

THE ABYSS
AN ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY
BY
JAMES CAMERON

August 2, 1988
Director's Revision

THE ABYSS

OMITTED 1

OMITTED 2

TITLE: THE ABYSS -- ON BLACK, DISSOLVING TO COBALT BLUE

EXT. OCEAN/UNDERWATER -- DAY 3

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

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

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

CAPTAIN

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

BARNES

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

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

CAPTAIN

What the hell is it?

EXEC

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

BARNES

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

EXEC

Eighty knots...

BARNES

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

FRANK
(simultaneously)
Still diving, depth nine hundred feet. Port
clearance to cliff wall, one hundred fifty feet.

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

EXEC
(low, to Captain)
It's getting tight in here.

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

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

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

EXEC
That's too damn close! We've gotta back off.

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

EXEC
(really freaked now)
Nothing goes one thirty!

Suddenly the control room lights dim almost to blackness.

EXT. U.S.S. MONTANA

5

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

INT. U.S.S. MONTANA

6

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

EXEC
Turbulence! We're in its wake!

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

CAPTAIN
Helm, all stop! Full right rudder!

HELMSMAN

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

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

HELMSMAN

Hydraulics restored, sir.

EXT. U.S.S. MONTANA

7

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

INT. PORT TO TORPEDO ROOM

8

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

INT. CONTROL RM/ATTACK CENTER

9

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

CAPTAIN

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

NAVIGATOR

The torpedo room is flooded, sir!

CAPTAIN

Blow all tanks! Blow everything!

HELMSMAN

Passing twelve hundred feet...

EXEC

Blowing main tanks!

HELMSMAN

Twelve hundred fifty feet...

EXT. MONTANA

10

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

INT. MONTANA CONTROL ROOM

11

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

EXEC

Main forward tanks ruptured!

HELMSMAN

Passing thirteen hundred feet...

EXEC

Too deep to pump auxiliaries!

CAPTAIN

All back full! All back full!

HELMSMAN

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

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

CAPTAIN

We're losing her. Launch the buoy!

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

EXT. MONTANA

12

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

INT. MONTANA

13

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

EXT. OCEAN/UNDERWATER

14

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