt brief the **new CIA Director BILL COLBY** (50s; WASP -- like every CIA chief).

DUCKETT
... we'll be starting sea trials next week. So we're on track to recover the K-129 in our eight-week window next summer.

COLBY
And the covey story?

DUCKETT
No leaks, no breaches. No intel that the Russians have any idea what we're up to.

He gestures to a pile of newspapers on the coffee table that they flip through the pile of newspapers touting the *HGE's* launch.

DUCKETT
The press has bought it hook, line, and sinker--

The door bursts open. It's COLBY'S SECRETARY. She utters the scariest six words in Washington:

COLBY'S SECRETARY
Seymour Hersh is on line one.

A long beat.

JP
 (being "optimistic")
 Maybe he's selling subscriptions?

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - SY HERSH'S HOUSE - WASHINGTON, DC - DAY

SY HERSH (30s) pours martinis out of a shaker into two glasses as he talks to someone o.s.

SEYMOUR HERSH
 ... I understand that there are
 national security implications.

Carries a martini over to Bill Colby, who sits in a tattered club chair. His hat, literally, in hand.

BILL COLBY
 I appreciate that, Sy. And if you
 hold off until we get the sub, I
 promise you'll have it exclusive.

Hersh sips the martini, then nods. *Deal.*

COLBY
 (relieved)
 Great martini--

SEYMOUR HERSH
 And... I'm going to need you to
 answer some questions about another
 story I'm working on...

Colby's relief evaporates. Knows exactly what story Hersh is talking about:

BILL COLBY
 A break-in at a local office
 complex?

SEYMOUR HERSH
 (nods, smiles)
 Let me get you another drink.

DISSOLVE TO:

TITLE CARD:

First Sea Trial
January 1974

EXT. PIER - LONG BEACH - DAY

The equipment and crew load onto the *Hughes Glomar Explorer*.

DAVE SHARP (V.O.)

Over the next six months, we will be conducting sea trials to test all of our systems...

Sparkman, Ruggles, and Steve Craig watch as the **THE ROUGHNECK CREW** boards the ship. They're the guys who do the actual work on the ship. They're mostly Southern good ol' boys; big, strong, long-haired and tatted up with nicknames like "Big John" and "Cowboy." (Many are hungover / still drunk.)

DAVE SHARP (V.O.)

... the Mission Director for the actual recovery, Captain Chuck Richeloux will have operational control during the trials.

Sparkman, Ruggles, and Steve watch as **NAVY CAPTAIN CHUCK RICHELOUX** (40s; stern) and his AIDES board the ship. They wear identical pressed shirts, khakis, and flat brimmed hats.

SPARKMAN

Steve, I thought you told the Navy guys to fit in.

STEVE CRAIG

I did.
(laughs)
That's them fitting in.

SPARKMAN

(loses it)
Holy god, you think they even know there's another position besides missionary?

Sparkman and Ruggles laugh.

RUGGLES

What's missionary?
(off their looks; laughs)
I'm not that square.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - THE HUGHES GLOMAR EXPLORER (HGE) - DAY

Dave stands on a table, continuing his instructions to the 100+ person crew.

DAVE SHARP

Our objectives for this trial are to operate the well gates, evaluate the docking legs and the heave compensator. And of course, the most important objective...

Everyone looks up.

DAVE SHARP

... Make me look good, since JP's gonna be here.

(gets laughs)

Alright, let's go.

CUT TO:

QUICK SHOTS AS --

-- John Graham and Captain Richeloux observe the crew going about their duties. Graham is nervous, rubbing his small piece of metal.

-- Steve Craig talks with the undercover Navy Officers.

STEVE CRAIG

You've gotta assume that the Russians are watching everything, so you gotta make 'em think that you're commercial sailors. Alright?

(they nods)

Sailors swear a lot; every third word by my count. So start swearing, okay?

NAVY OFFICER #1

Yes, sir.

STEVE CRAIG

And for god's sake, stop saying "sir!"

CUT TO:

THE HUGHES GLOMAR EXPLORER - DAY

It comes to a stop a couple miles off the coast. The seas are calm.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - THE EXPLORER - DAY

Dave gestures to the John's piece of metal.

DAVE SHARP
 You ever gonna tell me what that
 is?

JOHN GRAHAM
 I told you... a small piece of
 metal.

He takes a deep breath, gives the order:

JOHN GRAHAM
 Flood the moon pool.

CUT TO:

THE MOON POOL.

It's enormous -- 200 feet long by 74 feet wide and 100 feet high. Big enough to fit a Soviet nuclear sub.

THE CATWALK ABOVE IT

Steve Craig, Sparkman, and Ruggles, and the Navy Officers watch as water floods into the pool.

STEVE CRAIG
 Am I the only one who feels a
 little nervous seeing a ship being
 filled with water intentionally?

The other guys laugh... a bit nervously.

CUT TO:

EXT. HELIPAD - LONG BEACH - DAY

JP, Walt, and Curtis climb into a waiting helicopter.

VOICE (O.S.)
 Hold on!

They turn around, see Admiral Zumwalt getting out of a car.

ADMIRAL ZUMWALT
 Mind if I join? Excited to see
 what our three hundred million
 dollars has bought.

JP
 (sotto to Walt)
 Guess he hasn't seen the latest
 budget yet?

(MORE)

JP (CONT'D)
 (big smile; to Zumwalt)
 Of course, happy to have you.

Zumwalt walks over. He's in his civvies -- ironed khakis and shirt. He looks just like the other Navy guys.

JP
 (to Curtis)
 Jesus, why doesn't he just wear a sign saying, "I'm in the god damn Navy!"

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Dave watches John Graham working, talking to his guys in the Moon Pool. Suddenly--

BOOM... BOOM... BOOM...

Dave gives John a look -- *What the hell is that?*

John races out, Dave right behind.

CUT TO:

THE MOON POOL.

Partially filled with water. But because of the boat's pitching--

-- **A THIRTY FOOT WAVE OF WATER** sloshes back and forth, **SLAMMING** into the walls with incredible force.

CATWALK ABOVE THE MOON POOL

Dave, John Graham, Captain Richeloux and their collective teams watch this.

CAPTAIN RICHELOUX
 Maybe we should wait to open the gates.

JOHN GRAHAM
 No. These are the conditions that you'll be working in -- if you're lucky.
 (yells to men)
 Open the gates!

The sound of MASSIVE MACHINERY kicks in...

... The TWO GATES start to open.

They're supposed to move away from each other so that a giant hole is created in the bottom of the ship.

Supposed to. But they don't.

Instead all hell breaks loose.

The violent wave action tosses the gates around in their guides as though the gates were made of plywood instead of nine-foot thick steel.

BAM!... BAM!

CAPTAIN RICHELOUX

Jesus Christ! Stop it! Move 'em back!

JOHN GRAHAM

We can't. We're too far along now!

BAM!... BAM!... The doors continue to SLAM... John has to literally scream into Sherm Whetmore's ear:

JOHN GRAHAM

Drive 'em harder!--

The entire ship SHUDDERS.

NAVY OFFICER #1

Holy fucking shit!

Steve Craig, Sparkman, and Ruggles are so freaked out that they can't even comment on the Navy Officer swearing.

CUT TO:

INT. HELICOPTER - SAME TIME

They head out to the *Explorer*, which is visible on the horizon.

JP

Admiral, I know we've had our differences, but I think you're going to be quite impressed with this ship.

CUT BACK TO:

THE CATWALK ABOVE THE MOON POOL

The gates slowly open as they continue to SLAM UP AND DOWN. But in between BANGS, Dave hears a worse sound -- JP's helicopter approaching.

DAVE SHARP
John, they're almost here.

JOHN GRAHAM
It's okay. We'll be good once we get 'em completely opened--

The gates GRIND to a halt. (Though they keep slamming up and down.) John, for the first time, is at a loss.

JOHN GRAHAM
I think... the pinion gears must've got stripped. That shouldn't have happened.

Dave turns to Navy Captain Chuck Richeloux, the man with operational authority.

DAVE SHARP
Chuck, you're gonna have to send divers down there.

Chuck doesn't even hear him. He's a deer in headlights.

DAVE
(to Chuck's aide)
Get the god damn divers down there!
They gotta lock down those gates!

CUT TO:

JP'S HELICOPTER

touching down on the *Explorer's* helipad. They climb out. Hear the BANGING.

But what's worse is they see physical deformation waves going up and down the derrick.

ZUMWALT
(to helicopter pilot)
Keep the rotors running.

CUT TO:

DIVERS

tethered to safety and breathing lines, drop into the MOON POOL.

Swim to the center, avoiding the bucking gates. Until--

-- a diver is sucked through the open gates.

BAM! The uncontrolled gates SLAM SHUT. They lose sight of the diver. Can only see his severed breathing line.

After an excruciatingly long beat, the gates open. The diver swims through them back into the moon pool.

DAVE SHARP

Pull him up! Pull him up!

The diver is pulled out of the pool. But-- BAM! BAM! The gates keep slamming.

JP, CURTIS, AND ZUMWALT

take this all in.

And Zumwalt, a man who has spent his life at sea, is shaken.

Finally the divers secure the gates. The BANGING stops.

Dave turns to JP and Zumwalt, but Zumwalt's already on his way back to the helicopter -- he's seen enough.

DAVE SHARP

(to JP)

We'll get to work figuring this out--

JP

No, you won't. 'Cause you're fired, Professor.

Dave's stunned.

JOHN GRAHAM

It's not his fault--

JP

Not alone! God knows I know that!
But since I can't fire you, he goes. Somebody's being held accountable for this!

He starts off. Graham calls after him:

JOHN GRAHAM

John, after some deep soul-searching,
I've realized that in an effort to
foster an environment of
accountability, I'm going to quit.

JP turns around. Stews for a beat in the corner he's painted
himself into. Then:

JP

Sharp, you're rehired.
(beat)
Now fix this god damn ship.

He storms off with Walt in tow. Dave and John Graham stare
at each other for a beat.

JOHN GRAHAM

You're welcome.

DAVE SHARP

(loses it)
"I'm welcome?!" Fuck you, John!
You got me a job back I lost
because of you!
(calming down)
You wouldn't take any advice, you
had all the answers--

SHERM WHETMORE

As John said, this stuff happens--

DAVE SHARP

Not like this, Sherm. I saw his
face up there.

He waits for John Graham to deny it, but he doesn't.

CUT TO:

EXT./ESTAB. LONG BEACH PIER - NIGHT

The *HGE* is tied up. It's the middle of the night. Deserted.

THE MOON POOL - SAME TIME

John Graham and Sherm Whetmore inspect the gates. John lets
loose a terrible COUGH. Sherm looks at him, worried. Sees
how frail and how much weight John's lost. The toll it's
taken on his friend.

SHERM WHETMORE

You alright?

JOHN GRAHAM
Will be when I figure out what the
hell's going on here.

SHERM WHETMORE
You always do.

John nods, goes back to the work. Then stops. Turns to his
old friend. Vulnerable.

JOHN GRAHAM
But what if I can't?

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - WCPO - NIGHT

Dave's Corvette's the only car in the lot.

Dave is shooting baskets by himself. Not casually. He's
drenched in sweat. It's like he's playing a game against
himself -- trying to exhaust himself.

Candy walks over. A beat.

CANDY
You wanna talk about it or play
HORSE?

A beat, then Dave passes her the ball. She hits a basket.
Dave shoots to answer it, when--

-- his vision goes blurry.

The ball goes way left of the basket.

CANDY
You trying to throw this?

DAVE SHARP
(laughs)
Lights in my eyes.

But as he tries to blink away the blurriness, it doesn't go
back to normal.

CANDY
You okay, Dave?

DAVE SHARP
 (long beat)
 No, I'm not. I gotta go to the
 ER.

CUT TO:

INT. ER - LATER THAT NIGHT

Dave's on the exam table talking with an:

OPHTHALMOLOGIST
 ... it's called Central Serus
 Retinopathy, which is a fancy way
 of saying that stress has created
 tiny holes in your retina and fluid
 is leaking through them.
 (beat)
 The good new is that if you stop
 whatever's causing the stress the
 holes will heal on their own.

DAVE SHARP
 (beat)
 And if that's not an option?

The doctor and Candy give him a look -- *if that's not an
 option?*

OPHTHALMOLOGIST
 It'll get worse... and eventually
 become permanent.

CUT TO:

INT. CANDY'S CAR - NIGHT

They're arguing as she drives Dave home from the ER.

DAVE SHARP
 I'll manage my stress--

CANDY
 Yeah, you've done a great job of
 that so far.

DAVE SHARP
 I can't quit. I've just gotta get
 through the sea trials and then
 hand over the ship to the Navy.
 And then I'm done. I'll have
 plenty of time to rest.

CANDY

Good. Then you'll have plenty of time to learn braille.

CUT TO:

A TV.

WALTER CRONKITE (ON TV)

... in a troubling development for the White House in the burgeoning Watergate scandal, Seymour Hersh of the New York Times wrote today...

REVEAL that it's in **BILL COLBY'S OFFICE**. Colby, Duckett, and Walt watch.

DUCKETT

Hersh must have a hell of a source.

They chuckle, except for JP -- who is reading Hersh's *Times* story. Colby turns off the TV.

COLBY

Where are we with the ship?

DUCKETT

(full salesman mode)

We're making great progress. The first sea trials gave us... a lot of data. We'll conduct more trials later this year. And we're still on track for recovery next summer--

JP

We can't wait 'til next summer.

Duckett shoots eye daggers at JP.

JP

We have to go this July. The cover story won't hold--

COLBY

Hersh'll honor the deal.

JP

Sir, when you were a boy, you ever walk through the woods, kicking over dead logs to find ants?

COLBY
 (nods)
 Sure.

JP drops the *Times* on the coffee table--

JP
 You ever find just one ant?

-- where it lands next to the *Post* and the *Journal*.

DUCKETT
 (shakes his head)
 God damn First Amendment.

As they enjoy a needed laugh,

CUT TO:

INT. ADM. DOMYSLOVSKI'S OFFICE - SOVIET PACIFIC FLEET HQ - DAY

Shtyrov is getting undressed by the Admiral:

DOMYSLOVSKIY
 No! You're not getting any more ships! That prick captain on the *Gidrograf* bitched and moaned to Moscow and I still haven't heard the end of it.
 (beat)
 Now go back to your office and take that shit off your walls.

CUT TO:

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - WCPO - DAY

Dave is in a meeting with Sparkman and Ruggles. Dave looks stressed. The compressed schedule weighing on him.

He stops speaking mid-sentence when out the window he sees--

-- John Graham's truck leaving the parking lot.

Dave checks his watch -- 4pm. Curses under his breath.

DAVE SHARP
 Spark, gimme your keys.

SPARKMAN
 Gladly.

Dave takes Sparkman's keys and runs out.

SPARKMAN
Hey, where the keys to the 'Vette?

CUT TO:

INT. SPARKMAN'S PINTO - DAY

Discreetly following John Graham's truck.

The truck passes John's bar without stopping.

Dave's surprised...

CUT TO:

INT. SPARKMAN'S PINTO - LATER

... but not as surprised as he follows John's truck into a
HOSPITAL PARKING LOT.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

John goes through a door. A beat later, Dave walks up to the
door. It's a chemotherapy treatment center.

CUT TO:

INT. CHEMO TREATMENT CENTER - DAY

As John gets his dose of poison, he reviews architectural
drawings of the gates of the HGE's moon pool.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - LATER

John exits, lights up a cigarette and heads to his truck.
Stops short when he sees Dave.

JOHN GRAHAM
Well if we don't get this ship
figured out, good to know you can
become a PI.

DAVE SHARP
 "Mannix" makes it look fun.

John laughs as they stand there awkwardly.

DAVE SHARP
 (really means it)
 I'm sorry, John.

JOHN GRAHAM
 (so does he)
 Thank you.

Another long beat.

DAVE SHARP
 Well, I should get back.

Dave turns to go.

JOHN GRAHAM
 Hey--
 (Dave turns around)
 -- wanna play hooky?

INT. SPARKMAN'S PINTO - DAY

Following John Graham, who pulls into a MARINA PARKING LOT.

DAVE SHARP
 Shit.

EXT. DOCK - MARINA - LONG BEACH - DAY

Dave and John walk down the dock to John's sailboat. John steps on, but Dave pauses.

JOHN GRAHAM
 Everything okay?

Dave hesitates. He should tell John that he gets seasick...
 ... but that would mean telling John that he gets seasick.

CUT TO:

THE SAILBOAT

Heading into the bay. John's at the tiller, smoking a cigarette. Content. This is where he's happiest. Dave is miserable; white-knuckling the railing.

JOHN GRAHAM
 (yelling over wind)
 The wind's whipping. Beautiful day
 for a sail.

They pick up speed; the boat smashes into the waves. Dave's face goes green. John sees this; starts LAUGHING.

JOHN GRAHAM
 Why would somebody who gets seasick
 spend four and a half years of
 their life trying to raise a sub?

DAVE SHARP
 I'm not sea--

He leans over the side, spews chunks into the water. John laughs harder. Swings the tiller...

JOHN GRAHAM
 Coming about.

... Dave ducks the boom. They head back into the harbor.

DAVE SHARP
 Thanks.

JOHN GRAHAM
 (still laughing)
 No, thank you. Most fun I've had
 on the water in a long time.
 (beat)
 And I bet the fish appreciated
 their lunch.

His LAUGHTER echoes as they head back in.

JOHN'S SAILBOAT - LATER

Safely tied up at his slip. Dave drinks a beer, John enjoys a Coke and a cigarette.

DAVE SHARP
 Now this kind of sailing I could
 get used to.

JOHN GRAHAM
 You're a regular mariner.

They sit there for a beat.

DAVE SHARP

Are we going to be able to make this work?

JOHN GRAHAM

The gates?

DAVE SHARP

(nods; quietly)

All of it. 'Cause right now, the pipe string, the capture vehicle, nothing's working.

(beat)

And I haven't even figured out what the hell I'm gonna do if Russians follow us and send divers down.

JOHN GRAHAM

Well, I wasn't dumb enough to sign up to oversee all of that. But as far as the ship goes, I think we'll get there-- or at least I'll die trying.

Dave doesn't laugh at the gallows humor. Stares out at the water.

DAVE SHARP

I can't fail, John. I've sacrificed too much. It can't all be for naught.

Dave looks away; ashamed that he let his vulnerability show.

JOHN GRAHAM

So it wasn't all about keeping the world safe for democracy?

Dave can't help but smile at John, at his fellow traveler.

JOHN GRAHAM

My old man was a wildcatter back in Texas. Anyway, he'd been drilling this hole for a while, sure it was gonna be the motherlode. "Matching Cadillacs for me and your mother."

(takes a drag on cigarette)

Nobody got Cadillacs. We barely kept our house. He was devastated. Hell, I was devastated and I was only seven. But I'll never forget what he told me. "Sometimes you get oil, sometimes you get mud."

(MORE)

JOHN GRAHAM (CONT'D)
 And it ain't nobody's fault but a
 bunch of old rocks and dead
 dinosaurs."

Dave considers that for a long beat:

DAVE SHARP
 I don't think I'd be a good oilman.

JOHN GRAHAM
 (laughs)
 Probably not.
 (tosses cigarette into the water)
 We should probably get back, put
 our heads together and figure out
 how to make those gates work.

DAVE SHARP
 (taken aback)
 Is that your way of asking for my
 help?

JOHN GRAHAM
 No, it's my way of throwing you a
 bone to boost your spirits.

CUT TO:

TWO MARTINIS BEING POURED

by Seymour Hersh's practiced hand. Once again, he's hosting
 Bill Colby in his home office.

SEYMOUR HERSH
 My exclusive is in danger of
 turning very non-exclusive.
 (beat)
 Somebody wants this story out.

He hands Colby the martini.

SEYMOUR HERSH
 Made yours a double.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - WCPO - NIGHT

Once again, Dave's car is the only one in the lot.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Dave struggles in vain to solve the problem with the gates.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Dave shoots baskets by himself, still trying to find the answer. Every once in a while, he will pause as inspiration strikes.

A beat later, he curses and shoots again.

INT. BATHROOM - DAVE'S CONDO - LATER THAT NIGHT

Dave, in a towel, slides the shower door open to turn the shower on. Steps in.

Stops.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME TIME

Sneaking a cigarette, John works in his bed as he reads a book (it's about the Ghost Army of WWII). The PHONE RINGS. Answers it.

DAVE SHARP (O.S.; ON PHONE)

(excited)

What if we had wheels on the bottom of the gates in the guides, like a shower?-- Then when the gates locked in there'd be a little dip where the wheels could go?

JOHN GRAHAM (INTO PHONE)

(long beat, then:)

Are you sitting in your condo naked?

DAVE SHARP

No.

REVEAL -- Dave naked in his condo.

DAVE SHARP

I'm standing.

They both laugh.

JOHN GRAHAM
 Sharp, maybe you're not completely
 useless as a marine engineer.

Dave relishes the "high praise" from John Graham. Then:

DAVE SHARP
 Shit.

JOHN GRAHAM
 What?

DAVE SHARP
 What if we actually figure this all
 out and then they don't let us go?

JOHN GRAHAM
 Why wouldn't they let it go
 forward?

DAVE SHARP
 'Cause it's Washington.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

**Excom Meeting
 June 5 1974**

INT. CABINET ROOM - SAME TIME

The meeting that will determine the mission's fate.

Dave sits against the wall with other underlings as JP, Duckett, and Colby make their case to the most powerful people in the world, including PRESIDENT NIXON.

JP
 ... After our changes, we're
 confident that the systems will work.

ADMIRAL ZUMWALT
 (scoffs)
 I was on that ship! It is unsafe a
 couple miles off the California
 coastline, but you expect us to
 just take your word that it'll be
 okay in the middle of the Pacific?!

Dave taps his foot anxiously... knows it's not going well.
 But powerless to do anything about it.

ADMIRAL ZUMWALT

And we haven't even heard a contingency plan. What the hell's going to happen if the Russians send divers down there when you're pulling their sub up?

JP

We're working on that.

ADMIRAL ZUMWALT

And what the hell happens if they board you?

A beat as JP tries to project confidence in his answer:

JP

Our contingency plan needs to line up with our cover story so...

(beat)

The plan would be to repel them with water hoses until the Navy arrives--

The military guys nearly spit-take. Zumwalt looks around the table incredulously (and theatrically).

ADMIRAL ZUMWALT

I'm sorry, but I will not allow any of my men to serve on this mission.

(beat)

The Navy refuses operational responsibility for this mission.

SecDef Schlesinger nods in support. A big blow.

The CIA group look to Kissinger. He stares back blankly. Bigger blow.

Finally they turn to their last hope, Joint Chief Chairman Admiral Moorer. The guy who started this thing.

ADMIRAL MOORER

I think we should cancel it.

The CIA is incredulous.

ADMIRAL MOORER

I want those missiles more than anyone, but the Navy's saying it's a disaster waiting to happen, a suicide mission--

DAVE SHARP (O.S.)
It's safe!

It takes people a moment of looking around before they realize that the voice came from the cheap seats.

ADMIRAL ZUMWALT
(scoffs)
It's easy to say that when you won't be the one on the ship--

DAVE SHARP
I'll go. I'll lead it.

ADMIRAL ZUMWALT
(thrown)
You're not qualified.
(to Kissinger; flustered)
The CIA's trying to avoid responsibility by doubling down on a plan that doesn't work--

WHAM! JP slams his hand on the table. Looks at Moorer:

JP
Remember when you did that five years ago, Admiral?

He stands up, takes a deep breath. Addresses the President.

JP
Sir, there's a ship docked in Long Beach Harbor...

CUT TO:

EXT. HUGHES GLOMAR EXPLORER - DAY

As the crew continues working.

JP (V.O.)
It's unlike any ship that's ever been built. And we built it for one purpose -- to recover a Soviet sub that's sitting three miles below the ocean's surface.

John Graham and Sherm Whetmore are in the giant moon pool, working to fix the gates.

CUT BACK TO:

THE MEETING

JP

And right now, up in Redwood City, I have over two hundred men learning how to take apart a Russian sub...

CUT TO:

INT. SECURED WAREHOUSE - DAY

The crew, including Sparkman and Ruggles, practice using welding torches to take apart a scaled-down version of the K-129.

JP (V.O.)

... Which very likely will be hot.

CUT TO:

THE CREW MEMBERS

Practice putting on their radiation suits. Duct-tape each other's hoods so they're air-tight.

CUT BACK TO:

THE MEETING

JP

When we were tasked with coming up with a plan to recover the sub, I thought it was a fool's errand, a pipe dream, a way to pacify somebody's bruised ego.

He glances over at Admiral Moorer.

JP

And I wasn't alone. In fact the only reason we have this opportunity is because the Russians think it's impossible. It was impossible. But over the past five years this man...

Points to Dave.

JP

... and his team have made me believe that the impossible is possible.

(MORE)

JP (CONT'D)

Am I guaranteeing success? No.
It's risky as hell.

(beat)

But when the hell was greatness
ever achieved without a large
degree of risk?

He pauses dramatically, a prosecutor reaching the climax of his closing argument.

JP

Was it on the fields of Gettysburg?
The beaches of Normandy? Maybe it
was on the surface of the moon?

Zumwalt senses the room starting to turn.

ADMIRAL ZUMWALT

I'm not arguing we cancel it. Just
do more sea trials, go later--

JP

(explodes)

We can't! As you know, there's six
weeks out of the year that we can
operate in those seas. But our
cover story won't hold 'til next
year...

(stares at Zumwalt)

... because somebody's leaking to
the press. So it's now or never!

After a beat, JP turns back to President Nixon.

JP

We can do this, sir. Let us go get
that sub.

Dave watches Nixon, who is inscrutable as the Sphinx.

CUT TO:

WHITE HOUSE HALLWAYS

The CIA contingency leaves the meeting. Still tingling from JP's speech.

DUCKETT

Great speech, JP. "When was
greatness ever achieved without a
large degree of risk?"

JP
Saw it on a TV show about the moon
landing.

As they laugh,

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE GAIL'S HOUSE - DAY

Taking advantage of being on the East Coast, Dave sits in his car, down the street from Gail's house. He's watching as his son William shoots baskets outside.

Dave wants to go talk to him. But can't.

He drives away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT./ESTAB. WCPO - LOS ANGELES - DAY

INT. DAVE SHARP'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Dave shoots a mini basketball at a hoop on the door. Nothing to do but wait.

A knock, then Candy enters.

CANDY
JP's calling.

INT. COMMS ROOMS - WCPO - DAY

Dave takes a deep breath, then connects to JP on the secure Donald Duck line. And finally, the connection is clear.

INTERCUT WITH:

JP
Nixon's going to Moscow for the
SALT II talks. So you can't do the
recovery...

Dave shuts his eyes, crushed.

JP
... between June 27th and July 3rd.

OUTSIDE THE COMMS ROOM

Dave's SHOUTS OF JOY penetrate the (almost) sound-proof room. The staffers explode in applause.

INSIDE THE COMMS ROOM

Dave hears them, but doesn't hear them. Lost in the moment.

JP

One other thing. Colby told them we'd have some guns in case you're boarded.

DAVE SHARP

They really think we're going to hold the Russians off with a couple rifles 'til the cavalry arrives?

JP

No. But it'll help ease their consciences a little...

As Dave wonders why their consciences need to be eased,

CUT TO:

INT. WCPO - LOS ANGELES - MINUTES LATER

The celebration is in full swing as Dave steps out of the Comms Room. Everyone shakes his hand and slaps his back.

He goes to middle of the room, stands on a chair. Whistles to get everyone's attention.

DAVE SHARP

It's official. We're going.

More WHOOPS and HOLLERS.

DAVE SHARP

But there's been a... uh new wrinkle.

(beat)

The Navy will not be coming to our aid if we're boarded.

The whoops and hollers stop. Sparkman stops drinking from the champagne bottle mid-sip.

DAVE SHARP

The White House is worried that if the Navy engages and something goes wrong, this could escalate.

SPARKMAN

So we'll be on our own?

DAVE SHARP

(nods)

And in light of that, I'd like everyone who is going... to reassess their decision. If you choose not to continue, I completely understand.

(beat)

If you do decide to go, make sure you get your next-of-kin paperwork in as soon as possible.

CUT TO:

INT. JP'S OFFICE - NIGHT

JP sips a scotch in silence. His mind on the fact that Dave and his team will be out there without back-up.

A knock at the door, then Walts walk in.

WALT LOGAN

I just wanted to say, "congratulations." You did it, JP.

JP

Thanks, Walt. But we should probably hold off on the congratulations 'til it's clear what the hell I did.

CUT TO:

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - WCPO - NIGHT

Dave and Candy have just given John Graham the good news over the phone. (INTERCUT with John at the Hospital).

JOHN GRAHAM (O.S.; ON PHONE)

Well, thanks for calling.

DAVE SHARP

John, I, uh, I'd like to come down, see you before I go...

JOHN GRAHAM
To say good-bye?

DAVE SHARP
No. To say "thank you."

The display of emotion is making John uncomfortable.

JOHN GRAHAM
Think you just did.
(beat)
And you're welcome. Have a good
night.

DAVE SHARP
You too, John.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAVE'S CONDO - NIGHT

He parks his car, walks to the door. Hearing footsteps, he whips around. Sees...

Ruggles. He's shaken.

RUGGLES
Sorry to... See I was filling out
my next-of-kin affidavit, and...

DAVE SHARP
It's okay.

RUGGLES
It's not because I don't have
confidence in the mission. And if
I didn't just have a daughter--

Dave puts his hand on Ruggles' shoulder.

DAVE SHARP
You don't owe me an explanation,
Rugs. You don't owe me anything.

Ruggles nods, but still feels like a coward. They shake hands. Then Dave watches his good friend walk out of the driveway, his mission over.

CUT TO:

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - WCPO - NIGHT

Dave's alone at work. A knock, then Candy comes in, carrying take-out. Sets it up on Dave's desk and opens a couple beers.

As Dave eats and works, Candy eats and reads a book. It's clear that this has become their routine.

CANDY

When are you going home?
 (off his confused look)
 To see your son.

DAVE SHARP

After I get back, when I move back.

CANDY

You're not going before?

DAVE SHARP

(beat, shakes his head)
 Don't have time.

Goes back to his work.

CANDY

Well, you should make time then.

Dave looks up, annoyed.

DAVE SHARP

I'll be back there soon full-time anyway.

CANDY

What if you're not?

DAVE SHARP

I wrote him a letter. I'm going to send it to Gail.

CANDY

A letter? David, you need to go--

DAVE SHARP

My god, you sound like Sparkman. Everything's going to be fine on the mission.

(beat)

And why the hell's it matter so much to you?

CANDY

Better question is why doesn't it matter so much to you.

DAVE SHARP

Of course it matters to me...

He starts to say more, but stops.

CANDY

Then go. You'll regret it if you don't.

DAVE SHARP

I can't go.

CANDY

Why not?

DAVE SHARP

Because when I see him...

(quietly)

I realize how much of a failure I am.

CANDY

David--

DAVE SHARP

It's true. I failed as a father, as a husband. And I can't have that in my head right now... any more than it already is. Because I can't fail at this too.

Candy takes Dave in for a long beat. Sees that he really believes he's a failure as a father and husband.

CANDY

You beat your son?

DAVE SHARP

Of course not.

CANDY

Provide for him, care for him?

DAVE SHARP

Yeah.

CANDY

Love him?

DAVE SHARP
 (beat; quietly)
 More than anything.

CANDY
 Your problem is that you think if
 you're not perfect, that you're a
 failure. But life isn't like that.
 (beat)
 David, you might not be father of
 the year, but you're a long way
 from a failure -- trust me on that.

It's clear she's speaking from experience.

DAVE SHARP
 (quietly; looks down)
 I wouldn't even know what to say.

CANDY
 Well, I'd start with...

Dave looks up, ready to receive her wisdom.

CANDY
 "hi."

As Dave laughs:

CUT TO:

EXT. GAIL'S HOUSE - DAY

William shoots baskets by himself. Misses. The ball goes
 past him and is scooped up by Dave as he walks up the
 driveway.

DAVE SHARP
 Hi.

Nothing. Dave has no idea what to say now. So he doesn't
 say anything.

Just passes the ball back to his son.

As William shoots, Dave rebounds for him. Keeps feeding him
 the ball.

After a half-dozen shots, William passes the ball back to
 Dave to shoot.

As Dave shoots,

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD:

**Day of Departure
July 20, 1974**

THE HUGHES GLOMAR EXPLORER - LONG BEACH - DAWN

Under intense security and secrecy, final preparations are made for the departure. Steve Craig and Captain Gresham (the Captain from the recon missions) watch as equipment and huge amounts of food are brought on board.

ON THE PIER

Candy hugs Dave good-bye. Breaks the hug, then hugs him tighter. Off the hug's intensity:

DAVE SHARP

Did John tell you something about
the ship he didn't tell me?

Candy laughs, shakes her head.

DAVE SHARP

Tell him I said "goodbye", okay?

CANDY

I'll see you soon--

She kisses him. Pulls back. Looks around. Nobody noticed.

CANDY

(embarrassed)
I'm sorry--

Dave pulls her behind a storage container. As he dips and kisses her like that iconic photo of the sailor kissing the Nurse after WWII, PRELAP:

DAVE SHARP (V.O)

So that's the contingency plan?

CUT TO:

INT. DAVE'S BERTH - THE EXPLORER - DAY

He and Steve Craig stare at the contingency plan--

-- a handful of guns from Big 5 Sporting Goods. Not exactly enough to hold off the Russian Navy.

DAVE SHARP

The fire hoses are looking better and better.

STEVE CRAIG

That's why I came up with a Plan B.

He goes out, then wheels in six cases of Russian vodka.

STEVE CRAIG

Best vodka in the world. If you're boarded, hopefully your guests will be more interested in your hospitality than doing a thorough inspection of the ship.

(off Dave's dubious look)

It also has one other benefit.

DAVE SHARP

What's that?

STEVE CRAIG

You can drink it if the ship sinks.

Dave and Steve laugh.

JOHN GRAHAM (O.S.)

It's not gonna sink.

Dave and Steve are shocked by John's appearance. Still has his hair, but he's frail and shockingly thin. Sensing that he's a third wheel, Steve excuses himself:

STEVE CRAIG

Good to see you, John. I'm just gonna make sure the gangplank is still up.

DAVE SHARP

How you doing, John?

JOHN GRAHAM

(laughs)

Better than your powers of perception obviously.

(beat)

Brought you a little something.

(hands Dave a small vial)

Ancient Chinese sailors used this for seasickness.

DAVE SHARP
Does it work?

JOHN GRAHAM
(offended)
How the hell should I know? Never
had occasion to use it.
(beat)
There's one other thing...

John hands him the tiny piece of metal that he always rubs.

DAVE SHARP
Ah... the tiny piece of metal.

JOHN GRAHAM
Pull tab from the last can of beer
I ever had.

DAVE SHARP
(reads the tab)
"Schlitz?" Jesus, you really were
an alcoholic.

JOHN GRAHAM
(laughs)
Yeah, if jonesing for a Schlitz
isn't rock bottom, I don't know
what the hell is.

DAVE SHARP
Thank you, John.

John nods, but looks away. Uncomfortable with the emotion.

JOHN GRAHAM
Anyway, you probably got a million
things to get squared away.

DAVE SHARP
Million and a half.
(beat)
I'll see you when I get back.

They both know that's a lie.

JOHN GRAHAM
Yeah. Maybe we'll go for a sail.

Dave laughs as they shake hands. Then, to Dave's surprise,
John pulls Dave in for a fierce hug.

JOHN GRAHAM
 (urgent)
 Now go get some god damn oil.

CUT TO:

THE HUGHES GLOMAR EXPLORER - NIGHT

Over five years after its conception, the giant ship pulls away from the pier to start its mission.

THE BOW

Dave stands alone. Excited. Nervous. Ready.

CUT TO:

EXT. HARBOR - CATALINA ISLAND - THE NEXT DAY

Sunbathers and swimmers all stare at--

the HMB-1 barge as it submerges.

CUT TO:

EXT. HARBOR - CATALINA ISLAND - NIGHT

The *Explorer* positions itself over the submerged barge.

DAVE SHARP (O.S.; PRELAP)
 Open the gates.

CUT TO:

CATWALK ABOVE THE MOON POOL

Dave watches as the giant well gates start to open and pull apart. It's much smoother than last time.

DAVE SHARP
 Well, that's an improvement.

SPARKMAN
 Yeah, now only is the sub was in a harbor, we'd be all set.

Dave laughs, looks down into the giant hole in the ship -- the top of the submerged barge is now visible.

VOOOOOM...

The roof of the barge slides open, revealing the Capture Vehicle (the crew affectionately refers to her as "Clementine").

VVVVVVVV...

The *Explorer's* TWO GIANT DOCKING LEGS lower into Clementine.

UNDERWATER

DIVERS lock Clementine into the docking legs with giant support pins.

VVVVVVVV...

The giant legs retract, pull Clementine into the moon pool.

OUTSIDE THE EXPLORER

The transfer is completely invisible to the outside world.

CUT TO:

EXT./ESTAB. AIRPORT - MOSCOW - DAY

Nixon and Brezhnev do a photo-op on the tarmac.

NIXON

... It is my sincere hope that these talks usher in a new era of openness and mutual trust...

MATCH CUT TO:

A TV IN JP'S OFFICE.

JP and Duckett nurse scotches while they watch Nixon.

DUCKETT

I almost believe him myself.
(grins, turns off TV)
Well, we're off to a good start.

JP

(grunts)
We've duped some sunbathers and had a President, who's being impeached for lying, tell a lie.
(finishes scotch)
Plenty of time for this to all go sideways.

CUT TO:

EXT./ESTAB. SOVIET PACIFIC FLEET HQ - DAY

INT. SHTYROV'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

A printer spits out a cover letter. Shtyrov places it on top of a thick report about his belief that the Americans are trying to raise the K-129.

As he double-checks the cover letter (which is in Russian), we see chyroned subtitles of phrases from it: *"raising the K-129", "100% convinced", "a colossal intelligence failure".*

Satisfied, Shtyrov signs it with a flourish.

He just signs it with Admiral Domyslovskiy's name.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE HUGHES GLOMAR EXPLORER - DAY

It's battered by terrible weather and huge waves as it makes its way toward the recovery location.

INT. DAVE'S BERTH - SAME TIME

Dave, seasick, is on his knees in front of the toilet. He pours the vial of Chinese remedy John Graham gave him down his throat. It's empty.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOSCOW AIRPORT - DAY

Nixon waves and walks up the steps to Air Force One.

CUT TO:

INT. ADMIRAL DOMYSLOVSKI'S OFFICE - DAY

At his desk when his secretary runs in:

DOMYSLOVSKIY'S SECRETARY
It's the Minister!

Domyslovskiy takes a deep breath, then answers the phone.

DOMYSLOVSKIY
Minister, what a pleasant surprise.
To what do I owe this honor?

As he hears the origin of this honor,

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SHTYROV'S OFFICE - FIFTEEN SECONDS LATER

Shtyrov calmly eats an apple, his feet on his desk.

Domyslovskiy bursts in, spittle literally foaming at the mouth. He starts to scream at Shtyrov, but each time he starts, he is so overcome with anger he has to stop.

SHTYROV

Did the Minister give you the ship
you requested?

Domyslovskiy glares at him -- *the nerve of this man.*

DOMYSLOVSKIY

You better be right or it will be
the gulag for you.

SHTYROV

I better be right or it will be the
gulag for both of us, Admiral.

As Shtyrov grins and chomps down on his apple,

CUT TO:

INT. COLBY'S OFFICE - CIA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Duckett and JP walk in. Colby grins and tells them:

COLBY

Air Force One is officially out of
Soviet airspace.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE OF THE PACIFIC - DAWN

"Recovery Location"

The *HGE* bobs on the water, encased in a shroud of fog.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - THE EXPLORER - DAY

Dave gets a message over the secure telex machine: "You have a go from the highest authority."

Dave grins, turns to Sparkman:

DAVE SHARP
Drop the transponders.

CUT TO:

CRANES

releasing THE TRANSPONDERS. As they disappear into the ocean...

CUT TO:

THE OCEAN FLOOR

as THE TRANSPONDERS' WEIGHTED BATTERY PACKS hit the ocean floor, one after the other. Tethered to them thirty feet above, the blinking TRANSPONDERS.

SPARKMAN (V.O.)
Transponders have landed.

The blinking lights give us a tiny glimpse of the K-129.

CUT TO:

THE CATWALK ABOVE THE MOON POOL

Dave stares down at the gates. Hoping/praying that his shower epiphany will work.

DAVE SHARP
Open the gates.

The giant gates GROAN as they open in the rough seas. But they don't buckle.

CUT TO:

CURTIS & JP ON THE DONALD DUCK PHONES

as Curtis updates JP.

CURTIS
The gates have opened.

JP
And the ship's still floating?

CURTIS
(laughs)
Affirmative.

JP breathes a sigh of relief. Turns to Walt:

JP
I don't think my heart's gonna be
able to take this.
(sips his drink)
Or my liver.

CUT BACK TO:

THE MOON POOL

The gates are completely open. Dave stares down at the ENORMOUS HOLE. Relieved it worked.

DAVE SHARP
Lower the pipe-string.

CUT TO:

THE STACKS OF PIPE STRING.

They're identical -- each sixty feet long and painted bright yellow with "Hughes Tool Company" written down the side.

Except ten pieces of string are painted a greenish-blue.

THE ROUGHNECKS

load the pipe string under the watchful eye of John Graham's lieutenant, Sherm Whetmore.

It's an impressive ballet of coordination and brute strength.

A sixty-foot piece of pipe is pulled out of storage by a crane and...

.... conveyed up to the top of the derrick, 240 feet above the deck. Then...

... another crane spins the pipe and holds it vertically as it's lowered into the preceding pipe...

... where it's screwed into place, then driven down.

Another piece in an ever-expanding chain that will eventually reach three miles.

The power for this process comes from--

THE HEAVY LIFT SYSTEM.

Forty-eight hydraulic pumps operating pressures of up to 3,000 psi. So deafening and literally teeth-rattling that the TECHNICIANS operate the pumps from a glass-enclosed room.

BENEATH THE SHIP

Twelve DIVERS tread underwater as they watch THE PIPE STRING emerge sixty feet at a time.

The first pieces of string emerge are the greenish-blue ones, which blend in with the ocean water.

DAVE SHARP (V.O.; PRELAP)
Start Clementine's descent.

CUT TO:

CLEMENTINE

attached to the giant docking legs, slowly descends through the open moon pool into the ocean.

CUT TO:

THE BRIDGE

Captain Gresham and his team work the thrust in tiny bursts -- attempting to keep the ship as still as possible.

RADAR TECHNICIAN
Captain.

Gresham looks at the radar, A BLIP. Moving fast, faster than a ship.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM
What the hell is that?
(into radio)
Sharp, I need you up here.

CUT TO:

DAVE

running up a stairwell, emerges on to the deck.

And hears a helicopter. Impossible to tell how far because of the fog. Dave yells to a bunch of Roughnecks:

DAVE SHARP
Get some boxes!

ROUGHNECK
Of what?

DAVE SHARP
Of anything!

CUT TO:

THE SOVIET HELICOPTER

emerges out of the fog, approaches the *Explorer*.

Tries to land, but Dave and the roughnecks load boxes on the helipad. The helicopter comes closer... but Dave and the guys stand their ground.

Finally the helicopter aborts the landing attempt.

DAVE & THE ROUGHNECKS

watch the chopper circle the *Explorer*. The Copter's REAR DOOR opens and A CREWMAN starts taking pictures with a huge telephoto lens.

As the Russian snaps the photos, we DIVE INTO--

THE WATER.

Clementine continues its descent toward the pipe string.

The Divers look up... can see the shadow of the helicopter as it circles the ship.

CUT TO:

DAVE & SPARKMAN

watching as the helicopter leaves, disappearing into the fog.

DAVE SHARP
We don't have much time. We gotta undock now.

Sparkman nods, starts to run off.

DAVE SHARP
And empty the trash.

Off Sparkman's quizzical look.

CUT TO:

EXT./ESTAB. CIA - NIGHT

INT COLBY'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Walt points to satellite photos of the *Chazma*, the Soviet ship that houses the helicopter.

WALT LOGAN
... NSA says it's the *Chazma*, a Soviet missile tracker that was on its way back to its home port of Petropavlovsk when it was diverted.
(beat)
The only positive is that they don't appear to have divers.

Colby, Duckett, and JP stare at the photos for a long beat.

DUCKETT
Jesus, they're not even pretending to be sending a commercial ship.

Colby gives voice to the question they're all wondering:

COLBY
Do they know?

As they ponder that,

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE - THE CHAZMA - DAY

The 450 foot Soviet missile tracker crashes through the waves as it goes full-bore through the fog.

The Captain speaks into the radio:

CHAZMA CAPTAIN
(stilted English)
We heard your call for assistance.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM (O.S.; ON RADIO)
We made no call. You must be mistaken.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN GRESHAM (O.S.; ON RADIO)
 We require no assistance. Repeat.
 We require no assistance.

The Chazma Captain hangs up the radio.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL CENTER - SOVIET PACIFIC FLEET HQ - NIGHT

Shtyrov and Domyslovskiy, their futures now co-mingled, pace the control center. It's tense. Everyone smokes, except Shtyrov, who calmly chews an apple.

A COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER runs over with a secure message. Starts to hand it to Domyslovskiy, but Domyslovskiy refuses to take it -- he's still trying to distance himself from this.

SHTYROV
 (reads the message, then:)
 They'll be there in thirty minutes.

DAVE SHARP (O.S.; PRELAP)
 Commencing undocking.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CONTROL CENTER - THE EXPLORER - DAY

Dave and the Department Heads stare intently at the MONITORS, watching as the divers start the most crucial step...

... undocking the four million pound Clementine from the Docking Legs and transferring it to the pipe string.

UNDERWATER

BOOM! BOOM!

The pipe string and Capture Vehicle smash into each other, causing--

THE ENTIRE SHIP

to shake. Physical shock waves from the collisions are visible on the derrick structure. But that's not what's the scariest part... the sound is.

It sounds like the ship is being torn apart.

THE BRIDGE

Captain Gresham and his crew look at each other. Terrified.

FIRST MATE
 Feel like we're being taken down by
 the Kraken.

Gresham looks back at the radar, as the *Chazma* blip keeps coming toward them.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - BELOW THE EXPLORER

The Divers start the next step into transferring Clementine onto the pipe string, guiding **GIANT HALF-TON PINS** into eye-holes.

It's like threading a needle. Underwater.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAZMA - DAY

Closing in on the *Explorer*. Can't see it through the fog, but can hear the groaning of pipe-string.

A SAILOR on the bow spots something in the water... a trail of trash bags floating toward them.

CUT TO:

INT. SOVIET PACIFIC FLEET HQ - NIGHT

Shtyrov and Domyslovskiy are told:

SOVIET COMMUNICATIONS TECH
 They want to know if they should
 stop and pick up the trash bags.

Yes--

DOMYSLOVSKIY

No-- SHTYROV

*

DOMYSLOVSKIY
 It might tell us what they're up to.

SHTYROV
 Then we'll circle back for it later.
 (to the Comm Tech)
 (MORE)

SHTYROV (CONT'D)

Tell them to get the *Explorer* to move.

(to Domyslovskiy)

If the *Explorer* moves, then maybe it really is a commercial ship.

But if it doesn't...

CUT TO:

INT. BRIDGE OF THE EXPLORER - DAY

All eyes focused on the radar as the *Chazma* blip continues toward them.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM

What the hell is he doing?

Captain Gresham grabs the radio.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM (INTO RADIO)

Chazma, you are coming too close to us. Repeat, you are getting dangerously close to us.

A long beat of silence, then:

CHAZMA CAPTAIN (O.S.; OVER RADIO)

We need you to move. We are having engine trouble and can not stop.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - EXPLORER - SAME TIME

Dave and his group exhale as they hear:

DIVER (O.S.; OVER RADIO)

Second pin secured. Two to go--

CAPTAIN GRESHAM (O.S.; OVER RADIO)

Sharp, need you back up here.

CUT TO:

DAVE

Races across the deck heading toward the bridge. Sees the *Chazma* emerge from the fog, heading for them.

Dave sprints faster.

CUT TO:

THE BRIDGE

Dave mid-argument with Captain Gresham.

DAVE SHARP

You can't move until the transfer's complete--

CAPTAIN GRESHAM

We have no choice! He's saying he can't stop!

DAVE SHARP

He's lying!

CAPTAIN GRESHAM

You don't know that!

(to XO)

Adjust course!

DAVE SHARP

No! Don't do it!

CAPTAIN GRESHAM

I am the Captain--

DAVE SHARP

And I am the Recovery Director!
And you know that I have absolute authority once we have reached the recovery site.

Gresham's crew looks away, not used to having his authority challenged.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM

(as if talking to five-year-old)

If we don't move and he hits us, we will sink.

DAVE SHARP

And if we do move, we'll lose Clementine.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM

(incredulous)

And that's worse?!

Dave looks at the crew. They're terrified. Worried that Dave has lost it, that he's gone Colonel Kurtz on them.

SPARKMAN (OVER INTERCOM)

Third pin secured.

Dave looks out at the *Chazma*, still heading straight for them.

DAVE SHARP
He's lying. He'll alter his course.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM
You don't know that! You can't know that!

He waits for Dave to see the error of his ways. Instead:

DAVE SHARP
I have to get back to the control room. You have your orders.

Off Captain Gresham's look of disbelief,

CUT TO:

THE BRIDGE OF THE CHAZMA - SAME TIME

As they hear over the radio:

CAPTAIN GRESHAM (O.S.; OVER RADIO)
(strained)
We too have engine troubles and can not move.

The *Chazma* captain and crew exchange nervous looks.

CUT TO:

UNDER THE EXPLORER

The divers work to secure the fourth pin. But--

FOURTH PIN DIVER (O.S.; INTO RADIO)
It's not threading correctly.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SOVIET PACIFIC FLEET HQ - SAME TIME

Shtyrov paces, wondering aloud:

SHTYROV
With a ship bearing down on them, they lie and refuse to move. Why? For manganese nodules?

DOMYSLOVSKIY

No.

Shtyrov pauses, sees that Domyslovskiy is starting to believe.

DOMYSLOVSKIY

If moving is a disaster worse than sinking, then we must make them move.

CUT TO:

THE BRIDGE OF THE CHAZMA - SAME TIME

The Captain reads a secure message. Doesn't like it. Hesitates before taking the radio and calling the *Explorer*.

CHAZMA CAPTAIN (INTO RADIO)

We have been unable to finish repairs and can not alter our course.

(pleading)

Surely, you can move a little.

THE DECK OF THE EXPLORER

The Crew watches the *Chazma* coming toward them. The ship is going to turn, right?

Right?!

THE CONTROL ROOM

Dave stares at the monitor as the divers try and force the last pin.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM (O.S.; ON RADIO)

Sharp...

Sparkman reaches for the radio, but Dave waves him off.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Sharp?!

THE EXPLORER'S BRIDGE

Gresham stares at the *Chazma* through the binocs; the *Chazma* crew is panicking. Gresham calls down to Dave:

CAPTAIN GRESHAM (INTO INTERCOM)
 They're never going to be able to
 stop in time!

CONTROL ROOM

CAPTAIN GRESHAM (O.S.; OVER INTERCOM)
 Sharp, we have to--

Dave turns off the intercom.

CUT TO:

THE BRIDGE OF THE CHAZMA - SAME TIME

The Captain binocs the *Explorer*, sees how freaked out their
 crew is. Nobody wants what appears inevitable.

CHAZMA XO
 Captain, we have to alter our
 course!

CHAZMA CAPTAIN
 (shakes his head / hopefully)
 They will move. They have to.

CUT TO:

UNDER THE EXPLORER

The fourth, and final, pin is locked into place.

DIVER (O.S.; OVER RADIO)
 Clementine secured to pipe string.

CUT TO:

CONTROL ROOM - THE EXPLORER

Sighs of relief. But they're not done yet.

DAVE SHARP
 Complete transfer.

CUT TO:

UNDER THE WATER

The pipe string GROANS and BENDS as it takes the entire weight of the four million pound Capture Vehicle.

CUT TO:

THE BRIDGE OF THE CHAZMA

The Captain and Officers watch as the *Explorer* sways and GROANS. Never seen anything like it.

And the Captain wants no part of it, orders be damned.

CHAZMA CAPTAIN (INTO INTERCOM)
Full astern! Full astern!

CUT TO:

THE EXPLORER

ALARMS blare all over the ship as the ship continues to try and stabilize itself.

CUT TO:

OVERHEAD SHOT OF THE TWO SHIPS

heading for a collision even as the *Chazma* tries to reverse.

CUT TO:

EXPLORER CONTROL ROOM

The alarms stop. Dave turns on the intercom, hears Gresham screaming. Screams over him:

DAVE SHARP (INTO INTERCOM)
Move! Move!

CUT TO:

THE BRIDGE

CAPTAIN GRESHAM
Full ahead! Full ahead!

CUT TO:

THE ENGINE ROOM

The giant engines roar to life.

CUT TO:

UNDERWATER

Clementine sways precariously from the pipe string as the Explorer starts to move forward.

CUT TO:

THE MOON POOL

The stresses cause bolts attached to the gimbal rings and heavy lift cylinders to shear off. The bolt heads fly off, ricocheting around like bullets.

CUT TO:

THE DECK

Dave stares at the *Chazma*, which is trying to turn as it reverses, but its momentum is still bringing it toward them.

Looks like it's going to hit the *Explorer's* stern.

Until finally...

THE TWO SHIPS

narrowly miss each other.

CUT TO:

QUICK SHOTS

Of the crew members of the two ships. Breathing a sigh of relief. None more than Dave.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE EXPLORER

bobs in heavy seas. Miserable weather. The *Chazma* sits a quarter of a mile away. Both crews watch each other through binoculars.

DIVE UNDER THE WATER and follow the pipe-string down, chyron:

"Day 41 of Mission"

CUT TO:

INT. JP'S HOME - NIGHT

JP, from a dead sleep, grabs his bedside phone before the first ring is done.

BILL COLBY (O.S.; ON PHONE)
The *LA Times* has the story...

CUT BACK TO:

THE JOURNEY DOWN THE PIPE STRING

BILL COLBY (V.O.)
... They'll play ball, but the dam's breaking and I'm running out of fingers.

Chyron:

"16250 feet of pipe string deployed..."

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL CENTER - SOVIET PACIFIC FLEET HQ

A nervous Domyslovskiy is on the phone with Moscow as Shtyrov silently encourages him.

DOMYSLOVSKIY (INTO PHONE)
... Yes, sir, you've been more than patient. But we-- I-- am asking for just a bit more--

The blistering retort is audible through the receiver. Domyslovskiy looks like a beaten dog. But then he bites:

DOMYSLOVSKIY
It is not impossible! They are raising our sub! Now are you going to give me what I'm asking for or are you going to sit there on your fat ass and let them steal our sub!

Shtyrov watches in amazement.

CUT BACK TO:

THE JOURNEY DOWN THE PIPE STRING

As the bright yellow pipe-string turns into the bluish-green ones, we notice a small box attached to the last yellow pipe-string. Chyron:

"100 feet from target"

As we finally reach Clementine:

DAVE SHARP (V.O.)
Okay, let's take a look at her.

Clementine's lights come on... and we get our first real glimpse of the K-129.

CUT TO:

CONTROL ROOM - THE EXPLORER

Dave and his team stare at the monitors. Stunned to actually be staring at the K-129, which is mostly intact--

SPARKMAN
Shit.

-- except for the missile tubes -- some sort of explosion occurred.

They all exchange looks -- this changes everything.

CUT TO:

INT. JP'S OFFICE - CIA HQ - DAY

A secure written communications comes across the printer. Walt grabs it, reads it.

WALT LOGAN
(worried)
"Tubes impacted. How should we proceed?"

CUT TO:

INT. COLBY'S OFFICE - CIA HQ - DAY

Colby, JP, and Duckett look worried:

COLBY
So those nukes could go off?

JP nods.

DUCKETT

Could, not will. We're still going to get it, right?

He looks at Colby, who looks at JP.

JP

It's not my call.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - THE EXPLORER

Dave stares at the secure message: "Proceed at your discretion." And everyone stares at him.

DAVE SHARP

Let's get this SOB.

They cheer and clap. Even with imminent (nuclear) danger, they all want this.

Dave puts his hands on **HANK VAN CALCAR**'s shoulders, who is operating Clementine. Hank (20s) is a young cocky guy...

DAVE SHARP

Ready to win the Cold War, Hank?

... usually. He doesn't answer Dave and what's worse is that Hank's hand is shaking. As Dave's face goes white:

HANK VAN CALCAR

(grins)

Just screwing with you, boss. All good. Engaging thrusters.

CUT TO:

CLEMENTINE'S EIGHT THRUSTERS

-- engage. Clementine slowly positions itself above the sub.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - THE EXPLORER

Nobody speaks (or seemingly breathes) as Hank makes tiny adjustments, lining up with his three reference points on the sub -- including a large fracture.

But it's hard since there's such a long lag time between Hank moving the joystick and then Clementine carrying out the command.

Finally, Hank exhales. Lets go of the controllers.

HANK
We are lined up.
(shakes out cramps in hand)
Hasn't hurt like that since I was
thirteen.

Laughter eases the room's tension.

DAVE SHARP
Commence touchdown.

OTT SCHICK
(the guy who created Clementine)
Extending breakout legs.

CUT TO:

THE BREAKOUT LEGS--

-- think of them as four HUGE COLUMNS -- descend out of the bottom of Clementine until-- **THUD** -- they make contact with the sea floor.

CUT TO:

THE CONTROL CENTER

OTT SCHICK
We have touchdown!

WHOOPS and CHEERS. But not from Dave.

DAVE SHARP
Drive the tines.

CUT TO:

THE ENORMOUS TINES

dig into the seabed beneath the sub.

But they can't penetrate the ocean floor.

CUT TO:

THE CONTROL CENTER

Everyone's freaking out, yelling at the monitors as the tines struggle to penetrate. Dave, calm, rubs John Graham's beer tab.

SPARKMAN

What's that thing?

DAVE SHARP

Small piece of metal.
 (off Sparkman's look)
 Inside joke.
 (to Hank)
 Keep going.

As Hank applies more pressure,

CUT TO:

THE TINES

forcing their way into the seabed, which still does not want to give. Tiny cracks appear in the tines...

... but finally the tines penetrate the soil.

CUT TO:

CONTROL CENTER

Explode in applause.

HANK

Preparing to close tines.

DAVE SHARP

Just remember, there's enough nuclear material to blow up Los Angeles.

HANK

I live in the Bay Area.

As Hank takes a deep breath:

CUT TO:

THE TINES

come together beneath the sub.

CUT TO:

THE CONTROL CENTER

HANK

We're closed. Deploying net.

A metal net deploys from Clementine and is pulled over the missile tubes.

CUT TO:

THE BRIDGE OF THE EXPLORER

The ship pitches back and forth.

HANK (OVER RADIO)

Target is secured.

Everyone high-fives, except Captan Gresham who is watching huge waves crash over the deck of the ship.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM

(to First Mate)

What's our roll?

FIRST MATE

Five degrees.

Off Gresham's nervous look,

CUT TO:

THE CONTROL ROOM

DAVE SHARP

Okay, let's bring her home.

(beat)

Commence breakout.

CUT TO:

CLEMENTINE

starts to vibrate as pressure is applied.

But it doesn't move.

CUT TO:

DAVE AND TEAM

watch as Clementine tries to defy gravity and dead-lift over twelve million pounds.

CUT TO:

THE CHAZMA

The crew watches *The Explorer* as the derrick strains and the ship rolls even more on to her side from the exertion.

The Chazma crew has never seen anything like this.

CUT TO:

CONTROL ROOM

All eyes on the monitors.

CAPTAIN GRESHAM (O.S.; ON INTERCOM)
Sharp, our roll's at seven!

Dave ignores him.

CUT TO:

CLEMENTINE

rises for a second...

... then sinks back to the ground.

CUT TO:

DAVE

Stares at the monitors. His vision starts to blur.

He shuts his eyes, picks up the intercom.

DAVE SHARP
Need a little more, Sherm.

CUT TO:

THE HEAVY LIFT CONTROL ROOM

It's so loud that they can barely hear. The coffee mugs on their control panel are vibrating from the exertion.

They apply more hydraulic power-- SMASH! The coffee mugs are marched off the control panel.

CUT TO:

THE EXPLORER

Rolled even more on to its side, battered by giant waves that crash over the deck. But still, over MOTHER NATURE'S FURY, they hear the **scariest sound** anybody on board has ever heard. It's coming from--

THE PIPE STRING UNDER THE SHIP.

Because of the ship's seven-degree roll, every connection between the sixty-foot pieces of pipe-string STRAINS.

And if a piece of string snaps, it will start a cataclysmic chain reaction that will send the pipe-string smashing back up into the ship.

CUT TO:

THE BRIDGE

GRESHAM (INTO INTERCOM)
Roll's at seven-point-five!...

CUT TO:

THE CONTROL ROOM

GRESHAM OVER INTERCOM)
... We've gotta let it go!

Dave ignores him. Sparkman goes over to Dave.

SPARKMAN
Remember when you stormed into Graham's office and told him we needed the roll to be able to go to eight-and-a-half degrees instead of eight and he told you to pound sound?
(Dave nods)
How sure were you?

DAVE SHARP
 (small smile)
 Not sure at all.

SPARKMAN
 (also lying)
 That's what I thought. Just making
 sure.

He pats Dave on the back and goes back to his post.

CUT TO:

CAPTAIN GRESHAM

pleading into the intercom:

GRESHAM
 We're at seven-point-eight degrees!...

CUT TO:

THE HEAVY LIFT CONTROL ROOM

Alarms are bleating. Sherm and his crew are all probably
 legally deaf now.

GRESHAM (OVER INTERCOM)
 ... The ship can't take anymore, Sherm.

So Gresham has given up on reasoning with Dave.

Sherm hangs up, calls down to Dave.

SHERM WHETMORE (INTO INTERCOM)
 We're maxed out up here. The
 gimbals are locking up. I don't
 think she can take it.

DAVE SHARP (OVER INTERCOM)
 Sherm, John knew this ship better
 than anyone. He said we'd be okay
 at eight.

SHERM WHETMORE (INTO INTERCOM)
 (stressed)
 Well it sure doesn't feel good at
 seven-point-five!

DAVE

Starts to yell back, but pauses. Then gently:

DAVE SHARP (OVER INTERCOM)
Whatever you think, Sherm.

SHERM

The decision in his lap (not entirely happy with it). Looks at his men, who are waiting for his decision.

Finally:

SHERM WHETMORE
Give us a little more.

As his men apply more power, Sherm mutters:

SHERM WHETMORE
Better be right, John.

CUT TO:

THE EXPLORER

Her port side now completely under the giant waves. The DERRICK bends and **SCREAMS** from the strain.

CUT TO:

CLEMENTINE

rises off the ocean floor again...

... but this time it *keeps rising!*

Clementine pulls away from the Breakout legs.

CUT TO:

THE EXPLORER

rolling back and forth, creating GIANT WAVES that smash back into the NATURAL WAVES. Finally the ship stabilizes.

CUT TO:

CONTROL CENTER

HANK
We have lift off!

They all start CHEERING!--

HANK
Shit!

DAVE SHARP
What?

HANK
It's shifting!

CUT TO:

THE K-129

rolls in Clementine's grasp.

CUT TO:

CONTROL CENTER

Everyone SCREAMS at Clementine as if they're yelling at a racehorse.

EVERYONE
No! / Stay! / Come on, Clementine!

CUT TO:

THE K-129

finally settles. Snug.

CUT TO:

CONTROL CENTER

HANK VAN CALCAR
She is secured!

Finally the celebration can begin. They all start hugging and high-fiving each other. Sparkman look arounds for Dave. He's not there.

OUTSIDE OF THE CONTROL CENTER

Dave has found a place by himself. Leans against a wall. The **HOOTING** and **HOLLERING** echoes from every part of the ship.

Dave's oblivious. Reflecting on the five years that have led to this moment.

He slides down against the wall, squatting on the floor. He breaks down; overwhelmed.

DAVE SHARP

(sotto)

We got oil, John. We got oil.

CUT TO:

INT. COLBY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

JP, Duckett, and Colby are high-fiving and hugging. The door bursts open. It's Walt...

... carrying bottles of champagne.

The POPPING of the champagne bottles gives way to:

WALTER CRONKITE (O.S.; PRELAP)

... So it seems that this will end
in one of two ways -- impeachment
or resignation.

CUT TO:

INT. ZUMWALT'S OFFICE - THE PENTAGON - SAME TIME

Zumwalt watches the latest trouble for Nixon on TV. Craven and Bradley walk in.

CRAVEN

They picked up the sub. They're
bringing it up now.

Zumwalt ponders that for a beat. Then grins.

ZUMWALT

Son of a bitch, they did it.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Candy and Curtis hurry down the hall. Go into John Graham's room to tell him the good news. But the room is empty.

John Graham has passed away.

CUT TO:

THE K-129

slowly and methodically rising toward the surface.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CONTROL CENTER - SOVIET PACIFIC FLEET HQ - DAY

Shtyrov chews an apple as he watches Domyslovskiy on the phone. Domyslovskiy hangs up, takes Shtyrov's apple out of his hand, takes a bite. Grins.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DECK OF THE EXPLORER - DAY

Dave shoots hoops at a makeshift basketball net. Hears a helicopter. But the *Chazma's* copter is on its deck.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CHAZMA - DAY

The *Chazma's* helicopter hovers as a new helicopter lands. When it does, a **TEAM OF DIVERS** climbs out with their gear. This has always been Dave's worst fear.

CUT TO:

THE SOVIET DIVERS

in the water under the *Chazma*. Watching as the yellow pipe-string is drawn back into the *Explorer*.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL CENTER - THE EXPLORER - DAY

DAVE SHARP
This is for you, John.

As he presses a button,

CUT TO:

THE LAST YELLOW PIPE STRING

Down at five hundred feet, below where divers can go. As the small box attached to it explodes:

CUT TO:

THE SOVIET DIVERS

Watching as the last of the yellow pipe-string comes up from the depths. And attached to it is:

A giant vacuum-looking contraption (a life-sized version of the mock-up of the nodule gathering machine they showed the press).

And because the last bit of pipe-string below is bluish-green and nearly invisible in the water, it looks like the contraption is at the end of the miles of pipe-string.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL CENTER - SOVIET PACIFIC FLEET HQ

A stunned Shtyrov and Domyslovskiy read the secure message:

"There is no sub"

CUT TO:

INT. MOON POOL - THE EXPLORER

They pull in the vacuum-looking contraption, then deflate it.

(John Graham modeled it on inflatable tanks and planes that made up the Ghost Army which tricked Hitler in WWII. We saw him reading a book about it earlier.)

CUT TO:

THE DECK OF THE EXPLORER - DAY

A picture perfect day. Dave watches the *Chazma* take off; the final tumbler of the lock falling in place. Now they'll be able to pull in the K-129 totally undisturbed.

Dave savors the moment--

BOOM! A SMALL EARTHQUAKE seems to pass through the ship.

Everyone on the deck gives a look: what the hell was that?

CUT TO:

THE HEAVY LIFT CONTROL ROOM

The dials and gauges go crazy. Everyone clueless as to why.

HYDRAULICS ENGINEER (INTO RADIO)
We're losing all sorts of weight.

CUT TO:

THE CONTROL CENTER

Dave and the other guys stare at the monitor -- it shows the sub safely in Clementine's claw.

DAVE SHARP
It's not us! We've got it all!

A collective sigh of relief. But then:

SPARKMAN
We took it off the live feed to save bandwidth.

He resets the feed. It goes live.

And most of the sub is gone.

All but the back forty feet of it.

Dave stares at the monitor, refusing to believe it.

CUT TO:

INT. JP'S OFFICE - DAY

JP and Duckett have heard the news. Duckett is unhinged. Pacing and ranting. JP, who can rant with the best of them, is calm.

DUCKETT
(to Walt)
Send 'em a message, tell 'em to go back and get it!

JP
Carl--

DUCKETT
 (ignores him)
 Tell 'em to go back and get it! And
 it's not a request, it's an order.

Walt starts off.

JP
 Carl, they can't go back.
 (Walt stops)
 They don't know the sub's location
 or condition--

DUCKETT
 (to Walt)
 Get me a line into that ship!

JP
 There aren't any secure ones.

DUCKETT
 Then get me an unsecure one! I
 don't care! I want to talk to that
 son of a bitch Sharp!

JP
 (calmly)
 Carl, you can't call Sharp. The
 Russians will hear everything.
 Everything will be compromised. The
 mission... The crew. Everything.

Duckett realizes the logic. Doesn't make it easier.

DUCKETT
 Then what the hell do we do, John?

JP
 Bring up what they have.

Duckett sits down. Crushed.

DUCKETT
 They're gonna crucify us, John.

CUT TO:

THE CATWALK ABOVE THE MOON POOL - EXPLORER - DAY

Dave, by himself, watches as the water's drained from the
 moon pool, revealing the forty foot piece of the K-129.

Ironically, there are also manganese nodules scattered around that were scooped up when they picked up the K-129.

Sparkman comes over. Puts his arm around Dave's shoulder. Dave doesn't acknowledge it, just stares at the chunk of sub.

SPARKMAN
We did good, Dave.

No response from Dave. Then:

DAVE SHARP
Have 'em bring up the Geiger counters.

SPARKMAN
You wanna get started on the recovery--

DAVE SHARP
I want to look at those tines, see why they broke. Maybe even get the data up to Lockheed while we're heading home so they can get a head-start.

SPARKMAN
On what?

DAVE SHARP
Fixing it for the next mission.

Dave walks off. Resolute. Sparkman double-takes -- "*next mission?*"

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Colby, Duckett, and JP try to convince Kissinger and PRESIDENT FORD to continue the mission.

Zumwalt argues just as vociferously in opposition.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE EXPLORER - DAY

As it heads back to Hawaii, we see:

SHOTS OF THE EXPLOITATION.

- The crew, wearing their protective suits, use blow torches to cut their way into the sub.

- They pull out codebooks, a nuclear-tipped torpedo.
- Sparkman crawls through the sub. Stops when he sees a dead sailor.

The sailor is the young one who was smoking a cigarette on the K-129 before she departed.

Sparkman reaches out with his gloved hand and closes the sailor's eyelids.

PRELAP the *Soviet Union National Anthem...*

CUT TO:

EXT. DECK OF THE EXPLORER - DAY

The remains of the SIX SOVIET SAILORS have been placed in a large steel container. The Soviet flag is draped over it.

Dave and the rest of the crew watch solemnly as a crane picks up the container. Gently places it in the ocean.

As the *Soviet Anthem* fades away, it's replace by a TAT-A-TAT-TAT-TAT noise.

CUT TO:

CONTROL ROOM - THE EXPLORER

The printer spits out a secure message.

CUT TO:

INT. MESS HALL - THE EXPLORER - DAY

The entire crew is here. Been called for a big announcement. Pin-drop-silent.

Dave walks in, climbs up to a table.

CUT BACK TO:

DAVE

reading the secure message.

"Mission is over. No appetite from 1600 to continue."

Dave's vision starts to blur. As the machine TAT-A-TAT-TAT-TATs out a new message:

CUT TO:

THE MESS HALL

DAVE SHARP
We're not going back. The mission
is over.

The crew, like Dave, is crushed. We can see and feel the incredible disappointment that they feel after devoting so much time and energy to the project.

DAVE SHARP
(voice quivering)
I'm sorry... For some of you, many
of you, this has been a five year
journey requiring many sacrifices.
(beat)
I know it has been for me.

The crew looks down. Sad, ashamed.

CUT BACK TO:

DAVE

Continuing to read the secure message: *"Return home ASAP. Worried about cover story."*

As he stares at the message:

CUT TO:

THE MESS HALL

DAVE SHARP
But god damn it, this is not a
failure.

As people look up from the floor,

CUT TO:

INT. COLBY'S OFFICE - DAY

JP holds a secure message from Dave: *"Leak the story"*

COLBY

Why the hell would he want us to leak the story we've been trying to contain?

JP has no idea. Then he figures it out. As he smiles,

CUT TO:

THE MESS HALL

Dave gathering steam.

DAVE SHARP

We went out into some of the harshest seas in the world and picked up a Soviet sub from the bottom of the ocean, three miles down.

(beat)

And we did it right under Russia's nose; hell, the world's nose. And why we could do that? Because everyone thought it was impossible!

Some people start clapping.

DAVE SHARP

And very soon, the leaders of the Soviet Union are going to read about what we did. And they are not going to be happy...

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - THE KREMLIN - DAY

Copies of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *LA Times* litter the table. The entire COMMAND STAFF of the Soviet Navy and POLITICIANS argue.

OPTIMISTIC NAVAL OFFICIAL

Maybe the Americans got nothing and this is all disinformation?

SKEPTICAL NAVAL OFFICIAL

But maybe they got all of it?

DAVE SHARP (V.O.)
 ... because they'll have to assume
 the worst case scenario -- that
we've recovered it all.

CUT BACK TO:

THE MESS HALL

DAVE SHARP
 And so the Russians are going to
 have to redesign everything about
 this sub class. Missiles,
 cryptographic hardware. The
 operational procedures--

More clapping.

DAVE SHARP
 -- for their entire fleet!

People jump to their feet.

CUT BACK TO:

CONTROL CENTER - THE EXPLORER

Dave looking at the last secure message from JP:

"You are NOT a professor."

DAVE SHARP (V.O.)
 So don't let anybody say we failed...

CUT BACK TO:

THE MESS HALL

DAVID SHARP
 ... because what man could do, we did.

The hall explodes with WHOOPS AND HOLLERS. It's turning into
 a church revival.

DAVE'S POV: watching this, his vision perfectly clear.

DISSOLVE TO:

A TITLE CARD:

"Even after the news embargo lifted, President Ford never acknowledged the operation. In response to numerous Freedom of Information Act requests, the CIA responded:

CUT TO:

A PRESS CONFERENCE

Walt reads from a statement.

WALT LOGAN

"We can neither confirm nor deny the existence of the information requested but, hypothetically, if such data were to exist, the subject matter would be classified, and could not be disclosed."

CUT TO:

A TITLE CARD:

"This response came to be known as the Glomar Response and was used repeatedly by the CIA and other government branches in subsequent years.

When the CIA opened its official Twitter account in 2014, its first tweet was: "We can neither confirm nor deny that this is our first tweet."

CUT TO:

EXT./ESTAB. SOVIET NAVAL BASE - ARCTIC SEA - DAY

Snow and blistering cold temperatures in great abundance. Everything else is very scarce. It's the worst posting in the Soviet Navy.

CUT TO:

A TITLE CARD:

"The Soviet Union never officially acknowledged that the K-129 was lost or the CIA's efforts to raise it."

CUT BACK TO:

INT. NAVAL BASE - SAME TIME

Shtyrov works at his desk. This is his punishment.

He opens a package addressed to him. In it, a copy of the *New York Times* with Hersh's article about the K-129.

And an apple.

Shtyrov reads and chews. Grins. He was right.

CUT TO:

A TITLE CARD:

"Dave Sharp left the CIA shortly after the operation...
... as did Director Colby, Carl Duckett, and John Parangosky."

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAVE'S HOME - ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND - DAY

Dave guards his son William (17) as they play basketball.

William passes the ball to his GIRLFRIEND as Candy guards her.

CUT TO:

A TITLE CARD:

"Candy and Dave married in 1980 and remained married until her passing in 2018."

CUT TO:

REAL LIFE PHOTOS

Of Dave and Candy on their dock in Maryland.

CUT TO:

A TITLE CARD:

"Some naval historians believe that the CIA recovered the entire K-129 and that subsequent accounts which depict recovering only a portion of the sub are misinformation intentionally put out by the CIA.

The CIA neither confirmed or denied those rumors..."

And then the FINAL TITLE CARD:

**"... nor have they released the contents of what was
recovered from the K129. They remain classified to this day."**

THE END