

SENTIENT

Written by

David Steinhoff

12 Moller Ave
Birrong
NSW 2143
Australia

0417 400 001

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. SYDNEY. HARBOUR FORESHORE - DAY

A disheveled man in a Navy T-shirt stares across the harbour. His eyes are pooled with blood, his face is felled by stroke.

LT. COMMANDER MICHAEL DOWD towers against a savage sky and all is deathly quiet.

A NAVY VOX OPERATOR communicates from an unseen vessel.

NAVY VOX OPERATOR (V.O.)
What do you see?

Dowd's view is revealed. A sea of human bodies float facedown in the harbour.

EXT. SYDNEY HARBOUR. OCEAN FLOOR - DAY

Pitch black.

SUPER: 48 HOURS EARLIER - ORDINANCE DISPOSAL MISSION

NAVY VOX OPERATOR (V.O.)
Commander?

A light appears. Royal Australian Navy Diver, Lieutenant Commander Michael Dowd emerges from the darkness.

The hull of a Navy vessel hovers on the surface above.

DOWD
Repeat.

NAVY VOX OPERATOR(V.O.)
What do you see?

DOWD
Nothing.

NAVY VOX OPERATOR(V.O.)
You're right on top of it.

DOWD
There's nothing here.

LT. AIDEN FRANK (V.O.)
Found it.

Dowd looks to his dive partner's GPS position on a device.

DOWD

Report!

EXT. SYDNEY HARBOUR. OCEAN FLOOR. ORDINANCE SITE - DAY

Navy Diver and son of the Admiral, LIEUTENANT AIDEN FRANK spots a rusted metallic object through the murk.

LT. AIDEN FRANK

Seventy metres to your east. I'll lay charges and be home in my jamies before you get here.

EXT. SYDNEY HARBOUR. OCEAN FLOOR - DAY

Dowd ascends a rise.

DOWD

Seventy metres?

LT. AIDEN FRANK (V.O.)

To your east.

DOWD

Seventy metres from the GPS marker? Negative Lieutenant! Bombs do not float! Hold position and wait upon my arrival.

EXT. SYDNEY HARBOUR. OCEAN FLOOR. ORDINANCE SITE - DAY

Frank paddles blithely towards the object.

LT. AIDEN FRANK

Repeat.

A World War Two mine rises from the murk.

EXT. SYDNEY HARBOUR. OCEAN FLOOR - DAY

Dowd paddles furiously over the rise.

DOWD

I said, wait upon my!...

An explosion erupts from the ocean floor. A compression ring heads straight at Dowd.

INT. SYDNEY. NAVAL HOSPITAL. CORRIDOR - DAY

Dowd contorts with pain on a stretcher bed.

NURSES hurriedly trolley him through the corridor.

The cart abruptly stops.

The forboding figure of COMMODORE FRIESNER blocks their way.

Friesner leans into Dowd, now writhing with the bends.

FRIESNER

If you live, you'll wish you
hadn't.

A DOCTOR, joins them.

DOCTOR

Barometric chamber, now!

The Doctor pushes through Friesner. The nurses push Dowd into a Barometric Chamber room. The door shuts behind them.

FADE OUT:

SUPER: 36 HOURS LATER

INT. SYDNEY. BAROMETRIC CHAMBER - MORNING

Dowd is woken by a dying warning tone and an open door.

INT. SYDNEY. ROOM HOUSING BAROMETRIC CHAMBER - MORNING

Dowd staggers into the darkened room.

A howling wind rakes the building.

He makes his way to the exit and wrenches the handle.

The door flings-back, collapsing a body onto him. Both drop backwards to the floor.

Dowd flails about wildly. He pushes the body away. It's one of the nurses. Dried blood has pooled around the nurse's eyes, nose and mouth. He checks for a neck pulse. Nothing.

INT. SYDNEY. NAVAL HOSPITAL. CORRIDOR - MORNING

Dowd enters the darkened corridor, clutching at his chest.

Dowd spots a dimmed exit sign and proceeds.

A pile of bodies obscures the swing-door to the exit.

Dowd rolls-back one of the bodies. Dried blood has pooled around its eyes, nose and mouth. They're all the same.

A blood droplet falls from Dowd's nose to the back of his hand. Dowd looks to his hand.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. NAVY TRAINING FACILITY - MORNING (TWO YEARS BEFORE)

Dowd stands before a room of NAVAL TRAINEES. A blackboard notice tasks the Trainees, 'Chemical attack, know the drill!'

DOWD

Your base has just been hit. You have seconds to act. Take me through it.

TRAINEE ONE

Kit-up.

DOWD

In a hurry. Breathing ap first. Eyes then body.

TRAINEE TWO

What if you don't get kit?

TRAINEE ONE

Then you get dead.

That gets a laugh from the trainees.

DOWD

Also in a hurry. Next.

TRAINEE THREE

Find command. Establish contact. Seek orders.

DOWD

And...

The room is silent.

DOWD (CONT'D)

Ready to fight. Someone is coming to kill you.

RETURN TO PRESENT

INT. SYDNEY. NAVAL HOSPITAL. CORRIDOR - MORNING

A door creaks-open behind Dowd, returning him to the moment.

Dowd releases the body and stares into the abyss.

DOWD

Hello?

From the abyss, something stares back.

Dowd rises slowly then backs into an office.

INT. SYDNEY. NAVAL HOSPITAL. OFFICE - MORNING

Dowd locks the door behind him then jams a chair under the handle. He keeps his eye on the handle for movement.

He steps back towards the windows.

A hypnotic red glow seeps through venetian blinds behind him.

Dowd turns and reaches for the draw-cord.

TEICHER (O.S.)

I wouldn't do that.

Dowd turns alarmed to discover scientist, DR. AMON TEICHER wearing infectious diseases protective kit. Teicher sits next to an oxygen tank with his mask retracted to his forehead.

The two men take each other in for a moment.

DOWD

Why not?

TEICHER

You may not like what you see.

But Dowd has to see. He pushes aside the blind to reveal an angry red, swirling storm.

EXT. SYDNEY. NAVAL HOSPITAL - MORNING

Dowd stares out of the window in disbelief. We pull back to reveal, all of Sydney is enveloped by the storm.

FADE TO:

TITLE:

"SENTIENT"

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. SYDNEY. NAVAL HOSPITAL. OFFICE - DAY

Dowd stares out of the window, stupefied by the storm.

Teicher approaches, wheeling his oxygen tank with him. He draws intimately close.

Dowd releases the blinds.

The two men now stand side by side, silhouetted against the hypnotic red glow spilling through the blinds.

Dowd grabs Teicher's name badge.

DOWD
Teicher, Dr. Teicher?

TEICHER
Amon.

DOWD
(Motioning to the storm)
What is it?

Teicher shakes his head.

Dowd reaches for a wall phone. It's dead.

DOWD (CONT'D)
Do you have a mobile?

TEICHER
There's no signal.

Dowd's eyes begin to weep blood. He wipes it away.

DOWD
Doctor, I believe we're under
attack.

TEICHER
There's no power.

DOWD
This is what we're going to do.

TEICHER
There's nothing.

DOWD

Listen to me. We get to command, we find out what's happening and we get in the fight. Do you understand? Doctor?

TEICHER

Yes.

DOWD

Do you have another suit?

TEICHER

In my lab. Just the one tank.

DOWD

Share-with?

TEICHER

What will 'share-with' look like when the tank begins to empty?

Dowd takes a fire extinguisher off the wall, raises it ready to use as a weapon then looks to Teicher.

DOWD

Stay close.

Dowd removes the chair propping the door and opens it.

INT. SYDNEY. NAVAL HOSPITAL. CORRIDOR - MORNING

Dowd enters the darkened corridor.

He scans the darkness behind, listening for any potential threat then proceeds in the other direction towards the exit.

The bodies, once piled at the door have disappeared. Teicher follows, wheeling his tank along with him.

Dowd now stares into the now empty space. Teicher looks but there's nothing to see.

TEICHER

Something?

Dowd looks behind him to darkened corridor.

DOWD

Come on.

Dowd swings-open the doors. The foyer floods with the swirling, hypnotic light of the storm. It is a blinding wall of light.

INT. SYDNEY. NAVAL HOSPITAL. FOYER - MORNING

Dowd and Teicher stagger forward to the exit. Blood begins to stream from Teicher's nose and eyes.

TEICHER

The suit.

Dowd, oblivious, drives himself forward. It's like wading through wet cement.

Teicher collapses to his knees. Dowd takes Teicher by the collar and drags forward.

DOWD

We've got, to get, to.

Dowd passes out next to him. This is as far they will go.

INT. SYDNEY. NAVAL HOSPITAL. FOYER - DAY

Dowd wakes. His vision is hazy. His senses dulled.

He sees Teicher seated upright against a pylon.

Teicher maintains a thousand yard stare. Both men's eyes are pooled with blood.

Dowd begins to hear barking from outside. He drags his body around to look.

TEICHER (O.S.)

He knows you.

Dowd turns back to discover Teicher is alive, but is he?

TEICHER (CONT'D)

(Louder to communicate)

He knows you!

Dowd is confused. Teicher gestures to a barking dog, petitioning them through the glass door. Dowd indeed, does know the dog and is glad to see him.

DOWD

Hec Waller.

Dowd staggers upright and opens the door. HEC WALLER romps in, tail-wagging and leaps all over Dowd.

TEICHER

He knows you.

DOWD

'He', is the Admiral's dog.

We now see the other side of Dowd's face. It's fallen as if by stroke. Teicher gaze is fixed on Dowd's distorted face.

DOWD (CONT'D)

What?

Teicher shakes his head, keeping it to himself.

TEICHER

I don't.

DOWD

Don't what?

TEICHER

Don't know you.

Dowd offers a hand to Teicher to lift him to his feet.

DOWD

Dowd, Lt. Commander, Michael Dowd.

EXT. SYDNEY. NAVAL BASE - DAY

Dowd and Teicher exit the building. The shock of even the natural light is now blinding. They cover their eyes.

The raking wind has passed but a stream of smoke and mist wafts through the buildings.

Hec Waller bounds off, stops then looks back to Dowd and Teicher.

DOWD

Command.

They follow.