

Dolphin Point

FADE IN:

EXT. OUTER SPACE — TIMELESS

MUSIC IN: Nat King Cole — Stardust.

Darkness. Then stars. Infinite, still, blazing.

The camera drifts through the universe. Unhurried. Patient.
As though it has all the time there is.

TITLE CARD:

"The most beautiful declaration of love to reality is
science."

We drift on.

TITLE CARD:

"This is a declaration of love to science."

We drift on.

TITLE CARD:

"Based on true events."

The credits begin. Names appear and dissolve into the dark
between stars. Quiet. Unhurried.

TITLE:

"Dolphin Point"

And then — far ahead — a small blue light.

It grows.

The Earth. Whole and luminous, turning slowly in the black.

The camera holds for a moment.

Then — gently — it turns away. Back toward the stars. And
then begins to fall. One continuous movement. No cut.

The music fades.

EXT. GREEN BANK RADIO TELESCOPE - NIGHT

The night sky blazes with stars. Crickets chirp. A screech owl calls. A full moon hangs low.

In the moonlight, a massive radio telescope gleams, listening.

Behind it, a white building.

In the shadow of the building, an orange-red dot glows.

FRANK DRAKE (30, glasses, neat suit, gentle face, astronomer and astrophysicist) leans against the wall beside the door, staring up at the sky, drawing on a cigarette.

He coughs. Looks at the cigarette. Looks at it again. Drops it. Grinds it out with his shoe. Looks back up at the telescope.

RING. A telephone shrieks somewhere inside the building.

Drake turns his head. One last look at the sky. He sighs and goes inside.

INT. GREEN BANK OBSERVATORY - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The phone keeps ringing.

We follow Drake down a lit corridor toward the sound.

The ringing comes from an office branching left off the hallway. Drake goes in.

INT. GREEN BANK OBSERVATORY - DRAKE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Drake's office. Files stacked on every surface. A sign on the wall reads PROJECT OZMA. Monitors and astronomical instruments blink and hum. A printer spits out paper. A clock on the wall reads 10:22 PM.

Drake crosses to the desk and picks up the receiver.

DRAKE

Hello?

(smiles)

Gregory.

INT. BATESON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

INTERCUT WITH: INT. GREEN BANK OBSERVATORY - DRAKE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A warmly lit study. Bookshelves floor to ceiling. Photographs from Bali and Papua New Guinea on the walls. Exotic artifacts on every shelf. A large, solid desk. A fire burning in the fireplace.

In a red leather armchair beside the fire sits GREGORY BATESON (54, tall, lean, anthropologist, cyberneticist, philosopher, impeccably but casually dressed). A telephone in his lap. An unlit pipe in his hand.

BATESON

How are your aliens, Frank?

CUT TO: Drake, watching a printout feed from the printer. Numbers.

DRAKE

(sighing)

Silent, Greg. Silent. But they're out there. Think about how many stars there are in this galaxy alone.

CUT TO: Bateson, gazing into the fire.

BATESON

Maybe we just can't hear them. Maybe we're so used to listening the way humans listen that we can't open ourselves to other kinds of communication.

CUT TO: Drake. He says nothing. Stares at the blinking lights.

BATESON (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Think about it. We live with dogs and cats and we don't understand them either. How do we expect to understand extraterrestrials — their whole system of communication — when we can't even understand our own poodle?

Drake nods slowly. He knows Bateson is right.

CUT TO: Bateson. He puts the pipe in his mouth, picks up his lighter, flicks it on — then sets it back down on the armrest. Takes the pipe out of his mouth.

BATESON (CONT'D)
Maybe you can't figure out
"whether" they're talking to us
until you've figured out "how"
anything talks to anything. And
that means asking whether we're
even capable of understanding.

DRAKE (O.S.)
You might be onto something there,
Greg.

BATESON
I've heard about a young man who
might have something useful to
contribute, Frank.

CUT TO: Drake. He smiles.

A knock. The door opens. An ASTROPHYSICIST (mid-50s, beard, glasses, visibly annoyed) stands in the doorway.

ASTROPHYSICIST
I need the telescope now, Frank.

DRAKE
I have fifteen minutes left.

ASTROPHYSICIST
Fifteen minutes during which no
alien is going to call you.

Laughter from the hallway.

ASTROPHYSICIST (CONT'D)
Fifteen minutes we could be using
to study gamma-ray bursts. Which
are actually happening.

DRAKE
They've been happening for billions
of years. They'll still be
happening in fifteen minutes. And
I'm on the phone. We'll sort this
out after.

The astrophysicist raises one eyebrow with great
condescension and leaves. Drake sighs.

DRAKE (CONT'D)
If Thomas Hobbes had known any
astrophysicists, he might have gone
easier on wolves.

Both laugh.

DRAKE (CONT'D)
So. Who is he?

EXT. OUTER SPACE - TIMELESS

Darkness. A vast black nothing.

A heartbeat pulses through the void, echoing and fading.

DR. JOHN LILLY (45, thin, tall, wire-rimmed glasses) drifts
nude and weightless, eyes closed, suspended in infinite
space. Only the heartbeat.

He opens his eyes.

Stars ignite. Galaxies. Nebulae. Lilly drifts through the
universe. The heartbeat pulses.

He breathes in. Looks around.

RRRIIINNG — A telephone tears through the infinite dark.

Lilly looks around, annoyed.

It rings again. He rolls his eyes.

INT. LILLY'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

A dark room. Heavy curtains drawn across a window. Furniture
barely visible in the dimness.

In the center of the room: a round tank filled with water.
John Lilly floats face-down in it. He wears a hood on his
head with a tube running to an air compressor.

A telephone rings in the corner.

Lilly stands up awkwardly in the tank and looks around.

He pulls off the hood. Sighs.

He wades to a light switch on the wall.

CLICK. The lights come on. We're in a study-slash-office.

The telephone is at the far end of the room, on the desk, still ringing.

Lilly stares at how far away it is. Rolls his eyes.

He climbs out of the tank, grabs a towel from a nearby chair, wraps it around his waist, and trudges across the room.

LILLY

Yes? Dr. Drake ...Dolphin
communication? ...When?

He scribbles something down.

LILLY (CONT'D)

I see. ...And who else will be
there? ... Sure i can give a
talk... Dolphins are highly complex
and remarkably intelligent
creatures. I think You'll be
surprised by what I have to say.
...I assume all expenses will be
covered? ...Good. Send me the
details.

He hangs up. Stands in the middle of the room for a moment,
not quite sure what to do next.

A knock.

LILLY (CONT'D)

What?

JUAN (22, six-pack, Speedo) opens the door and looks in,
uneasy.

Lilly crosses his arms. Puts on his mildly irritated
expression.

JUAN

Señor, the dolpheen...

LILLY

Yes?

JUAN

...well...

Lilly stares at him impatiently.

JUAN (CONT'D)
...ees dead, Señor.

Lilly crosses to the window and yanks the curtains open.

Outside: a perfect day. Blue sky. Brilliant sun fracturing on the surface of a turquoise sea. Palm trees. Exotic plants. The land slopes gently down to the water.

From the window, we can see a large tank adjoining the house, close to the shore.

In the tank, a dolphin floats motionless on its back.

Lilly looks at it for a moment. Then turns to Juan, who is visibly uncomfortable — but subtly, undeniably attractive.

JUAN (CONT'D)
What should we do, Señor Lilly?

LILLY
DOCTOR Lilly.

JUAN
Señor Doctor Lilly.

Lilly crosses his arms again.

LILLY
You're from St. Thomas, aren't you?

Juan nods.

LILLY (CONT'D)
What do people do there when they find a dead dolphin?

JUAN
Well, Señor... dolphins are in the ocean and we live in the town. There are not many dead dolphins — or living ones — in the town. My uncle Carlos, he saw one on the beach one time. He told me about it.

LILLY
And what did he do with it?

JUAN
Well... it was on the other side of the island, and Carlos was driving for a biologist who was studying an algae colony nearby.

(MORE)

JUAN (CONT'D)

The dolphin was very far from any town. I think he did nothing with it.

LILLY

We can't do nothing with the dolphin out there.

JUAN

Maybe the garbage truck could come pick it up?

LILLY

(sharply)

That's absurd.

(thinks. sighs.)

Do you have the number?

Juan grows visibly more uncomfortable.

JUAN

Today ees Sunday, Señor. The garbage truck, they don't work on Sunday.

Lilly looks at him for a long moment, arms still crossed.

LILLY

Today is Sunday?

EXT. APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS / ROUTE 28 - DUSK

MUSIC: Dave Brubeck - Unsquare Dance

AERIAL — A vast valley sunk in blue dusk. Forests dark on every side. And there, winding through the mountains: two headlights. Small. Deliberate. The only moving thing in the frame.

The camera holds, then begins to drift — following the headlights as they trace the curves of the road below. Patient. Unhurried.

The valley opens. And there — impossibly large against the darkening sky — a radio telescope. White. Still. Pointed at nothing visible.

SLOW PUSH IN as the car descends toward the observatory grounds. The headlights find a parking lot. A handful of cars already there.

The engine stops.

DR. JOHN C. LILLY steps out.

Frank Drake is already waiting. They greet each other warmly. Then they walk to Lilly's car. Lilly opens the rear door, hands Drake a box, takes some rolled-up papers and a leather briefcase himself. They head inside.

INT. GREEN BANK OBSERVATORY - CONFERENCE ROOM - EVENING

A conference room. Scientists sit around tables arranged in a horseshoe. Some of them smoke. They are Drake, Philip Morrison, Dana Atchley, Melvin Calvin, Su-Shu Huang, Barney Oliver, Carl Sagan, Otto Struve — and organizer J. Peter Pearman.

A slide projector stands in the center of the room, throwing an image of a dolphin poking its head out of the water onto a screen. Next to the screen hang anatomical charts. On the right, a human brain. On the left, dolphin anatomy and a dolphin brain.

LILLY

Nobody's going to argue that
dolphins are intelligent
creatures. Some researchers say
they might even be
smarter than humans.

Some of the scientists laugh.

Lilly advances the slide. Two dolphins tossing a red ball to each other with their snouts.

LILLY (CONT'D)

Their brains are comparable in size
to ours. They
communicate using complex
vocalizations with an
enormous range of variation. In
thirty-seven trials,
after a few weeks of color
training, they always
brought me the ball in the correct
color.

Murmuring. Lilly smiles. He has their interest.

LILLY (CONT'D)

A scientist you should all know — Gregory Bateson — wrote to me that he believes the intelligence of dolphins and humans may be comparable. But since they never developed hands to manipulate their environment, they direct their intelligence toward interpersonal...

(smiles)

...or inter-dolphin relationships. He believes they are, in all likelihood, better therapists than many humans.

BARNEY OLIVER

That's interesting. But what does any of this have to do with extraterrestrials?

Murmurs of agreement.

DRAKE

Roswell.

Silence.

OTTO STRUVE

Come on. That's a rumor.

DRAKE

One persistent enough that the odds of there being something to it are pretty good. And Roswell isn't the only one. They don't just crash — they fly around. So why don't they land and say hello?

MELVIN CALVIN

Maybe they don't want to?

DRAKE

Right. Or they've evolved in such a way that they don't use radio waves. Or language the way we know it. What if intelligence uses clicks?

SU-SHU HUANG

Like a dolphin?

DRAKE

Like a dolphin. If we want to know how many civilizations are out there — we multiply all the factors required for one to come into existence. Habitable zones. Life-friendly conditions. Civilizations that don't wipe themselves out before they develop spaceflight. You can put that in a formula.

Excited murmuring.

DRAKE (CONT'D)

The best evidence for extraterrestrial life is us. Because we exist. So let's say they're out there — why aren't they talking to us?

LILLY

They communicate. They use different sounds for different things. In one experiment I removed the red ball from the tank — the dolphins talked to each other about it. Coordinated during the search. They are an alien intelligence right here on this planet. extraterrestrials — learn to talk to dolphins.

Murmuring.

BARNEY OLIVER

But you've spent years working with them and you still don't understand their language.

OTTO STRUVE

You want to teach dolphins English in order to communicate with aliens?

SILENCE.

OTTO STRUVE (CONT'D)

How does that help you when you have no idea how extraterrestrials communicate? Dolphins don't use radio waves.

LILLY

They use echolocation. Their sounds
— and those of whales — can be
heard hundreds of miles through the
ocean. If we understand their WAY
of communicating, we can derive how
alien civilizations might
communicate — once we know their
physical parameters.

Silence.

LILLY (CONT'D)

(smiling)

If you're looking for aliens — I've
got some in a tank. They love fish.

DRAKE

We're scientists. Let's find out if
it's true.

A telephone rings in an adjacent room. Pearman steps out.

SU-SHU HUANG

It sounds crazy. But it sounds
logical.

Pearman returns with a serious expression. Everyone looks at
him — they can tell something significant has happened.

J. PETER PEARMAN

Melvin Calvin has won the Nobel
Prize in Chemistry.

Everyone looks at Melvin Calvin, who sits there completely
overwhelmed.

Then the room erupts. Everyone jumps up and embraces Melvin.

MUSIC: Little Richard — Lucille

Pearman waves Drake and Lilly over. They emerge from the side
room carrying bottles of champagne and glasses. Corks pop.

INTERCUTS:

- Everyone toasts each other
- Some of the scientists push the tables aside
- A few begin to dance
- Melvin is hugged and embraced from all sides

MUSIC: Transition to: Gary U.S. Bonds — Quarter to Three

INTERCUTS:

- The party is in full uninhibited swing. Ties are loose and crooked.
- Otto Struve pours champagne directly from the bottle into Su-Shu Huang's mouth
- Other scientists carry Melvin Calvin through the room on a chair, cheering him on
- The scientists dance
- Barney Oliver drinks champagne from his shoe while the scientists egg him on. He drains the shoe and holds it up triumphantly to the cheering crowd.
- Drake has tied his necktie around his forehead and sits completely drunk next to an equally drunk Lilly in front of the projector, looking at dolphin slides.
- Melvin Calvin climbs onto a table and addresses the room.

MELVIN CALVIN

Here's to the aliens, people. We
are the Order of the Dolphin.

Everyone cheers. Someone shouts: "Dolphins are the shit."

Pearman collapses drunkenly next to Lilly and Drake.

LILLY

(slurring)

So if you wanna find out how to
talk to dolphins... uh... aliens:
come on by. We'll teach the little
bastards English. I'm gonna build
us a house where we live with the
dolphins.

DRAKE

How's that supposed to work? They
live in saltwater. Like... like
noodles.

Everyone laughs.

LILLY

I'm Dr. John Lilly. You guys handle
the funding, I'll handle the rest.

J. PETER PEARMAN

Order of the Dolphin.

PEARMAN, DRAKE, LILLY (TOGETHER)

Order of the Dolphin.

Everyone toasts.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - NASA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

An unremarkable government building in Washington. A sign above the door reads "NASA Space Task Group."

INT. NASA HEADQUARTERS - OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: 1963

Lilly, Drake and Pearman stand in a NASA office. Behind a desk sits a stern-looking man. A nameplate on the desk reads "James Webb - Director."

He looks the three scientists over with a hard stare, then glances down at the papers on his desk.

CLOSE ON: Grant application.

An "APPROVED" stamp comes down on the application.

EXT. ST. THOMAS - DOLPHIN POINT - DAY

SUPER: 1963

A beautiful day on St. Thomas. Exotic plants and flowers in bloom. The sea is turquoise. Gulls cry overhead.

A construction site directly on the water, on a rocky stretch of coast.

A concrete structure is going up. Construction workers in Speedos - all of them latently, inexplicably attractive - build, drill, and work the site. They wear hard hats. One of them removes his helmet and wipes the sweat from his forehead in a way that is somehow sexy, his six-pack glistening. He cracks open a can of soda and drinks.

The staff at Dolphin Point wear Speedos throughout. They appear regularly in the background - unhurried, effortlessly and inexplicably attractive

HECTOR, a very large construction worker, also in a Speedo, carries a steel beam on his shoulder onto the site.

Steel cables with loops descend from above. Eager workers slip them over the ends of the beam. Hector looks up.

Two workers lean out from the upper floor and give a thumbs up. They haul the beam upward. Hector gives a thumbs up as well, turns around, and walks off.

In front of the building, on an open stretch of ground, DR. JOHN LILLY stands with his back to the construction. He wears a suit.

Beside him stands PABLO, the foreman. He has a snorkel around his neck and is also wearing a Speedo. A set of blueprints is spread out between them.

PABLO

Dee construction, she is going as planned, Señor Doctor Lilly. We expect to stay on schedule.

LILLY

Good. And make sure the upper floor is structurally reinforced.

PABLO

Like you said, Señor. But you really want dee pool running all dee way into dee living room?

LILLY

It's not a pool. It's a dolphinarium.

PABLO

Forgive me, Señor.

LILLY

The ocean waves supply the dolphinarium with fresh water. The dolphins will be able to swim right into the house.

PABLO

But... what for?

LILLY

(smiling)

To learn from them.

In the background, Hector carries another steel beam onto the site.

PABLO

Learn? Learn what?

LILLY

Communication.

PABLO

What does a dolphin have to say
that's so exciting?

Lilly puts on a pair of safety goggles.

The camera circles around them until we see Pablo and Lilly from behind, slightly from above. In front of them the sea glitters and a flat rocky expanse stretches out.

LILLY

What would you want to ask a
dolphin?

PABLO

I don't know, Señor. Why dey jump
out of dee water, maybe.

LILLY

What do you think? Why do they do
it?

PABLO

(shrugs)
Boredom? What else you gonna do
when you spend all day in dee
water?

LILLY

And wouldn't it be something if
they could tell us — instead of us
just guessing?

A warning siren sounds. Then an explosion rocks the rocky ground. Stones are blasted from the earth. An enormous cloud of dust rises and engulfs Lilly and Pablo. It settles. Excited shouts in the distance.

PABLO

Dey could tell us where to find dee
best tuna.

Workers in Speedos arrive with wheelbarrows and begin loading the rubble.

LILLY

If they're truly intelligent, they
wouldn't give that away.

PABLO

Den ask dem, Señor. If dey tell you
— you know dey're not dat smart.

We see Lilly and Pablo from the front again. They are slightly dusty. Juan approaches.

JUAN
Marine Studios, dey called. You can
have dee dolphins.

LILLY
Very good. Call them back. We'll be
ready.

In the background, Hector carries another steel beam into frame.

EXT. MARINE STUDIOS - DAY

UNDERWATER. Diffused light. Two silhouettes drift lazily through the pool. Pamela. Sissy.

PETER'S POV: He makes his rounds. The water warm. Familiar. The silhouettes of the two-legged ones up at the edge, wavering as always.

From above — muffled, excited — children's voices. Many of them.

Peter sets course for the center of the pool. Accelerates.

He explodes through the surface —

ABOVE WATER — a wall of faces. Children, mouths open. Adults with cameras. Everyone staring at him.

He spins. Hangs for a moment in the air.

Then the water. Silence.

He makes a lap. Sets course again.

This time — mid-jump, on the left side of the pool — something unfamiliar.

A stretcher. Men. Sissy is being lifted out of the water.

Peter lands.

UNDERWATER: He turns immediately. Searches.

Pamela. But Sissy — gone.

He circles. Waits.

The stretcher lowers back into the water. A fish lands in the pool. Pamela swims over, curious, comes to rest on the stretcher –

The stretcher rises.

ABOVE WATER: Peter holds his head above the surface. Watches as a wet cloth is laid over Pamela. Watches as she is lifted into the truck. Watches as the doors close.

Peter is alone in the pool.

He dives. Surfaces. Dives.

The water does not answer.

A stretcher lowers into the water. On his side. Toward him.

A fish lands close beside him.

Peter does not move.

Two-legger voices from above. Coaxing. The familiar pattern. Come. Here. Good boy.

Peter knows the pattern.

He dives.

UNDERWATER: The fish lies on the bottom of the pool. Peter hangs in the water. Still. Light breaks from above.

Above – voices. Consultation. Disagreement in the tone.

Peter hears it.

He swims slowly to the bottom. Takes the fish in his mouth.

Swims with it to the edge of the pool.

Sets it down.

Then turns toward the stretcher.

And swims toward it.

ABOVE WATER – the stretcher rises. Water runs off. Air. The squeal of metal.

Peter's gaze falls on the wall opposite.

A picture. A dolphin. Large. Colorful. Below it, a word:

FLIPPER.
Then cloth. Darkness.

EXT. MARINE STUDIOS / MIAMI STREETS - DAY

SPLIT SCREEN.

LEFT: Workers drape wet cloths over Sissy. Her fin twitches once. Then still.

RIGHT: A yellow cab fights through Miami morning traffic. In the back: CARL SAGAN (29), briefcase on his lap, looking out the window.

MUSIC IN: Prince Buster — Madness.

LEFT: A forklift. The stretcher carrying Peter is hoisted into the air. Below him the pool shrinks. Men shout instructions. One of them dumps a bucket of water over him.

RIGHT: Sagan pays the driver. Tips well. Picks up his briefcase. Glances briefly at the sky.

EXT. MIAMI AIRPORT - DAY

SPLIT SCREEN.

LEFT: The trucks roll onto the tarmac. In the back — the stretchers, the cloths, beneath them the rhythmic rise and fall of flanks. Life. Still.

RIGHT: Sagan enters the departure hall. Checks the board. Gate 7. St. Thomas. He strolls. No rush.

LEFT: Ground crew haul the stretchers across the asphalt into the cargo hold. One of the men stumbles. Curses. The stretcher wobbles. The dolphin beneath it — motionless.

RIGHT: Sagan stops at a kiosk. Picks up a magazine. Life. Cover: astronaut in space. He smiles briefly. Tucks it under his arm.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

SPLIT SCREEN.

LEFT: The cargo hold. Half dark. Three stretchers. A man with a hose moves from dolphin to dolphin. Water runs over the cloths. Drips onto the floor. The hum of the engines.

RIGHT: First class. Sagan leans back. A stewardess sets a cocktail in front of him. He nods thanks. Pulls out his notebook. Writes something. Looks out the window into the clouds.

EXT. ST. THOMAS AIRPORT - DAY

SPLIT SCREEN.

LEFT: The cargo hatch opens. Blinding Caribbean light. The stretchers come out. More buckets of water. One of them sloshes over the side. Nobody notices.

RIGHT: Sagan steps out of the terminal. Warm air. He takes off his jacket. Throws it over his shoulder. An open red convertible is waiting. He puts on his sunglasses.

EXT. COASTAL ROAD, ST. THOMAS - DAY

SPLIT SCREEN.

LEFT: Two trucks make their way along a narrow coastal road. Turquoise sea to the right. Palm trees. The trucks lurch over a pothole. Inside — water sloshes off the cloths.

RIGHT: The convertible. Wind. Sagan's hair. The sea to the right. The same road.

The two vehicles — on the split screen — travel side by side.

Sagan glances briefly to the left, as though he might be seeing the trucks.

He looks back ahead.

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT, ST. THOMAS - DAY

The screens come together. One image.

The trucks park. Workers open the cargo doors.

The convertible pulls up beside them. Sagan gets out.
Stretches.

He watches briefly as the first stretcher is unloaded.

Then he walks past the building, following the sound of
voices.

He rounds the corner —

The pool. The sea beyond it. LILLY (50) and BATESON (59)
stand at the edge, talking. Lilly gestures. Bateson listens,
arms crossed.

Behind them — a splash.

The first dolphin glides into the water.

Sagan stops. Watches.

SAGAN
Impressive.

LILLY
(without turning around)
That's real science. Mr. Sagan, I
presume.

Sagan nods. Pulls down his sunglasses. Looks at the pool.

Staff in Speedos tend to the dolphins in the background.
Hector carries in a basket of fish.

SAGAN
Which one's the smartest?

A brief pause.

BATESON
That hasn't been determined yet.

A second splash. Then a third.

The music ends.

Lilly turns around, greets Sagan warmly and rubs his hands
together with purpose.

LILLY
So — we're really just waiting
for...

He seems to notice something. Everyone turns.

CUT TO: JOHN Lovatt.

JOHN LOVATT (30, full beard, vaguely hippie-ish, camera around his neck, shorts, shirt) comes around the side of the building toward the pool. He spots the dolphins and immediately takes a photo.

Then he sees the scientists, takes another photo, smiles, and walks over to the group.

He shakes everyone's hand.

LILLY (CONT'D)
 ...John Lovatt. He'll be documenting the experiment photographically. John was recommended by Dr. Bateson — he's worked as a photographer on several expeditions.

LILLY (CONT'D)
 The staff here are from Puerto Rico. You won't find better hands for dolphins anywhere.

Lilly turns to go and waves for the others to follow.

LILLY (CONT'D)
 Come on — let me show you the house.

Sagan, Bateson and Lovatt follow Lilly toward the building. Instead of a front wall, the facade is open. The dolphinarium extends into the house itself. Along the pool edges there are walkways. At the far end of the pool: baskets of balls, pool noodles, flags, cards printed with letters, words and images. Microphones hang from the ceiling.

The dolphins follow them, curious.

LILLY (CONT'D)
 This is our dolphinarium. Separated from the open sea by nothing but a natural stone wall. Twice a day the tide flushes fresh seawater in.

Lovatt takes photos.

LILLY (CONT'D)
 This is also where the experiment will take place.

SAGAN

Where did the dolphins come from?
Were they caught in the wild?

LILLY

Better. They were liberated. From a television studio. Which means they're already used to people. They know how we communicate.

SAGAN

And how are you going to run the language training?

LILLY

Well — Dr. Bateson will focus on participant observation and evaluate the experiment scientifically. Mr. Lovatt will document it photographically. And I...

Lilly reaches into a bucket, pulls out three fish and tosses them into the water.

LILLY (CONT'D)

...will try to teach the dolphins words. If Dr. Bateson is right — if evolution has wired dolphins for communication — then they should actually be smarter than us when it comes to interspecies contact.

One of the fish is launched back out of the pool toward Lilly. Peter and another dolphin chatter. Lilly smiles.

LILLY (CONT'D)

The key is play. It's how children learn best too.

At the far end of the pool there's a door. A staircase leads upward.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A living room furnished in typical 1960s style.

LILLY

As you can see — a perfectly normal living room. Somewhere to step back, reflect, talk things over.

He waves for the others to follow and heads back toward the door. They go upstairs.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT - FLOATING ROOM - DAY

A room with a wardrobe, a bed, and a desk. In the center: a large, round tank. Beside it, a piece of equipment with a tube ending in a leather mask, hanging from a hook.

The tank is filled with water.

SAGAN

What is that?

Lovatt takes photos.

LILLY

That's a flotation tank. A new approach to meditation. You lie in it and you're weightless. You breathe through the mask.

Everyone is quiet. They look at the tank.

BATESON

You built a flotation tank on NASA's budget?

LILLY

We're trying to establish a basis for communication between two entirely different species. If it were easy, someone would've done it already.

He taps his temple.

LILLY (CONT'D)

You have to think outside the box. And the best way to do that is with an empty head.

Bateson takes out a notebook and writes something down. The experiment has begun.

LILLY (CONT'D)

Next door there's a small bathroom, a small office, and a small kitchen.

He goes through the door into the adjoining room.

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT - BALCONY - DAY

The group steps out onto a balcony. The Caribbean stretches out before them, along with the dolphin pool where the bottlenoses swim.

SAGAN

There are worse places to run an experiment. When do you start?

LILLY

Tomorrow. Everything's ready.

Sagan nods.

BATESON

Frank Drake isn't coming?

SAGAN

He just published his famous Drake Equation. He's tied up - staying at the observatory. Maybe he'll make it out sometime.

Juan steps onto the balcony in a Speedo.

JUAN

Señor Doctor, everytheeng ees ready.

Sagan looks at him, slightly confused. Squints briefly. Then crosses his arms.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Ees everytheeng okay, Sir?

SAGAN

Do I know you from somewhere?

JUAN

But of course, Sir. My parents, dey rented dee beach house to your parents when dey were on holiday here. I was very small back den, though. My mother always say I had mischief on dee brain.

Sagan looks at Juan skeptically. Then nods slowly.

SAGAN

Right. Of course.

LILLY

Come on inside. There are some
snacks set up in the living room –
we can go over everything there.

MUSIC IN: Wes Montgomery – Full House

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT - POOL - DAY

MUSIC: Wes Montgomery – Full House

MONTAGE. Lilly's clothes change from day to day. Bateson's don't. The staff wear Speedos. When it rains – rain hats and rubber boots. Hector appears regularly. Between shots, the dolphins chatter.

– Lilly holds up a picture of a ball. Sissy swims off and retrieves one in the wrong color. Lilly shakes his head. Peter brings the right one. – Fish.

– Lilly tosses Sissy a ring and points at Pamela. Sissy flicks the ring with her snout to Pamela, who catches it. Lilly points at Peter. Pamela tosses it to Peter. Bateson takes notes. – Fish.

– Lilly shows Peter a picture of a dog. Peter dives. Sissy and Pamela chatter and look around. Bateson takes notes. Then Peter appears from the side. He has a brown poodle in his mouth. It's wriggling.

MUSIC: Stops.

Lilly and Bateson react with alarm. Bateson drops his notepad. Both rush to Peter and extract the poodle from his mouth. It stands at the pool's edge and shakes itself off.

Hector arrives out of breath. He picks the poodle up and looks at it anxiously.

HECTOR

I am so sorry, Señor Doctor, Sir. I
was looking after dee dog of Maria,
my neighbor.
She had to go to dee hospital
because her father, he has a very
bad heel spur and he can barely
walk anymore. And he has a flower
shop where he has to stand all day.
But dee pain, it got so bad he
couldn't walk no more.

(MORE)

HECTOR (CONT'D)

So he went to dee hospital where he hoped dey would operate. But on dee way dere, he broke his leg. Dee dog must have fallen into dee pool by accident. I am so sorry, Señor.

LILLY

(sternly)

That was careless, Hector.

HECTOR

I know, Señor. I am sorry.

LILLY

Dolphins are predators. They hunt large fish together. They even kill great white sharks.

HECTOR

I am truly sorry, Señor. It won't happen again. I'll put him in dee car.

Hector hurries off. Lilly and Bateson look at each other in silence. Bateson writes something in his notebook.

MUSIC: Wes Montgomery — Full House resumes.

MONTAGE CONTINUED

— Lilly tosses Pamela a red ball and signals Peter to retrieve it. Pamela swims off with the ball, Peter follows. Peter comes back with it. — Fish.

— Lilly throws various objects into the water. He holds up a card with a padlock on it. The dolphins dive. Sissy brings Lilly a wooden spoon. Lilly shakes his head and points at the picture. Pamela chatters at Sissy. Sissy dives again and brings up the padlock. Lilly smiles and nods. Bateson notices "beak propulsion". — Fish.

— Lilly jumps into the pool with the dolphins. Bateson takes notes.

— Pamela brings Lilly a pool noodle. He holds up a picture of a ball. Peter shakes his head and chatters. Lilly holds up a picture of a green ball. Peter shakes his head and chatters. Lilly holds up a picture of a pool noodle. The dolphins nod enthusiastically. — Fish.

— Lilly stands before his flotation tank, his back to us. He unbuttons his shirt.

MUSIC: Ends.

EXT. OUTER SPACE - NIGHT

Only a heartbeat. It pulses through the darkness.

Lilly floats naked in the void, eyes closed. He smiles.

Then he opens his eyes.

Stars and galaxies ignite and blaze into view. Cosmic nebulae. Lilly drifts through the universe.

His heartbeat pulses outward like a wave through space.

Dolphin sounds join in.

Lilly listens. He nods — he understands.

EXT. CARIBBEAN SEA - DAY

MUSIC: Serge Gainsbourg - Couleur Cafe

A gorgeous day. Scattered clouds. The sea in every shade of blue and green. Gulls.

St. Tropez vibes.

A wooden Caribbean fishing boat with a small motor cuts across the water. The paint is slightly peeling — in the sunlight it looks almost like a painting.

In the boat: MARGARET HOWE (22). Dark hair, pixie cut. Bardot-style sunglasses. An oversized Breton sweater with blue stripes, sleeves pushed up. Tight blue jeans. She's barefoot — a pair of espadrilles sit on the bench beside her. Her finger- and toenails are painted red. A small gold chain bracelet on her wrist.

The wind plays with her hair. She's sensual without being overtly sexual. Margaret is enjoying the ride.

The boat heads across the water toward Dolphin Point.

A wooden dock juts a few yards out to sea. A NO TRESPASSING sign is posted at its entrance.

The boat arcs wide in front of the property, then pulls up to a small dock.

CLOSE ON: Margaret's bare foot — red nails — touching down on the wood.

Margaret steps out and ties the boat to the dock. Everything about it is easy, elegant, sensual.

Once the boat is secured, she straightens up and walks along the dock toward the house — unhurried, fluid.

Bateson stands at the back of the pool, notepad in hand. The photographer is there too. Lilly stands beside him, arms crossed, watching her arrive.

Margaret is aware of all of them. She takes her time.

She reaches the pool's edge. The dolphins watch her with curiosity.

Margaret walks along the edge of the pool toward the scientists. The dolphins follow her. Peter in particular watches her closely.

She reaches the group just as the song ends. The dolphins gather near them.

MARGARET

I was just passing by.

Lilly looks around. The open sea stretches out before them. There are no houses along this stretch of coast.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

(deadpan)

They say you have dolphins here.

LILLY

(deadpan)

And if we did?

MARGARET

Then I'd be interested in seeing them.

LILLY

Why?

MARGARET

Because I find marine mammals interesting.

LILLY

Sea otters are marine mammals.

MARGARET

Only partly. I have heard they also come ashore.

LILLY

That may be true. It doesn't explain your visit.

MARGARET

Well — you're either rich and eccentric, or you're scientists, or both. Any of those would be reason enough to stop by. If you are scientists, I'm hoping you'll tell me what you're working on. I'm very interested in science.

Margaret looks the three men over.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

I think you ARE scientists.

LILLY

Possible.

MARGARET

What are you researching?

LILLY

Interspecies communication.

MARGARET

That's genuinely interesting.

LILLY

Interest tends to be erratic, Mis—

MARGARET

Miss. Howe. Margaret Howe.

LILLY

Well, Miss Howe, science establishes premises and pursues them through a research framework. It's goal-oriented.

MARGARET

I don't know what "erratic" means, but I know that interaction is emotional. Fluid. Empathetic. Structure is always useful for a setting. But communication has to flow — it has to happen intuitively.

(MORE)

MARGARET (CONT'D)
You learn best through play. And
dolphins are known to love to play.

LILLY
Is that right? And how exactly
would you communicate playfully
with a dolphin?

MARGARET
I have no idea. I don't have a
dolphin.

Lilly is quiet for a moment.

LILLY
(deadpan)
Well. It may surprise you to hear
that we do, in fact, have dolphins
here.

Peter lets out a cheerful squeak.

MARGARET
(smiling)
I knew it.

Margaret kneels at the edge of the pool and reaches out to
the dolphins. As she does, the gold chain bracelet slips off
her wrist into the water.

Peter dives and brings it back up to her.

Margaret smiles at him and strokes his snout. Peter makes
soft, friendly sounds.

LILLY
When can you start?

MARGARET
Right now.

Bateson makes a note.

Lilly nods.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
Is it normal to hire someone this
spontaneously?

LILLY
In research, the unexpected is a
relevant variable.

Margaret nods.

MARGARET
What would my role be?

LILLY
Try to communicate with them. Write
everything down. Everything
matters.

Margaret nods.

LILLY (CONT'D)
Let me introduce you to the team.
Dr. Bateson here is an
anthropologist – participant
observer.

Bateson and Margaret shake hands.

LILLY (CONT'D)
John Lovatt is our photographer.
He's documenting everything for
posterity.

Lovatt smiles at her. Margaret smiles back. They like each
other immediately.

LILLY (CONT'D)
We also have a vet coming. And I'm
Dr. John Lilly. Behavioral
researcher.
(looks around)
I'd say let's go inside and go over
the rest.

The group turns and heads into the house.

Peter calls after Margaret – a bold, playful sound.

She turns and laughs.

Once they're gone, Peter makes a quieter sound. Softer. Like
something just clicked.

He dives.

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT - POOL - DAY

A beautiful, sunny day. Margaret sits at the edge of the
pool, legs dangling in the water.

While the other two dolphins play lazily with each other, Peter works intently with her, staying close. Margaret rewards him with strokes and jots notes on a clipboard.

Bateson observes from the balcony, making notes.

Sagan approaches. Casually dressed, sunglasses on.

SAGAN

Oh, Hello. We haven't met, Mrs. ...

MARGARET

(staying seated)

Miss. Margaret Howe. I was just hired.

SAGAN

Welcome to the team. I'm Carl Sagan — I stop by regularly to check on the project's progress. What's your doctorate in?

MARGARET

I don't have a doctorate. I go with my gut.

SAGAN

Interesting. Why not.

In the background, a young man in a Speedo — ERICH (19) — carries in a large basket of fish with a smaller basket balanced on top. He looks very Hispanic.

He sets the large basket down beside Margaret. Sweat glistens on his six-pack. He elegantly wipes the sweat from his forehead and runs his fingers through his black hair. Sagan looks at him briefly.

SAGAN (CONT'D)

I wonder how much a basket like that weighs.

MARGARET

(laughing)

Ask him. The staff here are very friendly.

SAGAN

I'm afraid my Spanish isn't very good.

ERICH

(with a German accent)

Oh, I do not speak Spanish at all,
mein Herr. I was born in
Oberzitzelfingen, in Germany. My
parents came from Puerto Rico and
lived zere as guest workers.

Juan appears and plants his hands on his hips.

JUAN

Why are you keeping dee ladies and
dee gentlemens from their work,
Erich? Dey don't have time for your
stories.

ERICH

I am not telling stories. I only
explained zat I do not speak
Spanish.

JUAN

Do you hear anyone here speaking
Spanish?

ERICH

No. Of course not.

JUAN

Den why would eet interest dem
whether you speak Spanish or not?

ERICH

Because Señor Sagan said he could
not speak to me because he does not
speak Spanish.

JUAN

Why would he speak to you in
Spanish when nobody here speaks
Spanish?

ERICH

He should not speak to me in
Spanish. I do not speak Spanish
eizer.

JUAN

You should not speak to him in
German eizer. Why do you assume he
speaks German?

ERICH

I am not assuming anyzing. I only said I do not speak Spanish.

JUAN

If you speak to Señor Sagan, you speak to him in English. Everyone here speaks English. We are speaking English right now. Dis is not respectful to our employers.

Juan stares at Erich and crosses his arms.

JUAN (CONT'D)

When I promised your fazer I would hire you — because he ees dee husband of a cousin of my godchild — he made a point of telling me dat you had been in Germany for a very long time and had picked up some German habits.

ERICH

I have no German habits.

JUAN

You eat rolls with cheese and sausage. In dee morning. For breakfast. Like eet ees nothing. We all see eet and we ask ourselves: how can you do dat and feel okay for dee rest of dee day? What ees dat? Why don't you eat breakfast like everyone else in dee world? Esmeralda from dee grocery store told me she orders dee sausage special from dee mainland for you. Dat ees very eccentric. And now you stand here and you don't want to speak English to dee ladies and dee gentlemen.

ERICH

Rolls with sausage are not eccentric. Zey provide zee necessary salts and fats for a healthy start to zee day.

JUAN

If dee udder of a cow knows so much about nutrition, den I wonder why we are at dee top of dee food chain and not dem.

(MORE)

JUAN (CONT'D)

I think dat ees what your fazer meant by German habits. Instead of thinking about dolphins, you think about dee udders of cows. Dat ees very German, and eet ees what brought dee Germans to grief. If you don't want to come to grief yourself, I advise you to put aside dis German spirit and focus on dee here and now.

ERICH

Ja, mein Herr.

JUAN

And your here and now ees a basket full of fish. And eet does not matter what dey are called in German. Here dey are called herring.

ERICH

Zat is a German word.

Erich catches Juan's dark look, sets the small basket of fish beside Margaret, picks up the large basket, and hurries off.

JUAN

(almost pleading)

Please excuse him. He ees a good boy. But he was exposed to bad influences.

Juan leaves.

Sagan watches them go. Their argument fades as they walk off.

Silence. Just the water.

Peter dives.

One second. Two.

He surfaces at the pool's edge. A herring in his mouth.

Margaret reaches out to take it — Peter shakes his head. Chatters.

MARGARET

(laughing, not looking up)

Mr. Sagan. I think Peter's got something for you.

Sagan turns around. Peter presents him with the fish.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
My guess is he thinks you should
eat something.

SAGAN
(laughing)
I actually am hungry.

He takes the fish from Peter. Nods his thanks. Peter squeaks happily, throws himself around the pool once, then makes his way back to Margaret.

Sagan looks at the fish in his hand.

Then at Peter.

SAGAN (CONT'D)
So — what kind of progress are you
making?

MARGARET
(to Peter)
Roll over.

Peter rolls onto his back. Margaret strokes his belly. In the distance, Erich and Juan are still arguing, gesturing emphatically.

PETER
Moooooore!

Margaret strokes his belly again.

PETER (CONT'D)
Mooooore!

Sagan's eyes go wide.

SAGAN
This is incredible. He's talking.
He's actually talking. Great work,
Miss Howe. I have to find Lilly
right away.

Sagan hurries toward the house. Margaret tosses Peter a fish. The other dolphins swim over.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Lilly sits on the sofa, surrounded by diagrams and textbooks, writing. Sagan enters. Lilly looks up and smiles.

LILLY
Ah, Carl. Good to see you.

Sagan is practically buzzing. He gestures toward the pool.

SAGAN
He talked. Peter. He said "more."

LILLY
(nodding)
Yes, that's one of the words he
has.

SAGAN
But that's incredible.

LILLY
I think Peter knows quite a few
more words than that.

SAGAN
(overwhelmed)
...quite a few more words. And
which one of us can say
e've learned even a single word of
Dolphinese? Maybe that tells us
something about the relative
intelligence of our two species.

Lilly laughs and nods.

LILLY
You think they're smarter than us?

Sagan weighs the possibilities.

LILLY (CONT'D)
(laughing)
Well. Be glad they can't build
tanks.

Both laugh.

LILLY (CONT'D)
I'm heading to Los Angeles tomorrow
morning. That new dolphin show on
television...

Sagan groans and rolls his eyes.

SAGAN
Flipper. Dreadful.

LILLY

Our dolphins came from them. We owe them something. So tomorrow I'll be at a party at Ivan Tors' place. His wife wants to know how the experiment is going.

SAGAN

Is Bateson staying overnight then?

LILLY

(surprised)

Nobody's here at night.

SAGAN

Nobody? Who looks after the dolphins?

LILLY

They're fine. Margaret -

SAGAN

- lovely woman. Good addition to the team.

LILLY

(nodding)

- she goes home in the evenings. Bateson has a family. So do I. The dolphins are fine. There are three of them. I think they're glad to have a little peace from us.

SAGAN

I think Drake is going to want to hear about this.

LILLY

How is he?

SAGAN

Since he published the equation his phone hasn't stopped ringing.

LILLY

As it should. Masterpiece.

Juan enters.

JUAN

Perhaps dee gentlemen would like some coffee and a snack?

Lilly and Sagan look at each other, nod, and grin.

LILLY

That's one thing we have in common
with the dolphins. When there's
food involved, we show up.

Bateson comes in from the hallway. He smiles.

BATESON

Hello, Carl.

JUAN

Okay, snacks for three - and I'll
bring sometheeng out to Señorita
Howe.

BATESON

The Order of the Dolphin, assembled
once again.

SAGAN

Melvin Calvin actually had pins
made. Mine arrived in the mail
yesterday.

Bateson and Lilly look at each other, eyebrows raised
in appreciation.

BATESON

Ours'll probably show up in three
weeks then.

Everyone laughs.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

1964. A perfect sunny day. A motorboat sits anchored on blue
water. BELLA VANDERBERG (25, blonde, pretty) and EDDIE
MCCULLEN (31, receding hairline, plaid jacket) are sitting in
it. A small coastal town visible in the background.

MUSIC: Warm, cheerful. The kind of music that means
everything is fine.

BELLA

What a beautiful day, Eddie.

EDDIE

Sure is. And you make it even
better.

BELLA
(bashful)
Oh, stop it.

EDDIE
But you know what would make it
even better than that?

BELLA
Oh?

Eddie gets up and kneels in front of Bella. She looks at him, giggling shyly.

BELLA (CONT'D)
Eddie, what on earth are you doing?

EDDIE
Bella...

He pats his pockets. Nothing. He pats them again.

BELLA
What is it, Eddie?

EDDIE
Where did I...

SPLASH! A dolphin surfaces next to the boat, clicking excitedly.

BELLA
(delighted)
Oh Eddie, look! A Dolphin!

The dolphin clicks at Eddie. Eddie seems to understand perfectly and leans over. The dolphin opens its mouth. Resting on its tongue: a gold ring with a stone.

EDDIE
(relieved)
What would I do without you, buddy.

Eddie takes the ring. The dolphin clicks and splashes around happily.

Eddie kneels before Bella again and holds out the ring. Bella giggles.

MUSIC: Swells dramatically.

Suddenly Eddie's face changes. His eyes go wide. He grabs his chest. Bella screams.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
(gasping)
Flipper... get Bella... out of
here.

Flipper clicks and swims away. The boat — Bella still screaming — bobs behind him.

Flipper cuts urgently toward a wooded stretch of coastline.

The camera pulls back --

INT. HOTEL - BALLROOM - NIGHT

-- and we're looking at a screen.

ZOOM OUT: Malibu. A large, elegant hotel ballroom. A high-society party. The rich, the beautiful, the eccentric everywhere. Candles. Crystal glasses. Smoke. Laughter. Flipper is playing on a screen.

The camera finds --

DR. JOHN LILLY standing next to MRS. CONSTANCE TORS (38, blonde, elegant, the smile of a woman who knows exactly what she's done).

Lilly stares at the screen, puzzled.

On the screen, Flipper leaps out of the water.

He hangs there a moment too long. Almost three-dimensional.

Lilly blinks.

The colors on the screen are moving. Not much. But they're moving. Flowing into each other, forming patterns.

LILLY
Flipper, huh? Interesting concept.
Visually too. How'd you get the
colors to move like that?

Mrs. Tors smiles. The smile is very knowing. Her face is perfectly normal -- and somehow not.

MRS. TORS
That's probably the LSD, John.

Lilly looks at her.

LILLY
Interesting.

He looks back at the screen.

LILLY (CONT'D)
Not what I pictured.

He says it completely calmly. But he glances down at his shoes. They seem to move slowly.

LILLY (CONT'D)
I'd love to grab something to
drink, Constance, if that's okay.

Mrs. Tors just nods. The smile stays.

MUSIC IN: The Zombies -- She's Not There.

The guests begin to dance. Elegant sixties moves. Everything perfectly normal --

-- except it isn't.

Lilly moves through the room. Walking in a straight line. Every step a small decision.

Around him, a party is happening that only in his perception is starting to tilt.

Not dramatically. More like the world has been set slightly off-kilter and nobody has noticed yet but him.

A waiter walks by carrying a tray of glasses -- and for a moment the glasses hang in the air, long after the waiter has already moved on.
Lilly glances over. Keeps walking.

Two women laugh. The laughter arrives late, like it's coming up from somewhere deep. It echoes, repeats. Stays in the room after the women have already stopped laughing. The echo folds into the music. Lilly shakes his head.

A man with a cigar -- the smoke rises and for a moment forms something that looks like a dolphin. Lilly stops. Looks. The smoke is smoke.

He keeps walking.

The dancers: their movements leave trails. Every arm that lifts leaves a trace behind it. Lilly sees music. Not as a vision -- more like the sounds have a texture that settles on people's bodies. The Zombies sound like a color. Blue-green. He knows that isn't right.

He nods at a guest and gives a brief smile.

The guest smiles back.

The smile stays a second too long.

Lilly nods again and keeps walking.

He reaches a drinks table. Pours himself a glass of water.
Drinks. The water tastes like nothing and everything at once.
He sets the glass down.

On the screen at the far end of the room: Billy and Sam jump
on their bikes.

BILLY
(from off screen,
distorted, trailing)
We gotta get help. Sure hope Pa's
got harbor duty
today.

The dolphin's clicking -- from the screen -- rolls through
the room and settles over the music.

Lilly turns around once. The whole party. The dancing people.
The screen. The candles, whose flames seem to be moving in
sync.

He reaches into his jacket pocket for a pen. Doesn't find
one. Doesn't find a jacket either -- he can't remember when
he took it off.

He sees the door.

LILLY
(to no one)
Excuse me.

He walks toward the door. Calm. Purposeful. A scientist who
just needs some air.

Lilly turns back one last time toward the screen.

On the screen, Flipper leaps out of the water.

He hangs in the air.

And hangs.

Lilly opens the door and leaves the room.

INT. HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Music: continuing.

Lilly is no longer wearing shoes or pants. Just socks, boxers, a dress shirt, and his tie.

He moves carefully down a hotel hallway, thinking through each step. He keeps one hand on the wall and makes his way slowly forward.

A COUPLE, party guests, come toward him laughing and stop short when they see Lilly.

MAN

Dr. Lilly, isn't it? Do you need some help?

LILLY

No thanks, I'm fine. Just trying not to fall.

MAN

Fall? Fall where?

LILLY

You don't see those drop-offs? Watch your step.

MAN

Why in the world did you take your pants off?

LILLY

(muttering)

What pants?

The couple shakes their heads and walks on.

Lilly carefully makes his way toward the elevator. We see him from behind. He pulls off his shirt with some difficulty. Then leans against the wall again. Leans against the elevator door and presses the button.

LILLY (CONT'D)

Clothing separates our bodies from reality.

DING. - The door opens.

Lilly falls into the elevator.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

John Lilly lies in a hospital bed, connected to beeping, blinking machines. His hair is uncombed. He looks a little worse for wear. His eyes are closed.

Bateson sits in a chair beside the bed, an unlit pipe in his hand, his tie loosened slightly. An empty coffee cup and a book sit on a small table beside him.

He takes a lighter from his pocket and flicks it on.

Lilly opens his eyes and groans softly.

Bateson puts the lighter away.

BATESON

John. You're finally awake.

LILLY

Gregory. So nice that you are here.
Where am I?

BATESON

At the Hospital.

LILLY

Oh. When did you get here?

BATESON

The moment I heard you'd collapsed
at the party.

(mildly reproachful)

THREE days ago.

LILLY

(surprised)

I've been here three days?

BATESON

In a coma.

LILLY

Oh.

BATESON

What in God's name happened? They
found you naked in an elevator.

LILLY

Well... I had some rather
extraordinary experiences, you
see...

BATESON

What kind of experiences.

LILLY

With a substance called LSD.
Remarkable. It expanded my mind in
ways I wouldn't have thought
possible.

BATESON

You were found naked in an
elevator. Whatever was dignified
and interesting in your mind was,
in reality, a one-way ticket to a
guided tour of the local psych
ward.

LILLY

I'm in a psych ward?

BATESON

No, thank God. But it would've been
the more sensible choice, for
someone in the state you were in.

LILLY

If new experiences were
predictable, there'd be no point in
having them. You could just read
about them.

BATESON

It might be wise to NOT mention
that to our funders, should they
ask.

LILLY

Who's been looking after the
dolphins?

BATESON

Margaret's been a tremendous help.

LILLY

Yes. She's a great asset.

He sits up abruptly in bed.

LILLY (CONT'D)

Come on, Gregory. Let's fly back to
St. Thomas.

He jumps out of bed, gets tangled in the equipment cables,
and crashes to the floor.

BATESON
(deadpan)
Or you could stay another night.

LILLY (O.S.)
Gregory?

BATESON
Yes?

LILLY (O.S.)
Am I blind?

BATESON
That depends on your definition of
blind, John.

LILLY (O.S.)
I can't see anything.

BATESON
Are your eyes open?

LILLY (O.S.)
I think so?

BATESON
You know, reality is generated by
the brain. It's highly subjective -
- dependent on the perceptual
capabilities of the individual.
Photons carrying information strike
your optic nerve, and your brain
processes that information and
constructs YOUR version of reality.

LILLY (O.S.)
That's a very thorough explanation,
Gregory. Thank you. My optic nerve
isn't receiving any signals right
now. So either it's completely
dark, my eyes must be closed, or
I'm blind.

BATESON
It isn't dark.

LILLY (O.S.)
That narrows it down. My eyes are
open too. Perhaps the LSD has
disrupted signal transmission from
the optic nerve to the brain. What
do you think?

BATESON
That's a plausible hypothesis.

LILLY (O.S.)
Maybe it's just a temporary
disruption in signal transmission.

BATESON
THAT is speculation.

LILLY (O.S.)
You're right. I should stick to
hypotheses rather than speculation.

BATESON
Speculation has its place when a
hypothesis doesn't hold. But as
long as you have a hypothesis, it's
worth pursuing.

LILLY (O.S.)
I always find our conversations so
enriching, Bateson.

BATESON
Thank you. Shall we call the nurses
and get you back into bed?

LILLY (O.S.)
That sounds like an excellent idea.

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT - POOL - DAY

MUSIC IN: Nat King Cole — Nature Boy.

The pool. Late afternoon. The surface barely moves. The light
on the water is the color of something almost gone.

MARGARET stands at the edge. She wears a white cotton
negligee — thin as a breath, lace at the hem. It belongs in a
bedroom. Or a dream. She is barefoot. Her red toenails at the
very edge of the stone.

She looks into the water for a long moment.

Then she dives. Headfirst. Clean.

UNDERWATER.

Bubbles stream upward in slow silver threads. The world above dissolves into light and surface and nothing certain. Down here the colors have drained away. Blue-grey. Green-grey. The negligee billows around her like something loosening. Like something letting go.

Margaret rights herself.

She is weightless.

She hangs in the water — arms barely moving, hair spreading outward — and looks.

Peter is there. Across the pool. Still. He watches her arrive. He does not move toward her.

He waits.

She waits.

Between them: water. Distance. The soft pulse of the current. Seconds that belong to no clock.

Then Margaret moves. Slowly. An arm extends. She drifts toward him — not swimming, barely — just allowing herself to close the space between them.

She reaches out.

Her fingertips find his snout.

He holds.

A breath. Two. Three.

His eye — dark, patient, without bottom — finds hers and stays.

Then he moves.

Not away. Around.

He begins to circle her. Slowly. He rotates as he moves — unhurried, deliberate — turning on his own axis like a thought completing itself. The water folds around him without resistance.

Margaret turns with him.

Her eyes follow. Then her shoulders. Then her whole body — slow, unhurried — pivoting in the water as he passes. She is not chasing him. She is answering him.

He completes the circle.

He returns to her.

His snout finds her open hand. He rests there for a moment – the weight of him, the warmth of him, impossible and real.

Then he pulls away again. Not far. He drifts backward into the grey-blue middle distance and hangs there, watching her.

She watches him.

Nothing happens.

This is the thing that is happening.

He comes back to her differently this time. From below – rising slowly beneath her, close enough that she can feel the displacement of water against her skin. She looks down. He looks up. Two faces, inches apart, the surface of things suspended between them.

She reaches down and her hand finds the curve of his flank. She lets it rest there. He does not move. She does not move.

Then – slowly – he begins to rise.

And she rises with him.

They ascend together through the water. Vertical now, facing each other, close. He circles her one last time as they climb – she turns with him, hand trailing – the surface coming toward them in fragments of light and air and the world above.

The water thins. The light brightens.

They break the surface together.

ABOVE WATER.

Margaret exhales. A soft sound. Not quite a word.

Peter is beside her. His breath – from the blowhole – warm and unhurried.

They rest. The water moves around them in small rings, outward and outward and gone.

The music holds. The pool holds. The late light holds.

Nobody is watching from the balcony.

The microphones hang silent above them, far away.

This moment belongs to no experiment.

No notebook. No grant application. No formula or equation or slide projector or Nobel Prize or radio telescope pointed at the infinite dark.

This moment belongs to them.

Only to them.

The song finds its last notes.

SLOW PULL BACK — until they are small in the frame. Two figures in still water. The sea beyond the wall. The sky enormous above.

The music ends.

The water moves.

That is all.

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT - POOL - DAY

A gorgeous day. Gulls cry overhead.

John Lovatt stands on the balcony, taking photographs.

Margaret swims to the edge of the pool after her dance and pulls herself up. She picks up a white towel and dries herself off.

Lilly comes around the corner, a bag of his things in hand.

He looks different. Looser. More relaxed. His hair isn't as neat as it used to be. No tie. Shirt unbuttoned. Sunglasses.

Margaret and the dolphins both greet him when they see him.

MARGARET

Dr. Lilly. It's good to have you back. How are you?

LILLY

Very well, Miss Howe. I made a little detour through a rehabilitation clinic after my... accident. But in hindsight, the time away did me good. Please — call me John. How are you?

MARGARET

Good. We're making progress, I think.

LILLY

(smiling)

You should get yourself a swimsuit. Save your clothes.

MARGARET

(laughing)

Oh, that was spontaneous. It felt right.

LILLY

(with a hint of mystery)

I learned a great deal about intuition while I was away, Miss Howe.

MARGARET

Oh — please, call me Margaret, Doctor.

Lilly raises an eyebrow.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

John.

LILLY

Perhaps we need to focus less on intellectual learning and more on the connection between minds.

MARGARET

What do you mean?

LILLY

Do you remember what you said when you first arrived? That communication happens intuitively. Between two living beings. We've been focused on the interface — when we should be focused on the connection. You see?

MARGARET

(laughing)

Not quite yet.

LILLY

I think intuitively, you already do.

MARGARET

Doctor... John... I've been thinking too. We— but don't you want to settle in first?

LILLY

No. Tell me.

MARGARET

We come in the morning. We work with the dolphins. We go home in the evening. We come back. But interaction happens in life.

LILLY

But we do live with them.

MARGARET

In a work setting. What we need is an everyday setting.

LILLY

You're thinking along the right lines, Margaret. There's a team meeting later. Take the time until then to figure out what you want, how you're going to sell it, and how you're going to convince us.

Lilly smiles, waves as he goes, and heads inside.

LILLY (CONT'D)

(over his shoulder)

One of the core skills in science is learning how to sell. A convincing story is what keeps the funding coming.

Bateson comes around the corner.

BATESON

Good morning. I saw a cab pulling away. Who was it?

MARGARET

Dr. Lilly's back.

BATESON

Good. Then we're all here again.
(looking Margaret over)
You're wet.

MARGARET
(laughing)
Field research.

BATESON
The most dangerous kind. Depending
on the field.

He heads inside.

BATESON (CONT'D)
Now that we're all here, it's time
we implement our research design
effectively and with focus.

Margaret keeps drying off.

The dolphins play in the water.

Margaret notices John Lovatt photographing her from the
balcony. She reacts as though she finds it uncomfortable —
but as she heads inside, she smiles up at him.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bateson sits next to Lilly on the sofa. John Lovatt is on a
beanbag chair. Margaret is in an armchair.

Bateson looks resolute and indignant.

BATESON
This is absurd.

He looks at Lilly. Lilly shrugs and gestures for Bateson to
take it up with Margaret.

Bateson looks at Margaret seriously.

MARGARET
We're trying to establish an
interaction with the dolphins that
goes beyond interpreting body
language and sounds — am I right?

BATESON
Yes.

MARGARET
Then it's not just about pure
communication. We're two different
species. With different physical
makeups.

(MORE)

MARGARET (CONT'D)

We could never produce the clicking sounds dolphins use, whether we understand them or not.

BATESON

Go on.

MARGARET

If we had similar physical capabilities, it would just be a matter of learning a foreign language. But we don't. So what we're dealing with is the essence of interaction itself. And that includes motivations, emotions, habits, rituals, personality. Culture.

Bateson looks at Margaret for a moment – wordless, but understanding – and writes something in his notepad.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Weren't you in Papua New Guinea?
With the cannibals?

Bateson nods.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Did you come to understand them by watching from the outside?

BATESON

What are you getting at?

MARGARET

You were there. You lived with them. Laughed, cried. You were part of their community. That's how you understood them.

Bateson writes something in his notepad. He writes: "Cold reading?" Does not respond.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

We come here in the morning. We work. We talk to the dolphins. We go home in the evening. Come back the next morning. A mother teaching her child to speak doesn't go home in the evenings. She lives with her child.

Silence.

BATESON
You are not the dolphins' mother.
And your desire for connection is
not a scientific method.

Silence. Lilly looks up at the ceiling.

LILLY
What's your counter-proposal,
Gregory?

Bateson looks at Lilly. Then Margaret. Then Lilly again.

Nothing.

LILLY (CONT'D)
Exactly.

He nods to Margaret. She nods back.

LILLY (CONT'D)
Call Pablo.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT - LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Lilly, Bateson, Lovatt and Margaret sit in the living room.
They're wearing different clothes. Bateson is wearing a
different tie — but it's loosely knotted and sitting crooked.

Lilly is relaxed and at ease, dressed more casually than
before his LSD trip.

CLOSE ON: Pablo.

Pablo comes in. He sets his blueprints on the table and holds
his notepad in one hand. One blueprint rolls off the table.

Pablo sets the notepad down, bends over, picks up the
blueprint, and puts it back on the table.

Then he picks up the notepad and realizes he doesn't have a
pen.

He puts the notepad back on the table and leaves the room.

Outside, the gulls cry.

Pablo comes back in with a pen in his hand.

He picks up the notepad, takes a professional look around the
room, then looks at the scientists, who watch him with blank
expressions.

PABLO

You wan' to make dee living room
waterproof so a dolpheen can swim
in it?

LILLY

Could you do that?

PABLO

And how would dee dolpheen get up
here? You gonna carry him?

MARGARET

We could build a lift. The pool is
directly below us.

LILLY

Then when the tide comes in, we
could use it to exchange the water
too.

MARGARET

That could work.

PABLO

Forgive me dee question. I'm not a
scientist. I don' know about such
theengs. But what ees dee dolpheen
supposed to do in dee living room?

MARGARET

Live with us. So we can understand
him better.

PABLO

But he already leeves. Down in dee
pool. Wid dee other dolphins. Why
don' you just put a bed in dee
garage?

MARGARET

Because he'd only get distracted by
the other dolphins.

Pablo looks at Bateson. Bateson loosens his tie a little
more.

PABLO

And how high should dee water be in
here?

LILLY

About... mid-thigh?

LILLY (CONT'D)

We could chain the desk to the wall
above the water.

MARGARET

And the bed too. So it hangs just
above the surface.

Pablo takes notes.

PABLO

And what about when dee dolpheen
has to go? You know ... Number one
or number two?

LILLY

We connect the lift to the wave
system - that way the water gets
exchanged twice a day and
everything else gets flushed out
with it.

PABLO

You gonna teach heem to poo only
twice a day?

LILLY

Perhaps. We're scientists. We do
what's necessary.

PABLO

What eef dee water was jus' changed
and he has to go again?

LILLY

Then he goes.

PABLO

Den it floats around.

LILLY

That's the price we pay.

PABLO

Forgive me, Señor, I don' know
about these theengs. You theenk he
learns better up here than down
dere?

LILLY

That's what we intend to find out.

PABLO

Eef dee water comes up to dee
middle of dee Señorita's thigh, dee
dolpheen can only swim horizontal.
He cannot dive.

MARGARET

He's not here to dive. He's here to
talk.

BATESON

(faintly pained)
Is it structurally sound?

PABLO

Dee sister of my brother-in-law has
a neighbor who ees very...
voluminous. She ees truly massive.
Probably dee largest person on all
of St. Thomas. She even won a
competition for eet once. She
leeves in an apartment on dee
second floor.

LILLY

That's fascinating.

PABLO

Yes, she gets her food delivered
because she cannot get around so
well anymore. Many people theenk
she ees undisciplined. People
always theenk dat about large
people. But an endocrinologist
found out eet ees her thyroid. So
now she gets pills for eet.

LILLY

And do they help?

PABLO

Dat ees not so clear. To be honest,
eet could never be found out,
because shortly after she got dee
prescription, she passed away very
suddenly. We were all very sad.
Because she always gave good
advice.

LILLY

I'm sorry to hear that.

PABLO

And den dey had to knock out dee outer wall because dey couldn' carry her down dee staircase. A digger lifted her out of dee house and destroyed dee entire front garden in dee process. But as long as she was alive, dee structure was never at risk. And we made sure during dee original construction to use concrete and build to a high structural standard. You could probably keep a whale in your living room.

MARGARET

A dolphin will do.

Pablo takes notes.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

One more thing.

PABLO

Señorita?

MARGARET

A swing.

PABLO

A swing?

MARGARET

(nodding)

In the room. So I have something to do when there's a little downtime.

PABLO

Even scientists need a break, Señorita.

He writes it down.

PABLO (CONT'D)

Well — I have everytheeng I need. I'm going to dee hardware store.

Pablo leaves. The scientists remain.

A gull cries.

Pablo comes back into the room. He picks up the blueprints from the table and leaves again.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT - LILLY'S ROOM - EVENING

CLOSE UP: A sugar cube. Black background. The individual crystals clearly visible.

The tip of a pipette enters frame from above. It holds a clear liquid.

The pipette drops one drop onto the cube.

Then another.

The liquid soaks in.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT - LILLY'S ROOM - EVENING

CLOSE UP: Lilly's tongue.

The sugar cube is placed on his tongue.

WIDE ON SCENE: Lilly closes his mouth. He looks out the window.

Night falls. A sky full of stars blazes over the sea.

Lilly gazes out, lost in thought.

Then he picks up a pen and writes: We are part of a universe from which our bodies separate us — yet within this body lives a mind that still opens a gateway into infinity.

Lilly stands, undresses, climbs into his flotation tank, and closes the lid.

EXT. OUTER SPACE - NIGHT

Lilly opens his eyes. The universe blazes around him. More fantastic, deeper, more infinite, brighter and darker than before.

The universe hums in an all-pervasive, silent drone.

Lilly's heartbeat pulses into infinity and merges with the stars. The light of the stars seems to merge with Lilly.

He is no longer a man in space — he is one with space.

Dolphin clicking pulses through the infinite dark. It merges with Lilly and his heartbeat.

A dolphin "swims" through space toward him.

CLOSE UP: Lilly's face and the dolphin's face.

They are close. They look at each other. Connected.

The dolphin squeaks.

Lilly smiles. He understands.

The camera pans up into the starry sky.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Time-lapse from the window. As the camera drifts slowly back into the living room, the night passes and the sun rises. By the time the camera settles inside, it is day.

The living room has been converted into a pool.

The bed hangs from chains bolted to the wall, suspended a few inches above the water's surface. The desk is mounted the same way. A stool stands in the water, its top just clearing the surface.

Microphones hang from the ceiling.

In the center of the room, HECTOR stands on a ladder, mounting a swing to the ceiling.

LILLY and BATESON stand on the small landing at the top of the stairs — dry ground. Lilly's hair is uncombed. No jacket — just a pullover sweater. He is deeply, visibly relaxed. Bateson's tie sits slightly crooked. He does not look like a man who slept well.

MARGARET stands in the water in a wetsuit, watching the work.

Hector climbs down.

HECTOR
So, Señorita. Dis time eet should
hold.

Margaret nods. Hector folds the ladder and leaves.

A CLICK.

A RATTLE.

Where the window was, there is now a larger opening.

PABLO appears — this time wearing the diving mask and snorkel. He rides the elevator up. At the top, he gives a thumbs up, presses a button, and rides back down.

BATESON

I don't know, John. This is... how
do I put it... unusual.

LILLY

Sometimes we have to take unusual
paths to get the unknown to reveal
its secrets.

BATESON

What secrets does the unknown
reveal when you let a dolphin swim
around your living room?

LILLY

(smiling)
Something about relationships.

BATESON

About relationships in an unnatural
context. No dolphin lives like
this.

Pablo materializes behind them.

PABLO

We are ready, Señores.

Lilly and Bateson exchange a look. They look to Margaret.
She nods and smiles.

BATESON

Ready.

Pablo produces a walkie-talkie and pulls out the antenna.

PABLO

(into walkie-talkie)
Juan? Cambio.

JUAN (O.S.)

Pablo? Cambio.

PABLO
Who else? Cambio.

A brief silence.

JUAN (O.S.)
Should I answer dat? Eet sounded
like a rhetorical question. Cambio.

PABLO
Eet was a rhetorical question.
Cambio.

Silence.

JUAN (O.S.)
Bueno. Cambio.

PABLO
Are you ready? Cambio.

JUAN (O.S.)
We are ready. Cambio.

PABLO
Then go. Cambio.

Excited voices from below. A dolphin chatters.

Then — the elevator begins to move. They can hear it.

PABLO (CONT'D)
I don't know if there's something
dignified you're supposed to say in
a moment like this, Señores.

LILLY
What would you like to say?

PABLO
We live in modern times, Señor. Dee
days when you had to carry a
dolphinup dee stairs and into dee
living room are over. Today you can
build an elevator for dat.

All of them fall silent as Peter rises slowly into view
on the lift.

LILLY
That was truly moving, Pablo.

PABLO
Tank you, Señor.

The elevator stops. Peter lies on the platform.

BATESON

How does he get off the platform?

Pablo raises the walkie-talkie again.

PABLO

Juan? Cambio.

JUAN (O.S.)

Pablo, ees dat you? Cambio.

PABLO

(sighing)

Yes. Cambio.

JUAN (O.S.)

Good. Cambio.

PABLO

Why deed no one come up to help
lift dee dolphin into dee living
room? Cambio.

A heated argument erupts from below. Juan's voice rises, giving instructions.

The elevator — Peter still on it — descends.

Then it rises again. This time: TWO SPEEDOS standing on the platform.

They look at Pablo.

Pablo looks at Bateson and Lilly. Bateson nods.

Pablo nods to the Speedos.

The Speedos lift Peter off the platform and lower him into the water.

Peter swims around, curious.

Margaret feeds him and strokes his snout.

The elevator descends with the Speedos on it.

PABLO (CONT'D)

Everytheeng seems to be working.

LILLY

Good work, Pablo.

PABLO

Tank you, Señor. Dees ees not dee first living room I have converted into a pool. Whether a dolphin swims in eet – dat ees really just one more factor to add to dee calculation.

He leaves.

Bateson and Lilly watch Margaret and Peter for a moment.

LILLY

We really do live in modern times.

Lilly turns to leave.

BATESON

Wait a moment, please.

LILLY

What is it?

BATESON

I'll need to write an interim report to NASA regarding our funding. How do you intend to proceed with the research?

LILLY

I think the key to interspecies communication is the mental connection.

BATESON

What do you mean?

LILLY

I had a moment of understanding yesterday. Maybe Margaret's right. Communication is interaction. And interaction is bonding.

BATESON

We're talking about animals.

LILLY

We're talking about living beings.

Lilly turns to face Bateson.

LILLY (CONT'D)

(serious)

What do you think our consciousness is?

BATESON

(shrugs)

A complex interplay of neurological functions?

LILLY

(smiles)

Neurology may just be the vehicle. Energy flows through it. The same energy that flows through the brains of dolphins. It's their bodies that set them apart from us — that make them communicate and think differently. But energy is energy. Everywhere in the universe.
(taps his temple, smiling)
Helmholtz. Joule. THAT could be the key.

BATESON

Or it's that substance you've been taking.

LILLY

It's true liberation. I think in new, infinite spaces.
(smiles)
What are experiments for, if not to explore things?

BATESON

I'll be leaving early today. I have personal obligations. It's my wife's birthday.

LILLY

(smiling)

Please give her my warmest congratulations.

BATESON

Thank you, John.

Lilly nods and leaves. Bateson stays behind. He watches

Lilly go. Then he looks over at Margaret. He writes something in his notepad.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT - LILLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A sugar cube. Black background.

The pipette enters frame. Two drops fall.

The liquid soaks in.

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT - POOL - NIGHT

INT. DOLPHIN POINT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MONTAGE

Night. The pool is unlit — but a single lamp throws light along its edge. The two dolphins move through the dark water. Above the pool, above the sea: a full moon in a sky blazing with stars.

Lilly stands at the edge of the pool in swim trunks. Everything moves slightly. Flows. He is on LSD.

He looks up toward the living room.

CUT TO: THE LIVING ROOM

Light spills from the opening in the wall.

CUT TO: LILLY

He looks up at the night sky. Then down at the water. He feels at one with the night.

Sissy surfaces and breathes out. Fine droplets scatter into the air. Lilly watches. He nods slowly.

LILLY
(to himself)
Of course...

He breathes in, deeply. Stands still. Takes in the world. Then exhales — one long, powerful rush of breath. Like a dolphin.

He laughs.

He spreads his arms wide and lets himself fall

backward into the water. Like falling into a soft bed.

MUSIC IN: The Velvet Underground – Venus in Furs

MONTAGE:

– Lilly enters the water, arms outstretched. Silver bubbles rise through black. The world above dissolves.

– A bare foot. Red-painted toenails. It rests on grey skin. Margaret's foot. She sits on the stool in her negligee, stroking Peter with her foot. He wags his head and leans into it. Margaret laughs.

– Lilly drifts in the black water. Out of the dark behind him, one of the dolphins rises toward him. The other swims up ahead.

– Margaret strokes Peter's face with both hands. She looks loose. Happy.

– Lilly moves through the pool alongside the dolphins. He flows more than he swims. He is trying to swim like a dolphin. The clicking of the dolphins fills the water.

– Margaret sits on the swing. She pushes off.

– Lilly drifts upward toward the surface – rises more than swims – and exhales in one hard burst. A dolphin surfaces beside him and breathes out. Then both descend.

– Margaret swings higher. The swing passes over Peter, who watches her from below. She is enjoying this.

– Lilly and the dolphins spiral through the black water, nearly coiling around each other. The clicking echoes. Lilly imitates the sounds. To him, they sound almost dolphin.

– Margaret swings wilder. She laughs.

– The spiraling grows wilder. The sounds grow wilder. More urgent. More driven.

– Margaret's swinging and Peter's enthusiasm build together, wilder and wilder.

– Dawn breaks over Dolphin Point. Lilly floats on his back. He squeaks. He clicks. The sounds are not dolphin.

Margaret lies on her bed above the water. She sleeps, smiling.

Peter watches her.

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT - POOL - DAY

The next morning. A beautiful day. A seagull sits beside LILLY, who lies face-down on the pool's edge, asleep.

He wakes. His hair is disheveled; he looks hungover and confused.

Lilly groans -- the groan of a man with no good relationship with waking up -- and sits up. His legs dangle into the pool.

His glasses lie on the pool's edge beside him. He puts them on.

BATESON approaches. His tie sits slightly crooked and loose. Mild rings under his eyes. He looks tired.

He glances at Lilly and keeps a perfect poker face.

BATESON

Rough night?

LILLY

(pained)

Night was fine. Waking up was rough.

BATESON

What happened? Were you drunk?

Lilly shakes his head.

Bateson draws a breath. He doesn't want to let on that he disapproves of LSD.

Lilly wrestles with himself -- trying not to say it was LSD.

Bateson takes a pipe and tobacco pouch from his pocket and begins to fill it.

BATESON (CONT'D)

Are you losing your objectivity?

LILLY

Which objectivity?

BATESON

The kind you had before. The perspective of a researcher. A scientist.

LILLY

Who says I've lost it?

BATESON

Was sleeping here last night part of the plan?

Lilly weighs several answers. Then he turns to Bateson and looks at him with resolve.

LILLY

How do you study something you don't know?

BATESON

You develop hypotheses. Methods. Assumptions. Trials.

LILLY

(serious)

What we're trying to do here isn't just read the animals' body language or interpret their sounds and behavior. We're trying to communicate. Why? Because we want to know if we can communicate with creatures that share this planet with us. What for? To figure out how we might communicate with creatures that don't.

Bateson takes a lighter from his pocket.

BATESON

Yes.

LILLY

The nature of the unknown is that it's unknown. Which makes it unpredictable. So we have to be able to adapt our research design to respond to the unexpected.

In the background, ERICH begins feeding the dolphins. He walks slowly around the pool, tossing fish so the dolphins have to perform tricks and flips to catch them. Lilly and Bateson don't notice.

BATESON
 (irritated)
 Such as?

LILLY
 We show the dolphin a picture of a red ball -- he retrieves a red ball. Why? Because he gets a fish for it. Is that communication? It shows they can abstract and draw conclusions. It shows intelligence. But conditioning isn't communication, Gregory.

BATESON
 What is it, in your view?

In the background, PAMELA executes a backflip and gets a fish.

LILLY
 Communication is the exchange of assumptions about reality. Information. Subtext. Do you really think we can negotiate trade agreements with aliens -- peace treaties -- by showing them picture cards of balls? They'll probably show us some right back.

BATESON
 (lighting the lighter)
 And you believe mind-altering substances help you better understand a dolphin's assumptions about reality?

In the background, Sissy swims upright and backward across the pool and is rewarded with a fish.

LILLY
 Yes. Because I'm learning that my perception of reality isn't the only one. I'm developing an understanding of other perceptions.

BATESON
 Do you never doubt yourself? Your methods?

LILLY
 All the time.

BATESON

But?

LILLY

But you and I both know, Gregory,
that the only way to face the
unknown is to come armed with
imagination.

Bateson sighs -- the sigh of a man carrying considerable weight.

In the background, both dolphins launch from opposite ends of the pool and pass each other in midair.

LILLY (CONT'D)

Your mind and my mind, Gregory --
our bodies keep them apart. But
we're human. We can talk to each
other. The dolphins are
intelligent, no question. But
they're an entirely different
species. We have to find ways to
understand how they perceive the
world.

BATESON

The problem with you, John, is that
you are exactly as crazy as you are
brilliant. Our funders are not as
unconventional as you are. Bear
that in mind. Always.

Only now do Lilly and Bateson notice Erich and his game with the dolphins.

Lilly smiles, straightens his glasses, and lands back in reality. Bateson crosses his arms and watches in silence as the dolphins perform for fish.

Erich reaches them on his feeding round. The dolphins follow.

Erich holds the bucket out to Lilly, who waves it off with a grateful smile.

LILLY

I'd rather have a coffee.

Bateson rolls his eyes. Erich grins.

LILLY (CONT'D)

Bateson'll take one.

Erich holds the bucket out to Bateson, who looks uncertainly from Lilly to Erich. The dolphins chatter hungrily in the water.

Lilly gives Bateson an encouraging look and nods toward the dolphins with a grin.

Bateson sighs, pockets his pipe and lighter, reaches into the bucket and throws. Sissy leaps and snatches the fish from the air.

LILLY (CONT'D)

You knew what to do, Gregory. Not because anyone told you -- because you felt it. That's communication with the expectations of your social environment. That's human intelligence.

BATESON

And what is dolphin intelligence?

LILLY

(smiling)

You'll find out when you manage to break through and understand your own mind.

Bateson draws a long breath and walks away.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

MARGARET sits at the desk, working through her notes -- writing, flipping through textbooks. Her legs dangle into the water.

JUAN stands in the pool in waterproof waders, bare-chested, scrubbing the pool floor and walls with a long-handled brush. PETER watches him with keen editorial interest.

JUAN

Yes, Señor Dolpheen -- I know dis is bothering you. I'll try to be quick about eet. But you want a clean living room, don't you.

Peter chatters -- half indignant, half good-natured. Margaret laughs without turning around.

JUAN (CONT'D)

You making progress, Señorita Howe?

MARGARET

Some. Not as much as we'd like.

Peter chatters indignantly and swims between Margaret and Juan. He pushes toward Margaret and demands to be petted, which she laughingly fends off.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Is somebody jealous?

Peter protests.

JUAN

If only he could talk.

MARGARET

That's what we're working on.

Juan scrubs on, cheerfully.

JUAN

If I had to talk through my nose,
noseing would come out but
nonsense.

Juan finishes his round and leaves the room. Margaret watches him go.

MARGARET

(to herself))

Talking through your nose...

Peter imitates her tone exactly. Margaret's attention sharpens.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

(deliberate)

Do you actually understand what I'm
saying?

Peter imitates the melody of the question.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Oh.

She writes something in her notes. Peter swims closer, seeking contact. He presses himself against her and imitates the question melody again. Margaret looks up and strokes his snout. Peter squeaks happily.

He does it again. More strokes.

Then he turns and swims to the far end of the room. Margaret calls to him. He makes as if to respond -- starts toward her -- then breaks off mid-movement and goes still.

He looks at her. Not away. Not distracted. At her. Waiting.

She tries again. Same result.

Something is off. She can't name it.

BATESON appears at the top of the stairs and looks into the room. LOVATT appears behind him and raises his camera. Margaret glances up at Lovatt with a brief smile. He smiles back and slips away.

BATESON

Miss Howe. How are you getting on?

MARGARET

Pretty well, I think.

(to Peter, stressing the
question)

Right, Peter? Do you understand me?

This time Peter imitates the speech melody. Margaret's face lights up. She stands, goes to Peter, and strokes him.

He soaks it up.

Bateson nods and makes a note.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

I've been wondering -- could you train their blowhole? So they could shape human sounds more precisely?

BATESON

And how exactly would you train his blowhole?

MARGARET

He trains it himself. By watching how we form sounds.

She leans toward Peter and speaks very clearly.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Ma-ma.

Peter produces a sound somewhere between "wah-wah" and "uh-waaah." Margaret beams and strokes his snout. Peter chatters happily.

Bateson makes another note and leaves.

Margaret crosses to the desk and writes. Her back to Peter now. Pen moving. Done with him for the moment.

Peter watches her.

PETER

Wah-wah.

INT./EXT. DOLPHIN POINT — DAY — ONECUT

MUSIC IN: Jazz. Sparse. Hi-hat only — patient, unhurried. Then, as Lilly moves, a double bass enters. A walking line. It leads without pushing.

Pablo and Juan stand in front of Lilly's flotation tank, studying it with great concentration.

Everything pulses and breathes. The walls seem to expand and contract. Colors are unnaturally deep.

Lilly stands beside the tank, arms crossed, wearing nothing but a towel around his waist. He is watching Juan and Pablo. He is tripping.

While he alone remains constant, everything around him ripples and shifts.

JUAN

Well, Señor Doctor Lilly, Sir. I theenk we understand dee problem.

LILLY

You can see the smell too? It kind of tapers upward, doesn't it.

JUAN

No, Señor. We smell eet.

Lilly considers this briefly.

LILLY

Interesting... I think. ...Or? ...What I'm wondering is WHY the tank smells like that.

PABLO

When deed you last change dee water?

LILLY

I thought you changed the water.

PABLO

No, Señor. We don't touch your scientific equipment. Last theeng we want is to break sometheeng.

LILLY

What's there to break? It's water.

(considers)

You can't break water. Because it's a liquid. At most you could evaporate it, but it'd come right back together once it condenses.

(laughs)

What a fascinating medium.

JUAN

Well, Señor Doctor, DAT might be dee source of dee problem. Dee water has probably turned.

Juan's voice lingers strangely, merging with the room, throwing long, trailing echoes.

LILLY

Turned.

He thinks about this and finds the idea unsettling.

PABLO

Yeah, maybe algae grew in eet.

LILLY

You mean like seaweed and stuff?

PABLO

Uh, no. Not like dat. Much smaller. But dey change dee water.

LILLY

Can you change the water?

JUAN

If you tell us where dee drain is, we'll let eet out and I'll scrub dee tank real good. I got a new root brush.

Lilly looks at Juan with admiration. The root brush is the most interesting thing he's heard all day.

LILLY

I'd really love to take a look at that root brush sometime. It sounds genuinely fascinating.

(MORE)

LILLY (CONT'D)
(considers)
The thing is...

His words drift through the room like a wave of air. Lilly watches them go with interest.

LILLY (CONT'D)
...when I built the tank, I
apparently forgot to put in a
drain.

PABLO
Eet hasn't been changed since eet
got here?

LILLY
The way you say that, it almost
sounds like an accusation.

PABLO
Well, eet's no wonder dee water
turned den.
(to Juan)
We could scoop eet out with a
bucket and den put in a drain.
Or we put a pump with a hose in dee
tank and pump dee water into dee
living room.

JUAN
Better not, Señor Pablo. Dee last
dolphin died from bacteria in dee
water. He was floating dead in dee
pool for several days before anyone
came to pick heem up. Eet was a
very sad time for all of us. And we
got a really enormous bill from dee
garbage truck.

PABLO
You had heem picked up by dee
garbage truck?

LILLY
What else would you use?

Pablo thinks about this and can't come up with a better answer. He points at the tank.

PABLO
(emphatically)
When you build theengs, eet's
always incredibly important to
theenk about drains.
(MORE)

PABLO (CONT'D)
Because dee world consists of an
immense amount of water.

Lilly looks at him like a man who has just articulated a
profound scientific insight.

LILLY
(impressed)
That's true. There really is a
tremendous amount of water on this
planet. Please, go on.

PABLO
I just wanted to point out dat
drains are important. But you don't
always theenk about dem. Dere are
probably countless theengs in dee
world with no drain at all. Don't
worry, Señor Doctor Lilly – we'll
take care of eet.

LILLY
You two are trully an indispensable
asset to this research facility.

JUAN
Tank you, Señor.

Lilly nods and heads for the stairs. They look to him like a
sheer drop into the void.

Everything moves. Everything breathes. The staircase seems
unnaturally steep and long.

Lilly braces himself against the wall and moves carefully
forward.

Juan watches him go.

JUAN (CONT'D)
(concerned)
Should I come with you, Señor
Doctor?

Lilly waves him off – then immediately regrets it, having
risked losing his grip.

LILLY
Thank you very much, Juan. You're a
very kind and always helpful
person.

Lilly grips the railing with both hands and carefully tests whether he can turn toward Juan. It's difficult, but it works.

It occurs to Lilly how far up Juan is standing.

LILLY (CONT'D)

This is a controlled descent. I've done this kind of thing before. I'm actually pretty good at it by now.

JUAN

Señor Doctor?

LILLY

(calling up)

Why don't you call me John?

JUAN

You are my employer, Señor Doctor Lilly. Dat would not be appropriate.

Lilly nods and gives a thumbs up — then immediately regrets it and grabs the railing again.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Your pineapples are coming today. But I'm wondering if maybe dere was a mistake in dee order.

LILLY

Is it a doubt or a concern?

JUAN

More of a concern, I theenk.

Lilly keeps gripping the railing.

LILLY

(calling up)

You know, doubt is an important tool of self-improvement in science. Did I have doubts about making it down these stairs without incident? Yes. But if I'd had the concern that I might fall, I might never have taken this path at all. Concerns lead to bungalows. Doubt invents handrails.

Juan stares at Lilly somewhat blankly, then nods.

JUAN

Tank you for dee advice.

LILLY

(calling up)

Of course. I always enjoy talking
with you. I should keep moving
though – see you later.

Lilly keeps gripping the railing and continues his descent
toward the living room.

He is visibly relieved when he reaches the landing.

Lilly takes a breath and looks back up. The staircase looks
steep and treacherous. The stairwell breathes and flows. The
steps appear uneven.

In the flooded living room, Margaret sits on a stool. Peter
swims close to her, chattering with demanding insistence.

The living room too warps and shifts, colors occasionally
vivid and unnaturally saturated.

LILLY (CONT'D)

Miss Howe, how are you doing?

Margaret turns to him and smiles. Her face is painted black.
Her lips are painted white.

To Lilly, this is completely normal – and fascinating.

MARGARET

Hey, John. We're making progress,
but Peter is very demanding today.
He's practically pushy.

LILLY

He's a young guy. As a human he'd
probably be fifteen or so. He's
likely got other things on his mind
besides science.

Peter chatters excitedly and demandingly, pressing himself
toward Margaret, who deflects him with gentle affection.

Lilly thinks. He delivers his next line like a revelation.

LILLY (CONT'D)

I was fifteen once myself.

MARGARET

What were you thinking about back
then?

LILLY

I was a real troublemaker, you have to understand. A completely normal kid. I spent most of my time at fifteen under house arrest because I'd built a bomb in my lab.

MARGARET

You built a bomb?

LILLY

You just mix sulfur, sodium chlorate and charcoal. I did it in a Coke bottle.

MARGARET

But why?

Lilly thinks about this and laughs.

LILLY

What a strange question. The chemical reactions. The interaction of matter at different densities.

Lilly keeps thinking and is completely overwhelmed by his own thoughts.

LILLY (CONT'D)

(euphoric)

Molecules!

Margaret looks at him skeptically.

MARGARET

So why were you under house arrest?

LILLY

Because I underestimated what could happen when you drop a match in there.

MARGARET

I don't think Peter is thinking about bombs.

LILLY

But it would be completely normal for his age.

MARGARET

He's more... physically pushy.

LILLY

You're a scientist now, Miss Howe.
Observe the situation, identify the
problem, form a hypothesis, find a
solution, and try it out. If the
basement explodes, adjust the
formula.

Margaret stares at him blankly.

LILLY (CONT'D)

I really do admire your bond with
that dolphin.

Margaret smiles and strokes Peter's head. Peter responds with
a happy chatter.

MARGARET

(smiling)

Yeah. I love him already.

Lilly turns and heads back toward the staircase, then stops
and looks back into the living room.

LILLY

Your makeup is really...
(thinks)
...precisely executed.

MARGARET

Dolphins "speak" through their
blowholes. It does what our mouth
does. If I imitate his blowhole,
maybe it'll be easier for him to
shape our words.

Margaret looks Lilly in the eyes and forms the syllables with
great deliberateness.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

MA-MA!

PETER

Wah-wah!

LILLY

Wonderful!

Peter gets strokes and presses himself toward Margaret again.
She looks helplessly at Lilly.

LILLY (CONT'D)

Observe. Problem. Hypothesis.
Solution. Experiment. Evaluate.

He heads for the stairs.

MUSIC: A vibraphone joins the jazz.

Once again, Lilly fights his way down what feels like a treacherous staircase.

Halfway down, Sagan comes bounding up from below, easy and light on his feet. He stops short at the sight of Lilly in a towel, gripping the railing for dear life.

LILLY (CONT'D)

Ah, Carl. Really busy around here today.

SAGAN

You doing okay?

LILLY

Oh sure, I'm just on my way down.

SAGAN

You seem a little unsteady.

LILLY

No, I'm just watching where I step.
All good.

SAGAN

Why are you only wearing a towel?

Lilly looks down at himself. He considers.

LILLY

Well - I had algae in my flotation tank.

SAGAN

And so now you're going downstairs?

LILLY

Exactly.

Sagan nods and continues upstairs.

Lilly looks almost relieved. Then he resumes his perilous descent.

Below, at the pool, the sun is beginning to go down.

Bateson, Lovatt, and DR. WILLIAM ANDERSON (39), "The Vet," stand at the pool talking while the vet examines Pamela and Sissy.

They look up as Lilly approaches.

Bateson looks at Lilly. He clocks it immediately — Lilly is tripping again. He is not pleased. He opens his mouth, thinks better of it, and writes something in his notepad.

The other two nod to Lilly.

At the pool too, everything ripples. Bateson, Lovatt and the Vet leave trails behind them when they move. Their voices echo. Sounds are occasionally visible.

BATESON

John, there's a NASA rep coming tonight to get an overview of the project.

LILLY

Wonderful. Because I intend to make a breakthrough tonight.

BATESON

How?

LILLY

I plan to break through the barrier between our minds by establishing a common ground.

(short pause)

A mental one.

BATESON

And how exactly are you going to do that?

LILLY

By giving the dolphins LSD.

Bateson and the vet exchange a look that tells us nothing.

BATESON

And how is that supposed to create a mental common ground?

LILLY

(enthusiastic)

Tesla transmitted electricity — energy — through the air. You've said it yourself: our consciousness is energy. What we need are transmitters operating on the same frequency, so we can transfer conscious energy between minds.

BATESON
With LSD...

LILLY
Yes.

BATESON
How do you know how dolphins react
to LSD?

LILLY
I don't. That's what we need to
find out.

BATESON
And if they die?

LILLY
Then we'll know that LSD is toxic
to dolphins and we'll have gained
an important insight.

Bateson closes his eyes and takes a long, slow breath.

LILLY (CONT'D)
(to the Vet)
Is LSD harmful to dolphins?

THE VET
I have no experience with this LSD.

BATESON
(irritated)
Is it possible you're doing a whole
lot of guessing here, John?

LILLY
Don't tell me you went to the
cannibals in Papua New Guinea with
a meticulously developed research
design and everything went exactly
according to plan.

BATESON
(sharp)
Cannibals and dolphins are two
entirely different matters.
What is your research design?

LILLY
To find out how to achieve genuine
interaction with an intelligent,
non-human species.

BATESON
By drugging them?

Lilly taps his temple.

LILLY
By researching states of
consciousness and drawing
conclusions.

Bateson looks Lilly over — standing there in nothing but a
towel, hair slightly unraveled, thoroughly, visibly tripping.

BATESON
And what conclusions does a
scientist draw when he's only
wearing a towel?

LILLY
For one thing, that drains are
apparently more relevant to human
civilization than anyone gives them
credit for. And for another, that
dolphins have consciousness —
because they see images, form
associations, match them against
what they observe in their
environment, and respond
accordingly. Think about the
poodle.

Bateson stares at him blankly.

LILLY (CONT'D)
If they have consciousness, then
like ours it becomes a perceiving
force through energy and electrical
current.

Bateson rolls his eyes.

LILLY (CONT'D)
Energy is the same in its
fundamental form everywhere in the
universe. Since quantum fields
permeate everything, there must
also be a meeting ground for
energy. Same vibe — same frequency
— same plane.

Bateson stares at Lilly, furious. He lets out a contemptuous
snort and storms off toward the house.

LILLY (CONT'D)

The clarity of my thinking is all
the more remarkable considering
there are sounds flying around
everywhere.

(to the Vet)

So, Dr. Anderson — how do you give
a dolphin LSD?

MONTAGE — VARIOUS LOCATIONS / DAY INTO NIGHT

The music continues. And shifts. The bass line grows more
urgent. The hi-hat pushes harder.

A syringe. Close. The needle finds its mark. Smooth. Grey.
Not human.

Another syringe. The same hand. A different arm.

Lilly's arm.

Lilly doesn't flinch. He watches the needle with scientific
interest.

The music drives.

The light changes. Evening falls over Dolphin Point like
something closing.

EXT. ST. THOMAS AIRPORT — DUSK

A plane descends out of a darkening sky and touches down on
the tarmac.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT — LIVING ROOM — DUSK

CLOSE ON: Margaret's mouth. She forms words with great
deliberateness. Her lips painted white against black. Again.
Again.

Peter presses himself against her. Insistent. Demanding. She
deflects him without breaking concentration.

EXT. ST. THOMAS AIRPORT — DUSK

A MAN IN A SUIT — NASA REPRESENTATIVE (45, crew cut, the face of a man who files reports) — walks across the tarmac with a briefcase. He gets into a waiting taxi. The door closes. The taxi pulls away.

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT — POOL — NIGHT

LILLY stands at the pool's edge, arms crossed. He stares down into the water waiting.

In the pool: Sissy and PAMELA. They move in slow, continuous circles — rotating on their own axes.

Lilly watches them. He does not look concerned. He looks like a man waiting for something to arrive.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT — STAIRWELL — NIGHT

PABLO, snorkel around his neck, crouches in the stairwell laying hoses along the wall. He tests a connection. It holds. He moves to the next one.

A SPEEDO passes him on the stairs carrying a crate with pinapples. Then another. Pablo doesn't look up.

EXT. COASTAL ROAD, ST. THOMAS — NIGHT

The taxi moves through the dark island, headlights cutting the road ahead.

Coming the other way — SAGAN's convertible. The two cars pass each other in the dark without slowing.

Neither driver notices anything remarkable about this.

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT — BALCONY — NIGHT

BATESON stands at the railing. His tie hangs loose. His hair is slightly wrong. He looks out at the sea with the expression of a man reviewing a decision he has already made.

He does not write in his notepad.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT — LIVING ROOM — NIGHT

Margaret has stopped trying to form words. She sits at the stool and strokes Peter slowly. He settles under her hand.

She stares at nothing in particular.

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT — POOL — NIGHT

The dolphins circle. Lilly watches. The dolphins circle. Lilly watches.

Something is not connecting and he knows it.

He puts his hands on his hips. Looks around.

His gaze finds an equipment shed across the yard. Door hanging open. Inside, half in shadow:

A yellow jackhammer.

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT — ENTRANCE — NIGHT

The taxi pulls up to the house and stops. The NASA REP gets out. Straightens his jacket. Looks at the building.

The music continues. Only the music.

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT — FRONT OF HOUSE — NIGHT

Two large trucks are parked in front of the building, their cargo doors open.

SPEEDOS form a chain from truck to door, passing crates hand to hand in the dark. The crates are full of pineapples.

JUAN stands to one side, directing the operation with quiet authority, a clipboard in his hand.

The NASA Rep watches this for a moment.

Juan notices him, nods politely, and returns to the pineapples.

The NASA Rep looks at his watch. Looks at the trucks. Looks at the house.

He goes inside.

EXT. DOLPHIN POINT — POOL — NIGHT

The music cuts out.

Just hi-hats.

A jackhammer pounds through the night.

The NASA Rep moves toward the sound and steps into the pool area.

At the edge of the pool stands JOHN LILLY. A towel around his waist. Hair slightly wild. Safety goggles on. In his hands, a jackhammer, which he drives into the concrete.

In the pool, two dolphins rotate slowly on their own axes.

The NASA Rep approaches.

Lilly's face is focused. Expressionless.

When he sees the NASA Rep, he switches off the jackhammer.

He speaks as though it's still running.

LILLY

You with NASA? You're right on time.

NASA REP

For what?

LILLY

The breakthrough.

NASA REP

What breakthrough?

Lilly sets the jackhammer down and shakes the NASA Rep's hand. The NASA Rep shakes back, somewhat at a loss.

LILLY

Lilly. Dr. John Lilly.
(energized, euphoric)
You see these dolphins?

Lilly pushes his goggles up and points at the pool.

The NASA Rep nods.

NASA REP
What's wrong with them?

LILLY
We injected them with LSD so their
minds and my mind
can resonate on the same
vibrational frequency.

The NASA Rep stares at Lilly, lost.

NASA REP
But why the jackhammer?

Lilly pulls his goggles back down and picks up the
jackhammer.

LILLY
Vibrations, Mr. NASA. Dolphins are
extremely sensitive
to sound waves and pressure waves.
The drill's acoustics
will shake them out of their
lethargy - and then we'll
have direct access to their
consciousness.

A dolphin sound carries in from the living room above. The
NASA Rep looks up. Then back at Lilly, who switches the
jackhammer on again.

LILLY (CONT'D)
Nobody's ever done this before me.

The NASA Rep stares in horror and heads toward the house.
Behind him, Lilly hammers on.

The music starts again.

On the balcony, BATESON stands watching. When he sees the
NASA Rep, he goes inside.

INT. DOLPHIN POINT - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

PABLO kneels in the stairwell, snorkel around his neck,
laying a hose along the wall. He nods to the NASA Rep.

SPEEDOS carry crates of pineapples up the stairs.

The NASA Rep starts up. BATESON comes down toward him.

Deep rings under his eyes. Exhausted. His suit is rumpled.
His tie hangs loose over his shoulder. A notepad in his hand.
His hair is a mess.

He shakes the NASA Rep's hand. Says nothing.

From above – another dolphin sound.

At the top of the stairs, the NASA Rep stops.

In front of him: a living room. A hole has been knocked through the exterior wall. The room itself is flooded. Microphones hang from the ceiling. A bed and a desk are suspended from the wall on chains above the water. A swing hangs from the ceiling.

In the center of the room, on a stool, sits MARGARET. Her back to the door.

A dolphin lies on its back in her arms.

Her right arm and hand move rapidly up and down.

The dolphin squeals with delight.

The NASA Rep looks at Bateson, horrified.

Bateson says nothing. He lets the notepad fall. And goes.

The NASA Rep watches him leave.

A car door closes. An engine starts. A car drives away.

Margaret has heard it. She turns toward the door.

Her face is painted black. Her lips are white. Her hand is still moving.

MARGARET

Oh, it's purely scientific. Define the problem, form a hypothesis, find a solution, run the experiment, evaluate the results.

The NASA Rep stares, speechless.

PETER

MOOOOOOORREEEEEE!

Outside, the jackhammer pounds.

The NASA Rep looks back into the room.

A stamp in red ink hammers onto the frame:

PROJECT TERMINATED!

Then a second:

FUNDING WITHDRAWN!

INT. GREEN BANK OBSERVATORY — DRAKE'S OFFICE — NIGHT

TITLE CARD: A few weeks later.

The music softens — just double bass and a jazz drum kit.

DRAKE sits at his desk in front of his equipment. On the wall, a SETI logo has joined the rest.

He reads through printed diagrams and makes notes.

The door opens.

Drake looks up.

SAGAN steps in and hands Drake a report. He gives Drake an encouraging pat on the shoulder and leaves.

Drake looks at the report.

CLOSE ON: The cover page.

COMMUNICATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE
Dolphin Point Laboratory, St.
Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

FINAL REPORT

An Experimental Investigation of Human-Dolphin Communication
and Interspecies Cognitive Interface

Submitted to: NASA Space Task Group
Principal Investigator: Dr. John C. Lilly
1965

BACK TO SCENE.

Drake sets his diagrams aside, opens the report, and reads.

Not a flicker of expression on his face.

EXT. GREEN BANK RADIO TELESCOPE – NIGHT

The radio telescope rests in moonlight beneath a vast and beautiful sky full of stars.

The door of the office building opens.

Drake steps out. He walks a few paces into the night. The telescope stands before him.

He looks up into the sky. Into the width of the stars.

A long, pained sigh.

Facepalm.

FADE OUT.

POST-CREDITS:

MUSIC: Sam Cooke – Wonderful World

Photographs of those involved, each with a brief line about what became of them.

When Peter appears – as a final note:

RIP. Thank you for this story.