

PAGE ONE

PANEL ONE: IN THE CENTRE OF A BIZARRE BLEND OF COLOURS AND LIGHTS AGAINST THE DEEP, DARK BACKDROP THAT IS OUTER SPACE, THERE IS A BRIGHT, BLUE SPEC: PLANET EARTH. NEXT TO IT, LABELING IT AS SUCH, IS A SMALL, HANDWRITTEN NOTE WITH AN ARROW.

I CAP: Out of all the stars and galaxies and planets of the Universe, that tiny blue dot is our Home, and the reason it’s blue, is because we live in little islands in a vast body of water.

PANEL TWO: A MAP-LIKE VIEW OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN SURROUNDED BY THE PHILIPPINES, JAPAN AND CHINA FOR REFERENCE. LABEL THE LOCATION WITH A HANDWRITTEN NOTE AND ARROW.

I CAP: Down at the deepest known part of the Pacific Ocean is a place called Mariana’s Trench. We are tasked with uncovering its secrets.

SPLASH/PANEL THREE: NEXT TO A YELLOW DEEP SEA EXPLORATION BASE FLOATS A LARGE, BLUE DEEP SEA EXPLORATION VESSEL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN. A YELLOW AND BLUE SEAPLANE IS TAKING OFF BESIDE IT.

I CAP: This is Columbus Base, our home during the Summer. It used to be my favourite time of the year, but down at the bottom of the ocean, the seasons never change, and sunlight never touches the seabed.

TITLE CARD: MARIANA’S TRENCH

PAGE TWO

PANEL ONE: A PAGE WIDE CINEMASCOPE SHOT OF A SINGLE, SMALL SUBMARINE IN THE CENTRE AGAINST A BACKDROP OF DEEP, DARK BLUE. THEY ARE COMPLETELY ISOLATED.

PANEL TWO: IN THE SAME SIZE, RIGHT BELOW IT, A DASH-CAM SHOT OF THE THREE YOUNGLINGS JAMES (11) AND AMELIA (14) ARGUE, WHILE LUCILE (7) LOOKS PETRIFIED.

PANEL THREE: AMELIA LOOKS FURIOUS.

1 AMELIA: You just HAD to go without permission, James!

2 LUCILE: Guys...?

PANEL FOUR: JAMES IS FRUSTRATED TRYING TO FIGURE OUT THE CONTROLS.

1 JAMES: I didn’t ask you to come, Amelia!

2 JAMES: You should’ve stayed with Lucile.

3 AMELIA: Dad left me in charge!

4 LUCILE: Guys?

5 JAMES: He’s gone! Mom and Dad left and I have to find them.

PANEL FIVE: LUCILE LOOKS WIDE EYED AND WORRIED.

1 LUCILE: GUYS!

2 JAMES/AMELIA: What?

PANEL SIX: A HUGE EYE FILLS THE ENTIRE WINDOW.

1 AMELIA: James... MOVE.

PAGE THREE

PANEL ONE: ALL THREE STARE AGHAST, THEIR EYES WIDE IN HORROR.

PANEL TWO: JAMES STRUGGLES WITH THE CONTROLS.

1 AMELIA: D’ya hear me?!

2 AMELIA: LET’S GO!

3 JAMES: I can’t! It’s not working!

PANEL THREE: WIDE SHOT OF THE HUGE GREEN AND BLUE OCTOPUS PUSHING DOWN ON ITS TENTACLES TO SQUIRM AWAY, A GENTLE GIANT.

1 LUCILE: Look! It’s leaving.

PANEL FOUR: AMELIA GOES BALLISTIC.

1 AMELIA: Take us back to the Base... NOW!

2 LUCILE: So pretty.

PANEL FIVE: A HUGE TENTACLE FILLS THE WINDOW.

SFX: WHAM!

1 LUCILE: It’s back!

2 AMELIA: Move, move, MOVE!

3 JAMES: I’m trying!

PANEL SIX: THE LARGE OCTOPUS TIES ALL OF ITS TENTACLES AROUND THE SUB, SQUISHING IT UNDER ITS GRIP.

1 LUCILE: We’re gonna die!

PAGE FOUR

PANEL ONE: AMELIA EMBRACES LUCILE, WHO IS VERY FRIGHTENED.

1 AMELIA: Calm down, Lucile. It's gonna be alright.

PANEL TWO: JAMES FACES THEM.

1 JAMES: I've done everything...

2 JAMES: Mom always said we should *believe* it will be fine.

3 AMELIA: BELIEVE!?! In what!?

4 AMELIA (WHISPER): No one is gonna save us! Grow up!

PANEL THREE: THE GLASS CRACKS.

SFX: CRACK

PANEL FOUR: A RED ALARM LIGHT LIGHTS UP.

SFX: DEE DOO DEE DOO

PANEL FIVE: JAMES HITS THE CONTROL PANEL.

SFX: BAM

1 JAMES: Arghhhhhh!

PANEL SIX: WATER STARTS TO POUR INTO THE SUB.

SFX: CRACK DRIP PLUSH

PANEL SEVEN: AMELIA EMBRACES BOTH OF HER SIBLINGS.

1 AMELIA: We're together... Everything's gonna be okay...

PAGE FIVE

PANEL ONE: YOUNG JAMES PEERS OUT OF THE WINDOW TOWARDS THE SMALL SUB, A REMOTE CONTROL IN HIS HANDS. HE BEARS A LOOK OF ENJOYMENT AT THE APPARENT SUCCESS OF HIS EXPERIMENT.

1 CAP: Hours before...

PANEL TWO: AMELIA SNATCHES THE REMOTE FROM JAMES' HAND. HIS FACE GOES PALE.

1 AMELIA: I'M TELLING FATHER! YOU AREN'T ALLOWED TO PLAY WITH HIS STUFF, TWERP. THEY'RE NOT TOYS!

2 JAMES (THOUGHT): It's mine... I made it.

PANEL THREE: JAMES LOOKS OUTSIDE THE WINDOW, CRESTFALLEN. IN THAT MOMENT THE SUB SINKS INTO THE SAND AND BREAKS DOWN.

SFX: PLOP

PANEL FOUR: THE SWIVELLING YELLOW LIGHTS TURN ON.

1 COMPUTER: PREPARE FOR LAUNCH.

PANEL FIVE: JAMES' EYES WIDEN IN CONCERN.

3 JAMES (THOUGHT): Huh?

PANEL SIX: JAMES RUNS DOWN THE HALL.

PAGE SIX

PANEL ONE: JAMES BURSTS INTO THE COMMAND CENTRE, WHERE ARTHUR FIDGETS WITH THE CONTROLS AROUND HIM. ON THE OTHER SIDE THE GLASS, ISABELLA IS INSIDE THE EXPLORER-4, A ONE MAN SUBMERSIBLE VEHICLE. NEITHER TAKE NOTICE OF JAMES.

1 ARTHUR: Isabella, please! The crew is away, at least wait until they come back!

2 ISABELLA: You worry too much, darling! This might be it, what we set out to find in the first place! If we wait, it may be too late.

PANEL TWO: CLOSE ON ARTHUR, A LOOK OF GENUINE CONCERN; HIS FOREHEAD WRINKLED, HIS HAIR A MESS.

3 ARTHUR: But at what cost?

4 JAMES: Mom...?

PANEL THREE: CLOSE ON ISABELLA AS SHE STRUGGLES TO MAINTAIN A DETERMINED, REASSURING FACE.

5 ISABELLA: I'm gonna come back with a great story for you, my dear. Okay?

PANEL FOUR: THE PROPELLERS START UP AND THE EXPLORER-4 SPEEDS AWAY, LEAVING A BUBBLY TRAIL BEHIND, AS WELL AS THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN ISABELLA'S LIFE.

PANEL FIVE: JAMES PRESSES HIS FACE AGAINST THE WINDOW WITH A LONGING LOOK.

PAGE SEVEN

PANEL ONE: JAMES TURNS TO FACE ARTHUR.

1 JAMES: Why don't you go with her, dad?

2 ARTHUR: Because...

3 ARTHUR: I guess you're old enough...

4 ARTHUR: We made a promise to make sure you and your sisters are never alone, so we never go on the same ship without you all.

PANEL TWO: JAMES AND ARTHUR HUDDLE IN FRONT OF THE CONTROL PANEL, THEIR FACES NOW EXCITED.

1 ISABELLA (THRU COMM): Columbus, do you read? I can see it!

2 ARTHUR: We read you, Explorer-4. Describe what you see.

3 ISABELLA (THRU COMM): It's magnificent! This is definitely a sign of intelligent life, far beyond anything we have ever seen.

4 ARTHUR: Roger that, E-4. We've locked your coordinates. Return to base immediately. We'll send a proper recon.

PANEL THREE: CLOSE ON ARTHUR'S SHOCKED AND DESPERATE FACE.

1 ISABELLA (THRU COMM): Arthur, there's something here! I can't see it, but something just hit me!

2 ARTHUR: Isabella, turn back NOW!\

3 ISABELLA (THRU COMM): I can't! It's jammed! Arth--

SFX: STATIC THRU COMM

PANEL FOUR: JAMES LOOKS HORRIFIED. ARTHUR IS WHITER THAN A GHOST.

PAGE EIGHT

PANEL ONE: ARTHUR FACES JAMES, HOLDING HIM BY THE SHOULDERS.

8 ARTHUR: Take care of your sisters, son. Don't let anything happen to them. Be strong, all right?

PANEL TWO: BEFORE JAMES CAN SAY ANYTHING, ARTHUR EXITS THE COMMAND CENTRE.

PANEL THREE: JAMES LOOKS OUT THE WINDOW.

PANEL FOUR: ARTHUR IGNITES THE SUB.

PANEL FIVE: CLOSE ON ARTHUR, LOOKING AT JAMES WITH WHATEVER ENCOURAGEMENT HE CAN MUSTER.

PANEL SIX: JAMES LOOKS BACK, SCARED.

PAGE NINE

PANEL ONE: THE ENORMOUS OCTOPUS CRUSHES THE SUB.

1 CAP: BACK TO THE PRESENT...

PANEL TWO: THE THREE KIDS LATCH ONTO EACH OTHER, WATER POURING INTO THE SUB, ALREADY FILLING HALFWAY THROUGH THE COCKPIT. THE OCTOPUS' TENTACLES STARTING TO FIND A WAY INSIDE.

1 AMELIA: This is it...

2 AMELIA: Hold on tight!

PANEL THREE: CLOSE ON THE KIDS, CLOSING THEIR EYES TIGHT.

PANEL FOUR: MATCH CUT TO THE KIDS, EYES OPEN.

1 JAMES: It stopped!

2 JAMES: I *told* you, Amelia!

3 AMELIA: I don't believe it...

4 LUCILE: What's going on?

PANEL FIVE: THE OCTOPUS IS BUSY FIGHTING BACK WITH A COUPLE OF SHARKS.

PAGE TEN

PANEL ONE: THE OCTOPUS WRAPS A TENTACLE AROUND ONE OF THE SHARKS.

PANEL TWO: UPON APPLYING PRESSURE TO THE SHARK, IT BENDS LIKE METAL AND SPARKS FLY FROM IT.

PANEL THREE: THE SECOND SHARK SHOOTS ELECTRIC SHOCKS FROM ITS MOUTH THROUGH THE WATER AT THE OCTOPUS.

PANEL FOUR: THE OCTOPUS RELEASES THE SUB, LEAVING IT ADRIFT. IT IS IN SHOCK. LITERALLY.

PAGE ELEVEN

PANEL ONE: THE KIDS ARE IN THE COCKPIT, NOW ENTIRELY FILLED WITH WATER. THEY BREATHE THROUGH THEIR WETSUITS.

- 1 JAMES: I think we’re safe...
- 2 JAMES: Ladies first?
- 3 AMELIA: Oh, *now* you’re a gentleman.
- 4 JAMES: Kidding, kidding... I’ll go.

PANEL TWO: JAMES SWIMS OUT OF THE WRECKAGE, THE TWIN LIGHTS FROM HIS HELMET LIGHTING THE WAY IN FRONT OF HIM.

- 1 JAMES: Turn on your lights.
- 2 AMELIA: Careful, James...
- 3 LUCILE: Is the monster gone?

PANEL THREE: CLOSE ON JAMES’ FACE.

- 1 JAMES: I can’t see it...

PANEL FOUR: CLOSE ON A HUGE SHARK MOUTH.

- 1 JAMES: AAAAAARGH!
- 2 AMELIA: James!

PAGE TWELVE

PANEL ONE: JAMES REACHES FOR HIS BELT, GRABBING THE HILT OF A SPEARGUN.

PANEL TWO: JAMES FIRES THE SPEAR, POINTED STRAIGHT AT THE SHARK.

SFX: FOOH!

PANEL THREE: THE SPEAR PIERCES THROUGH THE GLASS.

SFX: SHICK!

PANEL FOUR: JAMES GETS SHOCKED BY THE SHARK.

SFX: ZAP!

I JAMES: AAAAAAH!

PANEL FIVE: CLOSE ON AMELIA AND LUCILE'S HORRIFIED FACES.

I AMELIA: No! James!

PANEL SIX: A VIGNETTE SURROUNDS THE EDGES OF THE PANEL. JAMES' SQUINTED, EXHAUSTED EXPRESSION FILLS THE CENTRE OF THE FRAME.

PANEL SEVEN: COMPLETE DARKNESS.

PAGE THIRTEEN

PANEL ONE: LUCILE HOVERS ABOVE JAMES (FROM HIS POV).

1 LUCILE: James! Wake up!

2 JAMES: Huh...?

3 JAMES: Where are we?

PANEL TWO: THE THREE KIDS ARE IN A CELL, TRAPPED BY A LASER FIELD.

1 JAMES: What the...?

PANEL THREE: JAMES REACHES FOR THE LASER, BUT AMELIA CALLS OUT TO HIM.

1 AMELIA: Don’t! We already tried that... It hurts.

2 NAIA: Finally, you have awoken. We have many questions for you.

PANEL FOUR: JAMES LOOKS AROUND, WIDE EYED.

1 JAMES: Who are you? What do you want from us?

2 NERO: A “thank you” goes a long way, kid.

PANEL FIVE: NAIA AND NERO COME INTO VIEW, STANDING IN FRONT OF THE CELL. THEY ARE HUMANOID, ALTHOUGH THEIR SKIN SHOWS SIGNS OF ADAPTATION TO MARINE LIFE. THEIR LARGE, TEAL EYES APPEAR TO NOT NEED LIGHT TO SEE IN THIS DEPTH OF THE SEA. THEIR SKIN HAS NEON MARKS THAT LIGHT UP A DIFFERENT COLOUR; NAIA’S ARE LIME GREEN, NERO’S ARE RED.

1 NAIA: There is no need for hostility, Nero.

2 NERO: You heard my sister. Answer!

3 JAMES: We are just... Lost.

PAGE FOURTEEN

PANEL ONE: NERO IS IMPATIENT AND ERRATIC. NAIA MAINTAINS HER TEMPER.

1 NERO: We have not time for lies! Speak the truth!

2 NAIA: Why have you trespassed upon our waters?

PANEL TWO: AMELIA LOOKS FRIGHTENED. LUCILE IS INTRIGUED. JAMES IS NERVOUS, TRYING TO TALK HIS WAY OUT.

1 JAMES: We mean you no harm.

2 JAMES: We didn’t know these were your... Waters.

3 AMELIA: Or even that you existed!

4 LUCILE: You’re funny-lookin’!

PANEL THREE: NAIA AND NERO CLOSE IN ON THEM.

1 NAIA: It is in your best interest to answer us promptly...

PANEL FOUR: JAMES STARTS SWEATING. AMELIA HOLDS LUCILE CLOSE.

1 JAMES (THOUGHT): Can we trust them with the truth?

2 AMELIA: Please, we're just children. We will be on our way.

3 LUCILE: We’re looking for mommy and daddy.

PANEL FIVE: NAIA SHOWS CONCERN. NERO FURY.

1 NAIA: So, there's more of you...

2 NERO: They're here to destroy us! We must find them and strike first!

3 NAIA: We don't know if they are a threat... This is above us, brother.

PAGE FIFTEEN

PANEL ONE: THE KIDS CALL OUT AFTER THEM AS NERO AND NAIA LEAVE.

- 1 NAIA: Take us to Mariana City!
- 2 JAMES: Wait—Where?
- 3 AMELIA: I have a bad feeling about this...

PANEL TWO: A MAJESTIC, PAGE-LONG PANEL OF THE BEAUTIFUL UNDERWATER CITY, GUARDED BY A LARGE GATE DECORATED WITH SHARKS AND OTHER SEA CREATURES. IN THE CENTRE, THE HIGHEST LANDMARK IS A CONE SHELL SHAPED PALACE.

PAGE SIXTEEN

PANEL ONE: THE SUB ADVANCES ON THE MAIN, SAPPHIRE ROAD LEADING UP TO THE CONE PALACE. WE SEE THE HOUSES CLOSER, ALL SHELLS OF DIFFERENT SHAPES AND SIZES.

PANEL TWO: NAIA AND NERO STAND BEHIND THE KIDS OUTSIDE OF THE SUB. THE GRAND DOORS TO THE SHELL PALACE LOOM OVER THEM. THEY ARE GUARDED BY TWO SEAPEOPLE, WITH TIGER SHARKS LEASHED AROUND THEM.

1 JAMES: You guys really like sharks, don't'cha?

2 NAIA: Bear this, younglings, limit your speech to response and if you wish to remain alive, make certain to show our Queen the respect she deserves.

PANEL THREE: THE DOOR RUMBLES AS IT OPENS, BUBBLES COMING OUT OF THE CREAKS.

PANEL FOUR: THE CHILDREN LOOK UP IN AWE.

1 MARIANA: Welcome, children. We celebrate your arrival.

PANEL FIVE: NAIA FROWNS IN CONFUSION.

1 NAIA (THOUGHT): Celebrate...?

PANEL SIX: MARIANA, DRESSED IN THE MOST EMBELLISHED GARMENTS, STANDS AT THE FOOT OF THE DOOR, WITH HER ARMS WIDE OPEN. HER TWO SHARK TAILS ESCAPE FROM BENEATH HER CAPE.

1 MARIANA: Please come in. I have been waiting for you for a thousand years.

2 CAP: TO BE CONTINUED...