

FADE IN

The sound of powerful waves CRASHING on solid metal. We see a cylindrical steel 'leg', and pull out to reveal a large, streamlined oil rig-like structure sitting on a choppy sea:

"POSEIDON WAVE-FUSION POWER STATION - N. ATLANTIC OCEAN"

INT. POSEIDON POWER STATION - DAY

A Control Room full of levers, monitors, lights and numbers. In contrastingly casual attire is DOCTOR ERIC WOODBRIDGE, 30s, staring out a window into the ocean beyond.

A phone RINGS. A screen flashes up "VANESSA LELAND".

ERIC WOODBRIDGE
Doctor Leland, good afternoon.

INT. VANESSA'S STUDY - DAY

In a room similar to Eric's, but with fewer levers and more screens, is DR VANESSA LELAND - 30s, lab coat, hair tied up.

TITLE: "KING CHARLES III RESEARCH CENTRE, CAMBRIDGE, UK"

VANESSA LELAND
Morning Eric. How's life on the open sea?

--INTERCUT--

ERIC WOODBRIDGE
Thankfully not so open.

He gazes out the window at the turbulent water.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE (CONT'D)
I heard it's been raining there?

He smirks.

Vanessa stares at banks of monitors showing numbers, graphs etc, constantly changing. She reads them like The Matrix.

VANESSA LELAND
Wettest August since records began. Seriously it's beyond a joke. It *actually* hit zero here the other night. Zero! In August! So much for the Beijing Protocol. Sod-all good that did...

Eric turns from the window and paces around.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

I told them it was too little too late, but they didn't listen. There's always some excuse. As if the imminent end of the World wasn't enough.

VANESSA LELAND

Well, at least there's a tiny bit of hope in that the Critical Point is still a few years away. If you keep pressing them with data --

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

No.

VANESSA LELAND

-- maybe... No?

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

I've recalculated. I think I was being a little optimistic before, and they've been too slow and too half-arsed on the Beijing Protocol, leading me to alter my figures.

VANESSA LELAND

And?

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

And... I think we've already hit Critical Point.

Vanessa stops dead.

VANESSA LELAND

Are... are you sure?

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

Well, nothing is for sure. But I think this data's more accurate.

Eric taps a screen and hits SEND.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE (CONT'D)

I'm sending you something, have a look.

Vanessa watches her screens and waits.

VANESSA LELAND

Where?

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

Hold on, it's a big file. My broadband provider tells me I can get speeds of one Terabyte, but I think they're lying...

VANESSA LELAND

Eric, this isn't the time for jokes. If your figures are correct, we're standing toe-to-toe with Armageddon.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

Well, not necessarily.

A screen PINGS with Eric's missive; Vanessa opens it. Screens fill with numbers and graphs, weather systems and population charts. She stares at the data.

A number claiming to be WORLD POPULATION rapidly increases:

8,423,931,677... 678...679...

VANESSA LELAND

Not necessarily? Do I need to remind you of what 'Critical Point' means?

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

No, I invented the term.

VANESSA LELAND

Exactly. You claim the Earth is irreparably damaged and cataclysm is now unavoidable.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

Yes. Except not necessarily.

VANESSA LELAND

Right. So have you come up with another genius invention? A big monster that eats CO2?

Vanessa gets worked up, while Eric SCOFFS, smiles.

VANESSA LELAND (CONT'D)

A cheap way of shipping eight and a half billion people to the Moon? I'm sure they already decided that wasn't feasible...

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

Vanessa. V. Calm down. No, a mass exodus is not the answer. And the Moon's too small anyway.

VANESSA LELAND

So what's your solution?

Eric stops, sits down in his chair.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

Well, we've tried various things: Population control, by various methods. Too hard to enforce, too much people-power required, ironically. Plus, it upset the Human Rights brigade.

VANESSA LELAND

Uh huh.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

We tried creating new land, that worked to a certain extent, but only in small quantities, and it has its problems. We considered relocating people to Antarctica, but that project got frozen. Funnily enough. We've made big leaps in nano-food production, although that, again, is proving more expensive than hoped. As for energy problems, well, we've just about solved that, but ten years too late. All because they didn't give me that grant when I first requested it...

VANESSA LELAND

Yes yes, I know all this.

She's obviously heard the last bit before.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

I'm just going over all the avenues we've covered. All the methods we've pursued to help save the World. And of course Nature's chipped in with natural disasters and killer viruses, but she's forever out-numbered. However...

VANESSA LELAND

However...?

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

I can give her a hand.

VANESSA LELAND

I can... You can give her a hand? Eric don't tell me you've created some lethal virus or something!

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

No no! I'm not a biologist! No, it's much simpler than that. *Elementary*, you could say.

(MORE)

ERIC WOODBRIDGE (CONT'D)
Look at my data. You'll see there's
a new figure in there.

Vanessa taps a screen and opens more data. It shows the World less turbulent than before: weather systems seem more placid, red numbers and graphs have turned to yellow/green.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE (CONT'D)
If you bring down the World's population to a certain level, given the current and predicted advances in technology - energy, food, life-expectancy et cetera - if returned to that level, we should be able to carry on as before, for at least another hundred years or so. Giving us hopefully enough time to at least terraform Mars.

A screen says "4,850,000,000".

VANESSA LELAND
Y...you reckon if we lose three and a half billion people we can survive?

ERIC WOODBRIDGE
More like 3.6, but yes.

VANESSA LELAND
Don't you think there's a rather large irony there? That for us to perpetuate as a race we need to eradicate almost half of us?

ERIC WOODBRIDGE
Sure I do. But that's what Nature's trying to do anyway. It creates life, but also takes it away. Natural disasters, HIV, Flu every winter... But like I said, we're too numerous. We're now more powerful than Nature itself. WE are the disaster, we are the ravenous parasite, the lethal virus, and our Host is losing its battle.

VANESSA LELAND
Agreed. But we can't just wipe out half the population in order to keep us under control. We're not... some garden shrub... it's not like dead-heading your Marigolds. No Government is going to agree to those extreme measures!

She clutches her forehead, SIGHS.

VANESSA LELAND (CONT'D)

The only solution is for more money to be pumped into the projects you mentioned - nano-food, land-building, Lunaforming, and hopefully --

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

(interrupting)

Hopefully! That's a very dangerous word when talking about planetary survival. And they don't HAVE the money, we know that!

Eric starts to get wound up now.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE (CONT'D)

It's so stupid, I mean why can't they just stick a few noughts onto the end of their budget? Turn a billion dollars into a trillion dollars, and whisk us all off to Mars?

VANESSA LELAND

You know you can't just do that with money.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

But what *is* money? It's just an abstract concept. Something we created. Tribes in the Amazon don't have money. They just hunt when they need to, chop trees when they need to. That's how it used to be, thousands of years ago!

Eric leaps up and paces round the room again.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE (CONT'D)

If Nature could take control, erupt a few volcanoes, flood a few rivers, create another HIV, the balance might be restored. Things might return to how they were in the beginning, when we knew to respect the Earth. Hunter-gatherer. When Man had to go out there and fetch his dinner, not push a few buttons and have it created before him in a matter of minutes.

Eric picks up a rod of some sort and wields it like a spear.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE (CONT'D)

But you give most people these days a spear, they wouldn't have a clue how to use it.

(MORE)

ERIC WOODBRIDGE (CONT'D)

Let alone have the fitness or the outdoor skills to get anywhere near to a deer!

VANESSA LELAND

Eric.

Eric stops, realises he's got himself in a bit of a state. He puts down the rod and leans against a control panel. Numbers and gauges gradually rise towards DANGER LEVELS.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

Anyway, Nature's overpowered, despite the Hurricanes and floods and other "acts of God" as the lunatics call them. Natural order won't be restored naturally. Money, the root of all evil, can't help us. And Governments aren't going to cull their populations, not just because it's inhumane, but because they'd lose tax revenue!

VANESSA LELAND

So what's your plan then, Doctor Woodbridge? You said you could give Nature a hand.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

I'm going to create a natural disaster.

VANESSA LELAND

What?! How can you create --

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

-- well of course it won't be *natural*, but it'll be the Earth that does the damage. Or more precisely, the Sea.

VANESSA LELAND

Eric. Eric, whatever you're plotting, don't! Don't even think about it!

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

Oh I've been thinking about it for years.

VANESSA LELAND

Well stop!

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

Too late.

Eric's calm again, Vanessa is anxious.

VANESSA LELAND

Too late? Too late? What have you done?!

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

I'm sitting on top of a nuclear reactor. Sea-water comes in, Giga-Watts go out. It's my greatest achievement, and one of the greatest of all Mankind. But, like Einstein, I never thought my work would be used as a weapon.

VANESSA LELAND

Eric! You can't!

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

I can. I have.

VANESSA LELAND

You... you have?

Vanessa slumps down in a chair, gobsmacked.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

The process's already started. Just metres below me, a reaction is starting.

VANESSA LELAND

So when you said it was 'elementary'...

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

Exactly that. Sub-elementary in fact. Atoms. Protons, electrons. Who would've thought something so tiny could create such immense destruction? By creating a huge underwater explosion, I'll cause a tsunami that will reach about 150 metres high and head towards land at about 500 miles an hour. East coast USA will be laid waste. New York City will finally sleep. All those beauties on the beach in Miami... even their pneumatic breasts won't help them float.

Vanessa's almost crying, talking in a WHISPER.

VANESSA LELAND

Eric, please!

ERIC WOODBRIDGE

Rio de Janeiro. You know that means 'January River'? Soon it's going to be more of a lake.

(MORE)

ERIC WOODBRIDGE (CONT'D)
 West coast of Africa, from Morocco
 to Ghana. Portugal and France...
 and that's just from *this* station.

VANESSA LELAND
 What?

ERIC WOODBRIDGE
 I've programmed the same event in
 the other stations. Indian Ocean,
 South China Sea... that should take
 out most of the big players. In
 total, I predict I'll hit - or
 slightly exceed - that target on
 your screen. Gotta play it safe,
 after all.

VANESSA LELAND
 Eric, stop this. You can't just
 kill millions of people! You can't
 play God!

ERIC WOODBRIDGE
 Someone has to.

VANESSA LELAND
 But you can't just... What about
 your friends? Do you not care? Your
 family, what about them?

ERIC WOODBRIDGE
 This is bigger than that.
 In death, we forget.

Eric stands before the control panel, pushes a button.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE (CONT'D)
 I just called to say Goodbye.

Numbers and dials increase. Warning lights FLASH, sirens
 WAIL. Vanessa can just about be heard over the din.

VANESSA LELAND
 Eric. Eric? Stop it, make it stop!
 There are alternatives! We'll
 survive, we'll find a way!
 Necessity is the mother of
 Invention, and all that...

As Vanessa rises from her seat and preaches to him, Eric
 strolls away from the controls and WHISTLES.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE
 Boson? Boson!

A SCUTTLING, and then a DOG rounds a corner and scurries
 towards Eric, greeting him as dogs do. Eric makes a fuss of
 him and kisses him several times.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE (CONT'D)
Boson. I'm gonna miss you, boy.

Vanessa's voice is still audible.

VANESSA LELAND
... nobody's going to thank you for
this, Eric. This is genocide! All
the good work you've done will be
forgotten in the wake of this...
this...

He returns to the console.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE
Vanessa.

VANESSA LELAND
(Calmer)
Yes?

Eric pauses a second.

ERIC WOODBRIDGE
You'll be okay.

VANESSA LELAND
What, here in Cambridge?

ERIC WOODBRIDGE
Who do you think got you
transferred there?

And with that he ends the call.

He approaches the window and stares out at the vast blue
ocean, Boson beside him.

INT. VANESSA'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Vanessa digests what Eric just said.

VANESSA LELAND
Eric, I... Eric?

But he's gone. Vanessa puts her hands over her face, and
watches her screens. She turns on a TV and waits.

There's a sudden TREMOR, the room shakes. Vanessa GASPS.

On BBC NEWS 24, a bulletin comes in:

NEWSREADER
Graham, sorry I'm going to have to
interrupt you there. I'm getting
reports of an Earth tremor which
was...

(MORE)

NEWSREADER (CONT'D)
 apparently caused by, I'm being
 told, some sort of seismic activity
 in the North Atlantic...

Vanessa looks at screens, touches them, and brings up a
 satellite image which shows a troubled mid-Atlantic.

VANESSA LELAND
 Oh God.

From here we see and hear a CRESCENDO of news items from
 different sources, in different languages, with images of
 giant waves on the sea, and people fleeing cities.

NEWSREADER 2
 ...have heard that the Poseidon
 wave-fusion power station has
 exploded, I repeat, has exploded...

NEWSREADER 3
 (American)
 ...seems this is no accident, as
 I'm told that two of Woodbridge's
 other major wave-fusion stations -
 the Neptune in the Indian Ocean,
 and the Atomica in the South China
 Sea -

NEWSREADER 4
 ...have also been destroyed more-or-
 less simultaneously...

NEWSREADER
 ...producing giant pressure
 waves...

NEWSREADER 2
 ...It is estimated the waves will
 hit Tokyo in an hour, Beijing in
 two hours, and New York soon after
 that...

FRENCH NEWSREADER
 ... Paris is claimed to be safe,
 but the entire West coast is in
 mortal danger...

NEWSREADER 2
 ... Ireland, Cornwall, Devon,
 Wales...

GERMAN NEWSREADER
 ...The Exodus has already
 started...

NEWSREADER 3

... As you can see, people fleeing
in their thousands, or trying to
flee, but roads are grid-locked
with the sheer numbers of people
attempting to escape...

And so on.

Vanessa sits motionlessly staring at the screens, watching
the population figures. And then it hits.

8,423,932,208 suddenly drops, and keeps dropping.

8,420,000,000... 8,410,000,000... 8,380,000,000...

7,960,000,000... 7,540,000,000... 6,875,000,000...

Etc. Accompanied by increasingly desperate news reports.

Eventually, as the hours pass, Vanessa slumped in her chair,
the figure settles down:

4,837,229,187,

4,837,229,186,

4,837,229,185.

And then, its seemingly relentless downward spiral come to a
halt, it changes direction:

4,837,229,186.

FADE OUT.