

UNTITLED SCREENPLAY

by

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EXT. VIEW OF EARTH - DAYSIDE

The view from God's balcony, Earth hangs like a blue jewel, slowly turning before us. Faintly we hear a WARBLING CALL, a strange bird, or perhaps a whale. Immediately we dive toward the sound as...

TITLES BEGIN

UPPER ATMOSPHERE

Through clear open sky surrounded by towering white clouds like cathedrals. Quiet as the day before life began. What might be a pterodactyl soars by beneath us and we veer toward it. It is an albatross, WIND rushing under its huge wings as it cavorts amongst the clouds, descending toward the vast blue-green ocean below.

Splashing through the tail of a cloud, a tiny white "V", the wake from the ship, beckoning. We break away from the bird, and dive at the oceans surface, only curving up at the last moment to follow the...

OCEAN SURFACE

Something man-made, a ship, breaks the horizon far ahead. A wave rolls up and ...

UNDERWATER

... envelops us with a SPLASH and we are traveling through a mysterious dark world. A darker presence slips quietly past in the depths beneath, drawing us towards the churning of two huge propellers. Through a bubbling maelstrom, beneath the murky keel, then away off the starboard side of a barnacled hull and...

OCEAN SURFACE

...break the surface a short distance away to see TWO PEOPLE at the railing looking in our direction.

TITLES END

The albatross flies by overhead barely veering from an unexpected geyser erupting from the surface before us.

EXT. MERCHANT SHIP AFT - DAY

The bird lands on the aft railing of the ship just as a bearded Monster crewman, all muscle, wearing nothing but oily overalls, steps out of a hatchway carrying an equally huge and greasy wrench. He grabs a battered metal bucket and upends a sludge of oil and unidentified garbage into the ocean. His dark soulless eyes notice a pair of tourists peering over the railing to forward.

Nervous about this big greasy human, the bird hops the railing toward the passengers.

A thin, gray-mustachioed man in a linen suit and a girl, perhaps eight, wearing a pretty pink dress, contrast the dingy gray of the merchant ship that carries them. The man, the girl's FATHER, is pointing out to starboard with more childlike awe than his jaded daughter, SARAH.

A whale surfaces like a SMALL GEYSER to starboard and disappears with a curl of its tail.

FATHER

You see, Sarah? A humpback!
Megaptera Navaeangliae. One of the
largest surviving mammals on Earth,
[and perhaps the longest lived.]
What we might learn from that
creature if it could talk.

Sarah is moody, obviously bored of this endless boat trip she once had been so excited about.

SARAH

I don't like whales, Daddy.

FATHER

(shocked)
Why not, Honey?

SARAH

They're all wet and slimy.

Father laughs, the sound of it brightening even Sarah's mood.

FATHER

Wet they are, but never slimy. The
water makes it look that way. If
you were to touch one--with their
permission, of course--you would
find their skin just like ours:
warm and soft.

Sarah looks skeptical.

FATHER

Anyway, we should respect our
hosts. This is their home here. We
are only visitors.

A plume of water erupts, closer this time. Father looks glum, talking as if to himself.

FATHER

Why they have anything to do with
us I'll never know. With all we've
done to them. They could teach us
about compassion.

Father suddenly looks worse than his fifty years. He pats Sarah on the head.

FATHER

I'm going back to the cabin. Will
you be O.K. out here?

Sarah nods and watches him plod into the ship.

SARAH

(quietly)

I miss her, too, Daddy.

Sarah turns back to the railing, looking for the whale. It
seems to have left them alone.

A shadow falls across her. Sarah senses something wrong and
turns. The huge CREWMAN towers over her, leering at her with
cold, dead eyes. He steps forward.

Sarah screams.

He doesn't care. He makes a grab for her with his free hand,
but comes up short. A boat hook is snagged inside his elbow.
He looks back to find...

...an OFFICER of the ship on the other end of the boat hook.

OFFICER

That's far enough, mister. I knew
I'd have trouble from you. Another
of the Captain's charity cases to
put in the brig.

The OFFICER yanks backward, but his prisoner won't budge.
Instead a huge wrench splinters the boat hook in two. The
officer stares at the splintered end.

CREWMAN

No brig. You're taking a swim where
nobody'll miss ya'.

The OFFICER drops the splintered handle and ducks as the
wrench attempts to take off his head. He steps back and
takes a cliché karate stance, looking odd with the uniform.

The monster finds this amusing and advances.

SARAH

I'll tell! You're a bad man!

CREWMAN

Then you go first.

With little effort, he grabs her and hurls her, screaming,
over the railing before turning back to the officer.

Who surprises him. The Officer catches the wrench swinging
down on him between his wrists, does a wild twist and the
wrench is sliding down the deck. Then he spins and sweeps
the giant off his legs, CRASHING to the deck.

The Officer peers over the railing to find Sarah barely holding onto a rope hanging from a vacant lifeboat hoist. But he has no time to help her, just barely avoiding the monster's fist like an oncoming Volkswagen. The OFFICER twists around and plants a chop across the giant's head, with little effect. The monster responds by backhanding the smaller man down the deck after the wrench.

Officer rolls away from a pair of lethal size-fifteen's trying to stamp him flat, rolls up onto his feet and delivers a flurry of savage blows and kicks. It's like trying to vanquish a concrete post. A more desperate kick to the groin is caught by a huge hairy hand and twisted mercilessly. Twisting with it, the officer pokes the monster in the eye.

The monster shrieks and staggers back. The Officer thinks he's ready for the response, but sheer rage and strength overwhelm his defenses and he is bludgeoned and thrown bodily against the bulkhead, knocking the air out of him and an old fire hose from the rack behind him. Both meet painfully at the deck, the brass nozzle landing on his face.

The monster rubs his eye a moment in sheer rage.

On the deck, the Officer tries to focus, finally seeing the heavy brass nozzle lying in front of his face. He half rises, yanks several feet of hose from the reel.

The monster, beyond rage, picks up his wrench and prepares to squash this annoying bug. But as the wrench swings back, something strikes him across the jaw with a metallic thwack. He steps back, blinking.

The Officer, standing, swings the fire hose at a new angle and... whack. Another hit, across the temple. The monster staggers, drops his wrench and grabs his aching head. Thump-crack. Two broken ribs.

Officer is showing little mercy now. Like a circus performer, he twirls his weapon and knocks the monster back, finally swinging it to wrap around the thick neck as the huge body falls toward and over the railing.

The fire hose snaps taut, almost wrenching the reel from its mount. The Officer jumps to the railing to find the monster, hanging by the neck bug-eyed, like a big dead shark.

There is no sign of the girl.

Cursing himself, he races to the closest [intercom].

OFFICER

Man overboard! Stop the ship!

Alarms sound.

EXT. SHIP'S STERN

Propellers grind to a halt.

EXT. UNDERWATER

Sarah drops slowly from the shimmering surface, too shocked to move, her pink dress billowing. BUBBLES from the ship's passage are already diminishing.

The water becomes darker as she falls deeper. She begins to move, realizing her peril. Alert now to an ominous presence nearby. A huge dark thing sweeping past, roiling the water, twisting her around. Then it disappears in the murk.

She almost screams, flailing in fear to get to the surface. But she cannot swim and continues to drop.

The presence looms again. This time she sees it coming straight at her, bigger than any shark could possibly be. Her eyes go wide in horror. A HAUNTING WARBLE ECHOES through the water.

As the creature approaches, the view clears and what were teeth become pleats under a toothless line of a mouth. It is a HUMPBACK WHALE, still huge and formidable to a little girl.

The cold water and lack of air take their toll. She can do little while yet another huge creature advances upon her.

But this monster is gentle, a black wall suddenly beside her, close enough to touch. Near blacking out, Sarah remembers her father's words and touches it carefully. It is warm.

The wall moves and a huge eye slides up beside her, gazing at her a moment. Sarah looks into this eye and finds a strange MAGICAL GLOW deep inside. Sarah seems to relax looking at it. But then her eyes flutter with oxygen deprivation and bubbles begin to escape from her mouth.

EXT. WATER'S SURFACE

A lifeboat containing the Officer, TWO CREWMEN and Sarah's despairing father search the water. There is no hint of her out here. Hopelessness begins to take its toll, when...

They hear a DISTANT COUGH and see the girl's head surface several yards away. They turn the boat, Father and the officer equally frantic to reach her.

But as they approach, the girl seems to rise up from the water unnaturally. It is as if she sits on a friendly rock in the middle of the ocean. No longer coughing, she smooths her soaked, wrinkled dress.

They pull up alongside...

FIRST CREWMAN

A Whale!

SECOND CREWMAN

Holy...

Officer reaches out and lifts Sarah from her impossible savior, too shocked to say anything. He hands her to her father, who cries with relief.

The whale, it's passenger delivered, slides away. A massive tail with a recognizable pattern to it curving up nimbly as if waving goodbye.

SARAH

You were right, Daddy. Whales are very nice.

She looks from the tail sinking into the water to the confused but attractive officer who helped save her life today. She smiles at him.

CUT TO:

EXT. SARAH'S BOAT, PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

SUBTITLE FADES IN: 25 YEARS LATER ...

The same smile plastered on her face, ADULT SARAH daydreams at the wheel of her boat, an aged forty-foot cabin cruiser, ENGINE THRUMMING as it plows ahead. Thousands of dollars of electronics gear mounted all around the flying bridge.

Sarah's lythe, more muscular best friend CASEY tweaks the innards of one complex looking piece of gear. She glances forward, then goes back to work.

CASEY

You think that container ship up ahead will give us the right of way?

Sarah blinks, turns the wheel sharply to port and angles the boat to the stern of the ship blocking the horizon ahead of them.

Casey shakes her head.

CASEY

Your men are going to be the death of me.

SARAH

I was not thinking about...

CASEY

Oh yes you were. I'd know that goofy look anywhere.

Sarah ignores her, tweaks a scope to her right, for something to do.

CASEY

And if I know you, the next one won't improve on your last.

SARAH

Like you're overwhelmed with men.

CASEY

That's different. Most of them want the cute wimpy kind, like you. I scare them off before they become a problem. But your pretty Ken dolls only have room for one thing in their plastic heads.

Sarah jogs the wheel, trying to knock her friend off balance. But Casey's lithe muscles only tighten a little as she continues to work.

Sarah frowns. Glancing aft.

SARAH

Time to lose these suckers.

ANGLE ON

Three boats, bloated with camera-toting tourists, follow at a barely respectful distance. From the markings and signs, they are obviously whale watching excursions.

Casey holds on as Sarah GUNS THE ENGINE on their custom-made marvel. The boat roars, lifts and pulls away from the crowd. Her MARINE RADIO COMES TO LIFE with a whiny male voice.

RADIO

Come on, Sarah! Throw us a bone here.

ANGLE

On the bridge of the lead boat behind them, a man holds a microphone, an imploring look on his face.

ANGLE

Sarah picks up her mike.

SARAH

Sorry, George. Got work to do.

(To Casey)

Like I'd lead that mob anywhere I'm going.

The whale watchers fall way behind. Sarah makes sure they are too far away to see, checks her chart, the GPS, then turns to a new heading.

Casey motions to a stairway leading into the large cabin below.

CASEY
Maybe you and Pop...

SARAH
Casey...!

CASEY
(shrugs)
Just an idea.

Sarah peers down into the cabin.

From above we see POP laid out snoring on the nearest bunk, looking like Santa Claus in wrinkled shorts and a gaudy Hawaiian shirt.

SARAH
We've got to find that man another woman.

Pop's snore becomes a loud snort, then settles down. Casey smiles.

SARAH
And a feminized man for you, so you'll stop pestering me.

CASEY
Ouch.

They cruise quietly, Sarah enjoying the view. Beautiful clouds mixing colorfully with the barely risen sun.

Casey closes up the console she's working on and puts away her tools.

CASEY
One multi-port sound synthesis unit, ready for action. Think you'll get to use it today?

SARAH
I'll find 'em.

CASEY
Of course you will. If you had the same talent with--

Sarah gives her a look.

CASEY
OK, all right! Not another word.

Casey thoughtfully considers something off their stern. Absently she flicks on the new machine. A terrible echoing warble erupts from it, like the sound of propellers from a

million boats at once, traveling through a tunnel full of water.

Quickly Sarah reaches over and turns the machine off.

CASEY

I know, "Not while we're moving."

SARAH

It's sensitive.

CASEY

I thought you could hear whales sing miles away.

SARAH

Yup. But I'm not interested in singing. That's mating, maybe territorial. What I want to get is conversation--like what we're doing now.

CASEY

(goadng)

They don't just sing quieter?

SARAH

Knucklehead. They grunt and "wheep" all the time, but a huge part of their brains and most of the space in their skulls is devoted to sound transmission and processing. Sonar.

CASEY

Because their eyes are like ours. They see better in the air than the water, from when they used to be wet pigs.

Sarah wonders why she brings her along on these trips.

SARAH

Sixty-five million years ago. There are theories they not only see three-dimensionally with echolocation, but may also be able to draw pictures with it as well.

CASEY

3-D chit-chat.

SARAH

Yeah. That's what this rig is designed to analyze.

CASEY

And you want to listen in.

SARAH

I want to learn to talk with them.

She checks the GPS against a heavily annotated map nearby.

SARAH

But while we're here, I'd like to figure out why they've been veering off their usual migration lanes in this area.

CASEY

Could be the Navy. Messing with their subaudible experiments again.

SARAH

They said they stopped doing that.

CASEY

(skeptical)

Remember who I used to work for?

SARAH

Well, if they are...

She pats the new machine.

SARAH

...this baby will out them. What?

Casey is looking to port, concerned.

She reaches into the cabin, where a military looking shoulder harness hangs on a hook, slips a hefty automatic out of the holster, and assumes a natural pose with the gun against her thigh. We see some understated technology mounted atop the barrel.

CASEY

We've got company. Picked us up on the other side of the container ship.

Sarah sees it and pretends to be calm.

What could be a fishing boat, perhaps three times the size of their boat, is overtaking them, veering in from their port side. Several hopeful ocean birds trail behind.

SARAH

Every time we come out this way.

CASEY

Yeah.

(pause)

This one's getting closer than usual.

Sarah attempts to remain calm. The other boat begins to cut across their path. Sarah considers turning away from them, but throttles back instead, knowing running won't help. The other boat does the same, pulling alongside their port bow.

Three men stare at them from the main deck, dressed like any fishermen might. The CAPTAIN, a big, burly and hairy creature, leers at them from the open bridge, elbowing the dull-eyed MATE conspiratorially.

CAPTAIN

You lost? Pretty far out for a couple ladies by themselves.

SARAH

No, we're fine. What do you want?

The captain elbows his mate again, who begins to look annoyed at the treatment. Birds hover patiently, waiting for some fish to be caught.

CAPTAIN

What did I tell you, Rudolfo? Huh? Classy broads. Don't want to seem too eager. We come over, help you find your way home.

A couple of CREWMEN brandishing boat hooks, start pulling the boats together. One grabs a bow rope.

Casey turns, lets them see the gun in her hand. The men with the hooks hesitate. The captain looks amused. Sarah finds it hard to believe this is happening.

CASEY

She said we're fine. Why don't you move along now.

CAPTAIN

Ah, the girl has a pistol. We got us a feisty one. Much better company. Watch your toes men.

SARAH

(under her breath)

Casey...

The men start pulling again. Casey grins and fires three times from the hip, as if she's firing at random.

The rope one man is hauling on EXPLODES a few inches from his hand.

The boat hook of another does LIKEWISE.

And a bird above SQUAWKS and drops squarely on the first mate's head. He brushes it off as if it is attacking him.

Before the captain can react, Casey flicks a switch on the gun and re-aims, still from the hip. Cool as an ice cream sundae.

The captain's eyes cross, looking at a BRIGHT RED DOT on the end of his nose. The mate notices it, too, and attempts to brush it off. The captain slowly pushes away his confused helper, still cross-eyed. The smile fades away.

CASEY

Now, would you mind getting your
butt-ugly boat out of our way?
We've got things to do.

Without a word, the captain starts the engine. With various looks of awe and fear among the crew, confusion from the mate and an unfathomable look on the captain, the boat pulls away and heads out to sea.

Casey puts the gun away.

SARAH

(shaken)

Jesus, those monsters give me the
creeps. The next time I complain
about your gun, remind me of today.

CASEY

Trouble is, there's always a bigger
gun.

Sarah, still jittery over the whole thing, throttles up the ENGINE, tries to shake it off and get back to into the swing.

SARAH

You didn't have to shoot the bird.

Casey can't believe what she's hearing.

Just then, Pop emerges from the cabin, hand holding his captain's hat like a compress, the other carefully steadying a mug.

POP

You ladies make enough noise up
here.

CASEY

Hey, Pop. How's it hanging.

POP

Please, not so loud.

SARAH

You want to drive a while?

POP

As much as a woman behind a wheel
terrifies me, I'll need a few
quarts of this silt you call coffee
first.

SARAH

(relieved)

You sure you wouldn't rather go
back to bed?

POP

What? Naw. Wouldn't be doing my
job. Gotta keep you girls out of
trouble way out here by yourselves.

Sarah and Casey share a look.