

# **DAEDALUS**

SCREENPLAY BY

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FADE IN:

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - DAY

SONAR PINGS echo through icy black water, getting louder.

A searchlight slices the darkness as the Orb, a ten-foot glass and steel bathysphere, appears around a rock formation, skimming the ocean floor with its purring magnetic propulsion system.

Illuminated in the amber glow of the control panel is the eccentric ADMIRAL JACK PERRY, brilliant inventor and marine biologist. Behind his walrus mustache, a look of pure joy.

Beside him is the diminutive DOC, outspoken expert in hyperbaric medicine. She's in her 30s, but right now she's as wide-eyed as a kid in a candy store.

Perry steers them into a field of black smokers -- towering spires of mineral deposits belching clouds of sulfurous gas. Tiny volcanoes. Streams of magma create an eerie red light.

A trailing cable tethers the Orb to something lurking in the darkness behind. Something gargantuan.

INT. ORB - DAY

Perry nearly grazes a smoker. Doc nervously glances at the external temperature gauge -- it spikes to 700 degrees, then quickly drops back into the NORMAL range.

ADMIRAL PERRY  
(grinning)  
Having second thoughts?

DOC  
Not on your life.

Her smile vanishes as the seabed suddenly rises in front of them. It's a giant ray, lifting off from its camouflaged resting place.

DOC (CONT'D)  
A manta this far down? Amazing!

They watch in wonder as it glides gracefully around the Orb and heads deeper into the field of smokers.

Ahead, the ray is lit up by a radiance emanating from a hidden fissure. It banks and dives, disappearing from view.

DOC (CONT'D)  
That must be the rift.

Enthralled, Perry eases the joystick forward.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR

The Orb approaches the incandescent rift -- but its tether snaps taut, holding it in place.

INT. ORB

They try to peer over the edge to see what's creating the shimmering light, but they're not quite close enough.

ADMIRAL PERRY

(into mic)

John, I'm afraid we're going to need a little more slack, if you please.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR

Materializing ghost-like from the darkness behind them comes a fantastic prototype sub -- the Daedalus. Sleek and lethal. A panoramic window wraps around its flared nose.

INT. SUB OBSERVATION DECK

Watching the Orb through the giant window, two men with headsets fill side-by-side observation chairs.

LT. DAVID DRAKE stares out in wonder, his wholesome boyish charm accentuated by his pristine white dress uniform. He checks the Orb's instrument feed on his console.

DRAKE

Sir, based on their temperature data, I recommend we stay well clear of the smokers.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER, 40s, tough as nails, and the Navy's top sub commander, looks at him with disdain.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

You recommend that, do you?

They continue toward the deadly smokers.

INT. KEEFER'S QUARTERS

MILES KEEFER, the cunning, silver-haired Deputy Secretary of Defense, wakes from a nap and pours a scotch. A glance at his monitor shows the nose-camera view of the smokers, dangerously close. *Son of a bitch*. He abandons the drink and strides out.

INT. SUB OBSERVATION DECK

Drake stares at the giant smoker looming dead ahead. A collision is imminent. He knows he's being tested and tries not to flinch.

DRAKE

Sir?

At the last possible second --

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

All stop.

DRAKE

(relieved, into mic)

All stop.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

(into mic)

Admiral, on the recommendation of our cautious young lieutenant, we're going to hold position at the perimeter.

Annoyed at having his balls busted, Drake bites his tongue.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR

The Daedalus stops at the edge of the smoker field.

Ahead, the Orb maneuvers directly over the smoker-lined rift.

INT. ORB

Perry and Doc stare into the deep, incandescent chasm.

Perry fires off a single sonar PING. They wait for the bounce-back. It doesn't come. Finally, the return PING. They check the depth indicator, then look at each other in disbelief.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK

The Captain stares at the distant Orb hovering over the rift.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

Twenty-eight thousand feet?

ADMIRAL PERRY (ON SPEAKER)

I designed the Orb to withstand twenty thousand, so we'll drop down and take our readings from there. And that means we'll need all the cable. So I'm afraid you're going to have to come join the party.

Drake looks apprehensive. Keefer appears at his shoulder.

KEEFER

Whoa, whoa. We bump a smoker, it'll melt right through the hull, even if it is herculite. One mistake...

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

Good thing my men are trained not to make mistakes. Lieutenant Drake?

DRAKE

I'll wake the XO.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

No. You do it.

DRAKE

(stunned)

Sir?

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

I'm not asking you to parallel park. Just take her in. You've been itching to prove yourself. Well, here's your chance.

DRAKE

Yes, sir.

Uneasy, he gets up. Behind him, the room splits -- six steps down, behind glass, is the Strategy Room. Drake takes the six steps up to the Control Center, heart of the sub's operations.

Keefer takes Drake's seat, and in a hushed voice --

KEEFER

You're really going to let that glass of milk take our sub into a --

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

Look, Keefer, I'm impressed by the number of medals you raked in during your army days. I truly am. And I sure do appreciate how hard you fought to get the funding for this project. Hell, I hope they give you a plaque in the officers' head. But right now what I don't need is you breathing up my ass and second-guessing my orders. So stand down.

Under the Captain's intense stare, Keefer backs down.

KEEFER

I bet the kid pisses himself.

INT. CONTROL CENTER

Sitting in the slightly-elevated Officer of the Deck (OOD) chair is the rough, caustic CHIEF OF THE BOAT. At 45, the most experienced sailor on board. Drake faces him, heart pounding.

DRAKE  
Chief...

The Chief looks him over, evaluating. Making him sweat.  
Then, with a flourish, he relinquishes the chair.

CHIEF  
Lieutenant Drake has the con.

As Drake tentatively sits down, he sees the crew staring with concern. Most are in their twenties. And still innocent.

To Drake's left, at Sonar, a nervous, tanned beachboy they call SURFER.

To Drake's right, working the Weapons Control Panel, is the wildly-tattooed TRIGGER, an over-caffeinated fireball.

Sensing their anxiety, Drake pretends to look for something by the chair.

DRAKE  
Um... anyone know where the parking  
brake is on this thing?

SQUEAK, a high-pitched runt at Communications, trades a grin with the soft-spoken PREACHER, manning Navigation. The tension is eased.

DRAKE (CONT'D)  
Okay. Seven billion dollars. I do  
not want to be the guy who puts the  
first ding in the hull. So let's  
take her in slow.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK

Staring nervously out at the approaching smokers, Keefer crams another stick of gum in his mouth.

KEEFER  
So you're okay with this? Putting  
the sub in jeopardy just to satisfy  
the Admiral's obsessive scientific  
curiosity?

CAPTAIN LANCASTER  
I have my orders.

KEEFER

It's been two weeks of collecting specimens, mapping the ocean floor and taking pictures. We haven't even tested the weapons systems yet.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

Not the adventure you were hoping for?

KEEFER

I'm just saying, it'd be a shame to lose the boat before we even find out what she's capable of.

INT. CONTROL CENTER

The increasing intensity of SONAR PINGS bouncing off the smokers puts the crew on edge. Working the Ship Control Station, the HELMSMAN and PLANESMAN are especially jumpy.

DRAKE

Helm, right rudder five degrees.

HELM

Answering right rudder five degrees.

EXT. SUB & OCEAN FLOOR

The Daedalus glides silently between a pair of smokers, retracting the slack cable as it closes on the Orb.

The sub slows to a stop next to the Orb. Hovering over the rift, they're silhouetted in the shimmering light from below.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK

The Captain waves to the Orb through the window.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

(into mic)

You're good to go, Admiral.

INT. ORB / EXT. RIFT

The Orb descends into a surreal world of strange bioluminescent fish and phosphorous algae that give the rift its spectacular blue-green radiance.

Perry and Doc stare in awe at the bizarre assortment of creatures with glowing luminous organs -- jellyfish, squid, shrimp, starfish, giant isopods and a school of lanternfish.

DOC

Not in my wildest. All these diverse life forms, without sunlight...

ADMIRAL PERRY

The hydrothermal vents create a primordial soup, a nutrient-rich environment with all the necessary ingredients -- heat, water and just the right mix of chemicals and minerals. Chemosynthesis is just as good as photosynthesis when it comes to sustaining life. Or creating it.

DOC

You really think this rift could be the birthplace of all life on Earth?

Perry nods.

DOC (CONT'D)

I wonder how many more places like this there are on the planet?

ADMIRAL PERRY

Or in the universe.

She's intrigued by the thought. A grotesque dragonfish swims past. Doc follows its path upward... to the Daedalus far above.

DOC

So... all those years of struggle and sacrifice to make it happen... What do you think? Worth it?

Perry just grins.

ADMIRAL PERRY

And you? All the back-stabbing and sleeping around to get this job... Worth it?

DOC

(feigning offense)  
I think --

A powerful SHOCK-WAVE shakes the Orb.

ADMIRAL PERRY

(into mic)  
What just happened?

INT. CONTROL CENTER

Drake is overwhelmed by all the ALARMS from the consoles.

SQUEAK  
Lieutenant, I'm losing radio com!

Before Drake can respond, the EXECUTIVE OFFICER (XO) rushes in.

XO  
What have we got?

SURFER  
Oh shit!

The sonar panel flashes red. The XO has a look -- and goes pale.

XO  
Sound collision alarm! Rig for  
impact!

DRAKE  
Helm, right rudder ten degrees!  
Turn her into the swell!

INT. SUB

A BLARING ALARM sends the crew racing to their stations.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK

The Captain bounds up the stairs. Behind him, heavy steel shutters slam over the window -- BAM, BAM, BAM.

INT. CONTROL CENTER

Drake relinquishes the chair to the Captain.

DRAKE  
The Captain has the con!

XO  
Sonar detected a massive explosion  
fifty miles north-west.

SURFER  
Tidal wave! Coming fast!

CAPTAIN LANCASTER  
Retract the Orb! Turn into the swell!

DRAKE  
(checking helm control)  
Almost there!

CAPTAIN LANCASTER  
All hands, brace for impact!

They're hit hard.

IN THE RIFT

Perry and Doc watch the tidal wave ROAR past overhead, tossing the Daedalus around like a toy boat.

The Orb SLAMS into a wall, crumpling its propulsion system.

The tether is dragged against a smoker -- and melted through.

Perry and Doc stare out in horror as the Orb spirals down.

INT. CONTROL CENTER

Everything happens fast.

SQUEAK

Sir, I'm unable to raise the Admiral!

Drake checks another console, then locks eyes with the Captain.

DRAKE

The umbilical's been severed.

... We've lost the Orb.

The room goes silent.

EXT. RIFT

The Orb drops deeper... and deeper... The rift walls, once teeming with radiant life, gradually turn dim and grey.

INT. ORB

Doc grips her chair tight as the depth gauge passes 18,000 feet.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR

The Orb continues to plummet. At 21,000 feet it THUMPS down on a huge slanted ledge jutting over an abyss.

The terrified faces of Perry and Doc peer out into the dark.

INT. CONTROL CENTER

The Captain manages to look composed.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

Helm, move us back over the rift.

KEEFER

Hold on, Captain. Even if they are still alive, we've got no way to retrieve them. Not that deep. And if we're near a smoker and another wave hits...

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

No one dies on my watch, Mr. Keefer.  
It's that simple. Helm.

Drake nods, admiring his credo. Keefer does a slow burn.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR

The Daedalus moves through the smokers and back over the rift.

INT. ORB

In the red emergency light, Perry adjusts the radio controls.  
Just static. He gives up in frustration. Doc forces a smile.

DOC

The good news is, we have almost  
forty minutes of air left.

INT. STRATEGY ROOM

The Captain stands at a wall-sized plasma map of the world.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

...So with an explosion of that  
magnitude, we can assume for now that  
it was a nuclear explosion. And with  
no ships in the area, we can also  
assume we were the target.

Sitting at an oval table surrounded by walls of monitors are the  
XO, Drake, Chief, an ALBINO SCIENTIST, a BLIND SCIENTIST, and...

LT. KIM, an alluring, statuesque warrior with predatory grace,  
continually scans the group, focusing mostly on Drake.

KEEFER

We have to contact the base.  
Find out what the hell's going on.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

And give away our position?  
No, Mr. Keefer, we continue to run  
silent while we search for answers.

DRAKE

Sir, the clock is ticking on our  
other problem.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

You were suggesting a hook. Chief?

CHIEF

Sure, only we don't have a cable long  
enough.

DRAKE

So we lower ourselves down! The rift  
is wide enough for a descent.

KEEFER

With no room for error.

Drake turns to the Captain, hopeful.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

...Then let's not make any.

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR

The sub slowly descends into the narrow rift.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK

At the window, Drake and Keefer scan for the Orb. Drake finally spots a red light below.

DRAKE

I have visual contact!

KEEFER

It's intact.

Relief. Then the sub SHUDDERS.

INT. CONTROL CENTER

Surfer checks the data on his monitor. A look of panic.

SURFER

Captain, we have a surface explosion!  
Two miles south!

CHIEF

Tidal wave! Bigger than the first!

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

How much time, Chief?

The Chief turns, terror in his eyes. The sub is ROCKED.

EXT. RIFT

The swell SLAMS the Daedalus into a rock wall. Snapping the communications antennae array. Crunching the tail plane.

The disabled sub plunges toward the ledge.

INT. ORB

Perry and Doc stare in horror at the sub dropping on top of them.

DOC  
Oh dear God.

Perry throws his weight against the side of the Orb. And again.  
The Orb starts to roll... then rocks back.

INT. CONTROL CENTER

The SCREECH of the hull being squeezed by the pressure sends  
shivers through the crew.

HELM  
Helm is not responding, sir!

CAPTAIN LANCASTER  
Prepare to blow tanks!

INT. ORB / EXT. RIFT

Doc adds her weight to Perry's. The Orb rolls out of the sub's  
path. But now it's heading for the edge of the abyss.

It rolls right to the edge... And stops. Perry and Doc exchange  
a look of relief.

The sub THUDS onto the ledge, kicking up a cloud of silt.

It slides nose-first toward the edge.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK

Drake and Keefer are wracked with dread at their impending drop  
into the abyss.

INT. ORB

Perry braces himself -- the sub barrels right for them.

DOC  
Oh no, no, no...

It BANGS into them, CRACKING the glass shell. Knocking the Orb  
off the edge, into --

THE ABYSS

The Orb drops slowly...  
...silently...  
...into the darkness.