

Cradle of Industry

by
Rob Hackney

Solar Storm Films
[+61] (0)432 323 080

INT. SYDNEY TO PERTH SHUTTLE - NIGHT

Fade in slowly on WINTER VAN RIISE, slumped against the business class cabin's first row window, in and out of sleep.

Dominating audio, a haunting violin piece, punctuated by the occasional soft touch of piano.

An ATTENDANT serves gourmet meals from a cart, coming down the aisle toward him.

He drifts off again.

The attendant stops by his row, watching Winter.

ATTENDANT

Sir?

He opens his eyes, looking up at her.

WINTER

No. Thanks.

EXT. GREAT WESTERN SKYWAY - NIGHT

Two rows of floating markers, red and white, stretch out to the horizon.

The Sydney to Perth shuttle--a twin engine JUMPSHIP capable of carrying sixty--approaches, flying between the markers.

It passes us at speed, following the skyway's curve.

EXT. PERTH DOMESTIC AIRPORT - NIGHT

The shuttle touches down on a landing pad at Perth's domestic airport. Air traffic crowds the sky overhead within local holding patterns.

INT. ABC TAXI - NIGHT

From the rear of a taxi we look out at the long line of COMMUTERS waiting at the cab stand. We pass them all, pulling up beside Winter, at the front of the line with his single piece of carry-on.

He gets in, closing the door as we pull away.

DRIVER (O.C.)

Where to?

WINTER

Leederville. Do you know the Gamestead building?

DRIVER (O.C.)

Yeah.

Winter leans back, drifting off.

EXT. LEEDERVILLE CBD - NIGHT

The taxi cruises between block-wide, glass apartment complexes that stretch into the sky, unnaturally tall.

EXT. GAMESTEAD BUILDING - NIGHT

The taxi pulls up at the curb of one such glass giant. A holographic display on the building reads 'GAMESTEAD'.

INT. ABC TAXI - NIGHT

Winter unpockets his PDA, a notebook-sized piece of clear perspex that projects a blinking Euro sign as he swipes it past a sensor pad on his door.

The door plays a cash register 'CHA-CHING' sound sample, before opening.

INT. WINTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Inside Winter's small, dark apartment, a single red light shines on the front door.

It beeps twice, the light blinking green, before the door slides open.

The walls of his apartment light up as Winter enters, dropping his luggage and PDA on the kitchen counter.

He goes to the window, looking out across the bloated city, criss-crossed by air traffic and a seventieth floor light rail system.

He takes off the already-loosened tie.

INT. WINTER'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Winter stands in front of the bathroom mirror, brushing his teeth. His blinking grows longer, falling asleep where he stands. He drools toothpaste.

WINTER (V.O.)

(cold)

No calls. No q-mail. No sign she existed anywhere but the places you remember.

INT. WINTER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Winter collapses on the bed in his pants and half-open dress shirt. He falls asleep.

WINTER (V.O.)
There will never be a chance
encounter.

He snaps awake, looking around.

WINTER (CONT'D)
Time.

A holographic display blinks to life above his bedside table, tilting to face him. It reads: '07.30.2080.01:57a'

WINTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You'll never be that close again,
unless by design.

After a moment, the display fades, leaving the room dark again.

Winter drifts off then wakes once more. He sighs.

WINTER (CONT'D)
Feed. Infotainment, local.

Another display appears, this time in the corner of the room, a feed anchor recapping today's continental news.

Winter watches a while, eyelids growing heavy.

INT. SYDNEY DOMESTIC AIRPORT - DEPARTURE LOUNGE - NIGHT

Winter, nine months prior, hair longer and dressed more casual, stands in the departure lounge with JEN. Behind them, a display that reads 'Adelaide Shuttle QF543649'. They ignore the PASSENGERS milling about the lounge.

He holds both her hands, watches her eyes, where tears well.

WINTER (V.O.)
You know but you don't.

Close on her face, on the speckled orange motes of her green eyes.

WINTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Struggling to soak it in.

The display flashes, a doorbell-like alert sounding.

DIGITIZED VOICE

Attention passengers bound for Adelaide on QF-five-four-three-six-four-nine, your shuttle will depart momentarily at gate Y-two-eleven. Please have your personal data assistant ready for boarding.

People begin lining up by the skywalk entrance, Jen looking from Winter to the line, then back. The tears begin to flow now.

WINTER (V.O.)

It doesn't take. None of it registers. You're trying too hard.

She leans in close for one last hug, a kiss, squeezing him briefly before breaking away. She picks up her carry-on and walks to the line. She reaches it as the last of the queued passengers are swiping their PDAs to disappear through the sliding glass door.

Jen removes her own PDA, swipes it across the sensor pad by the door, then takes one last look back at Winter as it slides open. And with that, she leaves, the glass door closing between them.

Winter takes a step closer, craning his neck to see down the short skywalk, watching her round its curve.

WINTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

All at once you find your clarity. This is the last time she will ever be within arm's reach. A sudden awareness, of the last moment in which you could have changed the outcome. You literally watch it pass you by. And as it fades?

She disappears from view completely.

WINTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Before its afterglow has even left the visual cortex... you understand with true certainty that this is the greatest error in judgment you will ever make.

INT. WINTER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Winter jolts awake, looking around the room.

WINTER

Time.

The display blinks on again. '07.30.2080.01:59a'

Winter watches the news a while, nodding off.

EXT. PERTH CITY - DAWN

The sun rises over Perth, a tightly packed city on fast forward.

Air and road traffic clog its arteries.

Autonomous cranes and hovering welder platforms construct newer, taller skyscrapers, reaching higher into an already crowded sky.

INT. WINTER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAWN

Winter stands in front of his bedroom mirror, putting on a clean tie.

EXT. GAMESTEAD BUILDING - DAWN

Winter stands outside the Gamestead building on its crowded sidewalk, waving at an approaching TAXI.

It pulls over, letting him in.

WINTER (V.O.)

Employee neighbourhood to
Gamestead CBD.

The taxi pulls away.

INT. 123 TAXI - DAWN

Winter watches scenery pass through his window.

They pass a hospital, medevac HELOS landing and taking off on bays out front.

WINTER (V.O.)

Miller tollway through Yellow
Pages' shareholder districts.
Sony bridge, across the river,
then tolls again at McPherson's
border.

They drive alongside a MAG-LEV TRAIN for a moment before it ascends to the seventieth floor, Winter watching it join the network of mag-lev rails criss-crossing the city sky.

WINTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You work for a dinosaur, falling
far behind amongst dynamic
upstarts and forward-thinking
mainstays.

They pull up at traffic lights alongside a HOBO, slumped
against the outer wall of an abandoned federal government
building with his head hung low. His cardboard sign reads,
'Civil servant, seeks any work available.'

WINTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Soon Gamestead will buy a large
tract of land, somewhere central.
Ten square clicks will be
bulldozed, the land divided into
planned communities.

They cross the former Narrows bridge, Winter watching
massive holographic Sony banners pass by overhead.

WINTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Employee and shareholder housing.
Schooling. Peace Enforcement.
Health care. Efficiently placed
around the territory's focal
driving hub--its central business
district.

The driver pulls over at a sensor pad where boom gates
block the way ahead. The block is surrounded by a tall
outer wall. A holographic sign reads, 'The McPherson
Group'. He swipes his PDA, the gate lifting.

WINTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
When its internal workings are
centralised, Gamestead's assets
will be sold to the neighbouring
territories who pay unreasonable
amounts through the fog of a real
estate arms race. Your home will
be sold to them. Your possessions
relocated.

The driver swipes again, exiting boom gates at the other
side of McPherson's territory.

A holographic Gamestead sign on the largest tower amongst
unpartitioned office blocks. They pull up beside it. A
display projected on his window flashes '96 Euros'. He
swipes his PDA past the door, getting out.

INT. GAMESTEAD PERTH HQ - CORRIDOR - MORNING

Winter waits on a chair in one of Gamestead's large
corridors. He studies art adorning the opposite wall.

A young woman, ASSISTANT to one of the board members, exits a door behind him, waving.

ASSISTANT
They're ready for you.

He stands, collecting his coat and knapsack.

INT. GAMESTEAD PERTH BOARDROOM - MORNING

Winter sits at a long, oval-shaped oak table, surrounded by all seven of Gamestead's Perth BOARD, including its CHAIRMAN, sitting opposite.

CHAIRMAN
You may have heard. You may not.
There's a leak within Gamestead.

Winter blinks.

WINTER
What do you mean leak?

CHAIRMAN
A member of the executive staff
has sold operational data to both
Wellington and the McPherson
Group.

WINTER
Okay.

CHAIRMAN
We've lost deniability in several
key operations.

WINTER
How bad is it?

CHAIRMAN
Bad.

Winter nods.

CHAIRMAN (CONT'D)
We're assigning you to identify
and locate the source of our
leak.

WINTER
You don't want to outsource it?
What if I'm the leak?

CHAIRMAN
We have proof that you're not.
Therefore, it's on you.

WINTER

If you don't mind me asking...
what kind of evidence do you
have? It might help me locate the
person you're seeking.

CHAIRMAN

I can't reveal the specifics of
our investigation.

WINTER

What *can* you tell me?

CHAIRMAN

Just a name. Coltraine.

WINTER

Like the jazz guy?

CHAIRMAN

I believe it's spelled different.

WINTER

So nothing else?

CHAIRMAN

No.

WINTER

What kind of resources do I have
on this?

CHAIRMAN

Whatever you need. Go through
your regular channels. Report to
us where possible.

Winter stands.

WINTER (V.O.)

You don't tell them how suspect
it all seems.

WINTER (CONT'D)

Thanks.

He leaves the room. The board members exchange veiled
glances.

WINTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But they know that you know. And
suddenly, without awareness of
it, you're walking the tightrope.