

THE DAEDALUS MISSION (BY KEITH DAVIDSON)

FADE IN:

EXT. OCEAN FLOOR - DAY

SONAR PINGS echo through icy black water, getting louder. Materializing from the darkness comes a fantastic prototype submarine -- the USS Daedalus. Sleek and lethal, with a panoramic window wrapping around its flared nose.

A spotlight bursts on, searching for something below.

FROM ABOVE

Silhouetted against a river of orange lava, the Daedalus eases forward, its spotlight probing the rocky terrain beside the lava.

INT. STRATEGY ROOM - DAY

A wall-mounted plasma screen shows a map of a cave system beside the lava flow.

LT. DAVID DRAKE (25), wholesome charm accentuated by a crisp white dress uniform, points to the map with concern.

DRAKE

They missed the last radio check,
and they were supposed to be at the
extraction point eight minutes ago.
If they ran into mechanical
problems, their best chance would
be to hold position at Cave Seven.

Listening at the table is CAPTAIN LANCASTER (40), the Navy's top sub commander. Beside him, the caustic, headset-wearing CHIEF OF THE BOAT (45), the most experienced sailor on board.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

Why Cave Seven?

The map changes to an image of a cave entrance at the bottom of a narrow rift.

DRAKE

There's an opening here large
enough for them to squeeze through.

SECRETARY KEEFER (O.S.)

Assuming they're still alive.

They turn to see MILES KEEFER, cunning silver-haired Secretary of Defense, at the door.

DRAKE

So we'll assume that. Captain, we need to get down there. And we need to do it now.

SECRETARY KEEFER

That's an awfully narrow rift. One mistake...

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

Then let's not make any. Take the ship down, Mister Drake.

DRAKE

I'll notify the XO.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

No. You do it.

DRAKE

Sir?

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

You've been itching to prove yourself. Well, here's your chance.

DRAKE

(hesitates)

Yes, sir.

He hurries out.

SECRETARY KEEFER

I bet the kid pisses himself.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Sitting in the elevated Officer of the Deck chair, the XO (Executive Officer) hangs up the phone handset, not liking the orders he just received. With a flourish, he relinquishes the chair to Drake.

XO

Fasten your seat belts, ladies.
Lieutenant Drake has the conn.

Drake tentatively sits down. He's aware the crew are all staring at him.

To his left, SURFER (a nervous, tanned beachboy) mans Sonar.

To his right, TRIGGER (wildly-tattooed, over-caffeinated fireball) works the Weapons Control Panel.

SQUEAK, a high-pitched runt at Communications, trades a worried look with the soft-spoken PREACHER at Navigation.

DRAKE

We've got lives to save, so look sharp. Helm, take us down slow.

The HELMSMAN and PLANESMAN at the Ship Control Station initiate a descent.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

The back of the room splits -- six steps down is the glass-walled Strategy Room, six steps up is the partly-visible Control Center.

The Captain, Keefer and the Chief sit in the three bow chairs and watch out the wrap-around window as the sub descends into the rift. The cliff walls are almost scraping the window.

SECRETARY KEEFER

Seven billion dollars. You really want that glass of milk at the wheel?

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

This is a training mission.

SECRETARY KEEFER

Which makes me wonder again why we've spent two weeks collecting specimens and mapping caves. We haven't even tested the weapons systems.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

Patience, Mister Secretary. Patience.

SECRETARY KEEFER

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

CAPTAIN LANCASTER
You're an observer on this mission,
Mister Secretary. Observe. The
Admiral's down there somewhere.

They scan the bottom of the rift for a sign of life.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER (CONT'D)
Chief, if they've lost power, they
won't be able to come to us.

CHIEF
They're waking Murray now.

INT. BERTHING ROOM - DAY

A sign reads: MURRAY - Multitask Underwater Robotic Research Apparatus model-Y. Below it stands a twelve-foot-tall robot -- a multi-appendage machine designed for deep-sea salvage.

MURRAY powers up, its narrow visor glowing amber. It steps forward. That's because a short scientist next to it also steps forward on a 5' x 5' computer tablet on the floor -- PROFESSOR BLONDIN.

He wears a special suit connected by dozens of wires to a panel. Each movement he makes sends signals to MURRAY, who makes the same movement at the exact same time.

PROFESSOR BLONDIN
I think we may have our solution.

Other scientists watch, impressed. Behind them, a pool for sending out divers is ringed with futuristic submersibles. A recompression chamber fills one corner of the room.

Off to one side, LT. KIM -- an alluring, statuesque warrior with predatory grace -- watches Prof. Blondin work a touchpad remote control, testing MURRAY's built-in drills, torches, etc. She's losing patience, which is a dangerous thing.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

The sub continues to descend into the narrow rift.
Far below, a fissure in the rocks reveals

A CAVE

full of bioluminescent fish and phosphorous algae that give a spectacular blue-green radiance.

Stationary on a rock ledge is an eight-foot glass and steel sphere -- the ORB (Observational Research Bathysphere). Illuminated by the amber glow of the control panel, two occupants shiver, their breath visible --

Eccentric ADMIRAL JACK PERRY (50s), with a walrus mustache and the keen eyes of a brilliant inventor/marine biologist.

Beside him, barely holding it together, is the diminutive DOC (30s), outspoken expert in hyperbaric medicine. She taps the OXYGEN GAUGE -- the needle drops into the red.

DOC

The adventure of a lifetime, you said. Not the end of a lifetime.

Perry stares in wonder at the assortment of bizarre creatures with glowing luminous organs swimming past. A surreal world.

ADMIRAL PERRY

If you could peel your eyes from the oxygen gauge for a moment, you might appreciate that we're in the most spectacular place on the planet.

DOC

And if you're right about this being the birthplace of life on Earth? The irony doesn't bother you just a tad?

ADMIRAL PERRY

We're not going to die here, Doc. They'll find us.

DOC

You have a lot of faith in the crew.

ADMIRAL PERRY

That I do.

INT. BERTHING ROOM - DAY

The scientists argue over the touchpad control, trying to figure out why MURRAY's arm is jerking up and down.

PROFESSOR BLONDIN

(to Lt. Kim)

It's the Admiral's toy, and we're just guessing at some of it. Give us a few minutes!

LT. KIM

They don't have a few minutes! Switching to manual!

She pushes through them and punches in a code on MURRAY.

The front opens. She climbs in, sliding her arms and legs inside MURRAY's, wearing the robot like a monstrous exoskeleton. It seals her in, locking with an airtight HISS.

LT. KIM (CONT'D)

(booming robot voice)

Move!

Scientists scatter as she STOMPS to the pool. She pitches forward -- SPLASH -- and sinks out of sight. A thin wire attached to MURRAY's back unspools from a winch.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

At the window, Captain Lancaster and Keefer watch MURRAY descend. The Chief listens over his headset, then --

CHIEF

Lieutenant Kim is on board Murray.

The Captain is impressed.

INT. ORB - DAY

Hatchetfish with alien faces peer in at Perry and Doc. Shivering, lips turning blue, Doc's fear manifests as anger.

DOC

Just want to know how you can design... the world's most advanced research vessel... only to let it be turned into the world's... deadliest war machine. Just to get it funded!

ADMIRAL PERRY

This is the conversation you want to have now?

DOC

I think I've earned the right.

ADMIRAL PERRY

They gave me command. Which means I have the power to make sure the nuclear arsenal is never used for anything other than a deterrent.

DOC

Nice rationalization, Admiral. Only you're down here and Captain Lancaster is now in command.

As she glances up --

DOC (CONT'D)

What in God's name...

MURRAY descends into the cave, dropping beside the ORB.

Visible in the glass viewport is Lt. Kim's beaming face. She exchanges a look with the Admiral that reveals a closeness between them.

ADMIRAL PERRY

Doc, can I assume you don't object to the military funding my robot?

Lt. Kim takes the trailing wire and prepares to attach it to the ORB -- the ORB suddenly rocks to one side.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

The sub SHUDDERS. ALARMS SOUND on all the consoles. Drake isn't sure what to do.

SURFER

Detecting a massive explosion forty miles north-west.

The XO checks the sonar panel.

XO

Sound collision alarm! Rig for impact!

The COLLISION ALARM echoes through the sub.

DRAKE

Helm, right rudder twenty degrees! Turn her into the swell!

HELM
 Answering right rudder twenty
 degrees!

INT. SUB HALLWAY - DAY

The COLLISION ALARM sends crewmen racing to their stations.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

The Captain and Keefer bound up the stairs. Behind them,
 heavy steel shutters SLAM SLAM SLAM over the windows.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Drake relinquishes the chair to the Captain.

DRAKE
 The Captain has the conn!

SURFER
 Tsunami! ETA... one minute.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER
 Helm, turn her into it!

DRAKE
 (checking helm control)
 We're almost there!

The sub SHUDDERS again. Surfer checks his monitor.

SURFER
 Surface explosion! Two miles
 south!

CAPTAIN LANCASTER
 (grabs the mic)
 All hands, brace --

The sub is ROCKED. PROXIMITY ALARMS sound.

EXT. RIFT - DAY

A massive wave overhead sucks up the Daedalus, SLAMMING it
 into the rift wall. The tail plane CRUNCHES into the wall,
 sending a shower of rock toward the cave entrance far below.

The disabled sub plunges in a steep dive.

INT. ORB - DAY

Rocks rain down. Lt. Kim drapes herself protectively over the ORB. She's POUNDED. A boulder gets through, CRACKING the glass.

ADMIRAL PERRY

Son of a --

With a HIGH-PITCHED SCREECH, the crack spiderwebs. Doc cowers.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

The deck is tilted downward at a 45-degree angle. GROANING from the pressure-squeezed hull.

HELM

Helm is not responding, sir!

CAPTAIN LANCASTER

Blow tanks one, two, seven and eight!

XO

Blowing tanks one, two, seven and eight!

EXT. RIFT - DAY

Clouds of bubbles BURST from fore and aft. The sub's descent slows.

It settles onto the ocean floor, near the cave entrance.

INT. BERTHING ROOM - DAY

Drake, the Chief and the scientists stare anxiously into the pool as the winch reels in the wire.

The ORB breaks the surface. Drake can't see through the cracked glass.

Drake struggles to open the hatch, but it's jammed. Lt. Kim in MURRAY reaches past Drake and RIPS the hatch right off.

Drake helps Perry out. An obvious bond between them.

DRAKE

You had us worried, Admiral.

DOC
You were worried.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Admiral Perry stands at the plasma screen, showing a map with dozens of red dots in a 500 mile radius of their location far off the Florida coast.

ADMIRAL PERRY
I'm not seeing any discernible
pattern.

Under a pall of doom and gloom, Drake, Captain Lancaster, the XO, the Chief, Secretary Keefer, and Professor Blondin fill the table.

SECRETARY KEEFER
We have no idea how many explosions
there were out of our detection
range. The entire continent could
have been peppered.

XO
The magnitude of the explosions we
experienced, they had to be
nuclear.

ADMIRAL PERRY
Priority one is to repair the radio
mast. Find out what the hell's
going on.

SECRETARY KEEFER
It's obvious what's going on!
We're in a shooting war!

DRAKE
I don't agree, Captain. If we were
under attack we'd have received an
E.A.M. from base as soon as the
missiles were detected in the air.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER
Valid point.

SECRETARY KEEFER
Are we mobile?

ADMIRAL PERRY
How many hours to repair, Chief?

CHIEF

There's extensive damage to the stern diving planes, and we need to effect major structural repairs to the rudder. The screws may be --

ADMIRAL PERRY

Chief.

CHIEF

Four to five days. Minimum.

People are pissed.

EXT. DAEDALUS ON THE OCEAN BOTTOM - DAY

Arc-welders light up the darkness as crewmen in deep sea diving suits cut off damaged sections. The Chief, in MURRAY, hauls huge panels to replace them. Slow and tedious work.

INTERCUT THIS OPERATION WITH VARIOUS SHOTS:

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

The Captain watches from the window, checking a RUDDER SCHEMATICS MANUAL.

INT. ADMIRAL'S QUARTERS - DAY

Admiral Perry pores over documents spread across his desk. Words jump out -- retaliation... launch codes... Nuclear weapons deployment... Reserve nuclear weapons locations...

INT. SECRETARY KEEFER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Nursing a scotch, Keefer play a computer war game simulation.

INT. GYM - DAY

Drake spars with Lt. Kim, taking out their frustration. With lightning-fast aggression, she keeps him on the defensive.

INT. SCIENCE LAB - NIGHT

Doc and scientists study bizarre specimens of marine life swimming in large tanks. Lining the walls are glass compartments containing a large selection of land animals.

INT. CREW QUARTERS - NIGHT

Squeak finishes his Tom Clancy novel and trades with the man on the bunk above -- SASQUATCH, 40s, hairy, bad attitude. Squeak checks the title and looks dubious -- Bridges of Madison County.

INT. WARDROOM - DAY

Drake picks at his food as he reads a manual. Keefer, cheating at solitaire a few seats away, won't shut up.

SECRETARY KEEFER

An odd breed, lieutenants. They seem to share a common flaw. They're so afraid of making a mistake, they don't act. In a crisis, they'll stand frozen, waiting for orders. You could jack them like deer. You and Kim... you're the exceptions. You've both proven you're not shy about taking initiative. I just thought you might like to know why you got the tap over others more qualified.

Drake feigns disinterest.

SECRETARY KEEFER (CONT'D)

There's a balance on this boat that needs to be kept. That's the key to the Daedalus. Every person chosen has certain qualities that combine to make a balanced hand. Or, if you like, every one of us is a spoke in a wheel. And it must be kept true. The Captain has leadership skills that can't be taught. The Chief and the XO bring experience that inspires confidence. Add Lieutenant Kim -- fearless and aggressive. In a battle situation, she's who I'd want next to me.

(to himself)

Or under me.

DRAKE

Is there a point you're trying to make, Mister Secretary?

SECRETARY KEEFER

Earlier, when the Captain ordered you to take the helm, you hesitated. We're about to surface into a war. You cannot let the crew see you hesitate. Like Shakespeare said, "He who hesitates is fucked."

DRAKE

Well I'm pretty sure that was Twain, but thanks for the advice. You seem to know quite a bit, considering this is your first time aboard a sub.

SECRETARY KEEFER

It's funny you've never asked the question.

DRAKE

What question?

SECRETARY KEEFER

What the Secretary of Defense is doing on a submarine training mission?

DRAKE

You pushed hard to get the funding. I figured this was a perk.

SECRETARY KEEFER

Hardly.

Now Drake is intrigued. But before he can ask, the Chief pokes his head in.

CHIEF

Admiral wants us. On the double.

INT. STRATEGY ROOM - DAY

The Admiral addresses his senior staff.

ADMIRAL PERRY

It's been six days since the explosions. We may be surfacing into World War Three. Chief, I need communications operational asap.

The Chief nods.

ADMIRAL PERRY (CONT'D)
Make ready to surface.

Everyone eagerly hurries for their stations.

EXT. RIFT - DAY

Emitting a stream of bubbles, the sub lifts off, rising slowly up the narrow rift.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

Admiral, Keefer and Doc watch the walls move past the window, dangerously close.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Apprehension fills the room.

XO
Levelling at eighty feet.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER
Float the buoy, Lieutenant.

Drake hits a switch.

EXT. SUB - DAY

A buoy rises to the surface, trailing a long wire.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Drake waits anxiously for the results on a monitor.

DRAKE
... Radiation negative.

CHEERS of relief from the crew.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER
Mr. Secretary, I'm beginning to think your nuclear war theory was a rush to judgement.

SECRETARY KEEFER
I'd love to be wrong just this
once.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER
Surface.

XO
Surface.

He sounds the SURFACE ALARM.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER
(into mic)
Chief, I want comm back on line in
ten minutes.

EXT. SUB ON OCEAN - DAY

The Daedalus BURSTS onto the surface, into a world of dark clouds and incessant rain. Giant waterspouts sweep across the horizon. The world has changed.

The Chief steps from a hatch into the cramped Bridge of the Conning Tower (aka Sail). He looks up at the radio mast. Sasquatch squeezes in with an electronic testing kit. They pop a panel, exposing the inner workings of the radio mast.

The Chief spots a waterspout heading their way.

CHIEF
Step lively now.

Sasquatch runs tests on the radio mast, his device lighting up GREEN again and again.

SASQUATCH
Radio mast reads operational in all
respects!

That stumps the Chief.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

The Captain holds a headset to one ear at Squeak's console.

SQUEAK
We're still not receiving anything
on the UHF or ELF. And no GPS
signal. That makes no sense, sir.

DRAKE
I think I know why.

Drake looks up from the Navstar GPS Receiver, unable to mask his fear.

INT. STRATEGY ROOM - DAY

Admiral Perry, the Captain, Drake and Lt. Kim huddle at the table.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER
You're saying the NAVSTAR
satellites are gone?

DRAKE
All satellites. Our signals aren't
bouncing back because there's
nothing in orbit to bounce them off
of.

A chill goes through the room.

LT. KIM
That's not possible.

ADMIRAL PERRY
The nearest base is Pensacola.
I suggest we get there as fast as
we possibly can. And we keep this
to ourselves until we have some
answers.

EXT. OCEAN (UNDERWATER) - DAY

The sub powers along under the surface.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

The Captain watches the periscope MONITOR -- nothing but stormy seas. Drake and Preacher determine their course at the plotting table.

PREACHER
I'd be happier if we had stars or
the sun to go by. I'm just not a
big fan of dead reckoning, you
know?

DRAKE
I've seen your Nautical grades from
Annapolis. I'm actually okay with
putting our lives in your hands.

Bolstered by Drake's confidence, Preacher continues
calculating.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER
All stop.

HELM
Answering all stop.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER
(to the XO)
Tell the Chief to ready the Zodiac!
I want the Chief Medical Officer
and a medic outside on the double!

Drake checks the MONITOR -- a tented life raft is adrift in
the storm.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

The Captain and the XO step onto the bridge in rain gear.
Ignoring the waterspouts zigzagging through the storm, they
train their binoculars on the Chief, the ship's Chief Medical
Officer and a young medic in a Zodiac, heading to

THE LIFE RAFT

where they pull up alongside. The Chief opens the tent flap
and shines his flashlight in. He recoils.

The raft is full of bloated, decomposing bodies. Dried blood
covers their mouths, noses and eyes.

The medic leans in for a closer look. The Chief yanks him
back.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Drake and Doc watch a video feed on the MONITOR.

DOC
Get them out of there!

Drake grabs the overhead mic and hits a switch.

DRAKE
 (forced calm)
 Chief, come on back. On the
 double.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

The Captain and the XO see the Zodiac heading back.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER
 (into headset mic)
 Talk to me, Lieutenant.

DRAKE (OVER HEADSET)
 No survivors, Sir.

EXT. DECK - DAY

The men climb from the Zodiac onto the deck below the bridge.

The Chief notices blood dripping from the medic's nose.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Doc leans closer to the monitor, suddenly concerned.

DOC
 Don't let them back in!

ON THE MONITOR: the Chief reaches for the Conning Tower hatch.

DOC (CONT'D)
 Lock the hatch!
 (Drake hesitates)
Lock it!

The alarm on Doc's face convinces him.

DRAKE
 Seal the tower hatch!

CREWMAN
 Sealing tower hatch.

A green light on the HATCHES panel turns red.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

The Chief tries to open the hatch. The medic and Chief Medical Officer start coughing up blood. The Chief backs away in horror.

The Captain and the XO watch it all from above.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER
 (into headset mic)
 Open the hatch, Lieutenant. My men
 need to get to sickbay asap.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Drake isn't sure what to do.

DRAKE
 Squeak, get the Admiral up here!
 (into mic)
 Uh, Captain... Doc's worried about
 contaminating the ship.

CAPTAIN LANCASTER (OVER SPEAKER)
 Then get some medics topside, and I
 mean now!

Drake and Doc watch in horror as the two men worsen at a frightening speed. Bleeding from their eyes and mouths, they start convulsing. Unaffected, the Chief watches. Petrified.

DRAKE
 (into mic)
 That's a negative on the medics,
 Captain. It's too risky to --

He sees the Captain reach to open the Bridge hatch.

DRAKE (CONT'D)
Seal all hatches!

CREWMAN
 Sealing all hatches!

All panel lights turn red.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Admiral Perry strides down the hall.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Perry watches the monitor with Drake and Doc as the two contaminated men die horrific deaths.

DOC

It's a thousand times faster than Ebola.

DRAKE

(spotting something)
Oh Jesus.

The XO is coughing up blood. Doc struggles to stay composed.

DOC

That means it's airborne.

SASQUATCH

Radar, contact, bearing one-one-zero. We're tracking a bogie approaching from the northwest. Range, four hundred fifty miles... Speed... Mach four.

Looks of disbelief. Perry somehow remains calm.

ADMIRAL PERRY

What's the ETA?

SASQUATCH

ETA... Eight minutes!

ADMIRAL PERRY

Sound battle stations.

DRAKE

Battle stations!

The ALARM blares on.

ADMIRAL PERRY

Rig for dive.

Drake looks at him in shock.

DRAKE

Sir, the Captain and the others are still topside.

ADMIRAL PERRY

I am aware of that, Mister Drake.

He grabs the mic from Drake and hits the SHIPWIDE PA switch.

ADMIRAL PERRY (OVER PA) (CONT'D)
Rig for dive.

DRAKE
You don't know its intentions!

ADMIRAL PERRY
We can't afford the risk. They'll have to take their chances on the Zodiac. I doubt they'll be spotted in this weather.

(switches mic to BRIDGE)
John, I need you to get into the Zodiac and play possum.

He hangs up the mic.

DRAKE
Sir, the dive suction could pull the Zodiac down with us!

As Perry checks the radar, Drake tries desperately to come up with a plan. It's all happening too fast.

He scans the hatch panel... stops at the red light marked RECOMPRESSION CHAMBER. Inspired, he grabs the mic.

DRAKE (CONT'D)
Captain, listen. You and the Chief have to swim under the sub. You can get in through the recompression chamber's outer hatch. But you have to do it now!

EXT. DECK - DAY

The Chief and Captain grab scuba masks off the Zodiac.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Drake switches the recompression chamber hatch OPEN.

EXT. SUB UNDERWATER - DAY

A small belly-hatch swings open.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Perry turns on Drake.

ADMIRAL PERRY
What the devil are you doing!

DRAKE
If they stay in the Recompression
Chamber, they'll be quarantined
from the rest of us. Right, Doc?

He looks to Doc for confirmation. She's not so sure.

ADMIRAL PERRY
God damn it!

EXT. SUB UNDERWATER - DAY

The Chief and Captain swim to the hatch and disappear inside.

INT. CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Everyone is on edge.

SASQUATCH
Sir, this thing flies like nothing
I've ever seen before. Speed has
increased to Mach five! ETA is now
three minutes!

ADMIRAL PERRY
Dive the boat!

Drake grabs the PA microphone.

DRAKE
Dive, dive!

He pulls the overhead diving alarm -- OOOOOOOOH-GAAAAAAH!

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