# STARLIFT

By Niemand Geist

© 2015 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

### FADE IN:

# EXT. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER, FLORIDA - BASE FACILITY - DAY

STOCK FOOTAGE of the vehicle assembly building. A roller coaster-like track exits one side then curves into the sky and gradually tapers to nothing.

An ANNOUNCER delivers a spiel like a 1930s newsreel.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) Anchor Station, Florida... ground floor for the world's first elevator to the stars.

# INSERT CHEAP ANIMATION

... of the elevator and rail as an obnoxious announcer speaks.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D) Vertical high-speed elevators, or lifts for you Brits and Aussies... eh, you all sound alike to me. Anyway, the elevators will travel up and down the track on a magnetic field. They will dramatically lower the cost of sending astronauts and their equipment into space. Project lead General James Thompkins had this to say.

### INT. BASE FACILITY - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

A huge room. Reporters cluster in an open area between a bank of consoles and a huge projection screen TV against the opposite wall. The TV shows the building exterior and the track.

GEN. JAMES THOMPKINS (54), tall, thin, and dignified in his Air Force uniform, smiles triumphantly into a news camera.

#### CAMERA POV

He motions excitedly like a winning sports team coach.

THOMPKINS This is not just an American achievement, but one for our Commonwealth partners as well. The age of exploration has returned with this, the first launch of the elevator to the stars.

### EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

A mushroom-shaped space station floats over Florida. The elevator track extends from the station's "stem" and tapers to nothing in the atmosphere.

#### INT. ENOKI STATION - CONTINUOUS

Cluttered with CRT screens, consoles, and a dot-matrix printer.

Major NORMAN HISCOCK (45), thin and gangly in blue coveralls with a union jack on his shoulder, floats in zero-g over a console. He sips tea from a squeeze bottle as several drops float around him. He quickly SLURPS them out of the air.

Major ANDREW WIGGINS (40), fit and trim in blue coveralls with an Australian flag on his shoulder, "flies" past a huge picture window showing an empty docking bay.

> WIGGINS Oy. One o' these days, you're gonna miss and play bloddy 'ell keepin' your tea outta the electrical goodies. The general will throw a wobbly when you do.

> > HISCOCK

Throw a what?

Before Wiggins can answer, Major DUNCAN WEBBER (40), beefy in coveralls with a Canadian flag on his shoulder, flies in like a parachutist landing and floats over to the other two.

WEBBER

He means "go mad."

Hiscock nods in understanding as Colonel WADE JOHNSON (45), tall and fit in blue coveralls sporting an American flag on his shoulder, enters.

JOHNSON (southern drawl) Who's mad? Is the limey fixin' to throw a hissy fit?

Hiscock's smile disappears as he glares at Johnson.

WEBBER No, sir. He means the General will "blow a gasket."

JOHNSON Ah, you mean he'd be pissed.

# HISCOCK (puzzled) Intoxicated?

Webber pinches the bridge of his nose and takes a breath.

WEBBER Wiggins, where's Davies? The elevator is about to launch.

Major MARTIN DAVIES (40), short and thin in blue coveralls with a New Zealand flag on his shoulder, floats in.

DAVIES Here. We 'ave an Angus among us?

All heads turn to Davies.

### GROUP

No!

DAVIES Yeah nah, bros... just askin'.

Johnson nods to Webber.

JOHNSON Give me a thumbs up when everybodys' ready, Duncan.

Webber looks around the group as each signs "ready."

WEBBER We're ready, sir.

#### INT. BASE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

Thompkins picks up a bulky 1960s-style headset-microphone and makes a show of putting it on.

## INT. ENOKI STATION - CONTINUOUS

There is a burst of STATIC and Johnson reaches for a console. He slips on an old ear-piece/microphone and flips a switch.

> JOHNSON Say again, ground control.

WIGGINS (low) To Major Tom. Several suppressed giggles as Webber motions for silence. More STATIC, then Thompkins' voice comes in clear.

> THOMPKINS (V.O.) Ground control to Enoki Station.

JOHNSON Roger, ground control. We read you lima-charlie.

THOMKPINS (V.O.) Wade, we are one minute to launch. Anything quick to say.

Johnson pauses for a moment, then he beams.

JOHNSON I just want to say to our Russian and Chinese counterparts... up your commie asses! We win again, you bastards!

The astronauts stare in shock. Johnson looks around and smiles like a university student that just pulled an epic prank.

THOMPKINS (V.O.) Uh... thank you, Enoki Station. Stand by for launch.

## INT. BASE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

Thompkins covers the mouthpiece and murmurs to a flunky.

THOMKINS Remind me to fry Johnson's nuts over a slow fire when he gets back.

The flunky nods and writes on a notepad.

## INT. ENOKI STATION - CONTINUOUS

Everybody works their consoles as VOICE begins the countdown.

VOICE (V.O.) Fifteen... fourteen... magnetic field at ninety percent...

# SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Thomkins, the engineers, and the assembled reporters nervously wait as voice DRONES on.

B) The crowd of people outside the facility shifts restlessly.

C) A janitor wearing headphones plays air guitar in an empty hallway.

# INT. ENOKI STATION - CONTINUOUS

The astronauts calmly monitor their consoles as voice concludes.

VOICE (V.O.) Three... two... one.

#### EXT. BASE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

There is a WHUMP as a windowless maglev-train looking vehicle zips out of the building and skyward with a BUZZING WHINE. The crowd erupts into cheers.

> VOICE (V.O.) We have lift off for the first launch of the space elevator.

### INT. ENOKI STATION - CONTINUOUS

Hiscock whoops.

HISCOCK Here it comes, lads.

The astronauts cheer.

### INT. BASE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

The engineers hoot and holler as the news cameras focus on the TV showing the launch. Thompkins visibly sweats.

THOMPKINS (low to the flunky) My ass is puckering so hard, I could shit diamonds. Just a few more minutes and we're clear.

# INSERT CONSOLE SCREEN

The screen shows an old-fashioned analog, color-coded speedometer. The needle edges past YELLOW towards RED.

# BACK TO SCENE

Chief engineer MARTIN GARVEY laughs at something someone says as he glances at the console screen. A soft, squeaky whimper escapes his lips and he frantically taps at a keyboard.

### INSERT CONSOLE SCREEN

A large flashing red square appears with the word "warning." Immediately after, the word "mute" appears above it.

# BACK TO SCENE

There is a short, loud CHIRP, cut off by a BEEP. Several reporters turn to Garvey, who smiles sheepishly and returns to typing. Thompkins notices Garvey and hurries over.

THOMPKINS (CONT'D) (low) What the hell is wrong with you?

Garvey points surreptitiously at the monitor. Thompkins reads it at a glance.

GARVEY It's going full throttle. The field's working off stored power, so I can't even turn it off.

THOMPKINS Can't you use the manual override?

GARVEY

Someone has to be on-board to <u>manually</u> override the controls. I guess we should have sent up a monkey afterall.

Thompkins right eye tics.

## INT. ENOKI STATION - CONTINUOUS

The astronauts gather around Hiscock in stunned silence.

JOHNSON

Wah?

HISCOCK It's a runaway lift, eh, elevator.

DAVIES

Not even!

WIGGINS What kin we do?

WEBBER Nothin'... we're hosed.

#### EXT. ATMOSPHERE - CONTINUOUS

The elevator punches through clouds as it races upward.

### INT. BASE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

Everybody focuses on the shaky, fuzzy image of the elevator on the TV. The reporters don't notice Garvey turning pale.

#### INT. ENOKI STATION - CONTINUOUS

The astronauts watch nervously.

HISCOCK Thirty-five seconds.

#### EXT. UPPER ATMOSPHERE - CONTINUOUS

The sky shifts to black as the elevator races towards Enoki.

### INT. BASE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

The TV mesmerizes Thompkins. Garvey bites on a knuckle.

### INT. ENOKI STATION - CONTINUOUS

Wiggins squeezes his eyes shut, then cracks one slightly open like a kid watching a scary scene in a movie. The rest of the astronauts focus on their screens as the printer CLATTERS.

> HISCOCK Brace yourselves, gents. Here it comes.

The astronauts hurriedly brace themselves against consoles, walls, and other objects.

### EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The elevator races towards Enoki.

# INT. BASE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

Garvey turns away with a whimper. Thompkins spins him around.

THOMPKINS No. Watch what you morons caused.

### INT. ENOKI STATION - CONTINUOUS

Davies crosses himself while Wiggins looks around for a hiding spot. Johnson pulls a flask out of a pocket and takes a long pull. Hiscock snatches the flask and empties it. Webber snatches the flask, upends and shakes it in irritation.

### EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The elevator train races into Enoki's "stem."

# INT. ENOKI STATION - DOCKING BAY - CONTINUOUS

The elevator zips through and SMASHES out of the top of the station, leaving a large hole.

### EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The elevator rapidly FADES into space.

## INT. ENOKI STATION - CONTINUOUS

The astronauts bounce around as the entire station shakes.

#### INT. BASE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

Thompkins leans close and mutters to Garvey.

#### THOMPKINS

Well?

Garvey sweats profusely as he frantically works the keyboard.

### GARVEY

Too soon to know.

# INT. ENOKI STATION - CONTINUOUS

The shuddering subsides as the astronauts rush to the big window. They strain to look up into the docking bay ceiling.

Aw, shit!	JOHNSON
Bloody hell!	HISCOCK
Brutal!	WEBBER
Crikey!	WIGGINS

Bugga!

# INT. BASE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

Thompkins elbows Garvey and motions to the console.

THOMPKINS Mute the overhead speakers.

DAVIES

# INT. ENOKI STATION - CONTINUOUS

The astronauts stare through the window in fascination as STATIC blares. Johnson jerks and spins towards the radio console.

JOHNSON Enoki station. Send it.

THOMPKINS (V.O.)

(low) Status report.

JOHNSON We have a huge-ass hole in our roof, sir. What the hell do you think our status is?

SILENCE as Johnson taps his forehead, thinking hard.

THOMPKINS (V.O.) You're alive... that's good. What's the station like?

Johnson snaps his fingers in an "a-ha" moment.

JOHNSON We're fine. Look, I just thought how to pull your asses out of the sling you created. Put me on speaker and play along. Johnson flips a switch and points a finger at Wiggins.

JOHNSON (CONT'D) Where the hell is that elevator headed? The moon? Venus? Where?

Wiggins kicks towards a console and collides with the wall next to it. He shakes it off and hurriedly taps keys.

> THOMPKINS (V.O.) Enoki station. The world is waiting to hear how it went.

Johnson smiles as he looks at each astronaut in turn.

JOHNSON Hey, y'all... watch this.

Johnson flips the switch.

### INT. BASE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

The reporters and engineers hold their breath. Garvey wipes his sweaty forehead with a sleeve. Thompkins fidgets slightly.

> JOHNSON (V.O.) Ground control, we have successful launches for both the elevator and the payload launch as well. It's on-track to... Mars. Yes, will arrive Mars base site in about twenty-two months. Over.

The reporters give a rousing cheer as the engineers look at each other in complete confusion. Thompkins smiles and waves at a couple of reporters as he leans over to Garvey.

> THOMPKINS What the hell is he talking about?

> > GARVEY

(smiling) Genius. He just pretended we did that as part of a launch to a make-believe Mars base...

JOHNSON (V.O.) We take the lead in colonizing Mars. So, to my Russian and Chinese counterparts... suck it!

Thompkins fake smiles as makes his way to the sea of reporters.

# INT. ENOKI STATION - CONTINUOUS

Johnson and the other astronauts breathe sighs of relief.

WEBBER Damn. That was quick thinking.

HISCOCK That was the dog's bollocks, sir.

#### JOHNSON

Thanks. The commies think we just sent a payload to Mars. They'll scramble to launch their own missions as soon as possible. Now, how long do we have before supplies run out? The first launch was supposed to bring us chow.

Webber smiles sheepishly.

#### WEBBER

Actually, sir, I have been padding the supply rocket runs. We have plenty of food and water. The first elevator ride was bringing us cases of beer to celebrate.

There is a chorus of groans.

WIGGINS

You bloody wanker!

Johnson shrugs and smiles.

# JOHNSON

It's okay. We're alive. Besides... it was probably some of your Canadian moose piss anyway.

FADE OUT:

#### THE END