

EXT. ALASKA. A FROZEN SNOWY PLAIN. DAY.

An orange Sno-Cat lumbers across the thick snow. The weather is good. It is late afternoon.

INT. SNO-CAT CAB.

The driver, SANDRA BROOKS, is wrapped in a fur-lined parka and wearing snow goggles.

The radio crackles to life.

RADIO

(enormous static)

Losing . . . con...act. . .range. Weather...  
your... not good. . .seventy-two hour... Sorry.  
. . .luck . . .ation five . . .out.

SANDRA picks up the microphone, prepares to speak, realizes that it's useless, and drops the microphone back down on the seat.

EXT. SNO-CAT

The environment appears a bit more hostile.

The SOUND of arcing electricity. A FLASH and a SMALL PUFF of smoke.

The SNO-CAT stops dead.

SANDRA BROOKS leans down in an attempt to juggle the controls back to life. After this short exercise in futility, she climbs out of the cab and makes her way to the front of the cat.

She opens the hood, looks in, and tugs at some wires. Another FLASH and SMOKE. She gives up on the engine and walks back to the cab. Just before opening the door, she glances skyward, evaluating the weatherfront. She opens

the door, pulls the seat forward, and retrieves a tightly packed silvery bundle.

She turns toward CAMERA, revealing an imprinted logo of a woman's stylized face. Her long windswept hair forms the first letter of the word LifeSigns.

She takes the package several steps from the cat and unwraps it on the snow covered ground.

DISSOLVE TO:

A reverse angle of an assembled silvery umbrella tent.

The tent has a large orange "X" on it and a darkish panel. The tent has been oriented South so that the darkish solar panel can face the Sun. SANDRA is working on the panel now, watching a gauge to measure maximum voltage from the panel. Once finished, she climbs into the tent.

INT. TENT.

Back facing the CAMERA, SANDRA rumages in an O.S. sack and pulls out a small rectangular unit. She attaches it with velcro to the inside of the tent at about head height. Small wires lead O.S to a power unit. She unfolds sliver "barn doors" on the unit and sends power to the small infared heater. It glows. In this red glare, she undresses.

EXT. CAMP AREA. DUSK

The hostility of the environment grows.

INT. TENT

SANDRA lifts the top half of a silver jump suit over her bare back. SOUND of a zipper. She tucks her hair back and slips a silver hood over her head.

EXT. CAMPSITE

SANDRA climbs out of the tent. She attaches a "battery belt" to her waist, and clicks on a light at the belt. We can see her plug in small wires from her pants to her

shoes. This task complete, she picks up a lantern and walks toward the sno-cat.

CAMERA MOVES AWAY. Leaving an enormously wide shot of the camp and the light under the hood as SANDRA gets to work.

EXT. CAMP. NEXT MORNING.

Another sno-cat enters the camp. The driver and two others hop out. The DRIVER and one other go to the cat. The REMAINING PASSENGER, GEORGE FENAMORE, dressed in enough fur to resemble a Polar Bear, walks toward the tent. SANDRA, having been awakened by the commotion, EMERGES from her tent.

SANDRA

(angrily)

You're two days early. How on earth am I going to test this stuff if you don't give me some time out here?

GEORGE

I'm sorry, but it's an emergency. Do you remember the Persian Gulf test?

SANDRA

The one on the freighter with our fire suit?

GEORGE

That's the one.

SANDRA

That deal's all sewn up. The VP signed the authorization to purchase.

GEORGE

The CEO stopped it. There's no P.O. It's unraveling. The guy thinks we rigged the test.

SANDRA

(furious)

Rigged the test? The crew was scattered all over the tanker, they were in control of the missile simulation. How could we have faked that? We even had a group of passengers aboard who had never seen the equipment before. They did fine.

GEORGE

That's why I'm here. I can't get anywhere with this guy. You can. You have all the details at your fingertips because you were there. You have to deal with him before this whole thing collapses. He's also looking at cheaper gear.

SANDRA

O.K., O.K. I guess that's my job, isn't it?

GEORGE

Thanks, Let's get going. Those guys will have the other cat running in a couple of minutes. They'll pack up. We need to get back. (Pause)  
Oh, by the way, how did everything work?

SANDRA

Pretty well, I'm not cold. The suit works to specifications. Battery drain about as we predicted. We've got to have Mark work on the lighting though. It's just not convenient to have the lights where he wants them. It was tough for me to see the engine last night, my arms were always getting in the way.

SANDRA and GEORGE drift off toward the cat, climb in and head off toward the base camp. INT. CORPORATE BOARD ROOM FREIGHTER LINE. DAY.

SANDRA, wearing a dark business dress, perfect makeup, and a most attractive business attitude, sits across from ARTHUR CHAMBERS, a fortyish executive who devastates people at the first hint of weakness. With not a grey hair out of place, he fixes SANDRA with his eyes as he speaks. This is a test. The room is in deep shadow there are unnamed executive assistants placing and removing papers in front of CHAMBERS.

CHAMBERS

(flat but cold)

All we know from this experiment is that the suit is effective when you are there giving explicit instructions.

SANDRA

(returning his stare and his tone)

Current statistical data suggests that one person in a group of three or more naturally takes charge during any emergency. I did nothing more than what is natural during an event like that. I didn't assist any passenger with the suit and I didn't have to readjust or re-connect any part of it. The passengers and crew did it all on their own.

CHAMBERS

As you can well imagine, this is an important decision for this line. LifeSigns has a credible reputation in this field, but I'm not that interested in being a testing ground for your exotic gadgets.

SANDRA doesn't like the game, but she understands it. There is no sign that she is thrown by the insult. Her face is a calm and confident return for his stare. The stakes have driven both voices to a whisper.

SANDRA

Mr. Chambers, the threat is exotic. We're not talking about icebergs, hidden reefs or bad weather; we're talking about devastating technology purchased on the open market by crazy people. Their idea of a good time is sinking ships just like yours. Your ships can

SANDRA (CONT'D)

be gutted by fire, from bow to stern, in less than fifteen minutes. Without this exotic gadget, all your crew will have to fight this threat is CO2 fire extinguishers and styrofoam lifevests.

A piece of paper moves into place in front of CHAMBERS.

CHAMBERS

You know we can upgrade our safety equipment from other sources.

Contrary to her counterpart, SANDRA never once glances at her notes. She is thorough eye contact. And shows no emotion.

SANDRA

There's only one other source working on this level. If you're considering them, you should keep in mind that most of their line seems to be a crude copy of designs we offered years ago. I don't mind buying copies of designer fashions, but I wouldn't use that same approach when my life depends on what I'm wearing.

Someone whispers into CHAMBERS ear. He seems irritated, but the source of irritation is unclear. He gets up.

CHAMBERS

Well Ms. Brooks, I wish I could give you more time. I'll give this some thought, and perhaps after our next safety committee meeting, we'll have an answer.

SANDRA

(interpreting the atmosphere)

I hope you don't mind that this turned into a bit of a debate.

CHAMBERS

It's unusual, but, if you have your facts straight, I don't mind.

SANDRA

(taking him at his word)

May I throw one more fact in your direction?

CHAMBERS IS almost to the door. He responds with a hint that the test isn't over yet.

CHAMBERS

I am running late. . . Go ahead.

SANDRA takes the floor and prepares to hit the nail on the head.

SANDRA

This has been more than a sales meeting. We have spent time here discussing the lives of your employees. LifeSigns helps people stay alive against the odds. We understand how much people rely on what we make. That's why I don't sell anything I haven't tested. I know the equipment and I know the environment it must work in. It may not be to my advantage to debate safety policy with you, but, for the sake of your employees, don't expect me to represent this gear as if it were executive office furniture.

A long pause. Mutual stares with no meaning. Silence and Stillness. Then . . .

CHAMBERS

Will your company provide comprehensive effective training for the use of this new equipment?

Relaxed, the test is over.

SANDRA

Yes.

CHAMBERS

Will you design and conduct that training?

SANDRA

Not normally, but, in this case, yes.

CHAMBERS

Johnson!

Parts of a man move out of the shadows.

JOHNSON

Yes, sir?

CHAMBERS

Call purchasing. Have them give this lady a P.O.

JOHNSON

For the whole order?

CHAMBERS

Yes, the whole order.

With the hint of a smile only revealed in the eyes, CHAMBERS leaves. SANDRA has passed the test.

EXT. CARIBBEAN BAY. DAY.

View of the clear waters around the Island of St. John. CAMERA picks up SANDRA who is a passenger in a speedboat. The CAMERA follows wide until we see the luxury cruise ship "LifeSigns." The logo is painted on the bow and on the stern. CAMERA establish the ship at anchor in a

quiet bay. We see the speedboat come along side the yacht.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIFESIGNS YACHT DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY.

A clean white area with shelving and clothing racks surrounding a central work table and design area. There are samples of exotic fabrics scattered around, various hoses and metal fixtures of unidentifiable shape, and exposed parts of electronic gear. In the midst of this chaos are GEORGE GARLAND, MARK FISK, and JULIE FITZPATRICK. George is hunched over one of the unnamed metal fixtures, mumbling to himself, glasses high on his balding forehead. This man, the brains behind LifeSigns, looks out of place in a rugby shirt, tan shorts and running shoes. JULIE works at the drafting table. She is young (twenties) slight, and meticulous. She wears a clean shirt and running shorts. MARK, the engineer of the crowd, is working with a glue gun and some silver fabric at the center table. Denim cut offs and a t-shirt for him.

Mark is having a problem executing the new LifeSign design. It's a familiar problem. As everybody works, light banter develops.

MARK

I understand why you want to use this material for the desert suit, but I don't yet see how we're going to do the seams. Are you sure you don't want to add a reinforcing layer to the design?

GEORGE

Yes, I'm sure.

MARK

And this thing still has to hold up if someone runs down a sand dune, drops to their knees and cries "water."

GEORGE

Yep. And it has to reflect 98% of the daytime radiant energy. And it has to vent 72% of normal body heat while retaining 90% of body moisture. It must stay cool. It must be light. and it must last in extreme conditions for two months.

GEORGE looks up

GEORGE (Continues)

And, it must transmit the user's location automatically to any station within 500 miles.

MARK

Are you sure that's all?

GEORGE

For now.

MARK

Great design, guys. Of Course, now I've got to build the thing.

JULIE

We design `em. You build `em. It's all part of (dramatically) "The big Picture."

MARK

(scarcastically)

Yea, the Big Picture, Great!

SANDRA enters. At that moment, GEORGE leaps up and throws his arms around her. SANDRA accepts this physical praise with ease.

GEORGE

Fantastic! Welcome back! The United Shipping order was unbelievable! I don't know what we'd do without you!

SANDRA

(laughing)

Just one question. . . . Are you going to be able to ship on time?

MARK

(smiling)

No problem. First shipment goes out the middle of next week. We have three shifts cranked up at the factory, and the order will be complete well within their deadline.

SANDRA

Great. There is one thing I should mention.

GEORGE

What's that?

SANDRA

Pause to set up the compliment. Then . . .  
Pointing--first to GEORGE then to JULIE then MARK.

I can't sell what you don't create, what you  
don't design, and what you don't build.

JULIE

Thanks.

SANDRA

So, George, tell me, what's new?

GEORGE

Well, Mark's working on the prototype of our  
desert survival suit and loving every minute  
of it.

MARK

(jokingly)

Right.

GEORGE

Julie and I are working on three or four other  
ideas down this new path we've created. Some  
of them easy; some of them hard.

We've made some improvements in the mountain  
pack and rescue gear based on your suggestions  
after the test, and there seems to be real  
interest in our new line of "ShockSock"  
shelters.

SANDRA

I was wondering about that. I want to give  
that last model a try sometime soon.

GEORGE

Good, I was hoping you would. Oh, and don't  
forget that off-shore platform test at the end  
of the month. We've put the finishing touches  
on the rafts and the inventory. Now all we  
have to do is survive the meetings. It's  
going to be rough.

SANDRA

I still think we're in a strong position here.  
If I don't screw up, we'll be okay.

GEORGE

Screw up? Not a chance.

JULIE

Interrupting.

George, tell Sandra about the show.

GEORGE

Now Julie, I told you that nothing is decided yet.

JULIE

If nothing is decided yet, I'm open for suggestions as to what we're going to do with the TV crew from the Sporting Life Show. They have air time reserved for us.

A shy and private person, GEORGE now realizes that this show could become very public very fast. He is very uncomfortable. Publicity is a barely necessary evil.

GEORGE

What crew? You didn't tell me anything about this?

JULIE

You didn't ask. After Mark and I had that conversation with you about promoting SPLASHWEAR, we made a few calls and the Miami folks jumped on it. George, this program is syndicated in 35 markets.

GEORGE

(VERY uncertain)

I don't know about this. How did I let you talk me into this SPLASHWEAR thing in the first place?

SANDRA

Reassuring.

George, would you please stop being so practical. Your design ideas are great, and the materials you use are very unusual. Julie just had this idea to go off in another direction. She wanted to do something impractical. Remember? We talked about it long enough. What's wrong with it? It helps take our minds off things. SPLASHWEAR was alot of fun to create. I'll bet my next commission check on it's success.

GEORGE

(Still uncomfortable about technology turned into fashion)

You know that when I let you create SPLASHWEAR I wasn't looking for more money. It just seemed like a curious idea at the time.

Maybe I didn't know what I was getting into. Julie showed me the sketches, but I guess I wasn't really paying attention. Then, when the first samples came off the line and Julie's friend Chris tried them on... Well, I'm not too sure that stuff should be worn in public.

JULIE

George, Chris loved it. And she looked great! Now I understand why you were so quiet.

MARK, who has been working on his seam, walks over to GEORGE, JULIE, AND SANDRA. He holds the sample in his hands. Like a younger version of George, MARK is totally absorbed in his work. Through this concentration, or absent-mindedness, he has blocked out the current debate.

MARK

I think I have the seam figured out. You'll still need another layer on the inside, but if the specs on this new ultra thin durablend fiber are accurate, we won't add weight or lose flexibility.

JULIE

(Turning to MARK)

Maybe we need another opinion. Mark, you were here when Chris came by last week. What did you think of SPLASHWEAR?

MARK

(Chosing his words carefully)

Well Julie, you've always known that I've always wanted to see more of Chris.

JULIE

Yea, and?

MARK

SPLASHWEAR does the trick.

JULIE slumps into a chair and drops her head in a pile of material. SANDRA shakes her head.

GEORGE

Relieved and grateful that he now has a reason to shoot down the trial balloon.

See what I mean. That does it. I can't do this. Let's just call up the TV crew and tell them that we'll do this another time, for a different reason, ...(pause)...on a different planet.

GEORGE walks away.

MARK

Was it something I said?

SANDRA

Would someone please tell me something about what we're cancelling or not cancelling?

JULIE

Mark and I had this idea that we would get the crew from the Angry Mango aboard LifeSigns and launch SPLASHWEAR by having a fashion show for the Press.

SANDRA

That sounds like a great idea.

JULIE

(pouting)

Well, it was a great idea, and we were all set until Mark here introduced a concept with the intellectual strength of celery.

SANDRA

(selling once again)

Mark, George has some serious reservations about SPLASHWEAR. You know what we do for a living. It's efficient, practical, and very serious. SPLASHWEAR is the opposite of that. Now, do you have anything to add to your point of view that might help us convince George to promote this project?

MARK

Finally understanding the matter at hand.

OK, OK, I'm sorry. First of all, SPLASHWEAR is great stuff. The time you spend on material selection is enormous. The result of that energy shows up in every item of the LifeSigns products. Julie and Sandra have taken materials which are flexible, durable, comfortable, and form fitting, the same materials that we use, and have created a very attractive line of clothing for women and men.

No one buys clothing that isn't attractive. After all, half the fun is seeing if your selection works; if it attracts attention.

GEORGE

(Softening)

Alright, Alright, you can put on the show. Let's just make it a class act.

JULIE

(to MARK)

Mark, thank you, I think.

GEORGE

(wielding his authority in business if not in fashion.  
To MARK)

Don't you have some desert suit seams to deal with?

(to JULIE)

Julie, weren't you trying to design a survival hood to fit the average airline traveler?

JULIE

(excited, running in several directions at once)

Sandra, let's recruit our models at the Angry Mango tonight.

SANDRA

Sorry, I'll pass. This is a quick turnaround for me and I'm exhausted. I leave it in your good hands.

JULIE

O.K., but you must be around for the show.

SANDRA

(mostly joking)

I'm planning on it, but . . .

(pointing to GEORGE)

. . . you never know what this maniac has in store for me.

GEORGE

(false anger)

I heard that.

SANDRA

(without losing a beat)

George, are you going to stand there and tell me that you're not a maniac?

GEORGE stands speechless reviewing the mountain of evidence in his mind.

SANDRA (CON'T)

Only kidding George.

Could we talk about this rescue gear for a moment?

GEORGE

Absolutely.

SANDRA

I'd really like to get to the mountain tomorrow or the day after. Is the equipment ready?

GEORGE

We're putting the final touches on the electronics tomorrow morning.

We've picked a design for the gas capsule. It has just arrived and it looks good. If you want to leave in the next day or two there shouldn't be a problem. How long do you think you'll stay this time?

SANDRA

In the few short moments before I collapse, can you tell me something of the West Gulf off-shore platform test?

GEORGE

Sure. Unfortunately, this is another tough customer. After the slump in gas and oil prices only the biggest and the toughest management remained. Stewart Jackson is one of the survivors. He is not terribly

interested in the comfort of those trying to survive a disaster on one of his off-shore platforms. He is concerned about survival. He has balanced the cost of replacing workers who die against the cost of equipment to keep them alive. If it wasn't for the fact that it is hard to get anyone to live on top a wet propane tank, we wouldn't have a chance. He is vitally interested in the difference between our SeaShelter and the cheaper SurvivALL model.

SANDRA

You must mean that shelter which looks mysteriously like ours.

GEORGE

The very same. He doesn't want any more sales pitches. He wants to see both products in action in a drill he is arranging on one of his platforms. I agreed. You'll represent us. I figure Dave Mitchell will show up for SurvivALL.

SANDRA

Well, you can't keep a good worm down.

GEORGE

I guess this means I don't have to tell you to be careful.

SANDRA

We've met him twice before and won in spite of his crude methods. If we can make this his third strike, maybe he'll be out of the game.

GEORGE

Perhaps. But perhaps also he'll try harder to win his last time at bat.

SANDRA

Do you expect any trouble with the equipment?

GEORGE

None. Mark and I have been over and over the system. It has never failed, even when we introduced multiple flaws.

SANDRA

But these were all laboratory conditions, right?

GEORGE

That's right, the first full scale field test is in your hands.

SANDRA

I think that's all I need to know for now. When is the test scheduled for?

GEORGE

No specific date. I was waiting for a reading on how long you were going to be in the mountains. They are pressing me for a start date though.

SANDRA

Well, let me have at least a week. I'll call after that and see how things are going. If I need to, I'll try to get back here a few days early.

GEORGE

I don't want to press you on this because I think that your time away is important. Are you sure that it's enough?

SANDRA

Absolutely. Provided, that is, that I can get this afternoon off.

GEORGE

Well, O.K.

EXT. WHITE MOUNTAIN TRAIL TO ZEELAND FALLS. DAY.

CAMERA pans the forest coming to rest just as the sweaty head of SANDRA enters the frame. She throws her head back to drink from a water bottle. She is wearing LifeSigns hiking gear and a huge pack. After the drink she presses forward.

We follow her trip and see occasional interaction with others on the trail. At one point she reaches a clearing and looks over the valley. There is a reverse angle of this shot from a helicopter which pulls out and moves above to reveal the Zeeland Falls Hut.

Dissolve to the ground at the hut where a curmudgeonly looking fellow is gathering an audience of hikers who, victims of their politeness, stand in half attention as the storyteller goes on, and on, and on. It is late afternoon.

RICHARD one of the unfortunate members of the audience. He has had all of the woodlore he can take for one day and slips out toward the Hut. PAULA, another hut crew member, exits as Richard approaches. She, like Richard, is very attractive. With a tendency toward oversized shorts and undersized tee shirts Paula's muscular frame is always and intentionally on display. The display has a devastating effect on men, but this appearance is not supported by a flirtatious personality. PAULA is all business with an occasional dose of humor. As a nurse by training, she deals with first aid issues. As an assistant hut manager she also deals with the kitchen.

RICHARD

How's Shiela's foot?

PAULA

It's definitely sprained, but I think if she stays over an additional night and I wrap it right, she'll be able to get to her car without an air lift. I guess the world of computer programming will have to do without her for an additional day.

RICHARD

Is that what she does?

PAULA

She's a software engineer for Digital Equipment Corporation.

RICHARD

Better her than me.

PAULA

What do you mean?

RICHARD

I have stronger ankles and a clearer mind.

PAULA

In your opinion.

RICHARD

Are you referring to my ankles or my mind.

(PAULA smiles)

RICHARD (CON'T)

All right Ms. Michaels, how goes the kitchen work?

PAULA

We're all set. All we need from you sir is the final count for dinner. Where is this mythical creature you want to save dinner for?

RICHARD

She'll be here.

PAULA

(ambiguous tone)

I hope so, for your sake. Your continued celibacy hinges on her existence.

RICHARD

(not taking her seriously . . . for the moment)

Since when did this treatment become part of our hut's First Aid package?

PAULA

Man cannot live on hydroelectric stations alone.

RICHARD

But when he is abused by others it becomes far far easier.

PAULA

(with a deliberate hint of non standard sexuality)

There's something to be said for careful and tenderly administered abuse. Speaking of which, by the looks of the sweaty yet attractive creature who is approaching, I would guess that your dinner guest has arrived. Remember, I'll expect obvious and constant displays of affection if you are to remain chaste on this mountaintop after the visit.

RICHARD

(assuming the tone of victim. He asks a dramatic question)

Are all mountain tops this fraught with danger?

PAULA LEAVES going into the hut to finish with the dinner preparations. RICHARD turns and moves to assist SANDRA who has arrived at the hut and is detaching herself from her pack.

RICHARD

Let me give you a hand with that.

SANDRA

I may kill George. It feels like this gear is twice as heavy as the old stuff. Be careful, the way I feel now this may be the last time I develop a friendship with someone who lives on top of a mountain.

How are you?

They EMBRACE. Warmly. We detect that SANDRA, during these moments, lets down her considerably developed guard.

RICHARD

You better dry off before you cool down too much. Dinner's almost ready. As soon as you get settled, there's someone I want you to meet.

SANDRA

(a bit annoyed by the packed schedule)

And I thought I'd be able to slow down.

(another thought)

Are these things still divided into Male and Female sides?

RICHARD

(exaggerated formality)

We members of the AMC still strongly believe in Population Control. This is our small contribution to world stability.

SANDRA

(hinting)

Perhaps later I can introduce you to a few destabilizing products and procedures that may make segregation obsolete in future huts.

RICHARD

(playing along)

Well doctor, I'd be very interested in your research.

INT. ZEELAND FALLS HUT. EARLY EVENING.

Hikers have gathered at the indoor picnic tables for dinner. The cafeteria style service results in constant milling and conversation pockets. RICHARD is serving. We drift from conversation to conversation until we finally settle on one between PAULA and SANDRA. They are just getting to know each other.

SANDRA

I understand how this MIT Graduate came to be lord of hydropower at Zeeland Falls. But how did you get to be here?

PAULA

I worked at a health club most of the years I was in school. I was really interested in fitness and weight training and I used to spend a good deal of my time in the mountains as part of what I guess you could call my own personal fitness program. I was going after a nursing degree.

I finished the program just in time to fully understand the role that Doctors want nurses to fill, and I clearly wanted none of that. I went for additional training in Trauma, became EMT certified as well, and tried the emergency room. There was more a sense of a team there, but there was still a real fixation on sickness and the machinery of sickness. After a year, I left that and got a job at a health club again. I continued hiking and met some people from the AMC just at a time that they were looking for staff. It seemed like a good break for a while, so here I am.

RICHARD

Floating by to see if all is OK. He has heard the last part of the conversation.

Paula's been here about two months. She gets to see more than her share of turned ankles and boiled potatoes.

PAULA

Tell me more about this LifeSigns place you work for. It has something to do with survival and rescue equipment, doesn't it?

SANDRA

Well, LifeSigns is pretty much a result of George Garland's desire to be a competitor in the Winter Olympics.

PAULA

What?

SANDRA

George started LifeSigns. But the Skiing story is important. His first love has always been Skiing. Downhill racing. The one dream he had right into his twenties was to compete in the Winter Olympics. Both in 1964 and 1968 he just missed qualifying for the U.S. Olympic team. You have to understand that George was totally in love with skiing and racing. And he was good. But he was never great. From what I understand, he had grit and determination, but he always carried enough extra weight with him to decrease his speed and flexibility. Other skiers, who were lighter, could out race him even if they were barely as skilled in technique.

This was kind of a bitter pill for him to swallow and he began to think that he could compensate for his uncooperative weight problem by developing superior equipment and clothing for the competition. He has an engineering background, so between those early Winter seasons he would spend all of his time testing materials and developing new, lighter ski bindings, boots, skis and poles.

He became quite good at that side of the business, and in fact, did out ski his competition for awhile after he made improvements in his equipment.

PAULA

But you said he still never made it to the Olympics. What happened?

SANDRA

A couple of things. First you've got to picture overweight George showing up for a downhill race wearing gear and clothing that

has never been seen before. From what I've heard, George looked like a misplaced astronaut on the slopes. I've wondered if maybe he didn't win a race or two because the other skiers were having giggle fits all the way down the mountain.

PAULA

That's really funny. Today, when you watch ski competition, everyone looks like an astronaut.

SANDRA

Well, that's part of the story. The reason why George had an edge for only a year or two is because the other skiers caught on to his equipment. Since he was pretty much a one man show, the other skiers always had an opportunity to examine his equipment when he was away for a moment doing other things. That coupled with George's mad scientist tendency to be very chatty about his latest invention almost guaranteed that the next season the competition would show up with cheap but somewhat effective imitations of George's designs.

PAULA

So, once again weight became the deciding factor.

SANDRA

Exactly. Their equipment was inferior, but George's weight was superior.

PAULA

This still doesn't explain the survival business.

SANDRA

We're getting there. . . . He finally realized that he wasn't getting any thinner or younger and that he would have to give up his dream of Olympic competition. Along with this he realized that there was interest in the designs he was developing.

PAULA

Are you telling me that there is a connection between what Olympic competitors wear today and what George designed for himself?

SANDRA

Yes. A little more than half of what you see skiers wear today are George's designs.

PAULA

That's incredible. How come we haven't seen George's face plastered all over Time and Newsweek? Based on what your telling me, the story is also worth at least an hour of prime time Olympic coverage.

SANDRA

Here's the weight issue again. George is not what modern society calls "telegenic." Sure, the networks call once in awhile, but the pieces are always short and the interviewers loose interest fast because he slumps when he sits and his suits don't fit. Add to that the fact that he is happier in his workshop alone than almost anywhere else in the world, and the results are understandable.

PAULA

O.K. Sandra, I suppose this question is worth asking one more time. What about the survival business?

SANDRA

Hang on. . . .

The natural link to survival gear is clear if understand the elements of skiing. You must protect yourself from, cold and frostbite because you are in a hostile environment. You are wearing specialized equipment with quick release safeguards to help you remain uninjured in an emergency, and the equipment is necessary in order to negotiate the environment.

The more George understood about the manufacturing process, and the more manufacturers understood about him, the more areas opened for his designs. At first it was other sports, kyaking, cycling, hiking. Then it was protective clothing for arctic SANDRA

(CONTINUED)

research, then fire prevention. Before too long, George was stretched in a dozen

different directions by a dozen different manufacturers.

PAULA

And that is how LifeSigns was created?

SANDRA

That's right. George realized that he was working all the time and he wasn't doing any research, and he wasn't learning anything new. He was also developing concerns about the fact that he was losing control over the manufacturing process in many cases. In the line of work he was developing, manufacturing defects kill people. He was really uncomfortable with that. He severed his ties with all manufacturers, stopped consulting, and really threw the specialty sport and survival equipment business into a tailspin. They weren't real happy about that.

That's when George founded LifeSigns. I guess by many standards it's a small company, but it is truly multinational in the way it operates, and because of George, all the designs were unique and incredibly advanced.

PAULA

Where is it based?

SANDRA

George bought a research vessel a few years ago because he was working on sea survival designs and eventually moved his headquarters to the ship and kept it in the Caribbean. He has grown to love the sea almost as much as he loves the slopes.

PAULA

It sounds like George has no competition. Why does he need a Sales Rep?

SANDRA

When George severed his ties with the manufacturers and created his own company he

created a vacuum. The manufacturers were looking for a way to fill the vacuum and a smart lady walked right into the business.

PAULA

What do you mean?

SANDRA

A woman by the name of Joanne Richmann established a company called SurvivALL about a year after LifeSigns started. Joanne's background is in the fashion industry specifically the market where designer creations are copied for the lower priced market. What Joanne did was to keep her eye on us and copy our designs as closely as possible without violating our patents. We're not really sure how she does it, but within days of the release of one of our new products, SurvivALL comes out with something that looks identical and costs less.

PAULA

Are her products as good as yours?

SANDRA

No. We've seen a few failures and we've tested their products in our lab. In order to beat our prices, they must use inferior materials. In addition, they just don't have George's experience with material selection and treatment. And, since Joanne Richmann has to subcontract most of the design and manufacturing work out, there isn't much money left over for superior materials.

PAULA

Can't your customers see this difference?

SANDRA

The sad part is that some don't care. Sometimes all that matters is the appearance of safety. For example, let's say that a chemical manufacturer is required by his insurance company to have self contained respiration equipment in every lab. Even

SANDRA (CONTINUES)

under the worst management, the chances that each of those respiration units will be used before they're obsolete is small. That means that the useful life of the unit in question

will be spent hanging on a wall pleasing inspectors rather than keeping a worker alive in an emergency. President's and CEO's know this, and their purchasing decisions are frequently made with this uppermost in their minds.

PAULA

But what if something goes wrong, what if there's a real emergency?

SANDRA

Think about that for a second. We've already established that circumstances that would cause workers to need this breathing apparatus are rare. Now take the full sum of all those rare circumstances, and count those where the equipment is needed to keep the workers alive for more than one minute. Based on the statistics, the equipment doesn't need to work very well or for very long before outside rescue workers with the more expensive equipment get involved.

PAULA

This is true for other types of rescue and survival equipment?

SANDRA

Sure. And that's because the thinking can get all screwed up. Here's what I mean. You know the pictures only international safety cards that the airlines carry for you to study?

PAULA

Yes, you mean the ones that show you how to get out of the plane in an emergency?

SANDRA

That's right. The next time you're in an airplane, look at the picture for water landings. There's a years inventory of safety

SANDRA (CONTINUES)

and survival gear that's part of that illustration. The only problem is that the

situation illustrated is based on two remote possibilities.

PAULA

Which are?

SANDRA

That in an emergency, a plane can get down from 33 thousand feet to sea level safely, and that, once there, it will float long enough to allow passengers to gather all the toys.

PAULA

Unlikely?

SANDRA

Extremely unlikely. Here's another example.

By State and Federal regulation all off shore drilling platforms must mount a fire ax next to each fire extinguisher.

PAULA

I don't see what's wrong with that, that sounds like a good idea.

SANDRA

It might until you visit one. Off shore platforms are usually burn-proof and blast proof. That means that the same regulations that require a fire ax, also require that nothing on the entire platform be manufactured out of anything a fire ax could chop. From the desks, chairs, beds, and tables to the walls, floors, doors and cables, all you'll find is heavy gauge steel.

PAULA

What about windows. Aren't fire axes used to break windows?

SANDRA

Double thickness, wire reinforced, bullet proof and blast proof safety glass. It would take weeks.

PAULA

O.K. I believe you. What does this have to do with LifeSigns?

SANDRA

Same point as before. The person who buys the fire ax and the person who makes the fire ax know that the ax is a useless piece of equipment. It doesn't matter if it's sharp

and it doesn't matter if the handle is strong. No one is going to stand around and attempt to dent a bulkhead during an inferno. Because everyone knows this, the cheaper, more inferior fire ax is a better one. And the easier one to sell.

The same is true for the airplane. In that safety illustration, you sometimes see a flight attendant delivering instructions over a cute little orange megaphone. The airline that buys the megaphone and the manufacturer that makes the megaphone both know that before that flight attendant reaches for this item, the plane has to fall from 33,000 feet, stay in one piece, float, and not kill the person who would reach for it. Of course, this also assumes that anyone who survives this experience is inclined to spend time looking for it in a sinking plane.

In effect, the cute megaphone doesn't even have to work. It's easy to justify the purchase of the cheapest product possible.

RICHARD has again worked his way around the room to the position next to PAULA and SANDRA

RICHARD

(Almost sarcastic)

I'm pretty sure that most of the reason for your coming here was to escape and relax, But I could tell from the kitchen that you were talking about George again.

PAULA

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to wrap your head in stuff you wanted to forget for awhile.

SANDRA

That's O.K., It's good to reevaluate it all every once in awhile. Sometimes you get so caught up in the details that you can forget the history and the larger reasons for it all.

RICHARD

I've got to get back to the kitchen, but I thought you might want to take tomorrow and relax rather than rushing off to test the gear right away.

SANDRA

That's fine. I'd like to see how you're coming with the hydro project anyway.

RICHARD

Great. There's still a pile of work to do down there. I'll see you right after dessert.

PAULA

This isn't just a job to you, is it?

SANDRA

You're right, it's more than just a job, but I really like what I'm doing, and for the obvious reasons, I don't mind the battle to get our quality into the right places.

PAULA

After everything you've said, it sounds impossible to sell George's products.

SANDRA

We've developed a unique approach. For all our big accounts, we try to set up a realistic test where our equipment is thoroughly evaluated.

PAULA

That's part of the reason why you're here isn't it?

SANDRA

Yes. Hiking is a popular sport, and more people with less experience are trying it out. George has taken a hard look at the it. and we're field testing some of his new ideas. I don't think this stuff is quite ready yet, but it's coming along.

PAULA

When are you going to try the new equipment out?

SANDRA

Based upon what Richard was saying before, my guess is that I'll take off the day after tomorrow.

PAULA

I have alot of camping experience. Do you mind If I tag along?

SANDRA

Not if you don't mind losing your day off.

PAULA

That's not a problem. I suppose it's time for me to earn the 75 cents an hour they pay me.

SANDRA

See you later.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CLIFF. DUSK.

SANDRA is sitting out on a cliff, looking over the valley. Occasionally we see SANDRA'S face as she mentally and physically unwinds from her pressure filled career. It is as if she were in a shrine, a sacred place. She is drawn to the sunset. As the sunlit ceremony ends, she stands to sustain the last moment of golden light. At the moment it sinks below a distant ridge, she tilts her head back and rests against a tree, eyes closed.

RICHARD, who has been standing in the shadows, moves to her.

Rested, she stirs to his presence. She opens her eyes and her heart. Honored, RICHARD remains still, unwilling to risk losing the moment.

SANDRA, with a look of puzzle and passion, drifts toward him. They kiss. Their lips touch delicately, a controlled brushstroke of love. The exploration continues, in slow motion. RICHARD presses SANDRA into the tree. Their bodies meet. The barriers are gone. After time, there is a pause. The fire cools.

Their thoughts are stiff.

RICHARD

How was it?

SANDRA

What?

RICHARD

The sunset.

SANDRA

Incredible. (Pause. Thinking...drifting..) You know, I've seen the sun go down in Cairo, Vancouver, and Paris. I've seen the sun set in just about every place where you should see it go down, and I really think that it's most beautiful here. does that make any sense?

RICHARD

Unfortunately, his brain is revving into high gear.

Tonight, we have staying with us a surgeon who has written two novels, an archeologist who has just returned from China, two airline pilots, and a retired admiral. All of them have seen as much as you have, and all of them picked this place over any other. It makes perfect sense.

The beginning of a series of brain stimulating, passion quenching questions.

SANDRA

What about you? Why do you come here?

RICHARD

Because it's manageable. It's more pure. It's simple here. There's less static.

SANDRA

Static?

RICHARD

Every day the world down there gets a little more complicated. With every additional comfort, truth gets harder to identify. Down there, the struggle is different. It's easier to hide. It's also harder to learn about yourself. There's less static.

SANDRA

I think I understand that. You're still a puzzle. You're not just spending some time here, you're spending all time here. I don't know if that makes any more sense than the chaos in the valley. It's impossible for me to get you to visit my world. It's as if you're hiding.

RICHARD

I don't think it's anything more than another life-style. Up here, I can drive the world, not be driven by it. When I graduated from MIT, there were any number of places I could have worked. The promises were great, I could work on my own projects, I could pretty much name my own hours and the pay was substantial. But I had visited my friends who had graduated before me. All of them were working at different places; part of different projects. Yet the circumstances were the same. They had about the same size cubicles and they spent most of their day under fluorescent lighting working on their company supplied terminal or their company supplied drafting table. When they wanted to take a break, they went for a walk to the nearest window and looked out over similar parking lots. If they thought of something to do which had never been done before, they would have to convince their supervisor, his manager, the section head, the division vice president, the general manager and the New Projects Management Study Team.

If anyone of those people said "No" or "Let's Wait" The new idea was dead.

SANDRA

Sure. But you don't have to hide. You speak about the present as if it were something dirty or rotten. I don't want to work in a cubicle any more than you do. but there are other things out there. I think I'm doing something that's important and useful. I'm also pretty sure I'm not destroying or corrupting myself in the process.

RICHARD

Are you sure?

SANDRA

What?

RICHARD

You're an international nomad. Each week you're in a different country with a different product. This business you're in gives you no time off.

As soon as there is an important issue for you to deal with, another one pops up and interrupts the first. When you are working, you have to be ready to deal with harsh attacks from all sides at all times. The people you deal with are mostly unfriendly and cruel because their orientation isn't on humanity; it's on money. Your product is great, but it is necessary only because we've created a monstrous maze of complex technology that we have to protect ourselves from. Not only does this technology kill people, it also doesn't do what it's supposed to do half the time.

Not too long ago, when this all started, people were genuinely worried that we would have too much free time on our hands. They worried that the population would become bored and lifeless. Instead, we've become exhausted trying to work as hard and as fast and as long as the machines we have created.

SANDRA

Richard, just get off it. Your starting to sound like someone from a bad religious broadcast. I like this place alot and I like you alot. It's going to really ruin it if I to listen to whining isolationist mountain top philosophy as part of the package. I like who I am and I like what I do. I came here to see a friend, not a missionary.

SANDRA turns and heads back to the hut. RICHARD remains behind staring at the night sky.

EXT. BY THE SMALL HYDRO UNIT BELOW THE HUT. DAY.

RICHARD is working on the small hydro plant below the Zeeland Falls Hut. After a time, SANDRA approaches.

SANDRA

Good morning.

RICHARD

Morning. How'd you sleep?

SANDRA

Really well. I feel much much better. How's this thing working?

RICHARD

Apparently, very well. It's been up and running for four months now. And the performance is about what I expected. I'm still a little concerned about the pressure we're delivering here. It's not above what the turbine is rated to handle, but It's close. I keep wondering if it will last very long unless we do something to moderate the load.

SANDRA

Tell me, are you sure you don't have any secret desires to work on the turbines at the Cooley Dam?

RICHARD

I thought we were going to be nice to each other today.

SANDRA

Sorry, I couldn't resist.

(On the same topic)

You know, George took your design suggestion for the solar power strip on the arctic tech suit. I tested it a few weeks ago.

RICHARD

Great. The suit is a good idea. I'm glad I could help.

SANDRA

We figure that the suit will be ready to be introduced in about ten weeks. George would really like you to accept an invitation to visit us a few days before so he can show you the work and talk over a few other projects he has on his mind.

RICHARD

Please tell him I appreciate the invitation, but I don't think that would work out.

SANDRA

(disappointed)

Come on Richard, it's an all expense paid vacation to a warm place. Neither one of us is asking you to go to work at LifeSigns. It would be a nice change for you. I would really like to show you all the things I've talked about these past months.

RICHARD

I know you would. Look, it's really important to me that I understand my world and be able to control it and make it better. I'm not a whole lot of fun to be around if I'm in a new situation. It's not because I don't like new things, it's exactly the opposite. I like them too much. I'd find myself pulled in a dozen different directions at once. I wouldn't know what to do, and I'd be miserable.

SANDRA

That doesn't hold out much hope for me then does it?

RICHARD

What do you mean?

SANDRA

If you really only participate in experiences that you can totally control, that doesn't leave much room for a healthy relationship with another person; does it?

RICHARD

All I'm saying is that I want to move through my life carefully and well focused so that I can do a few things very well rather than doing dozens of things badly. If I can find an environment that helps this focus, then I'm happy.

SANDRA

You know, Richard, I think you just described a Monastery.

Silence.

RICHARD

Will Sanders is going to be here tomorrow. He's a physicist. I really could use him to dwork out some of the flow problems I have here. I talked to Paula this morning and I know she's interested in going out on the test. Why don't the two of you go out together while I deal with this?

Disappointed, SANDRA leaves and makes her way back to the hut. Richard follows with his eyes. No happiness.

EXT. TRAIL THE NEXT DAY. DAY

SANDRA and PAULA are hiking. SANDRA is dressed in unusual LifeSigns hiking gear with an unusual pack. PAULA is wearing her typical hiking shorts and trademark tee shirt. A stunning pair.

They are walking up hill and, as they approach the camera they stop, sit, rest, and talk. SANDRA is sitting on the trail leaning back on her pack. PAULA has taken off her pack and sits to the side of SANDRA. They drink water.

PAULA

How's your pack holding up?

SANDRA

It's better than it was last time, but I still think that George needs to put some more work into it. It might need another compression strap. The internal frame works, but it's still too hot.

PAULA

It seems that you spend an enormous amount of time on this stuff . . . trying to get it perfect and everything.

SANDRA

I guess we do. It's worth it though.

PAULA

Where is all this stuff made?

SANDRA

LifeSigns has a factory on the outskirts of Columbia, South Carolina. Once the prototype is finished and tested, manufacturing starts.

PAULA

How many people work there?

SANDRA

About twenty or so.

PAULA

I see. Who runs things for you there?

SANDRA

A guy named Jack Simpson. Why do you want to know?

PAULA

Sorry, I'm getting carried away. I hope you can understand my curiosity about you. Richard doesn't mention you excessively, but when he does, it's with a respect, almost a reverence. When he speaks of you, he's always a little bit different, there's a distance in his eyes that I don't understand yet.

SANDRA

There are certainly some things about this that I don't get. I can tell you that I don't want to be worshiped; I want to be loved. I think he does too, but we have both carefully developed our lives, and I really not sure howmany compromises we are willing to make.

PAULA

I can't give you too much help here except to say that if you find that it's not working, you should let me know. I'd probably be willing to make some short or even long term compromises where Richard's concerned.

SANDRA

I don't know if it's me, or him, where we work, or what we do. It's just not all sorted out yet.

PAULA

Why don't you give up analysis for awhile and just try for great sex?

SANDRA

That worked fine when I was younger, but I don't think that's enough anymore. It might be. I don't know how I would feel when it stopped. Is that fear?

PAULA

It might be.

SANDRA

This is horrible. I have confidence in all areas of my job and know that I'll always have friends there. There, I know what the future is, yet, in my personal life, I'm lucky if I have a handle on the next ten minutes.

PAULA

It's funny. Great people can't do great things by making compromises all along the way, yet that almost means that great people stay single and privately unhappy.

SANDRA

What's the story with you? Are you happy?

PAULA

I'm doing what I want to do. The results won't set the world on fire, but the experience has been good, the sex has been adequate, and my future is a hazy fog of uncertainty. We're kind of in the same boat.

SANDRA

No solutions. It helps to talk about it, I guess.

There is a moment of tense hesitation as PAULA hovers close to SANDRA.

SOUND in the woods.

PAULA picks up her head and looks back toward the sound.

TWO male HIKERS appear in the distance. They approach, greet and pass on.

PAULA

My guess is that those guys are going to miner's folly mountain to free climb. Why don't we head in that direction and see what they're up to?

SANDRA

Sure.

PAULA leans over to SANDRA, and grabs SANDRA'S shoulder straps and pulls her to her feet.

EXT. AERIAL MOUNTAIN TRAIL DAY.

SANDRA and PAULA on a ridge climbing toward their destination. SEQUENCE of DISSOLVES as time passes in the mountains.

13. EXT. MINER'S FOLLY ROCKFACE DAY

The two hikers who passed SANDRA and PAULA earlier are two steps into a free climb of a rock face

VICTOR, the first climber is skilled at this new and dangerous sport. JOHN, his companion is less skilled and, to keep up, more reckless. The climb progresses various shots of the climbers. JOHN is obviously expending more energy than VICTOR.

Down below, SANDRA and PAULA enter the clearing. The climbers are dangerously high off the ground.

SANDRA

I do like climbing, but I'm still not sure I'm ready for this.

They continue to look up. There is just the slightest hint of trouble.

VICTOR

Come on John, not much further to go.

JOHN

(weakly, panting.)

I'm . . . right behind you.

They continue to go higher. VICTOR at last makes the top of the rock face and hauls himself up. JOHN is obviously slower. VICTOR turns around and looks back down at his friend. JOHN is sweating, and clearly not having a good time. JOHN looks up.

JOHN

I'm getting there.

VICTOR looks down with a grin. His expression changes to horror. REVERSE ANGLE. We see John, in incredible slow motion, loosen his expression from exertion to emptiness. Ever so slowly, we realize that his load bearing foot has

slipped and his body is shifting into the first part of his journey to the ground.

SMASH CUT to catch VICTOR'S fruitless grab for JOHN followed by his scream of horror as he watches his friend drift further and further away. The image freezes like a bad dream.

We hear JOHN'S body hit right before we CUT to the ground. SANDRA and PAULA drop their packs. PAULA races forward to check JOHN. He has landed face up on a smooth spot at the base of the cliff. Blood is running out of his ear, and his twisted right leg suggests a severe fracture. PAULA checks his pulse. SANDRA has extracted a small first aid kit from her pack and now crouches near PAULA.

PAULA

He's alive. Barely. He's got one heck of a broken leg.

SANDRA

It looks like this first aid kit isn't going to make it.

PAULA

I'm afraid not.

SANDRA

My pack, however, may help.

Working together as a team, they disassemble the pack and use the internal frame, as it was designed to be used, as a splint. They quickly do what is possible to immobilize JOHN'S leg.

PAULA has taken the classic role of Trauma nurse while SANDRA is the competent technician who knows precisely how the new technology should be used.

VICTOR just arrives on the scene from his scramble down from the ledge.

VICTOR

Thank God you were here. How is he?

PAULA

He has a badly broken leg, and I think he's in a coma. As soon as we finish stabilizing him we'll get him to a hospital. I have a radio.

VICTOR

Is there anything I can do?

PAULA

Not for the moment, We've got . . .

Interrupting.

SANDRA

There is something you can do. Paula, we have to keep him warm, don't we?

PAULA

Well, we have to stabilize his temperature really. That usually means keeping him warm.

SANDRA

Go into my pack and look for a silver package labeled "ShockSock." Open it, follow the directions, and set it up for your friend.

VICTOR understands the instructions and scrambles off to SANDRA'S pack.

PAULA continues to make final adjustments to JOHN'S splints.

PAULA

"ShockSock?" More LifeSigns technology?

SANDRA

That's right.

PAULA

Is this some kind of rescue blanket or something?

SANDRA

No, not really. You'll see it in a minute, but I can tell you that it's a solution to the problem that you referred to just before. One of the problems in primary care is that natural conditions are usually not favorable for shock patients. We understand that a person in shock loses his ability to protect himself from his environment. A rescue blanket helps keep the patient warm, but frequently he is kept too warm. That's almost as bad as being too cold.

PAULA

I'm just about done. It will be interesting to see what this thing looks like.

Now, let me get my radio.

PAULA goes to her pack and gets her portable radio. She begins the call:

PAULA

Base, this is Zeeland Two. Do you read? Over.

Base, this is Zeeland Two. Request Medevac. Repeat, request Medevac. Do you read? Over.

SANDRA

That's a five watt, high frequency, FM portable. Isn't it?

PAULA

That's right.

Base, this is Zeeland Two. Come in please.

SANDRA

These mountains are almost solid granite. It may be hard to get a signal out.

PAULA

It's beginning to seem that way. Sandra, we have got to get this man out of here.

SANDRA

I've got something else.

SANDRA again fishes in her pack. She retrieves a slim case turns, and opens the lid. She pulls out a piece of sliverized plastic and two credit card sized calculators.

PAULA

Do you work for Her Majesty's Secret Service? What are the calculators for?

SANDRA

One of these is a micro-terminal and the other is what's called a "packet switch."

SANDRA (Continued)

The technology has actually been around for a few years. We just adapted it for survival use. Could you get your map?

PAULA rushes off to get the map while SANDRA stands entering information into one of the two "calculators."  
PAULA returns.

PAULA

What are you doing?

SANDRA

I'm describing our situation and loading in the nature of his injuries. The terminal converts this message into digital information so it can be loaded into the packet switch.

SANDRA (continued)

Can you give me a short and very accurate

description of where we are?

PAULA

Sure.

SANDRA

Perfect. Write it down. We have only one shot at this.

SANDRA enters the information by reading off PAULA's map. Then, when finished, she plugs one calculator into the other. She presses a key and waits.

SANDRA

A packet is a short, condensed, specially labeled electronic package that can be transmitted to another location, unwrapped, and understood.

I've just loaded the packet into the switch. Now we need to send it on it's way.

Moving to one side, SANDRA takes the silver balloon and inflates it with a tiny capsule of helium. she attaches the switch to the balloon and launches it in the clearing.

SANDRA

The packet can only be sent twice. It's alot like a flashbulb that burns out after delivering enormous light for just an instant. The switch will keep rising until it locks onto a satellite transponder. It confirms the lock and sends the packet. It has two tries at this, but it really only needs one. When the packet is delivered, the switch will relay a confirming signal to the terminal. Then we wait.

PAULA

Who are we sending this message to?

SANDRA

The network isn't totally up and running yet. The plan is for a sea and air rescue coordinating headquarters to be set up in the

states. Right now, these messages are being received by Air Force Tracking stations . . . and George.

There's a tone. SANDRA looks at the terminal.

SANDRA

They've got the message. Let's see how this guy's buddy is doing with the ShockSock.

They both walk over to the shelter which has been erected. It looks like a one man tent except that it's silver and has a clear window into it and an open end.

PAULA

How did you get him inside of this without any help?

VICTOR

The instructions are pretty clear. You just build the thing around him.

SANDRA

Great. That's the way it is supposed to work. You can see that this body is enclosed and his head is sheltered from the sun and wind, yet open to the air.

VICTOR

Is anybody coming to help him?

SANDRA

We did get a message through. It shouldn't be long before help arrives.

PAULA

I better check his signs.

CUT TO:

INT. HELICOPTER. DAY.

There is a litter strapped to the runner with John in it. There is an EMT, VICTOR and SANDRA in the helicopter. They are all wearing those cumbersome headsets with the large earmuffs. We can here the internal helicopter conversation over this system.

PILOT

We'll be in the air for about 20 minutes. After our hospital stop, I'll take you back to

the hut. Paula should just be arriving about the time we do.

SANDRA

Are you sure you can land there. It's pretty tight.

PILOT

I've been there dozens of times. I bring these huts their opening supplies at the beginning of each season.

RADIO

8603 NELSON DAVID This is Twin Mountain Tower.

PILOT

8603 NELSON DAVID. Over.

TOWER

Joe, do you have a Sandra Brooks aboard?

PILOT

Yes I do.

TOWER

There is a George Fennimore on the line who'd like to be patched through. Stand by.

PILOT nods at SANDRA.

SANDRA

George, you know you do have a nack for tracking me down.

GEORGE

Actually, you sent the first message. The rest was easy. I guess our packet switch works.

SANDRA

Seems so. What's up?

GEORGE

The SPLASHWEAR show has been moved up. Julie thought you'd like to know even if you can't make it back in time. It seems that the TV people can's stick to their original schedule.

I don't know where they're going to sleep, but they are coming the middle of next week. I wouldn't mind if you came back early. Someone's got to pull the reigns on Julie. I'm getting nowhere.

SANDRA

No promises George. I'd really like to be there for the show, but I just got here.

GEORGE

I know, I know. This isn't a pressure call; it's just information. One final thing: The gas platform test is set. When you get back, you might have to negotiate a bit, but the groundwork is laid.

SANDRA

Are you sure this isn't a pressure call?

GEORGE

No. . . . Take care of yourself.

SANDRA

Thanks.

EXT. ZEELAND FALLS HUT LANDING ZONE. DAY

A Jet Ranger Helicopter is landing in a tight area between the trees behind the hut. After dropping the patient at the Hospital, SANDRA is being dropped off at the hut. The Helicopter settles into place and SANDRA JUMPS out. RICHARD and OTHERS are gathered near the hut.

RICHARD

You sure know how to make an entrance.

SANDRA

Oh, Sorry.

Helicopter TAKES OFF and fades into the distance.

RICHARD

To one of the others

Do you think you could watch over things here for a while? I'd like to show SANDRA something.

OTHER

Sure.

SANDRA

Where are we going?

RICHARD

Not far.

RICHARD begins to walk away. SANDRA FOLLOWS. she doesn't know exactly what is going on. They continue to walk until they get to the falls above the hut, the source of the water for the hydro plant.

RICHARD

Here we are.

SANDRA

I've been here before.

RICHARD

I know you have. I just think you need to be here again.

SANDRA

I don't exactly get it.

RICHARD

You came here to rest. But, all you've done since you've arrived is work. From what I heard on the radio, you've used more technology here in a day than I use in three years.

SANDRA

What do you want from me? Should I have found a muddy stick to splint his leg with and then searched for a mountain goat to bring him to the hospital? You know I'm a pretty reasonable person, and I'm good at understanding other points of view, but I'm having serious trouble with what I'm hearing now.

RICHARD

It seems like you just don't get it. You can only understand this place if you get on the right level. You're not there yet, and it seems as if you're always putting outside things in the way. Under those conditions, it's tough to get anywhere.

SANDRA

Richard, on the way to the hospital I spoke to George. They've had to move the SPLASHWEAR presentation up. I'm going to have to leave tomorrow morning.

RICHARD

I see. Well, there's no real reason for us to spend anymore time here. I guess it's time to get back to the hut.

In silence they both turn to leave. Again, in sadness.

EXT. LIFESIGNS DECK. DAY.

JULIE walks among the TV crew, friends, photographers, and GEORGE.

There is general chaos. JULIE shouts instructions to everyone. Everyone ignores JULIE. This is a rehearsal for the show tomorrow.

GEORGE walks through the chaos shaking his head. The CAMERA FOLLOWS him as he walks around to the quieter side of the ship. There, SANDRA stands looking serenely out over the bay. She is not depressed or sad, yet she is not enthusiastic either. It is a calm which disguises trouble.

GEORGE

You know, I think Julie could use some leadership assistance with this thing.

SANDRA

This is really her show. I think she'll do a fine job. I just can't get into the mood yet. I'm sure I'll be ready in a few hours.

GEORGE

I take it that all did not work out as expected in the mountains.

SANDRA

Something like that.

GEORGE

Are you sure?

SANDRA

No.

(Half smile.)

George, I'm going to take the inflatable, and escape from this craziness for a few hours. Do you think you can hold the fort?

At this instant GORGEOUS WOMAN stumbles by wearing a fluorescent pink neoprene bikini. She is stumbling because she is attempting to pull on a tight matching miniskirt as she passes.

GEORGE

Frankly, no. I don't think I can.

SANDRA

Oh, George, don't worry, you'll be fine. Loosen up a bit. I'll be back in a few hours.

GEORGE shakes his head and heads off in the same direction as our struggling model.

LONG SEQUENCE of SANDRA getting into the inflatable. She wears a silver SPLASHWEAR malliot.

As she passes the beach, she notices a woman, her back to the water, being photographed by a man. He is giving her directions and telling her how to pose.

He catches SANDRA out of the corner of his eye and freezes for a moment. We follow SANDRA too. Eventually he gets back to his work.

EXT. BEACH. DAY.

SANDRA arrives, sets up her chair, and goes for a swim.

She returns, dries, and sits in the chair.

CAMERA highlights her beauty.

Then. We hear the click of a shutter and the whine of a motor drive. The photographer is now hovering near SANDRA.

SANDRA reacts. She opens her eyes and absorbs him, ignoring for the moment that he has taken her picture.

She also ignores the fact that he is about to take another picture. She remains on the chair. Another shutter click, followed by the motor drive JOE CAMBER is standing a not so discrete distance away spending as much time focusing on her without his camera as with his camera. He looks at her as if she were a shrine. We're not sure if he is acting.

He takes a step forward.

SANDRA

Is there something I can help you with?

JOE

Do you mind if I take your picture?

SANDRA

Isn't it a little late for that question?

JOE

It's a complement, you know.

SANDRA

It depends.

JOE

The local tourist board has hired me to take pictures of the island. I'm supposed to capture the natural beauty. I think you are naturally beautiful.

Referring to his camera.

May I?

SANDRA

Thinking deliberately

Yes.

JOE begins to photograph SANDRA. She doesn't move. He does. Around, behind, close and far away. He gets close again.

SANDRA

What exactly are you trying to accomplish here?

JOE

First, I'm hoping to do my job and get some great photographs, and then . . .

Getting ready for another shot

JOE (continues)

. . . could you tilt your head back a bit more?

SANDRA

No. . . . And then . . . what?

JOE

Get to know you better.

SANDRA

What about your friend?

JOE

I haven't known her that long.

SANDRA

But it's longer than you've known me.

JOE

Only by about ten minutes.

SANDRA

It sounds like you should get to know her better.

JOE

I'm really more interested in you.

SANDRA

Until someone else comes along.

JOE

There's no one else on the beach.

SANDRA

What's your name?

JOE

Joe Camber.

SANDRA

Well Joe, this has been an interesting experience, but please tell me why I shouldn't strongly urge you to cap your lenses and be on your way.

JOE

First, because you don't consider what I've done an insult. Secondly, I am, in fact, working for the tourist board, and they are paying me a great deal of money, and finally, I don't yet know your name.

SANDRA

Sandra Brooks. How would you like it if someone turned a camera in your direction. You're a pretty good looking guy. Would you be uncomfortable?

JOE

No.

SANDRA

Great. See that ship out there?

She points.

Be on it tomorrow afternoon at 2:00pm.  
. . . If you have the courage.

JOE

The courage? To go on a boat?

SANDRA

Tomorrow, there will be a special show of a new line of resort fashion. A syndicated TV crew has come down to record the event. You are now one of the runway models.

JOE is speechless but still confident. There is a curiosity in his face which is difficult to read. He caps his lenses and turns to leave. SANDRA stops him in his tracks.

SANDRA (continued)

Remember Joe, 2:00pm tomorrow. Right out there.

INT. SURVIVALL OFFICES. DAY

JOANNE RICHMANN, the President of SurvivALL is in quite a snit. There is a collection of young male and female assistants in her luxurious office. Amidst appointments that are more consistent with a high fashion outfit than a survival equipment company, JOANNE is storming about. The company is populated by a very young staff suggesting Joanne's insecurity or her side business in Day Care Her assistants are wincing.

JOANNE

(viciously.)

You call this information? This is crap! You can get this kind of stuff out of the Yellow Pages. We're spending a ton of money on this and all we're getting is superficial crap!

ASSISTANT #1

Ms. Richmann, we hired this person at your suggestion. She doesn't have a great deal of experience in the field. I'm sure she's doing what she thinks is a good job. Perhaps we should hire someone else.

JOANNE

Damn it, there isn't time. This is the person I got, and this is the person that will do the job. This isn't brain surgery. I want new information. If I wanted this stuff, I'd read their press kit.

ASSISTANT #1

What do you want us to do?

JOANNE

You get to her. Somehow, someway, you get to her. Tell her that I want to know of any changes in the SeaShelter. I want to know what they're worried about and what they're sure of. I want to know who's at the plant manufacturing this stuff and when they intend to ship. I want to know how they're shipping and when. And I want to know now.

ASSISTANT #1

I still don't think you've got the right person for the job.

JOANNE

Well, I don't care how you get this information or who gets it. If you have a better way, use it. But let me tell you this, our little investigator knows far too much about this operation to be dumped now. She will either get on board and get better . . . or she's going to get hurt. Am I making my point here?

ASSISTANT #1

Yes Ma'am.

JOANNE

Now get out of here, all of you. If you don't get some useful work done soon, you're all going to lose your jobs. Get out!

EXT. LIFESIGNS DECK. DAY.

This story is advanced through pictures and music. The open space on the LifeSigns deck has been turned into a fashion show runway. There are photographers and TV crewmembers milling around. There are also a collection of beautiful male and female creatures from the Angry Mango who are dressed in Splashwear fashions. Splashwear is a very offbeat combination of Skiwear, Scubawear, rainsuits and other camping/survival clothing which has been trimmed and cut to flatter the figures of the Mango Models. This is the pre-show time where everyone is getting ready.

INT. SHIP PASSAGEWAY.

There is a great deal of movement in the hallway. People move around in various stages of undress. There is barely controlled chaos. Sandra slips into one of the rooms.

INT. SHIP CABIN DAY.

SANDRA moves into the space. JOE CAMBER, who has clearly just arrived, is unpacking. The one piece suit he is required to wear is hanging in plain sight. SANDRA wears a short bathing suit top underneath an oversized shirt and baggy pants. JOE turns toward her and continues to unbutton his shirt.

JOE

Are you surprised that I'm here?

SANDRA

I'm pleased. I think you'll look great in this suit. I really can't wait to see it.

JOE

I'm familiar with this kind of flattery.

SANDRA

So, why is it that you're here?

JOE

I see this as a real opportunity.

SANDRA

For what?

JOE finishes removing his shirt and moves closer to SANDRA.

JOE

To get to know one of my subjects in a deeper more personal way.

SANDRA

I assume that you expect a reward for your efforts.

The sexual implication is very clear. JOE unbuckles his belt and pops the top button of his pants.

JOE

Let's just say that if I do a good job, I'd like to explore the possibilities.

Without flinching, and in spite of JOE's closeness, she responds.

SANDRA

That sounds dangerous, but danger is a part of life isn't it?

JOE pauses, breaks his eye contact with her, puts his hands on the the front edges of her oversized shirt, grazes her breasts, and drops the shirt off her shoulders. He almost clinically examines the texture of her shoulders with his hands.

JOE

I'm told that danger can sometimes feel very good.

SANDRA pauses for a moment. It is enough time to generate uncertainty inside JOE. Without the hint of rejection, she pulls her shirt back up over her shoulders.

SANDRA

You've certainly given me some food for thought. And, while I'm thinking, you should get ready.

At the precise end of this remark, SANDRA reaches out, grabs JOE'S crotch and gives his equipment a deliberate squeeze. A baffling, ambiguous, and radical move. SANDRA backs out the door.

EXT. LIFESIGNS DECK FASHION SHOW. DAY

The fashion show is now in full swing. We hear the announcer (JULIE) mentioning each design as it is presented. While there are both male and female fashions, the female fashions outnumber the male fashions. Ultimately, we see JOE CAMBER make his appearance. He is a bit stiff, but he pleases the crowd.

GEORGE, who was reluctant and anxious to the last minute is now having a great time. MARK is busy behind the scenes making last minute adjustments to critical areas of the clothing on the models. This is giving him an opportunity to touch his acquaintances as he never has before. They tolerate this with mild annoyance.

13. INTERIOR HALLWAY. DAY

JOE CAMBER is on his way back to his cabin.

14. INTERIOR CABIN DAY

JOE enters to be assaulted by motor driven flashes from his own camera. SANDRA is in his room and is exacting revenge. Her behavior is serious. His reaction is blank.

SANDRA

Just lean up against the wall there. Put your hands behind your back. Look out the window.

He turns.

SANDRA (Continued)

No, just your head.

(He complies.)

Okay, now, sit on the bunk. Put your elbows on your knees and put your head in your hands.

(He complies.)

Good. Now hold that.

(Another flash.)

Now stand and turn your back toward me.

He does. SANDRA moves behind him and peels one side of the suit off his shoulder. She steps back, examines him, puts the camera down, steps toward him, and peels the suit off his other shoulder. She runs her fingers across his bare skin. He tilts his head back. She turns him around, drops her shirt off her own shoulders, and finishes peeling his suit off. He is left standing in a thong style supporter.

SANDRA picks up the camera, steps back and takes another picture.

SANDRA (Continues)

Turn around

He does. His back is to the camera. Another flash. She speaks to his last bit of clothing.

SANDRA (Continues)

Take that off.

He does. She photographs his body with her mind and then uses the camera. There is a little quick breath and a little sweat to convey her ever advancing mood.

SANDRA (Continues)

Turn around.

He does. We see her from over his shoulder. There is hunger building. She takes another picture. Then another. She moves in for a closeup of his face. And takes another picture. Less than one sixtieth of a second after the shutter closes, he grabs her upper arms and pulls her toward him.

JOE

Put the camera down.

As she lowers her arms to comply, he pulls her tighter to his body. As a statement of the current circumstances, his enormously expensive camera never makes it to a table and drops to the ground with a thud.

He presses her to him and throws his head back. His eyes are closed. Hers are also. She slides her hands over his back and below his waist.

SANDRA

Lie Down.

He does.

In one swift move, SANDRA deals with her pants and suit bottom. They are history. She mounts him, sitting upright for the ride. Her hands are pressed into his waist. Her head is back and her eyes are closed. Her hips are between his hands, and he guides the rhythm to his maximum satisfaction. He loses control and convulses. She rides him to the bitter end and is satisfied. She collapses forward; her hands still stiffarmed on his chest. This is self-love times two.

There is a long moment of silence and stillness. Both are deep inside themselves, soaking the moment as they might a good back rub.

JOE

With clumsy politeness.

You were great. I'll be here for at least two more weeks. Maybe we could . . .

SANDRA

Silencing him with her hand and her words.  
(Quietly)

Please, please, don't say anything. Just don't say anything.

She waits a moment, straightens, dismounts. She picks up his camera first and her waist down clothing second. She dresses and slides to him just as he rises into sitting position. She seems to speak into his ear. Her reference is purposely unclear.

SANDRA (Continues)

I hope we made you comfortable enough to have fun today. I can see how some of this might have been embarrassing.

Before he can answer, she is up, shirt on, and out the door. He sits there adding it up.

EXT. LIFESIGNS DECK. NIGHT.

Fashion show is a success. The post show party is in full swing. GEORGE, surrounded by models who understand the game they play for a day, is thrilled and perhaps just a bit tipsy.

There is dancing and music. SANDRA and JOE work the party. JOE, his manhood and virility recently tested successfully is working the non-Sandra female boat population. Show participants who know him from the same one piece outfit that got SANDRA into trouble, drift away from GEORGE and seem to wait their turn to present themselves as potential objects of JOE'S desire. SANDRA catches this out of the corner of her eye and understands it perfectly. She continues to mingle with both genders.

She passes a couple by the railing of the ship. They are young and hot and loving. There is a tenderness and total submission in each moment they share. Backlit in the moonlight, a flood of information is exchanged through their eyes. Their hands meet and cherish each other's presence. Eyes close, lips touch and graze. Bodies together each gives openly to the other.

They separate, look into each other's eyes, and move away leaving us alone with the perfect setting for their romance.

EXT. ROUGH SEAS, SMALL BOAT. DAY

A grungy work tender makes its way toward the off shore platform.

SANDRA is one of several "workers" on the tender. She is wearing an orange jumpsuit with the platform company name on it. Next to the helmsman is a worker similarly dressed who is speaking into a portable radio. All wear the same uniforms. Naturally, SANDRA wins the prize for best appearance.

EXT. GULF PLATFORM STRUT DAY.

Rough sea. In order to get off the tender, workers must launch themselves off the boat and onto the vertical ladder. It's a tough job and frightening for those not used to the inconvenience. Executives and other VIP's

travel by helicopter. Workers and those posing as workers do not.

Gear is lifted off the tender by crane. Workers are jumping onto the ladder. There are glances toward SANDRA for all the stereotypical reasons. She is, after all, the only female within one hundred miles.

Raging sea below. Long dark climb above. SANDRA takes her position on the gunwale. She refuses all help and balances perfectly riding each swell until she uses one to spring toward the ladder. Because of her background she has made the landing gracefully. She receives high marks from those on and off the tender. Those watching from above applaud.

Her climb finished, she is greeted by the platform manager, DOUG HIGGINS. Doug is good natured, weathered, and 35.

DOUG

Welcome to station six, Ms. Brooks. All those in residence on this can have been told of your arrival as an addition to our gas chromaspectography lab. The drill is scheduled for tomorrow morning at 3:00am. I would suggest a nap if you can work it in.

SANDRA

I appreciate your help. Has all the equipment arrived?

DOUG

Yes. It's been checked against the master list and stored following your instructions.

SANDRA

Good. Thanks. Is there anything about the platform I should know?

DOUG

Well, as you know, we were an all male environment until just now. We've set up a bunk for you in an area that is normally restricted anyway. It should be fine. What do you know about off-shore platforms?

SANDRA

I know a good deal from reading, but it's general information. I'd be interested in the specifics of this platform.

DOUG

[Here, DOUG rattles off a bunch of useful statistics about the platform they are walking on. Information to be gathered at at later date.]

SANDRA

And all of this so that people across America can keep their Jacuzzis warm.

DOUG

Very true. . . . Please, let me show you to your quarters.

In a quick sequence they make some turns, climb through some hatches and negotiate some stairs. Ultimately they arrive at a grimy dingy section of the platform. There is a camp cot set up in the corner blocked from view by some rusting equipment lockers.

DOUG

It may not win any awards in House Beautiful, but is should do as home for one night.

SANDRA

You mean part of one night.

DOUG

I guess I do.

SANDRA

Well thanks. I guess.

DOUG

No problem. Dinner is promptly at six in the galley. Take some time to explore. And don't forget that nap.

SANDRA

I won't forget, but that may be more difficult than I originally thought.

DOUG

He doesn't get the reference.

See you later.

SANDRA

Yea.

DOUG leaves. SANDRA assesses her situation and begins to unpack. She does something to something to make it feel more like home and eventually flops on the bed.

INT. ZEELAND FALLS HUT. LATE AFTERNOON

Weekday, and a thin crowd enters and unpacks for the night. Within this movement, PAULA enters. You can read gloom on her face. She makes her way through the hut and ends up in the staff quarters behind the kitchen. RICHARD is in his small room, lying on his bunk reading. PAULA'S return catches his attention through the doorway. He stops reading.

RICHARD

How was the valley?

PAULA

It's been better.

RICHARD

(Unsure how to react to this mood.)  
There're only 12 tonight. The meal's easy too. We should be able to relax for once.

PAULA walks to the doorway to his room, leans against the entrance, and slumps to the floor. The behavior brings RICHARD to a higher level of attention.

PAULA

Did you ever do something really foolish and stupid when you were younger?

RICHARD

Twice a day, after major meals.

PAULA

No, I'm serious. Something really, really stupid that comes back to haunt you.

RICHARD

I don't know. Sounds like you got a bad phone call or something.

PAULA

Yea, I guess you could say that.

RICHARD

What's going on?

PAULA

I had a friend once, a really good friend.  
And we did some stuff that was pretty weird.

PAULA (Continued)

It seemed really liberal and wonderful at the  
time, but it screwed me up. It took me a long  
time to get out of that mess. I guess she's  
still in it.

RICHARD

I think everybody does stuff they regret.

PAULA

Maybe. Our friendship ended badly. She's  
certainly got some stuff she can hold over my  
head.

RICHARD

Is she bothering you now?

PAULA

Not really, yet. It's my fault. She asked me  
to help her out with something, and it seemed  
really reasonable at the time, but it's turned  
into a real mess. I guess she thought she  
could recapture the old times this way. God,  
what a mess.

A few moments of silence. Both think. RICHARD gets out  
of his bunk and moves to PAULA. He sits on the floor  
next to her

RICHARD

Let me know if there's anything I can do to  
help.

More moments of silence. Then . . . PAULA turns to him.

PAULA

Maybe there is something you can do.

RICHARD

What?

PAULA

Just sit there for a minute. Close your eyes.

He does.

PAULA looks down, thinks, then looks at him. She reaches up and touches his face, outlining his features. Then, with both hands, draws his face to hers. She kisses him. RICHARD opens his eyes with realization but not dismay. He lets himself slip. Heat builds. They break.

She stands slowly and takes his hand. He tries to speak but she stops him. Standing together they kiss languorously.

Deliberately, PAULA sheds her sweatshirt, pulls herself to him. They slip out of the frame.

INT. OFF SHORE GULF PLATFORM GALLEY - DAY

A collection of similarly uniformed workers has gathered at a location which is a study in stainless steel and formica. These are rough men whose manhood is more than slightly challenged by the presence of this woman. You can see it in their faces, and you can barely hear it in the mumble of conversation. SANDRA is already seated and eating. DOUG sits at the head of the table. Across from SANDRA is DAVE MITCHELL the young hotshot salesrep for Survivall. He too is under cover.

DOUG

To all

I want to welcome you all aboard. The shift change went well. As you know, we have two temporary positions this shift. Sandra Brooks will be working in the chem lab.

SANDRA nods in their direction. They eat.

DOUG (continues)

And Dave Mitchell, who'll be checking out our new meteorological equipment to make sure it doesn't say hurricane when it means sunny and calm.

DAVE

Jumping into the speaker's role without an invitation.

Actually, I came to install the fair weather equipment you guys are constantly ordering.

To SANDRA

DAVE (Continues)

Oh, my apologies ma'am.

An attempt to widen the gap that already exists.

DAVE (continues)

I have to say that this is an unexpected expected treat. We don't often see ladies in this line of work. I'm honored to be in your presence.

SANDRA

Unsure of where to go from here. Decides on polite.

Thank you.

DAVE

I'm hoping during our stay I'll have the opportunity to work closely with you. In fact, I have with me a special tool that I think you'll find especially satisfying. If you don't mind, I'd like to show it to you some evening when you're looking for something to do.

SANDRA becomes stonefaced. The others are beginning to stifle giggles. Her job will become much more difficult if this tactic is successful. She recognizes this as a traditional SurviveALL marketing technique. DAVE obviously sees the advantage of making the environment more difficult for her to deal with.

SANDRA

(coldly and directly)

Well, Dave, it sounds like you may have something there. It's unfortunate, but I've heard stories like this before and most of them are exaggerated.

I'm sure yours isn't though. Should that lonely night occur, and should I see that tool, I'm sure you wouldn't mind if I chopped it off and tacked it to the bulletin board.

Loud laughter. SANDRA pauses to let the punch line work the room. She is ready for a final blow.

I really wouldn't want to be the only one to share this privilege. Of course, we wouldn't have to do that if you intend to share with

the others anyway. It's one of the dangers of platform life from what I understand. There is, appropriately, no laughter now. DAVE is silenced and embarrassed. It's difficult to assess which image does the most damage. DOUG, who has let the encounter establish SANDRA's credentials, attempts to put a lid on the exchange.

DOUG

Now that we've finished discussing training and interpersonal issues, I want to let you know that your tender also brought the movie "Masquerade" which will be shown in the lounge at 9 tonight. Remember, you all have and early day tomorrow.

The table begins to break up. The eye contact and body language suggest that once again SANDRA has won and DAVE has lost. There is a hint of grudging respect for SANDRA, who now watches DAVE leave.

EXT. GAS PLATFORM. NIGHT

The night sky is ugly. SANDRA checks her own brand of meteorological data before turning in. It is half analysis half pleasure. She can remember the sunset on the cliff. Once again, there is something missing here.

She turns to leave.

With the turn she is grabbed by the arm and violently spun around. It is DAVE who has not quite recovered from the dinner conversation.

SANDRA

Burying her anxiety.

Well Dave, I see you decided to skip the movie this evening.

DAVE

Your tricks aren't going to work this time SANDRA, You're going to lose here, and you're going to lose big.

SANDRA

I appreciate your coming out her to tell me this Dave. Fortunately, I don't have to get a good night's sleep this evening.

DAVE

This has been a long time in coming, darling and I'm going to enjoy every minute of your defeat.

SANDRA

Look, dear, unless something has really changed, I doubt the results will be any different than they have been for the last three years.

DAVE laughs. His laughter and behavior is exaggerated and unstable. He exits into the night leaving SANDRA relieved and uncertain. We stay on her face for a moment. She thinks. Decides. And moves off.

EXT. GULF PLATFORM SURVIVAL LOCKER. NIGHT

The beam of a flashlight hits a locker marked "life rafts." The lid is lifted and the contents are examined. A LifeSigns logo is illuminated and the package is examined. Reverse angle reveals SANDRA'S face.

SANDRA examines the package closely to see if there is any tampering with the plastic seal. There isn't as far as she can tell.

INT. SANDRA'S BUNK GULF PLATFORM.

SANDRA is on her bunk sleeping fitfully. She is wearing a grey sweatsuit. The clock on the bulkhead reads 2:48 am (14:48).

The BONE-JARRING SOUND of the abandon rig klaxon destroys her sleep.

She moves quickly although it's clear that the fitful sleep has thrown her timing off. It is more of a struggle to get up than it normally is.

On the wall, next to her bunk, is an emergency package. She breaks it open. Without pausing, but without normal efficiency, she strips and pulls on the survival dry suit.

It's not record time, but it is still good time. She's up and out.

Hopping up the stairs two at a time, she makes it to the deck of the rig. There is familiar chaos. She launches herself at her assigned station and greets the all-male confusion.

SANDRA

To no one in particular.

Let's get that locker open.

Her words are the ignition for action. Two hands reach in and fling the locker open. Two other hands reach for the rope ladder. Others reach for the rafts and tear off the plastic covering.

The klaxon is followed by an announcement.

VOICE

Abandon Rig! Abandon Rig!

A puff of smoke and haze fills the air reinforcing the emergency.

The rope ladder is over the side and the SeaShelters follow pitched over the side.

Without hesitation, some members of the crew hurl themselves over the side and scramble down the ladder.

The ladder swings free ten feet from the surface of a rough sea. One by one the crew members make their way to the end, swing free for a moment and drop into the ocean.

EXT. OCEAN SURFACE NIGHT

An orange package is floating on the ocean swell. A hand reaches up, fumbles around the bag, finds a tab, pulls it. We hear the hiss of escaping gas. The plastic shreds. The SeaShelter inflates.

SANDRA, now revealed as the inflator, climbs in.

INT. SEASHELTER. NIGHT

SANDRA begins to move around the interior checking inventory and performing necessary housekeeping chores. As he moves around, other similarly suited men begin, one by one, to climb into the shelter. All are wet and there is general grumbling about the circumstances.

SHELTER RESIDENT #1

I hope there's a good reason for this. Once before I've been in these things, and it was because third shift operations manager didn't like the readings on one of his damn dials.

SHELTER RESIDENT #2

Why can't this stuff happen during the day?  
There must be some unwritten rule about this.

We can still hear the hissing of escaping gas.

SHELTER RESIDENT #3

Rummaging around in the inside pockets of the shelter.  
What's in this thing anyway?

SHELTER RESIDENT #4

Also rummaging.

Here are some instructions.

Reading to himself for a moment . . . then . . .

We're supposed to put this thing together. . .

Holding up metal parts that look like small thin fiberglass tent poles. . .

And make a crank for the propeller.

We can still hear the hissing of escaping gas.

SR #3

I found food!

Passing small bags around.

SR #1

Shouldn't we wait on this to see if this is a drill or something real?

SR #3

Nah, even if this is real, we'll be out of the water at daybreak. Might as well have a snack in the meantime.

The food continues to be passed out. SANDRA who has been silent, observing the realistic conditions, receives food.

SR #3

Well, haven't we been blessed. It's the new chemist. This should make our journey a bit more pleasant.

There are mumbles of agreement as the shelter population realizes that SANDRA is part of the census.

SR #4

Here's the radio beacon. Now, if I can just match the hand movements of the nerdy guy in the picture, I should be able to turn it on.

We can still hear the hissing of escaping gas.

SR #1

You know this is certainly a sturdy vessel when it's inflated . . .

Punching the inflated wall.

. . . solid as a rock.

SR #3

Seems almost too solid. What is that noise anyway?

All become aware of the hissing which has continued throughout the conversation. SANDRA is the only one who knows that something isn't quite right.

SR #1

Jokingly.

. . . well, I just hope we don't burst at the seams.

SANDRA is now well aware of the anomalous hissing sound. In an move more obvious than the test really allows for, she uncovers the pocket in the raft which holds the gas canister. The canister seems normal, but it is definitely is over inflating the shelter. The gauge on the canister shows that there is more than enough gas left to bring the shelter beyond its bursting point.

She attempts to close the canister valve. On her second attempt to stop the hissing, the valve breaks off in her hand. This destruction is noticed by the other residents.

SR #2

To SANDRA

What's all the fuss about over there?

SANDRA

It seems that we have a bit of a problem.

SR #

What's that?

SANDRA

This CO 2 Cartridge which is still dumping gas into the raft. The valve is broken and I can't remove it or shut it off.

SR #

Does that mean this thing could pop?

SANDRA

I don't know what it's going to do exactly, but, I know it can't hold up under much more of this.

SANDRA moves quickly to another compartment in the raft and removes a waterproof kit containing a signal flare. She begins to unpack it.

SR #

You sure know where everything is here. You sure you haven't spent time on one of these things before?

SANDRA

I've actually spent more time in this thing than I care to remember.

Hissing increases. SANDRA walks with the flare gun to the entrance of the shelter. She is angered by the apparent failure of the shelter after numerous tests. Pointing the flare gun down for safety, she loads the flare cartridge and cocks the hammer.

Without warning the hammer on the flare gun releases and the gun goes off. SMOKE, FIRE, and CONFUSION everywhere. The gun has burned through the raft which deflates rapidly. The shelter roof collapses on the residents and

the whole contraption begins to sink. FLAMES indicate that some are burned, perhaps seriously. THRASHING, SCREAMING, and TURMOIL continues.

EXT. GULF PLATFORM. DAWN

SANDRA and various CREWMEMBERS are clumped around the platform railing. They are still in their exposure suits. They have blankets wrapped around them. The others are getting warm SANDRA is getting reamed.

STEWART JACKSON, president of the company is fuming. He doesn't like being suckered into something, and he believes he has been. The audience for his venom believes she deserves it.

STEWART

It was a harebrained, nutty, stupid idea. I don't know how you ever convinced me to risk the lives of my crew in a demonstration of this insipid equipment.

Every single one of your cute little rubber ships sank. Eighteen people had to be fished out of the water. Thanks to you, three are seriously burned. I was told you were an expert. Some expert.

I still can't believe I seriously considered giving you my business without getting others involved. If it weren't for SurvivALL, I'd probably have employees permanently stationed at the bottom of the gulf.

SANDRA

Detached.

I don't know how it happened. I knew how to use that flare gun. But it just went off. I'm sorry.

STEWART

You can take your sorrow, your things and yourself off this platform, into that boat, and out of my life. I don't want to hear from you, or anyone from your company ever again.

To DOUG.

Is there any more of this woman's equipment on this platform?

DOUG

Yes sir, a few more suits and a couple of shelters.

STEWART

Destroy all of it and throw it over the side.

DOUG

Sir?

STEWART

You heard me. Destroy it and dump it.

SANDRA, standing there, distracted and confused, starts to walk to the platform exit stairwell. Intercut with this exit are scenes of crew members opening LifeSigns shelter packages, cutting them apart and tossing them over the side. SANDRA takes one look back, turns, and continues her silent exit.

INT. FIRST CLASS SECTION OF A 747. DAY.

SANDRA is in her seat speaking on an Airphone. We hear only her side of the conversation.

SANDRA

(low tones, neutral, depressed.)

He just didn't believe it. Blamed it on manufacturing. He's right. I wouldn't buy that stuff based on its performance. . . . And I'd fire me based on mine. (Listens) . . . Stop it George, It isn't O.K. It just isn't. (pause) . . . People almost died. . . . It doesn't really make any difference how it happened; the only thing that matters is that we missed it. We let it happen.

(brushing the response off). Look, I'm getting off this thing in Atlanta. I just can't come back right now . .

More for herself than George. . .

I just can't.

SANDRA drops the phone away from her ear, stares out into nothingness, shakes it off, picks up the phone again, dials, and without much enthusiasm, speaks.

SANDRA

Do you have a car and driver available to meet me at Logan this afternoon? (Pause). . . I don't know yet, I'll call with the flight and time later. (Pause) . . . Good.

SANDRA once again drops the phone. Another stare. Mental exhaustion.

EXT. LOGAN AIRPORT. NORTHWEST TERMINAL. MIDDAY

SANDRA briskly walks out of the terminal, across the street and into the Limo waiting area. She is carrying one suitcase and a briefcase and, as she was on the airplane, she is dressed casually in slacks, shirt, and shoes.

She approaches a line of limos and instinctively, as if she has done it hundreds of times before, makes contact with her driver.

DRIVER

Ms. Brooks?

SANDRA nods. The DRIVER takes her bag, sets it aside, and opens the door. She slides in.

INT. LIMO.

DRIVER (continues)

I beg your pardon ma'am, but I was given no destination at the time of booking.

SANDRA

Pinkham Notch, New Hampshire.

DRIVER

I'm terribly sorry. What was that again?

SANDRA

Just drive North. I'll get you there.

DRIVER

As you wish ma'am. I just hope this is a business expense.

To this SANDRA smiles, slumps back in the seat, and drifts off to sleep.

EXT. COUNTRY DIRT ROAD. LATE AFTERNOON.

The limo carrying SANDRA pulls to the side of the road. It seems as if it stops in the middle of nowhere. Upon close inspection you can notice a small and singular sign which identifies the stop as the beginning of a trail. DRIVER emerges, and opens the door to the back of the limo. SANDRA'S legs swing out but she does not emerge. Instead, we see this pair of legs, and the associated pair of hands work to remove the shoes from the legs.

DRIVER

Ma'am, are you sure this is the place? This doesn't seem to be much of anything to me.

SANDRA

Would you please get my bag from the back?

The DRIVER moves to fetch the luggage from the trunk. Upon his return SANDRA removes two pairs of thick white socks and a sweatshirt from the bag.

SANDRA

Do you have any additional containers of juice?

DRIVER

We have a bit of a supply in the trunk.

SANDRA

Good, I'll take them.

DRIVER is suprised, but responds to the request. Meanwhile, SANDRA has tied the sweatshirt into a pack She has also donned three pairs of socks.

SANDRA

Philip.

DRIVER

Ma'am?

SANDRA

There's one final thing.

DRIVER

Yes, Ma'am.

SANDRA

Give me your shoes.

In spite of what has gone on this is a final shock to DRIVER.  
We look down with him and see sturdy black wingtips with rubber soles. They are an acceptable hiking substitute as an alternative to SANDRA'S previous but useless footwear.

DRIVER

Ma'am, I'm afraid I don't understand. My shoes?

SANDRA

Yes, your shoes. I lost my walking shoes in an industrial accident the other day. Now I need yours to get where I'm going. Hand them over.

DRIVER

But these shoes are very expensive.

SANDRA

Just put them on the bill. Now, please.

SANDRA holds her hand out. Reluctantly, DRIVER removes his shoes. With the three pairs of cotton socks, SANDRA fits into his shoes. She loads her sweatshirt pack on her back and turns to DRIVER one last time.

SANDRA (continues)

That's all Philip. Please, don't wait.

SANDRA presses some bills into his hand. DRIVER is even more flustered.

DRIVER

But Ma'am, what about your luggage?

SANDRA

It has a tag. Send it to the address on the tag.

DRIVER

Oh.

SANDRA turns and quickly disappears into the woods.

EXT. HIKING TRAIL. LATE AFTERNOON.

SANDRA ascends towards Zeeland Falls Hut. The forest is a bit less kind. Late afternoon. SANDRA moves more recklessly, with a hint of desperation. She is alone. No one else is on the trail. It is getting noticeably darker.

INT. ZEELAND FALLS HUT. NIGHT.

RICHARD is sitting at a cleared dining table, enjoying an after dinner cup of coffee with a few of the hut residents. There is quiet, pleasant conversation.

CAMERA moves around the group, and reveals the entrance at the moment SANDRA enters. It is dark, she has no flashlight, and her new hiking boots have not made the trip particularly pleasant.

She is sweaty, dirty, scuffed and scratched. She is mentally and now physically exhausted.

RICHARD

Sandra?

SANDRA pulls off her makeshift pack and leans against the wall. RICHARD rises and moves toward her.

RICHARD

I didn't expect you.

SANDRA

I didn't know I was coming. Look, I need a little time to get myself together. Is there an empty bunk around here?

RICHARD

Paula's not here right now, why don't you take her bunk in the back until she returns. It doesn't look like you spent much time getting ready for this trip.

He looks her over to inventory the makeshift camping gear. His eyes settle on her shoes.

RICHARD (continues)

Nice shoes.

SANDRA

Just hold the jokes for awhile please, o.k.? I'm going back to settle in. I'll fill you in later.

With the period on the end of her statement, she walks back into the reserved area where Paula and Richard sleep. RICHARD stands watching her exit. He slowly sinks into his former position at the table. There is a troubled look on his face.

INT. PAULA AND RICHARD'S BUNK SPACE. NIGHT.

SANDRA is resting on Paula's bunk eyes open and distant. RICHARD ENTERS walks to her bunk, sits on the floor next to it, and speaks.

RICHARD  
Something's not going well.

SANDRA  
You've got that right.

RICHARD  
It's good to see you again in spite of the  
circumstances. (pause) I wasn't sure I would.

SANDRA  
Either was I. . . . for a while.

RICHARD  
Get some rest. You can fill me in tomorrow.

RICHARD stands, turns, and, for a beat, lingers over her. They stare at each other. Finally, in almost slow motion he bends and kisses her.

The move is slow and warm, more respectful than passionate. He leaves.

SANDRA pauses a moment in afterthought, then rustles around settling into PAULA'S bed. While rustling, she knocks something loose. It hits the floor. She reaches for it and discovers that she has retrieved a notebook. She glances through it, recognizes the personal nature of the entries and quickly closes it. She replaces it with great care and turns to sleep.

EXTERIOR. ZEELAND FALLS HUT. DAY.

SANDRA and RICHARD are above the hut near the falls. They've been in conversation for awhile. SANDRA is at the end of her tale of woe.

RICHARD  
As much as I can, I understand how you feel. The whole company is built on the idea of total safety. This is more than just a bad selling experience.

SANDRA  
The worst part is not knowing why or how this could happen. I don't have all the details yet, but I can't believe our manufacturing operation slipped up.

RICHARD  
What about industrial sabotage?

SANDRA

The night of the test I was convinced that Mitchell got to our equipment. But, I looked at it, I touched it, and the seals were all unbroken. You can't get into our stuff without leaving signs. There were no signs.

RICHARD

And the flaregun?

SANDRA

I guess I just didn't cock the hammer back all the way. It's hard to believe that I didn't, but that 's the only explanation that works.

RICHARD

What now?

SANDRA

I don't know. I want to think a bit. There's a really important test of rebreathing equipment coming up. It's our first large military contract. People are at risk there also.

You know, I take a look at how I feel and what I want to do, and how much I want to win these things, and I wonder if I'm any better than that trashbag of a woman at SurvivALL. I look at what she wants, and what I want, and it's hard to see the difference sometimes.

RICHARD

Well, I know you won't, but keep in mind that you can stay here for as long as you want.

SANDRA

Thanks, but in order to resolve this, I'll have to keep moving. As usual.

But . . . you can think about this . . . I wouldn't mind having a qualified engineer nearby during the next test.

RICHARD

(quietly)

I haven't changed my lifestyle much since our last visit. You know where I stand on that.

SANDRA

(Morosely)

Yea, . . . it's great to have strong, individual, well thought out, permanent positions. . . .(shifting gears) Where's Paula anyway?

RICHARD

(pause)

I'm actually not sure. . . . (becoming uncomfortable with the recent memory) . . . Something's on her mind. Her work is becoming irregular, and she's now overdue from what should have been a routine day and night off.

SANDRA

Well, I hope she's O.K.

I asked because last night, before I went to sleep, I was rolling around and I knocked a book of notes out of her bunk. It looked like a diary of some kind. I tried to put it back the way I found it, but she may notice

SANDRA (continues)

that it's been moved. If she does, let her know it was me, and tell her that I didn't read any of it. There's probably some private stuff in there.

RICHARD

Curious about the notebook.

. . . Sure.

SANDRA

Shifting gears again.

Here's my last try. I would really like you to come back with me to see what I do, to help with the next test, and to . . . actually . . . to give me a little extra support. I could use it right now. (Pause) . . . (forcing the next word out from the depth of her soul.) Please?

RICHARD

Rising, pacing.

You really have to understand that I really don't want to go. Because of my responsibilities here, I really shouldn't go. Because people are counting on me, and because this is what I want to do, I really can't go. You just must accept that.

SANDRA

It's funny . . . no, it's not funny. . . . Here we are, two people who seem to really get along, who really seem to be able to relax together. And we can only make it work during vacations (pause) ... or after professional

disasters. We both do what we like to do. We're faced with the great modern day choice: Build a relationship or build a career. We've picked career. Is that brilliant or stupid?

RICHARD

We don't both have to pick career.

SANDRA

(sarcastically)

Look, pal, I've got some doubts about what I'm doing right now, but I'm not quite ready to spend my days beating laundry with rocks by the river.

RICHARD

O.K., O.K., let's let this rest. I don't think we're ready yet.

SANDRA

(bitter)

Or ever. Look, as nice as it would be to stay here for awhile, I'm going to have to get back and see how I feel on the job. I can't just hide here.

RICHARD

(exasperated)

Let's go back to the hut. At least stay for another day. That will give you time for a rest and give me time to get some extra items together to help make it easier for you to get back down the mountain. I'd hate to see you have to wear your hiking wing tips again.

Uncertain glances. RICHARD and SANDRA get up and head toward the hut.

INT. URBAN TOP FLOOR CONDO. RESIDENCE OF SURVIVEALL PRESIDENT JOANNE RICHMAN

JOAN RICHMANN is standing in the center of the enormous living room. She is speaking to PAULA'S back. Dressed in an extremely expensive business outfit, she is picture perfect. Not a hair out of place, not a chip in her expensive set of carefully crafted nails, and not a scuff on her patent heels. She is speaks quietly, but underneath, she is as intense as she looks.

PAULA is standing by the window of the apartment looking down at the city street below.

JOANNE

I wouldn't have agreed to this meeting if I wasn't taking you seriously. In fact I intend to demonstrate just how serious I am.

PAULA

The information you have is accurate, I'm willing to repay the money you advanced for the work, and I'll keep your confidence.

JOANNE

As I've said before, there isn't time for me to set up another arrangement. This one is paid for. I intend to see that you meet your responsibilities. You'll retain your position at the hut in case she returns. In fact, you'll retain your position for as long as I want you

JOANNE (continues)

to. Tonight I'm going to encourage your continued good behavior. You know some of the consequences, but you don't know all of them.

PAULA

LifeSigns isn't the arrogant operation you described it as being. Why can't you just compete in the open marketplace with them like any other business?

JOANNE

I guess you don't understand. I am competing like any other business. You are part of my business plan.

PAULA

I'm sorry, I really don't want to be involved with this any more. What happened between us is in the distant past. I guess I don't care if you try and rub my nose in it.

JOANNE

I suspected you might feel that way. Tonight I'll give you something else to think about.

An intercom buzzes. JOANNE picks up a handset and takes the information from the doorman.

JOANNE

Thank you, yes. No, that's alright.  
It's fine. Please send them right up.

(Coldly, without emotion)

When I hired you, I really thought you  
would understand the business at hand,  
and make the transition. I guess you  
don't.

A KNOCK at the door. JOANNE moves to the door,  
checks her guests and lets them in. MARLOW and  
RALPH are obviously thugs.

MARLOW

(seeing PAULA)

You didn't tell us it was a skirt.

JOANNE

You're here because she didn't do her  
job. I'll expect you to do yours.

JOANNE (continues)

(to Paula)

Paula, you are involved. And you'll stay  
involved. Consider this a warning. Our  
business arrangements are to be  
successfully completed. You will do what  
is asked of you until you are released.  
These men are here to help you understand  
our new relationship.

At that moment a back bedroom door opens. out of it  
comes one Tough Woman. The similarity between Paula  
and this new entry is deliberate.

Tough Woman looks directly at JOANNE, ignoring all  
the rest.

JOANNE moves around the room gathering her things in  
preparation to leave.

TOUGH WOMAN

(Curtly. To Joanne.)

You ready?

JOANNE

Patience, my dear. Patience.

PAULA

Glancing around the room dealing with issues of thugs and reminders of ancient personal lifestyles.

Some things change. Other things, I see, stay the same.

Tough Woman removes and lights a cigarette. A masculine move.

PAULA (CONTINUES)

If I were you, I'd be careful. This road is dangerous. It may even be a dead end.

TOUGH WOMAN IGNORES PAULA

JOANNE

Time and money change all things. This business is critical to me now. I will be successful.

JOANNE (continues)

(To MARLOW)

She's right handed. Make sure she gets someplace where they can fix her up. I don't want to lose her yet. This is only a lesson.

(To PAULA)

All you have to do is keep up the good work and remember not to make any more mistakes.

Good night. Oh, well, I guess it won't be. Just think of it as a courtesy.

TOUGH WOMAN picks up JOANNE'S coat, helps her into it, picks up her own--a leather jacket, and escorts her friend out the door.

PAULA is still by the window. The two men are between her and the doorway. They advance. She walks away from the high locked window and into the livingroom. Sweat is beginning to form on her forehead. It is clear that no workable plan is forming in her mind.

MARLOW

(To RALPH)

Let's get this over with.

At his last word, Paula rushes headlong into RALPH. He catches her, spins her around, and pushes her hard toward MARLOWE. MARLOW steps back and plants a well aimed fist into Paula's stomach. PAULA doubles over, eyes wide, mouth open. She is unable to speak or breathe. From behind, RALPH removes a professional looking item from his pocket, packs it roughly into PAULA'S open mouth and ties it into place.

MARLOW rolls PAULA onto the floor face down and forces her left arm out to the foreground. PAULA, still winded from the punch offers little resistance. Her nostrils flare as she grabs for air. RALPH kneels on her back and grabs her hair holding her head up. Her left arm is stretched out over his left leg. There is a bundle of blurred movement in the foreground. A body moves up and slams down. There is a sickening crack. The force of MARLOW'S knee breaks PAULA'S forearm. Her face closes in pain as her brain shuts down. The job is finished.

With her forearm dangling at a crazy angle, PAULA is dragged to her feet. Her mouth is cleared and, in a grotesque concern for appearances, MARLOW straightens her arm out.

They drag her out of the apartment, through the hallway, and to the elevator. Other residents think she is drunk.

INT. LIFESIGNS OFFICE

It's not quite a morgue, but it's close. There's none of the spirit conveyed earlier. JULIE, GEORGE,

SANDRA and MARK sit at a table discussing the upcoming test.

JULIE

We have a design that works. All the chemical tests show that the rebreathers will withstand more than 30 minutes of exposure to Chlorine gas and will work underwater at depths of up to 250 feet. It has a slim silhouette, full vest design and quick release velcro fasteners.

MARK

Inside the vest is a soft plastic encapsulated flexible transmitter, with an antenna woven into the fabric at the shoulder. Right beneath the woven antenna are two 50,000 watt strobes which draw their power chemically from the salt water.

SANDRA

George, can I have some of the history on this again?

GEORGE

Sure. Everyone thinks they know about submarines. Large, silent, deep diving nuclear vessels. What they don't know is that there is a fair business in the used submarine market. Countries other than the US and Russia want submarines as part of their navy.

In the balance of power game, the superpowers sell used subs to countries that want them. There are over 100 diesel powered subs still in operation worldwide. Even the superpowers use them, but mostly for training.

SANDRA

And our rebreather has been designed specifically for these diesel submarines.

GEORGE

Right. Diesel subs run on battery power when submerged. The batteries are not all that different from the ones that we have in our cars. The one dreaded

accident that every diesel submariner fears is a battery explosion.

The battery compartments are in the bilge. If for any reason salt water rises above the normal bilge level and gets into the batteries, there is a powerful explosion which creates enormous amounts of chlorine gas.

SANDRA

Deadly stuff. Kills in seconds.

GEORGE

With each sale of a sub there is usually a contract for spare parts. In those contracts the selling country normally must provide emergency escape equipment to deal with the possibility of a chlorine explosion. We hope that this test leads the US Navy to pick our design for the American version.

SANDRA

What are our chances?

GEORGE

At the moment, good. The design has been approved and it meets all the milspecs of the RFQ. As far as I know, no other design comes close. The test is scheduled to take place on the USS Albacore and the decision maker will be there. The only problem is that they have insisted on using real chlorine gas in the test. In the same concentrations as would exist if there was an explosion.

SANDRA

In a bizzare twisted way, that makes sense. How are they going to get a crew?

GEORGE

Submarine duty attracts a strange animal. All service men are volunteers. The

training they receive is extensive, and frequently dangerous. One test locks them in a training tank, floods it, and forces them to escape through a jammed hatch. They volunteer for the tests also. There's still never any problem getting volunteers. This will be just another test to them. The Navy sees it that way too.

SANDRA

What about our end? Is our manufacturing operation O.K.?

GEORGE

I know what you're asking. I'll let Mark answer.

MARK

As far as we know, yes. We've checked all the employees, and examined every detail of the manufacturing process including inventory storage. There are additional controls in place so every product off the line should match the prototype exactly.

SANDRA

Do you have any clue what happened with the Sea Shelters?

MARK

Manufacturing was solid and traceable. I was in Shipping when they left, and I was at the dock in the Gulf when they arrived.

SANDRA

What about the shipping company?

MARK

It's the same one we've always used.

SANDRA

It sounds flawless. I just can't shake this bad feeling I have.

MARK

We'll keep checking.

GEORGE

O.K. Everybody, anything else?

Well, let me wish you all good luck. We need it.

Everyone gets up. GEORGE and SANDRA split off, and head outside.

EXT. LIFESIGNS SHIP. DAY

GEORGE

How are you doing?

SANDRA

Good question. . . No good answer yet.

GEORGE

What's coming up is the biggest thing we've ever done. I really thought of cancelling this whole project, but if we did, the Government would make us pay for all of their review time plus an enormous penalty. The development contract is rather clear on that point.

SANDRA

I know. I'll put whatever I've got left into it. Let's just get through this one. We'll figure out the future later.

GEORGE

I agree. I know it's tough right now. We can get through this. Let me know if there's anything more I can do to help.

SANDRA

Thanks.

EXT. AMC HUT. DAY.

PAULA arrives at the top of the trail before the Zeeland Falls Hut. She is more exhausted than usual because of her newly broken and repaired arm. She raises her left arm to wipe the sweat from her brow. The cast on her forearm interferes. Disgust and frustration show on her face as RICHARD approaches

RICHARD

Now I know why you've been missing.  
How'd you do that?

PAULA

Helping an old college friend move. We're both strong and independent, but we shouldn't have tried to move the dresser down the stairs. I slipped and so did the dresser. Hurt quite a bit, so they gave me some really good drugs. That's why I didn't call. I didn't know who I was or where I was for a couple of days.

RICHARD

You sure it's okay for you to be here?

PAULA

Yea. If you'll recall, I know something about these things. I just have something definite to do on my next few weeks days off. Anything new?

RICHARD

Sandra's visit. She left two days ago. She's been having some trouble at work.

PAULA

Anything serious?

RICHARD

I think so. It seems that some of her equipment failed during an important test.

PAULA

What do you mean?

RICHARD

Well, I don't know the exact details, but it was a raft test. The rafts somehow exploded. Some people got hurt. A few almost died.

PAULA

Do they know what happened?

RICHARD

No, not really. Sandra's taking it pretty hard.

PAULA

Look, I've got to go.

RICHARD

What?

PAULA

I've just got to go. There's something important I've got to take care of. Something I forgot.

RICHARD

Wait. There's one other thing. Sandra slept in your bed when she was here. You've got a journal or something?

There is a hint of fear in PAULA'S face. She cautiously continues.

PAULA

Yea.

RICHARD

Well, when Sandra was here she accidentally knocked it out of place. She wanted me to tell you that she didn't read it.

PAULA

O.K., great. Listen. I've got to go. Look, Richard, if I don't show up back here in a day, I want you to find that book and read it. Do you understand?

RICHARD

No, I don't. What's going on here?

PAULA

Please, just read it if I'm delayed, O.K.?

PAULA gathers up her things and leaves.

EXT. LIFESIGNS

SANDRA climbs down a ladder to board a power boat. Mark hands her a rebreather. She casts off and pilots the boat toward shore.

Midway through her trip, a second boat appears in the distance. It is racing toward her. She ignores it. It comes closer, clearly on an intercept course. It is still ignored. Closer still, it finally drops back behind her, pivots, comes alongside and matches her speed. JOE CAMBER is the pilot.

He picks up a portable marine radio and motions to her that he is going to use it. She switches on her marine radio and turns up the volume.

JOE

Keying the portable.

Switch to channel 72.

SANDRA does.

JOE

I was coming over to see if you were aboard LifeSigns. Julie mentioned that you were back. Where are you headed?

SANDRA

I'm heading into the shallow water to test a piece of gear.

JOE

Can I help?

SANDRA

This is considered for a moment. The extra help may turn out to be an extra burden. After this thought, a response.

Sure, Sure, come on along.

The boats run in tandem to the shore.

EXT. BEACH SHALLOW AREA DAY

JOE CAMBER and SANDRA BROOKS are together slightly off shore in the shallow area. SANDRA is explaining the rebreather to JOE

SANDRA

All I want you to do is go out a bit until the water is chest deep and then, when I throw the rebreather to you, I want you to get it on as fast as you can. Are you sure you understand how it works?

JOE

Pretty sure. Why are we doing this in water?

SANDRA

One of the problems with the old rebreathers was that they had straps and snapping buckles similar to those on lifevests. When you tried to put it on in a flooding compartment, the straps would float out of the way and, if there were enough people jammed together, get hopelessly tangled with the other men's units. We're hoping that the velcro tabs solve this problem, and I just wanted to see how they work. You're helpful here because you've never seen this before today. You ready.

JOE

Yep. (with a teasing emphasis) Why don't you come out into this "Chest deep" water with me? I think I could use the . . . support.

SANDRA

Cutting through the attempt at banter without giving it a thought.

Look, this is a useless and stupid exercise unless you can concentrate on your job. So get the girlie pictures out of your head or get lost. Are you ready or not?

JOE

humbled

I'm ready.

SANDRA tosses JOE the rebreather. He grabs it and without trouble slips it on and fastens the tabs. The process is repeated until SANDRA is satisfied. She motions him into shallower water at the end of the last try. With the water at his upper thigh, SANDRA checks the strength of the tabs. JOE, being a boy, would very much like SANDRA to continue checking his tabs, for hours. Unfortunately for JOE, SANDRA is all business.

SANDRA

Thanks, we're done. You can take that off now.

In a carefully choreographed concentration on his rebreather, JOE slides closer to SANDRA. He detaches himself, hands the unit over and slides his other hand around her waist.

JOE

Now that we're finished working, shouldn't we treat ourselves to a little recreation?

SANDRA is neutral. If there is any reaction at all, you can sense that this advance is considered another irritating burden added to an already complicated life.

She also full well realizes that she is significantly responsible for laying the ground work for the advance.

SANDRA

No, I don't think we should. Not now, not today, not here. Sorry.

JOE

I'm not going to make any great claims to know you very well, but you seem different. Is anything wrong.

SANDRA

There are a few things I'm trying to iron out, and they're taking most of my attention right now. That's all.

JOE faces her and puts his hands on her shoulders. He lets his hands drift down her arms in an action that is a debatable cross between comfort and a last

ditch attempt at stimulation. SANDRA now wants to be on another planet. She's not disgusted by this, but feels cornered and wants out.

JOE

Just take a few moments. If you relax, and just let yourself go a bit, you can face the world again with renewed energy.

SANDRA

Getting closer to anger.

I appreciate the free analysis, but I wish you'd get the message. Sexual excursions are fun, but if you take them like a pill SANDRA (continues) everytime the going gets rough, it screws up your life. I know I didn't deliver this message the last time we were together. I'm sorry about that. I guess I used you. It's just not a good idea.

JOE

I think you're just thinking about this too much.

SANDRA

No, you're not thinking about it enough. Hoping the world will revolve around your crotch is an interesting approach, but I wouldn't build my whole life around it. Sorry. Time to go.

She heads back to her boat. He stands in the water and slips into the insignificant background of her life.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE DAY.

Paula is on the telephone. The store owner sees her as another Summer resident with boy trouble. They all seem to come to his pay phone to terminate their relationships or inform the other half of the team of a missed period.

PAULA'S forced whisper reinforces his speculation. The content, however, is far more serious.

PAULA

I'll keep my word, but you have to keep yours. No more of this. I'm not going to be part of your murder plans. You don't frighten me anymore. If there's anymore trouble, you're going down. Let me tell you another thing, I let my guard down once, and your thugs got me good. If you try that trick again, I'll kill them. I want no more of your slimy business.

The handset is slammed back into its cradle. PAULA'S determination charges the atmosphere. CONVENIENCE STORE OWNER assumes another relationship is over. He's right in a way. She exits.  
INT. ENGINE ROOM USS ALBACORE DAY.

ADMIRAL LESTER K. JOHNSON is in the middle of his tour of the ALBACORE. LESTER is an easygoing Southerner with a manner which disguises the hard determination which brought him to his current position. SANDRA follows. The sub is a claustrophobic bustle of activity as crewmembers make the final preparations for the rebreather test. The ADMIRAL stops at the two huge diesel engines.

ADMIRAL JOHNSON

We forget. We forget so quickly and so completely. Ms. Brooks, you are looking at modern American art. There's simply no other description for it. These two diesel engines were designed from scratch for this vessel. They fit exactly where they're supposed to, they deliver precise efficient and quiet power to two counter rotating propellers. They are man's creation, Ms. Brooks, formed by the mind, heart, and hands of man before we left our thinking to computers and three dimensional CAD CAM machines that second guess us every time we have an original idea. Yes, we're standing inside a symbol of yesterday, but today and tomorrow wouldn't be possible without it.

The tour moves forward.

SANDRA

From what I've read, the Albacore was the first to use and test the cylindrical hull design used in all subs since.

JOHNSON

I appreciate your interest. That's right. It also incorporated new steering technology and noise suppression equipment that gave us quite a jump on our competitors. . . .And we all know who they are. . . . Anyway, those are the factors that make this a fine test ship. Sure it's old, but you're closer to the sea in this bucket than in the new stuff. You're less protected. That's good for training. It gives you a healthy distrust of technology.

The tour stops again. Below and in front of Johnson squats a seaman looking into a compartment under the floor. The compartment is well lit.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Well, here's the stuff that brings us all together on this fine day. Thirty six wet cell acid storage batteries wired in parallel to thirty six more up in the forward compartment. (Pause to prepare the upcoming clever joke.) With this product, batteries are included.

Son, why don't you tell us what you've got here.

SEAMAN

Sixteen batteries removed sir, eight here and eight in the forward compartment. Each battery has been replaced by a similar sized container with two compartments. One contains battery acid and one seawater. There's a thin flexible wall between them. On that wall is a thin blasting charge. When the charge is detonated, the wall shreads and

the fluids mix. The result is chlorine gas and a small fire.

SANDRA

What about the other batteries?

SEAMAN

All protected. We built a firewall between the real batteries and the imitations. The wall is also waterproof.

SANDRA

Where's the detinator?

SEAMAN

We've set up a temporary control room on the dock. The detinator's in there along with the readouts from dozens of temperature and vapor sensors we've mounted throughout the ship. everything's hard wired and runs through an access port in the pressure hull.

SANDRA

What about safety backup if something goes wrong.

SEAMAN

Pairs of 3 1/2 inch flexible ductwork throughout the ship. One intake one exhaust. they lead to all areas on this boat from a HVAC setup on the dock. We can exchange the air on this boat in 45 seconds.

SANDRA

Seems pretty thorough. Is there anything else you want to mention that you think I should know?

SEAMAN

Yes ma'am. On a sub of this class there are normally three escape hatches. One forward, one aft, and one in the con. When we designed the rig for this test, we faced a decision: Do we bring the air to the crew or do we let the crew get to the air? We decided to use the HVAC to get the air to the crew. In order to get all the ductwork where it needed to go we have blocked both the forward and aft hatches. If you find that you need to

get out in a hurry, the con is the only way out.

SANDRA

Thank you sailor, I understand. From the looks of things and this report, Admiral, it seems that you'll have no trouble being ready for the test the day after tomorrow.

ADMIRAL

Things do seem to be in order.

SANDRA

Tell me, Admiral, who exactly is going to be in this control room during the test?

ADMIRAL

That's a fair question.

We've restricted those present to necessary technicians and your representatives. Everyone in the room will be under my direct command.

SANDRA

Who will be on board?

ADMIRAL

Normally, ninety. In this case fifteen plus the captain. The Albacore will be under the command of Capt. Charles LaScala. Charlie is a veteran of 16 years of Submarine service. As I said earlier, he is a volunteer, as are the fourteen others. You are the fifteenth member of this crew.

The tour is at its informal end. The ADMIRAL makes his way forward. SANDRA follows. They make their way to the galley, the ADMIRAL helps himself to a cup of coffee and offers one to SANDRA. She accepts and they both sit down at one of the stainless steel tables.

SANDRA

I appreciate your attention to detail Admiral. I can't tell you how valuable it is to have this cooperation when arranging one of these tests.

ADMIRAL

Why it's no problem at all, no problem at all. (sips) Before you go I should touch on a few items that are important to me personally.

SANDRA

Certainly.

ADMIRAL

I believe strongly in simulations like this one. There are enough surprises out there that we can't simulate or predict to make us practice hard on the ones we can duplicate under controls like this. Of course, if you simulate too well, people die. So you always have to find a balance between realism and safety. With this Chlorine gas, realism is pretty hard to modify. What the mate in the hold didn't tell you is that the controlled release we've engineered is about one fifth the power of the actual releases we've documented. That little piece of information is pretty well classified, so please don't spread that around any. But to get back to my point, even at one fifth the strength, it's going to be mighty nasty down there. If something goes wrong, we're going to have somewhere between 12 and 20 seconds to do something about it. This is not a situation I

ADMIRAL (continues)  
like being in, but it's my job, and I've been doing it here for about 15 years. Over that time, I've put alot of sailors in alot of risky situations in the name of safety training. I just want you to know, first of all, that I didn't get where I am by killing sailors along the way. I want you to know that I have no intention of changing my ways now.

This test is important, not only to our Navy, but also to our friends around the world. When we decided that we wanted an

all nuclear force underwater, there were a large number of deisel subs sold to our friends. The State Department wants to make sure we give those friends the means to get out of the can if something goes wrong.

Now, your company has a fine reputation, and the Navy has even purchased some of your gear on the open market, but I know you've had some trouble recently, and I've got some concerns about that.

SANDRA

That wasn't widely publicized. I'm suprised you know about that.

ADMIRAL

As I said, this is a risk for us. I asked our intelligence branch to look into your company. We don't know the cause of the accident any more than you do, but the whole reason for this little chat is to let you know that I expect you to commit whatever resources are necessary to prevent that from happening here.

SANDRA

We've checked and double-checked every level of our design and manufacturing operation. We're doing all that's possible.

ADMIRAL

Well, I suggest you make absolutely certain. Because, if something goes wrong, and the blame falls in your lap, I'll use every resource in this government to put your ADMIRAL  
(continues)

company out of business. I will also make sure that I put you in jail. For a very long time.

relaxing after having made his point.

Now, why don't I get someone from the motorpool to drive you back to your hotel. I suspect you have a busy day tomorrow. Nice meeting you.

They get up and leave.

EXT. AMC HUT. DAY.

PAULA with her left forearm in a cast, struggles to lift a box of canned goods from the shed behind the hut. she finds that she has to lift them with one arm, slide them to the edge of the shelf and swing her hip around to catch the edge of the carton. In the middle of this process, RICHARD arrives and grabs the box from its perch on Paula's hip.

RICHARD

Let me give you a hand with that.

PAULA

Thanks.

RICHARD

You know, I really wish you'd talk about it.

PAULA

About what?

RICHARD

I don't know. all I can tell you is that there is definitely something bothering you. And it's bothering you alot.

PAULA

It's really tough. There's something going on which I want to forget. But it keeps popping up. It just makes me so angry.

RICHARD

It would make me feel better if I knew what was going on.

PAULA

And I should tell you because it would make you feel better?

RICHARD

That's not how I wanted that to sound. I know I have no right to dig into your past, but whatever it is isn't making the present too good. I really just want to help.

The distant sound of a helicopter.

PAULA

If I told you, I don't think you would like me very much.

RICHARD

Don't be so sure.

PAULA

Why shouldn't I? I have all the information.

RICHARD

You should give me more credit.

PAULA

I'm giving you a lot of credit. . . .  
Well  
maybe it's time to let this out.

The sound of a helicopter draws closer.

PAULA CONTINUES

When I was really into health and fitness, I met some strong women. Over time a rather large gap was created between my mountain lifestyle and my urban lifestyle. There seemed to be good parts to both, but they were really incompatible with each other.

The helicopter sound becomes loud enough to interrupt.

RICHARD

What is going on here? Supplies aren't due for another three weeks.

Helicopter heads for a landing.

PAULA

I've never seen those guys before.

PAULA AND RICHARD head down to the area where the helicopter is going to land. Pilot and passengers are wearing orange jumpsuits with lifesigns logos.

Front passenger gets out and walks over to PAULA and RICHARD. It's hard to hear over the noise of the helicopter engine.

RESCUE ONE

I'm looking for Paula Michaels. Do you know where she is?

PAULA

That's me. What's up?

RESCUE ONE

There's been an accident at the Twin Falls Pumping station. A maintenance worker is missing, and his last job was to check the Chlorine purification system at the pumping station. Our company built the pumping station, so they called us in to help out. The workers in back know mountain rescue, but they don't know too much about Chlorine victims. We understand that you are an EMT and a nurse. We need you.

PAULA

What about the Medivac Chopper? The valley spent a ton of money on that system?

RESCUE ONE

Not available. It's on its way to Boston with a patient. There isn't much time Paula, we have to go. Here, put this on.

HANDS HER AN ORANGE LIFESIGNS JUMPSUIT.

RESCUE ONE CONTINUES

We had these in our safety shed. They're supposed to protect us from toxic gases.

PAULA

Why don't you just go in, drag him out,  
and get him to a hospital?

RICHARD

Paula, you are qualified to give a hand  
here. Look, we can talk about the  
problem later. Right now, I think this  
crew needs your help.

Somewhat reluctantly, PAULA pulls on the orange  
jumpsuit. RESCUE ONE takes her arm and guides her  
to the helicopter. He has to yell in her ear to be  
heard.

RESCUE ONE

We're a little short on space. You're  
going to have to ride over in the litter.  
Danny will help you in.

PAULA climbs into the rescue litter. RESCUE ONE  
motions to the back seat and DANNY hops out. The  
two adjust straps at Paula's ankles, thighs, waist,  
and chest. There's is something a little too  
thorough about their work.

The Helicopter takes off.

EXTERIOR PUMP HOUSE LANDING AREA

Helicopter lands. Motor is cut. Occupants hop out.  
Two workers put full face masks on and rush to the  
shed. The pilot stays in the helicopter. The other  
two get out and begin to detatch the litter.

PAULA

Wouldn't it be a little easier if you let  
me out first.

There is no response. The Wisecrack turns sour in  
PAULA'S mouth as the purpose of the trip changes  
shape in her mind.

RESCUE ONE returns from his trip to the shed.

RESCUE ONE

Joanne sends her regards; and her regrets. I don't have all the details, but I understand that you made a telephone call that you shouldn't have. The stakes must be pretty high for her to hire us. The background details are, really, of little importance. There is enough chlorine in the shed to do the job. It won't surprise you to know that you're the lucky winner of the defective SCBA. I'm personally sorry about this. You're very pretty. It's such a tragedy to be up here on a false alarm and lose a member of the team.

RESCUE ONE (continues)

To Danny.

Let's get this over with.

PAULA is SILENT and RESIGNED. Danny fits the SCBA facemask over her head as the others put theirs in place.

The four carry the litter toward the shed. we see Paula's face as she struggles fruitlessly against the restraints.

The litter stops for a door to open. Through the changes in the lighting on Paula's face we know that they have entered the shed. There are wisps of smoke. After a moment, Paula's eyes start to flutter. she hyperventilates, struggles, moans, and with considerable agony, dies. The litter is lowered onto the floor.

EXTERIOR LIFESIGNS SHIP.

George is gazing off into the distance leaning on the railing of his ship. Julie walks by just as the cellular telephone of the deck rings.

JULIE

I'll get it.

Walks to phone.

This is LifeSigns.

pause.

Yes, just a moment. . . George, it's the admiral.

George walks to the phone.

GEORGE

Yes, Admiral.

Listens intently.

No, I wasn't aware of that, sir. Yes, I find that disturbing, and I intend to look into it. I can tell you with absolute certainty that your test is still secure. . . .I think I have a total understanding of the consequences.

SANDRA, overhearing the conversation, enters from below deck.

GEORGE continues

Yes Admiral, I will.

GEORGE hangs up and moves away from the phone. He is clearly agitated.

SANDRA

George, what's up? What's wrong?

GEORGE

I don't know how they know this, or even if they know this . . . No, I'm sure it's true. The Admiral just wanted to let us know that an older model LifeSigns SCBA setup failed yesterday when it was exposed to Chlorine Gas.

SANDRA

Where?

GEORGE

All he would say was Northern New England.

SANDRA

What about the test?

GEORGE

We're still set to go. The only thing that saved us was that the systems that

failed weren't filtering rebreathers. They were self contained breathing units. If filtering units were involved, we'd be cancelled. Finished. I'm trying to figure out if we were lucky.

JULIE

We've worked so hard on this. We can't just give up now. We know it's safe. Sandra, you're leaving tomorrow.

Cellular phone rings.

GEORGE

Lifesigns

Pause.

Yea. Hang on a second.

Pause and turn.

Sandra, It's for you. It's Richard.

SANDRA walks to the phone and takes the call.

SANDRA

You're never by a phone. What's up?

Pause. SANDRA slumps into the chair. Her head falls into her hands. She is still on the phone.

SANDRA CONTINUES

I don't believe it. What was their story?

Pause again.

Have you had a chance to check it out?

Well sure. You know I can use your support. I'll give you over to Julie. You can get the details from her. Bye.

SANDRA hands the phone over to JULIE who takes it and walks into the background. SANDRA walks over to GEORGE.

SANDRA continues

Northern New England turns out to be Twin Falls, New Hampshire. A crew airlifted Paula Michaels from Richard's hut to help with that rescue. Her unit is the one that failed. . . . She's dead.

GEORGE

How did the Navy find out about it so fast?

SANDRA

The Admiral told me that the Navy was keeping a watch on us. It's still a bit fast and a bit strange that they picked up this information so soon.

GEORGE

What's Julie doing?

SANDRA

Richard's obviously concerned about these recent events. He's beginning to see just too many coincidences in the recent past. He told me that Paula's arm was mysteriously broken just before she died. I hate the circumstances, but he's finally coming to see what we do. He's going to come out to the Albacore test just to keep his eye on things. He thinks that there's a connection between what's been happening on his mountain and the trouble we've seen over the last several weeks. I'm beginning to believe him.

GEORGE

I'm actually glad. You've told me about his engineering skill, and there's no questioning his loyalty. It will be good to have him there.

SANDRA

I'm going to check the preparations once more. We leave tomorrow. Everything must go right. There is no other choice.

INT. ALBACORE

A seaman approaches the galley area in the Albacore. He is hapless and appears overloaded with cleaning equipment. Buckets, mops, rags and a box of supplies.

All those who pass almost snicker at the sight of him lumbering down the hall. Some make joking remarks.

Our cleaning technician makes his way into the head and does some general sink cleaning until the head is empty.

Then, he reaches into a soiled and broken cardboard box and lifts deodorant tablets out. He examines them in the light and then places one in each of the urinals. He is being overly cautious.

He continues on his cleaning rounds. working through the galley and into the engine room. Along the way, without clear explanation, he cleans for awhile, then reaches into his box and deposits a deodorant tablet in a hard to reach place. While in the engine room we see him place a few tablets in the Battery compartment. Finally, he places a few rolls of toilet paper in the airducts. He sneaks around, completes his task and heads back out.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

The Admiral is standing by the bank of monitors and gauges in the control room. Other workers are scrambling around making last minute connections. Several are seated checking equipment. The Admiral silently supervises.

SANDRA enters, walks to the Admiral's side and stands sliently. Her eyes wander over the equipment.

SANDRA

Is everything coming together to your satisfaction, Admiral?

ADMIRAL

We're ready. and you?

SANDRA

The units are here. They've been checked and re-checked. They work. Can you fill me in on how this room monitors this test?

ADMIRAL

Certainly.

RICHARD walks in. The Admiral stops, expecting an introduction.

SANDRA

Richard. Please, join us. Are you settled in?

RICHARD

Yes, I'm fine. Julie's directions were perfect. Admiral, I'm sorry for the interruption. This is Richard Connors. He will be acting as a technical assistant and will be our representative in this control station during the test.

ADMIRAL

Pleased to meet you. You arrived at a perfect time. I was just about to explain the role this room has during the test.

RICHARD

Please, Admiral, continue.

ADMIRAL

There are three responsibilities that this room must meet. It must cause the problem, meaning that it has to control the release of the chlorine gas. It must monitor the environment, meaning that it must let us know if the test is going well, and finally it must purge the environment at the end of the test or if anything goes wrong in the middle of the test.

ADMIRAL (continues)

The monitors you see before you are hooked to closed circuit cameras that are placed throughout the ship. It is unlikely that they will be of great help during the test, because we are expecting a good deal of smoke. There are also motion detectors, and they will be our most reliable source of information about

where the crew is. The motion detectors are spread throughout the ship and are registered on the sub outline you see to the left. There are also temperature and vapor sensors that will tell us the progress of the controlled reaction. And we'll be able to detect vital signs of the crew through wireless monitoring equipment attached to each of them. By the way Ms. Brooks, you will have to report to our medical facility two hours before the test to be wired.

With the use of this room, we'll be able to evaluate the results of this test immediately.

RICHARD

Will we be able to communicate with Sandra?

ADMIRAL

Yes. Each crew member will have a separate transmitter and receiver for voice communications. They will come through that board over there. We can talk back using this microphone.

A crewmember walks over to the Admiral with some official looking pieces of paper. the admiral glances down and turns to SANDRA and RICHARD.

ADMIRAL (CONTINUED)

I'm sorry. There seems to be some items that need my attention. Is there anything else you will need to know?

RICHARD

No Admiral. I'll spend some time in here familiarizing myself with the set-up. There will be enough time to ask you one or two questions before the test starts. Thanks for your help.

ADMIRAL

Stay here as long as you like. This station will be manned around the clock until the test is completed.

SANDRA

Thank you sir.

ADMIRAL exits.

SANDRA

Thanks for coming.

RICHARD

There was no choice. I had to.

SANDRA

Well, this is my world. What do you think?

RICHARD

It's about what I expected, but I feel more comfortable here than I thought I would.

Listen, you know that journal you found in Paula's bunk?

SANDRA

Yea?

RICHARD

Well, Paula asked me to read it if anything happened to her. I haven't got it all figured out yet, but there's some stuff I want to share with you. Can we discuss it over dinner?

SANDRA

Sure. Sounds important. By the way, I'm really sorry about Paula.

RICHARD

Yea.

INT. RESTAURANT. DINNER

SANDRA

Did you learn anything from her journal?

RICHARD

Not much. Paula hinted at a great deal, but never was really specific. She was

doing something that she didn't want to do, she was afraid that something bad was going to happen, and she referred to her broken arm as if it were a lesson of some type. There are also many references to you and Lifesigns. It's strange, but it seems as if she was very interested in what you were doing.

SANDRA

You sound suspicious?

RICHARD

Well, she was really upset when I told her about your platform accident, she acted as if she were responsible in some way. She also was reluctant to go on that rescue mission. Perhaps she suspected something.. I joined the chorus of voices urging her to get on board.

SANDRA

Don't blame yourself for that.

RICHARD

I won't. Are you ready for tomorrow?

SANDRA

Yes. I can't describe it, but having you here gives me confidence.

RICHARD

Thanks. I'm making no promises for the future, you know.

SANDRA

I know. I'm just glad you're here now.

ESTABLISHING SHOT. TEST SITE.

INTERIOR TEST CONTROL CENTER.

TIGHT on Mission clock which reads 05:28:53

WIDE Into room where the operations crew and the Admiral go about their work monitoring the people, equipment and environment of the Albacore.

The ADMIRAL is pacing around throwing questions at those in his path. RICHARD is standing in one position in the room quietly observing

ADMIRAL

Is mission status still green?

PROJECT LEADER

Mission status is still green. All data paths are clear and correct. All monitoring is nominal. Voice communication open and static free.

ADMIRAL

Simulation report.

OPERATOR

Depth, 600 meters, cruising at 13 knots. Bottom depth 1,000 meters. No sonar contacts. Dive time 3 hours. Maximum dive time remaining, 19 hours. Batteries at 85% capacity.

ADMIRAL

Thank you gentlemen. It seems like the time has come to disturb the peace. Mr. Collins, please start the sonar sequence.

COLLINS

Aye, Sir.

INTERIOR ALBACORE CON

SANDRA enters the control room followed by the Skipper.

SANDRA

In a way, I'm sorry we couldn't do this before we designed the rebreather units. Actually working here can give you information you could never get from interviews and research.

SKIPPER

We're glad to be of help. Please let us know if there's anything else we can do to help you efforts.

SANDRA

No, everything's fine. I would like to stay here awhile and just observe.

SKIPPER

Please, be my guest. It's a little cramped up here, but if you stand over there, you'll be out of the traffic.

We are tight on the sonar operator who wears headphones and stares at what appears to be a TV screen. In one swift move, the operator grabs his headseat, listens carefully, checks his screen and shouts to the Skipper.

SONAR

Sonar contact dead ahead. Fixed. 800 meters.

SKIPPER

Helm, hard right rudder. Avoid that thing. Secure for collision. Repeat, secure for collision. Navigation, what's out there?

CREW

Aye Sir, full ahead.

SONAR

Contact is now off our Port beam. 200 meters. We're still closing.

SKIPPER

Explanations gentlemen?

HELM

Freak current. Strong. We're slipping sideways.

SKIPPER

So it would seem. Helm, come to 50 meters.

HELM

Aye Sir, 50 meters.

INTERIOR CONTROL ROOM. ADMIRAL IS PACING

ADMIRAL

That's what I like about this. You can do anything you want. There they were, cruising just as happily as you please and all of a sudden, something appears in their path rising off the bottom. Great fiction. How's our skipper doing?

PROJECT LEADER

He has just ordered Full Ahead at hard right rudder. He wants to bring the ship to 50 meters.

ADMIRAL

Excellent, All the correct responses. He's not going to make it is he.

PROJECT LEADER

No Sir. Impact in 10 seconds.

ADMIRAL

Good. Not mathematically accurate, but, in this case, useful.

INTERIOR ALBACORE

SKIPPER

Let's have a report, Sonar.

SONAR

Still off the port. Fifteen meters. Good chance of grazing it, Sir.

SKIPPER

Helm, status please.

HELM

We're up to 550 meters. She's a bit sluggish.

SKIPPER

Brace for impact. Brace for impact.

INTERIOR CONTROL ROOM

ADMIRAL

O.K. men, you can start the sequence.  
Please, remember, I want constant  
reports.

INTERIOR ALBACORE.

SKIPPER

Damage reports, please. That didn't seem  
like much of a bump, but we're still  
under quite a bit of pressure.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

No injuries reported sir. No equipment  
damage. No flood . . . Correction.  
Flooding in Aft battery compartment.  
Pumps engaged.

SKIPPER

Get all non-essential personnel out of  
that compartment. Pumps up full please.  
I'd like to avoid the chlorine gas if we  
can. Let's get the engine room personnel  
in rebreathers. Helm, let's also get  
this boat on the surface.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

There's gas, Sir. Aft battery  
compartment.

SKIPPER

Get us to the surface now, helm.  
Attention, all personnel, all personnel,  
prepare to evacuate. Gas in the hold.  
Gas in the hold. This is not a drill.  
Rebreathers on everyone. No exceptions.  
This is not a drill.

HELM

250 meters and climbing. We should be at  
the surface in 2 minutes.

SANDRA

Well, Skipper, thanks for letting me  
watch you work. time for me to go for a  
walk.

puts rebreather on.

SKIPPER

Good luck, Sandra.

She turns and heads down to the engine room. beginning a monologue for the voice recorders in the control house.

SANDRA

Heading down to the battery compartment now. There's no sign of smoke yet. Some crew members with rebreathers pass going in the opposite direction.

INTERIOR CONTROL ROOM

Richard and the admiral follow SANDRA'S progress on the monitors. TIGHT on one monitor as she works her way down a passageway.

SANDRA

I'm beginning to see signs of smoke. I expect the next compartment will be Chlorine filled.

ADMIRAL

How many crew still in the battery compartment?

PROJECT LEADER

Three sir.

ADMIRAL

Their condition?

PROJECT LEADER

Good. Heart Rates are elevated, but that's expected.

ADMIRAL

So far, so good.

SANDRA

I'm still breathing freely. The unit is not hindering my movement.

The ADMIRAL, RICHARD, and others are staring into the monitor that tracks SANDRA'S movement. For just a tiny moment, a thin line of interference rips into the center of the screen. It is there for a second, then it is gone. No one notices.

SANDRA continues

I'm at the door. There is definitely gas in here. And smoke. I'm moving through. Breathing normally. I'm less than five feet from the engine room hatch.

Control Room ALARM. PROJECT LEADER looks up and reports.

PROJECT LEADER

Engine Room personnel have lost consciousness, repeat, they have lost consciousness. Heart rate sluggish. We have a problem.

ADMIRAL

Let me see that room.

Monitor changes images from Sandra's location to the Engine Room. There is too much smoke. The screen shows nothing but clouds of smoke. Then, again, there is a thin line of interference. It is more obvious this time because of the whiteness of the monitor. RICHARD notices it, but draws no conclusions.

ADMIRAL

Turn the air on, I want that sub flushed now!  
Switch back to the outside corridor.

The ADMIRAL grabs a microphone.

ADMIRAL

Sandra, the men in the engine room are down. Something's gone wrong.

SANDRA

I understand. I'll be careful.

All stare at the monitor as she cranks the lock on the hatch that separates her from the engine room. There is the high whine of a turbine starting up to clear the air.

There is also another thin line of interference on the monitor.

SMOKE begins to cloud the picture

ADMIRAL

What in God's name is going on?

PROJECT LEADER

I don't know sir. All ventilation is on and up full. The smoke seems to be getting thicker. It makes no sense.

CONTROL ROOM CREWMEMBER

Sensors indicate Chlorine gas in the Galley. Approaching the Con.

ADMIRAL

What the \_\_\_\_\_.

Grabbing microphone.

ADMIRAL CONTINUES

Evacuate that ship now! Skipper, get those men out of there. Gas is heading in your direction. The rebreathers are not working, repeat, the rebreathers are not working! ...Show me the con, son.

PROJECT LEADER

Yes Sir.

The monitor flashes and shows the con. Whisps of smoke, but it's not thick. There is a little line of interference on the monitor. Following that there is a billow of smoke. Richard sees this.

RICHARD

Is there a recording of this?

ADMIRAL

Yes, we record everything.

RICHARD  
Playback that last view of the con.

ADMIRAL  
I really don't have time for this.

RICHARD  
Admiral, I think I know what's going on.  
Please, play it back.

ADMIRAL  
Play it back for the man. Fast.

Another monitor glows. Tape scans backward, pauses, rolls forward. The ADMIRAL and RICHARD press in close to the monitor. It replays the scene.

RICHARD  
Freeze it!  
The image freezes. There is the beginning of the new cloud of smoke just entering the frame.

RICHARD  
Roll back, slowly!

ADMIRAL  
Mister, I've got people dying in that ship. Let's get moving.

RICHARD  
There. Hold that.

The image is frozen on the line of interference. Richard turns to the Admiral.

RICHARD continues  
Do you have security or police or something around here?

ADMIRAL  
Shore Patrol. Why?

RICHARD  
Just get them. Follow me.

ADMIRAL  
To Project leader  
You heard the man. Have them meet us outside.

PROJECT LEADER calls on radio for SHORE PATROL.  
ADMIRAL and RICHARD lunge out of the CONTROL ROOM.

ADMIRAL

To Richard

It's time to tell me what the hell is  
going on.

RICHARD

High Frequency radio transmission.

ADMIRAL

What.

RICHARD

Someone is triggering something inside  
that ship. There was high frequency  
interference on that monitor right before  
the Smoke appeared in the con.

SHORE PATROL arrives. As they screech to a halt,  
PROJECT LEADER sticks his head out of the Control  
Room.

PROJECT LEADER

Shouting

Brooks is down! Her unit failed.

ADMIRAL looks at RICHARD then looks at the SUB in  
the distance.

ADMIRAL

Evacuation?

PROJECT LEADER

Ten are still inside. Gas all over the  
place.

RICHARD has been looking around. He spots a dark  
van with an unusual array of stubby antennae.

RICHARD

There, over there, Get over there and  
hold those people! Don't let them touch  
or do anything! Get them out of that  
van!

SHORE PATROL LEADER looks over at the ADMIRAL. The ADMIRAL nods. The SHORE PATROL takes off toward the van.

RICHARD breaks into a run and heads toward the sub. Along the way he races by an open jeep. RICHARD pulls himself up short, runs back to the jeep. From the back, he pulls out a SCUBA tank and facemask. He flings the tank on his back and continues his trip to the sub.

Once on the Sub deck, he fixes the facemask into position, places the regulator in his mouth, and negotiates his way down the con ladder. There are other sailors strewn around the sub external deck recovering from the gas. There is smoke coming out of the open hatch. Ambulances and fire trucks are arriving on the scene. Fire fighters pull on SCBA gear and head in to follow RICHARD.

RICHARD makes his way down into the bowels of the ship. The smoke is still thick. He feels his way along and finds SANDRA'S BODY. He drags her to a corner, rips the rebreather off her head. Sheltering her face, he uses his regulator to flush good air around her mouth and nose.

SANDRA begins to stir. At this point the smoke begins to lessen. In order for RICHARD to continue to breathe, he must move his head close to her mouth and nose, and the regulator. The Fire and rescue team arrives and straps oxygen to her face, puts her on a litter and carries her out. He stands, no longer needing the oxygen. Others are carried out from the engine room.

EXTERIOR TEST SITE.

As SANDRA'S stretcher is carried out we see the bad guys handcuffed, being loaded into the bad guy wagon.

RICHARD pops out of the con just in time to see the ambulance and bad guy wagon leave.

EXTERIOR LIFESIGNS SHIP AFTERDECK.

SANDRA is resting in a lounge chair. Wearing a sweat suit. It's clear by her appearance and her clothing that she is still recovering from her

ordeal. GEORGE comes out on the deck and sits beside her. They stare for a moment. Then talk.

GEORGE

You may have to testify.

SANDRA

Sure. I can't believe that Joanne was stupid enough to be in that van.

GEORGE

I think her whole attempt to do us in went beyond reason. This business could stand competition.

SANDRA

I suppose she should be congratulated.

GEORGE

What?

SANDRA

Well, she did us in, Didn't she?

GEORGE

I don't see how you can say that. We've been vindicated. Gulf Oil (NAME?) is calling for the SeaShelters. That's a direct result of the reports of Joanne's confession in the news.

SANDRA

Yea, George, but you're cutting back. I haven't heard you talk of one new product since I got out of the Hospital. I haven't been selling, and there haven't been any tense discussions about shipping problems. She did defeat us.

GEORGE

Sure. There are some problems to overcome. Even though we've been cleared, there's a certain nervousness in the industry. Everyone in the Navy knows that we weren't at fault with the

rebreathers, but they have to go through their formal investigation, and that will take almost a year.

SANDRA

And we're in never never land until then, right?

GEORGE

No, not at all. I think that the direct on-site testing days are over. There's too much bad history to overcome. I'm thinking of building a test facility so that customers can come to us for demonstrations. There will be less of a risk for all of us.

SANDRA

Where are you going to get the money for that?

GEORGE

I don't think that will be a problem. Julie will explain later.

SANDRA

Well, I guess that it's all good in a way. I don't think I'll ever have the energy I need to make this happen.

GEORGE

I don't think I'd want it any other way.

SANDRA

What do you mean?

GEORGE

I've had some time to think over the past days. When I was competing professionally, I would always blame other outside events, when things went wrong. That's how I got into this business. It's only when I accepted my natural limits, that I began to enjoy myself. I was thinking that this LifeSigns was getting to be too much like my old life. We were stretching the limits. Doing too much, trying to be too many things, trying to right too many wrongs. I think there are some limits that we have to recognize, and I'm glad we're getting this opportunity to scale back and take a look at things. Just as

an example, I don't think this company was being extremely fair to you. You were under extraordinary pressure. To meet the challenge, you had to almost sell your soul to the company, become part of what it was, destroy your private life. I don't think that's a particularly good idea.

SANDRA

I don't think I would have agreed with you three weeks ago. You'll get no argument now. Maybe it's time for me to build a personal life. What a great time to start over.

GEORGE

Start over?

SANDRA

I guess, I haven't heard a thing.

GEORGE

I know he was at the hospital. I think he left before you regained consciousness. He knew you were going to be alright.

SANDRA

I haven't heard a word.

GEORGE

What happened to that strong, independent, take charge, determined and self-reliant woman?

SANDRA

Softly.

I'm still recovering, remember?

GEORGE

Just take it easy, there's time.

GEORGE gets up and leaves. SANDRA stares out silently.

EXTERIOR LIFESIGNS SHIP. ANOTHER DAY

SANDRA walks out onto the deck. Dressed more fashionably. A sign of further recovery. Walking to the railing, she stares off to the shore and is distracted by clumps of bubbles heading toward the boarding ladder.

She tracks them with her eyes. A diver in a wet suit emerges from the water, flings his flippers onto the deck and climbs up the ladder.

It is Joe Camber.

JOE

With some sense that Sandra's been hurt and is recovering, Joe tries to send a get well message. As usual, the impulse for the message comes from between his legs.

I knew you were back. We were just cruising by. I thought you wouldn't mind if we stopped off for a few minutes, and maybe, ...ah, maybe made some plans for dinner or something, you know?

SANDRA

Abstractly.

That's not a bad idea. I'd like to get back out into the world a little more.

A SPLASH. COUGHING, SPUTTERING, GROANING. Joe's companion arrives. He's not as skilled.

SANDRA

Who can't see Joe's buddy yet.

Who is this other guy?

JOE

I was taking some shots at the airport. I gave this guy a lift to his hotel when he couldn't find a taxi. We started talking and I agreed to go Scuba diving with him. He's certified, but he's not very experienced.

OTHER DIVER

From below.

I wanted something simple and easy. Your just too fast.

The OTHER DIVER CLIMBS slowly up the ladder and makes it to the top. It is RICHARD.

RICHARD

Hi!

SANDRA locks her eyes on him. JOE senses that he doesn't exist anymore.

JOE

To SANDRA

You know him?

SANDRA

Quietly

Yea.

To JOE

Would you do me a favor?

JOE

Anything.

SANDRA

Find someone on this boat and have them take you and your gear to shore.

JOE

What?

SANDRA

Find someone and have them take you to shore. Now.

JOE

I don't get it. What about dinner?

SANDRA

I'm not hungry.

JOE

It doesn't have to be now, today.

SANDRA

I don't think I'll be hungry ever again.

JOE turns in frustration. and heads down the deck.

SILENTLY RICHARD removes his equipment. SANDRA hands him a towel. They sit.

SANDRA continues  
Sometimes, I thought I'd never see you again.

RICHARD  
I had a lot to sort out. I can't tell you how I felt when I found you aboard that Sub. As soon as I knew you were going to be okay, I had to leave. I didn't know what I would say or do if you woke up and I was there. I had to have time to think.

Now, I'm ready to talk. It seemed right that I come here.

SANDRA  
Things are different here too. I think I'm going to take some time off. I should take it easy. Maybe I'll hike for a bit in the mountains. Get to know someone else a bit better

RICHARD  
You may not have to go to the mountains for that.

SANDRA  
What do you mean?

RICHARD  
This will be my last season working up there. I like it, but it's time to move on. It just doesn't feel the same. I'm not interested in crawling through Chlorine gas anytime in the near future, but I am ready to engage the world a bit more. I still don't think I was hiding. I just want to enjoy those mountains as a visitor.

SANDRA AND RICHARD EMBRACE. They just hold each other for a moment.

SANDRA  
What's with this diving equipment?

RICHARD  
I figured that If I was going to hang around here, I better sharpen some skills.

SANDRA LAUGHS

JULIE ENTERS

SANDRA

Julie, I'd like you to meet . . .  
finally. . .  
Richard Connors.

JULIE

Wow. You're really here.  
Congratulations Sandra.

SANDRA

It's really not that simple, Julie.

RICHARD

Nice to meet you under any circumstances.

JULIE

Well, Sandra, It's back to work for you.

SANDRA

I'm not so sure about that. I've been  
talking to George, and . . .

JULIE

That's why I'm here. George told me that  
you were wondering what we'd do while  
LifeSigns carves its new path.

SANDRA

Yea, . . .

JULIE

Well, here's the answer.

At that moment, the Angry Mango crowd comes up from below and surrounds the group. They are all wearing SPLASHWEAR, revealing some new designs. They parade around a bit. Some of the styles are more technical looking, a clear sign that George is more involved.

JULIE continues

We're getting orders all over this country and in Europe. We've had to set aside additional space in the plant to keep up with the demand. And . . . I need help. Ralph and I can't do this alone anymore. New York, L.A. and Chicago want showings. We have to do a catalogue because the requests are still coming in from that TV show we did. We've got to get moving.

SANDRA

O.K., O.K. I don't understand anything about this business, but I'll help out. There's just one condition.

JULIE

Anything. Well (whining) almost anything.

SANDRA

If you hire me, you hire him.

JULIE

It's a deal. Now, it's about time you had a party.

To everyone.

Let's go. Music. To success, to Splashwear.

The relaxed group begins to celebrate the success of SPLASHWEAR.

RICHARD

I'm going to have to think about this.

SANDRA

Please, for me, just for now. Don't. Richard smiles.

GEORGE appears and the party gears up to the next level. George is very comfortable, and very happy.

THE END