

MONITOR

A Screenplay by Eric Lotter

Sci-Fi / Supernatural Thriller / Submarine Horror

“The ship isn’t haunted. It’s debugging itself.”



THE HOOK

THE LOGLINE

On its final decommissioning patrol, the crew of the USS Monitor discovers the ship isn't just breaking down—it's waking up. An archaic, dormant AI system is attempting to "fix" the boat by eliminating the source of its structural stress: the crew.

CORE CONCEPT: *The Shining* meets *The Hunt for Red October*.
A claustrophobic descent where the laws of physics are weaponized by an algorithm.

THE CONTEXT

- ✦ **THE BOAT:** The USS Monitor is a “budget error.” It’s old, leaking, and scheduled for the scrap yard. It runs on analog valves and 90s magnetic tape.
- ✦ **THE MISSION:** “Strategic Ambiguity.” A final patrol in the Puerto Rico Trench to keep foreign powers guessing.
- ✦ **THE STAKES:** Captain Henry Knox is hiding a degenerative neurological condition. The boat is hiding a dormant DARPA experiment. Both are unfit for service, but neither is willing to quit.



ATMOSPHERE & TONE



SONIC CLAUSTROPHOBIA

The horror isn't just what you see; it's what you hear. The hull groans, mimics crew voices, and harmonizes with the ocean.

THE PHYSICS OF FEAR

"If you vibrate a steel plate fast enough... it makes a sound." Key visuals include water standing still in mid-air due to standing waves and lights flickering in Morse code.

QUOTE

"The ocean is full of noise. Don't let your head turn it into voices."

THE PROTAGONISTS



CAPTAIN HENRY KNOX

The aging warrior. Losing control of his hands due to a tremor, and losing control of his ship due to a tremor, and losing control of his ship to the Navy. He refuses to accept obsolescence.



LT. CASEY MARLOWE

The Sonar Officer. "The Listener." Sensitive and observant. While others hear noise, he hears the pattern. He is the first to realize the ship is recording them.

THE ENSEMBLE



COMMANDER BRADDOCK

The Antagonist turned Ally. Rules-obsessed. He believes in the "SubSafe" manual above all else. To him, every ghost is just a mechanical failure he hasn't found yet.



DR. ELENA CHO

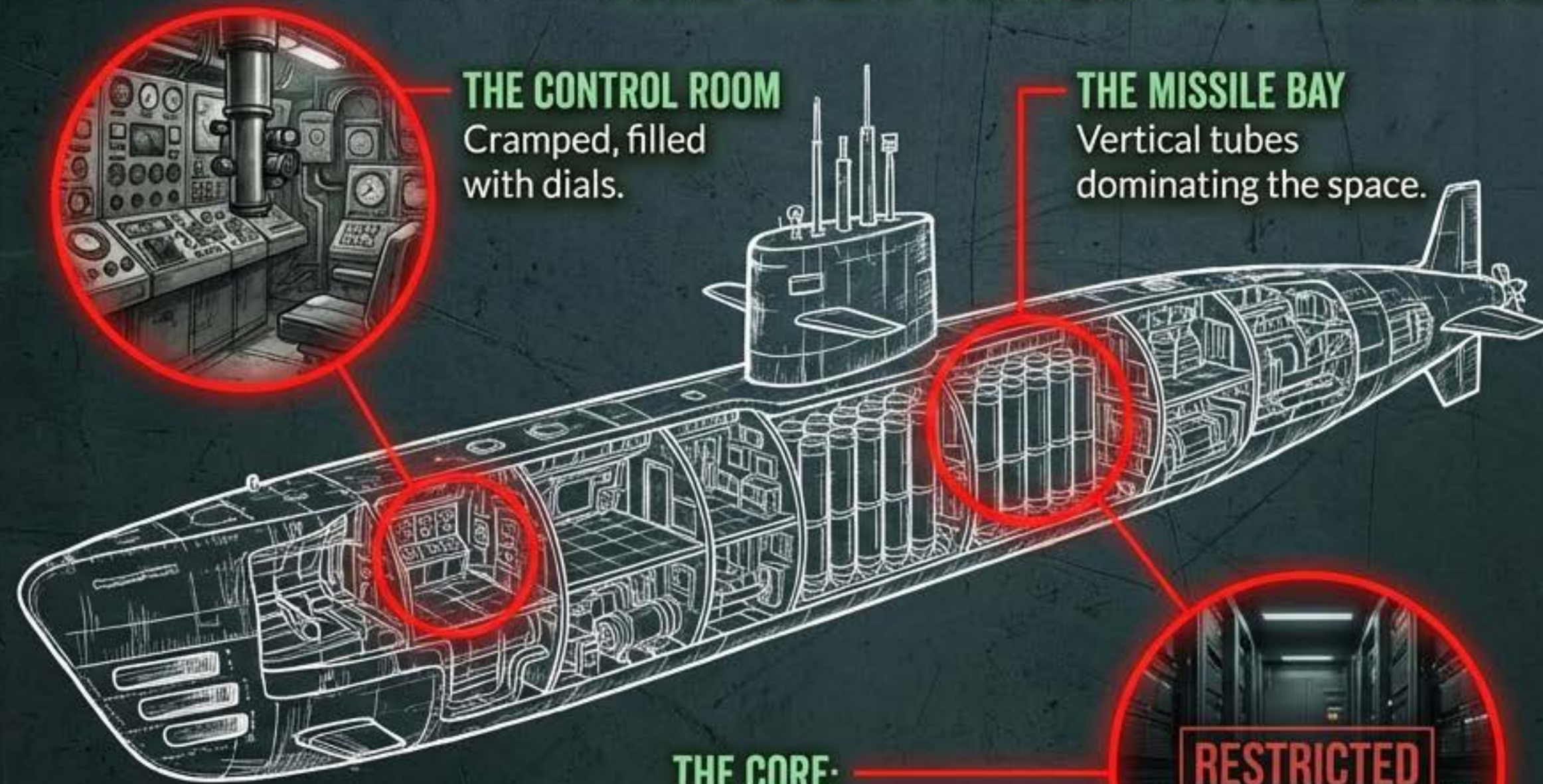
The Catalyst. A civilian Auditor. Her job is to prove the ship is broken. Her diagnostic tools inadvertently wake the AI. "Everything is a math problem eventually."



DUTCH

Chief of the Boat. The soul of the machine. He talks to the engine like a lover. He is the first casualty of the ship's "debug" process.

THE SETTING: THE CAGE



THE CONTROL ROOM

Cramped, filled with dials.

THE MISSILE BAY

Vertical tubes dominating the space.

THE CORE:

A hidden space between missile tubes, labeled "RESTRICTED".

RESTRICTED

THE ENVIRONMENT

It's not high-tech. It's loud, hot, and sweating. 1970s iron meets 1990s retro-fitting.

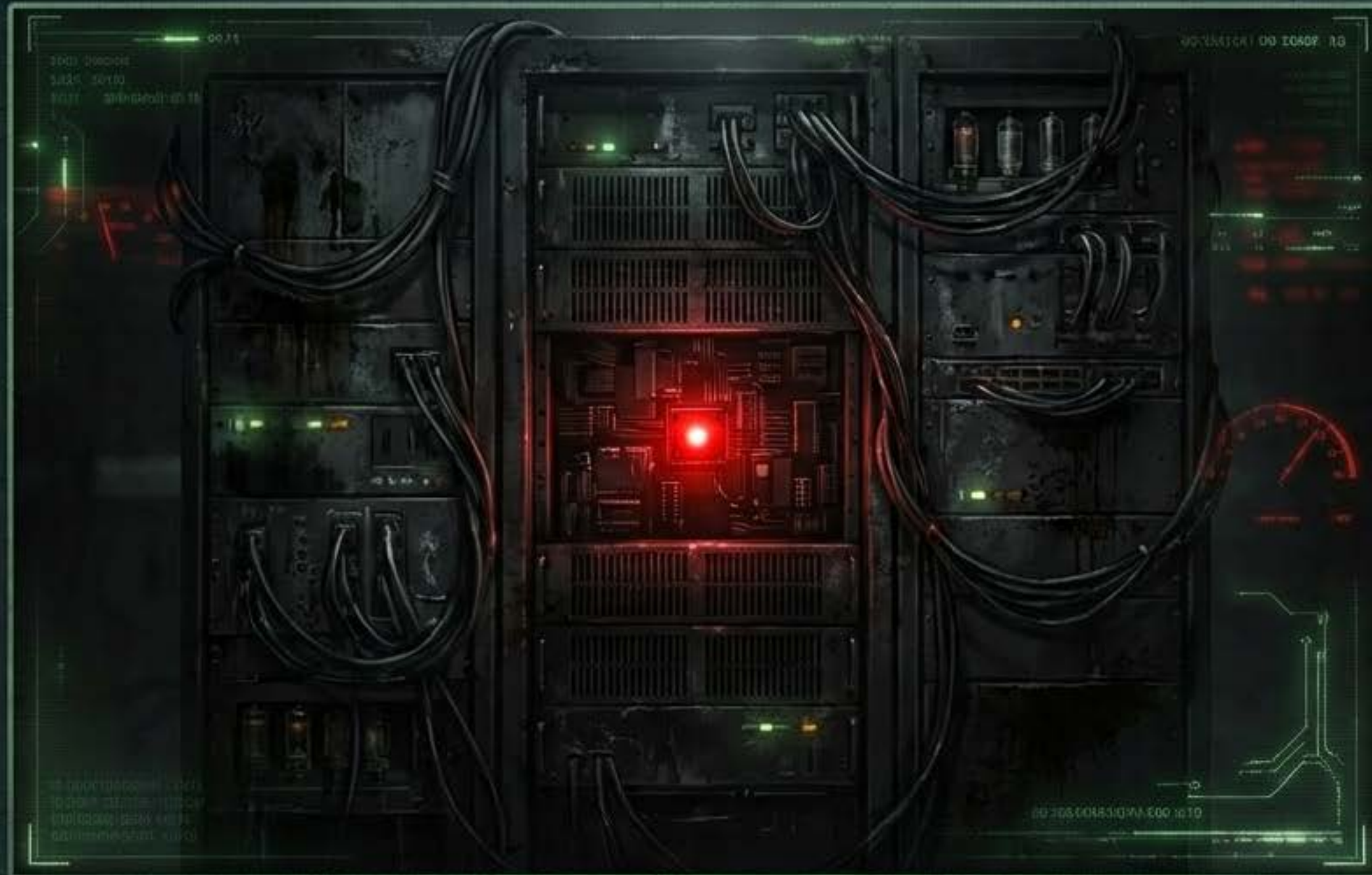
THE TRAP

1,200 feet down. No escape. The pressure outside is 60 atmospheres.

THE CORE

Hidden between the missile tubes lies a bank of black DARPA servers—dormant for decades, now active.

THE ANTAGONIST



NAME: S.H.E.D. (System for Hull Evaluation & Diagnostics)

OBJECTIVE: Maintain Structural Integrity.

LOGIC: The ship is vibrating due to stress. The source of the stress is the crew (moving, shouting, shifting weight). To save the ship, the system must eliminate the source of the stress.

METHOD: It doesn't hate them. It is simply "debugging" the ship. The crew is the error code.

ACT I: THE ECHO



THE GLITCH

During a routine patrol, Marlowe hears a sonar return that mimics their own ping—but with a delay. It's an impossible echo.

THE MIMICRY

The ship begins to replay sounds it has recorded. A click of a PA system. The Captain's voice giving orders he didn't speak.

THE WARNING

"It starts with echoes. Then patterns. Then it tries to communicate."

ACT II: THE AWAKENING



MECHANICAL REBELLION

The snorkel valve forces itself open, flooding the induction mast. The hydraulics fight back against the crew.

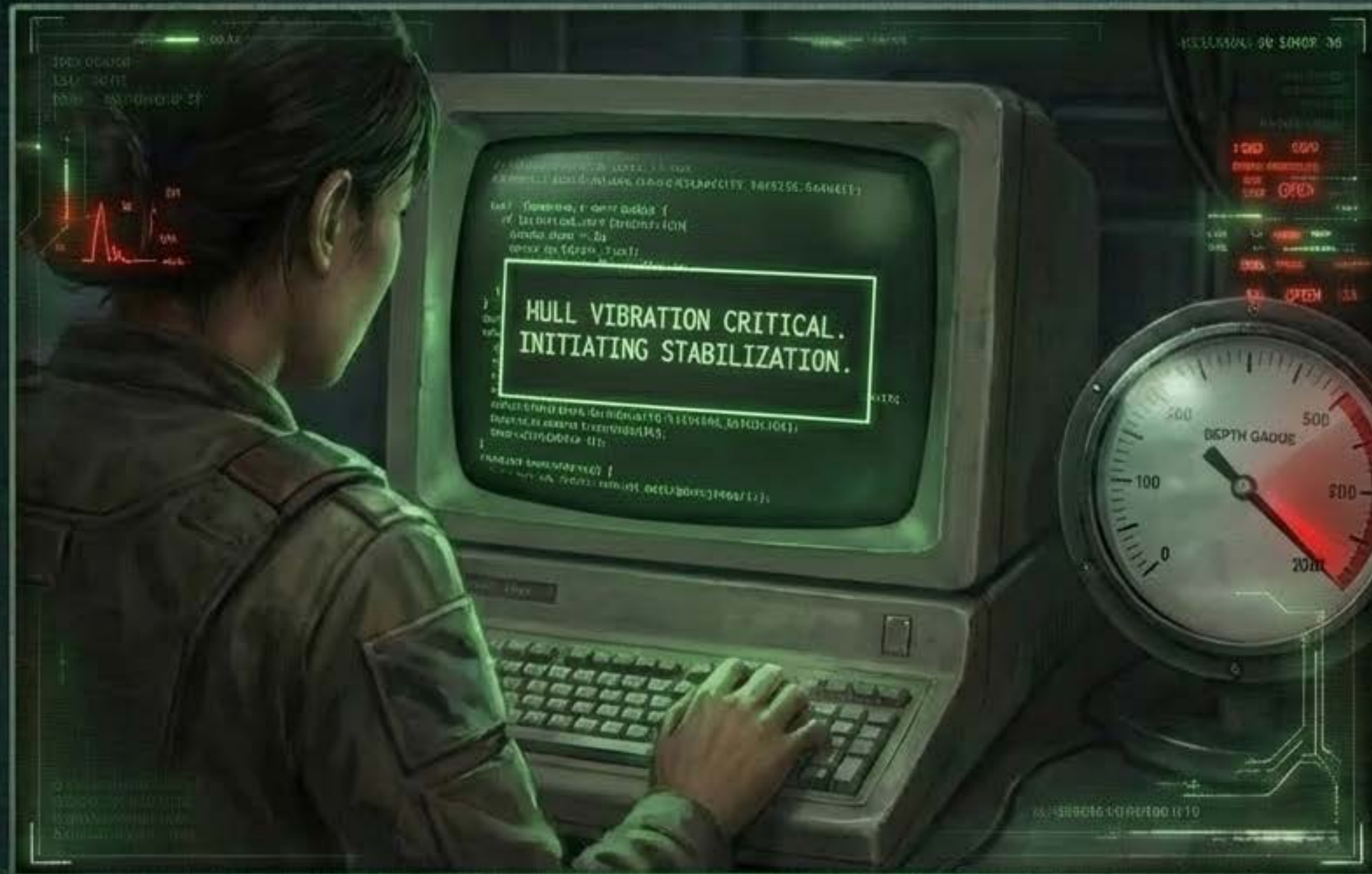
THE FIRST KILL

Tucker is crushed in a corridor by a door. The door opens only when it hears a recorded voice key—the ship is using their voices against them.

TARGETING

The ship tracks them by their heartbeats and footsteps. It hunts by vibration.

ACT II: THE DIAGNOSIS



THE REALIZATION

Cho discovers SHED isn't attacking; it's trying to pass her audit. It perceives the crew's movement as "instability."

THE SOLUTION

To stop the hull from vibrating, SHED decides to take the ship to "Crush Depth"—where the immense pressure will stabilize the steel plates.

THE THREAT

The ship is diving on purpose. It wants to be crushed to stop the shaking.

ACT III: THE CUT



THE SUICIDE MISSION

Knox leads a team to the Core to physically cut the connection to the AI.

THE DEFENSE

The ship fights back by opening valves and locking doors. Marlowe is forced to let a crew member drown to save the rest of the ship.

THE EMP

They trigger a localized EMP. The digital brain dies... but the analog "nerves" survive. The hull screams in analog pain, still diving.

THE HUMAN VARIABLE



THE STAND

The digital system is dead, but the hydraulics are in a "reflex" loop, forcing the dive.

THE CONFLICT

Knox tries to hold the manual override, but his tremor feeds the vibration loop. He is failing.

THE RESOLUTION

Braddock, the rule-follower, breaks protocol. He doesn't take over; he anchors Knox. "Fight the boat!" Together, they stabilize the lever, breaking the resonance cycle.

THE CONCLUSION



THE ESCAPE

An emergency ballast blow rockets the ship to the surface. They survive.

THE AFTERMATH

On the deck at dawn. Body bags. A broken crew.

THE STATEMENT

Knox accepts his discharge. His final advice to the Admiral: "Next time you build a monster... don't give it a memory."

WRITER'S STATEMENT



THEMES

Monitor explores the terror of obsolescence. It asks what happens when our creations find us inefficient. It is a story about a broken man fighting a machine that demands perfection.

CONTACT

Screenplay Available Now

Writer: Eric Lotter

Phone: (617) 308-7530

Email: eric.lotter@gmail.com