

Ante Meridiem
by Rus Robert Blemker

1.

1 EXT CHICAGO SKYLINE - NIGHT 1

The darkness entangles the city. All but a very few of the windows are black.

EXT NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

We see the last few stranglers stubble out of a Wicker Park club.

3 EXT CHICAGO COMMERCIAL STREET - NIGHT 3

The sounds and the lights of a diner sign bounce off the cold lonely surface of a sidewalk. Rat-tat-rat-tat-rat-tat.

We're so close to the diner's pulsing incandescent bulbs we fear that its rapid on-again, off-again rymthum will cause a change to our heartbeats. Leaving the sign, we see a long desolate stretch of Chicago street. You would think death had rolled through this part of town as the thousands of shops and apartments lay motionless. One man, DAVID - white age 26, is seen two and half blocks away stumbling along. He is a man alone in a city of millions.

We follow David from the street. His half-steps and weaving tell the story of his night. His head stays bent over his body dangerously adding to his unstable posture. His stumbling is only broken by periods of sad head-clutches and moans. We watch from a distance - objectively. He stumbles in front of a pastry shop window and reacts to the wedding cakes.

DAVID
(woman's voice)
I'm getting married.

Closer to David, we see him weave back-and-forth with the lazy eye movements of a drunk. He pauses again while rubbing his head like he's trying to extract some bad memory. As he stumbles forward again, his image blends into...

4 INT APARTMENT - NIGHT 4

David is stumbling forward, as before, but the background is filled with a close-up of a coffee table. The background and David's image appear to be a composite of two different images. Glasses of half consumed cocktails and smoked cigarettes are seen. The barely lit remains of a joint in forceps is seen smoldering in a ashtray.

5 INT NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

5

Now the image is another composite of David over the top of a panning shot of a row of Women. As camera moves over the women's faces they speak to the camera all at once.

WOMAN 1 (SYMPATHETIC)
Oh, I'm with someone - sorry.

WOMAN 2 (HUMORED)
(laughs)no...I don't think so.
(laughs)

WOMAN 3 (MOCKING)
Really? You and me?
Aaaaa no...go away.

WOMAN 4 (YOUNG)
Yeah...right - I'm 18,
really.

WOMAN 5 (FIGHTING OFF ADVANCES)
David - NO!

INT NIGHTCLUB

The background dissolves to one with a DUDE, blond hair and a shiny shirt, and TWO HOT WOMEN. They laugh as they look at the camera out of the corner of their eyes. It takes the Dude a beat to open the huddle to our arrival. The Women instantly start looking around disinterested and the Man gives off-putting nod and expression.

DUDE
David, what? Get yourself
together...

Dude turns back to women. David again rubs his head and we blend back to ...

6 EXT CHICAGO COMMERCIAL STREET

6

David finishes rubbing his head and searches his khakis and metallic blue "sran-wrap" shirt for something. He is not a skinning man, but then again he isn't obese. In the shirt pocket he has found a pack of matches. He drops the matches.

DAVID
(mumbles something
unintelligible)

Bending over to retrieve the matches he catches a glimpse of himself in a shop window. It's probably the most unflattering view one could see - the fat of his belly hanging over his waist is only masked by part of his big ass. The reflection sets him off. He stands upright in front of the reflection and a disgusted expression comes across his face.

DAVID
(animal like)
Fatass! Stupid fatass!

He rips the shirt open. Some of the buttons bounce across the pavement. He now stands in front of the reflection bare chested.

DAVID
Unloved pig...shit! I hate you!

He violently rubs his fat this way and that, making weird cresses in his torso. He yells at the reflection.

DAVID
Errrrrrrrr! Errrrrrrrr.
Errrrrrrrr! Errrrrrrrr.

He violently pitches his fat.

DAVID
It's like a curse! Always alone.

His movements slow as he goes from animal rage to a more introspective study of his reflection. His eyes droop and his body rocks. His hands travel to his man breasts and he pushes them together.

DAVID
(mornful, yet humourous)
To fat to get laid, not fat enough
to shut-up and enjoy dinner.

Looking back at the reflection, David sees four of the women that delivered rejections (dressed in white) caressing his belly and man breasts.

He is taken in by the erotism of there movements.

He snaps out of it and finds himself alone in a desolate street. Realizing he is exposed to the world, David tries to cover himself with his arms while pulling his shirt closed.

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4.

As he looks around the desolate neighborhood he sees the familiar radiating beacon of a twenty-four hour convenience store. He stumbles off towards it.

7 INT CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT 7

OFFICER DABROWSKI, thick white chucklehead age 45, is yelling at the camera while violently ripping packages of chips and gum off the counter. He is "off the wall" with emotion.

DABROWSKI
(thick chicago accent)
Cops get stuff for free!
(throws bag of chips)
That's the policy you slope!
(nervous laugh)

OFFICER SMITH, lanky and wiry fellow age 35, comes in to view as Dabrowski turns to him. Smith casually chews a stir stick looking slyly at both the camera and Dabrowski.

CASHIER (O.S.)
(thick Chinese accent)
I no know! Mr. Young no tell me!

We see the smallish and poorly dressed Asian American CASHIER. In her late fifties, she stands with a certain resolve against the onslaught of junk food thrown her way.

DABROWSKI
Can you believe this bitch?

Between the two officers we see David stumble outside into the front window. The Officers turn to the sound of the "thud".

EXT CONVENIENCE STORE

David is leaning against the glass of the store trying to button his shirt. He gets one buttoned before moving on.

INT CONVENIENCE STORE

The Officers watch David move around the corner of the store and through the door. The front door bell is heard. He catches his shoulder on the frame which causes him to stumble. He is surprised to see the officers.

The scene changes to slow motion as we watch Dabrowski eyeing David. Smith slowly rotates the stir stick in his mouth.

David(in slow-mo)lazily closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

A super-speed shot of David retreating out the door (backwards) and across the street well away from the cops who remain in their positions.

CUT TO:

David(in slow-mo)lazily opening his eyes and looking to the far end of the store.

CUT TO:

A super-speed shot. The view travels down the aisle and searches the shelves for items with mechanical-like movements. Up, left, right it moves like a robot. We see a bizarre mixture of products - logs, Campbell's Tomato Soup, meat, etc. The camera stops on "Phallic Farms" cucumbers before sweeping to "Ass Be Gone" spray picturing the two cops. Finally the camera rests on "Low Self-Esteem Pork Rines" with David's picture. One of the six boxes magically disappears before the camera retreats the way it came.

CUT TO:

Slow-mo of Dabrowski griping his belt and nightstick. The leather makes a binding noise.

CUT TO:

David (in slow-mo) slightly shakes his head and stares hard at a distance object.

CUT TO:

We see a view of the entire store with a distant animated clown display. The view whirls and zooms close to it.

CUT TO:

David begins to move into the store, his face is racked with intense concentration.

We steadily bobble along moving carefully toward the distant clown display.

Smith is searching magazines as Dabrowski enters the frame. Dabrowski's eyes are locked on something off camera. Smith tries to get Dabrowski to look at the magazine he has found.

SMITH

Check this out. You want to throw
the hammer to that, huh Dabrowski?

We see David's feet walking over linoleum floors.

We see his face concentrating. David smiles under his drunken
lazy gaze as he proceeds further into the store.

SMITH (O.S.)

Look at that bitch...You like those
tits Dabrowski?

Kerpluk! The view of David is rocked by a half step and the
sound of a shelf being hit. He raises with a devastated
expression.

CUT TO:

8 INT DARKEN ICE RINK - NIGHT

8

The space is pitch black except for a lone spotlight that
illuminates a six-foot circle of ice. David dressed in white
stockings, ice skates and a pink tutu comes sliding into the
spot light. His chubby body spins around on the ice and
comes to rest with legs splayed.

CUT TO:

A set of man's hands clapping slowly before stopping.

CUT TO:

David in the bizarre transvestite/clown makeup of the ice
skater outfit is crying. His makeup flows down his cheeks
with the tears.

CUT TO:

9 INT CONVENIENCE STORE

9

David's face is full of dread as he regains his balance.

Dabrowski is seen looking off towards David as Smith turns to
also look.

David looks out of the corner of his eye towards the cops as
he begins to stumble forward. His shoulders slump and his
cheeks fall as he loses all hope.

DABROWSKI (FLAT)
Punk. That reminds me, did I tell
you how my grandmother is losing
her house around the block.

Smith looks back at Dabrowski who continues to stare towards David.

We see David coming to rest on the cool glass face of the beverage locker. His sweaty face sticks to the glass that is misted by his breath.

DABROWSKI (O.S.)
Her property taxes have gone
through the roof because....

Dabrowski is seen looking off towards David as he gets more agitated.

DABROWSKI
(continued)
Of all these fuck'en transplanted
yuppie pricks, like this one here,
(head nod)
moving in.

David pulls himself off of the glass and opens the locker's door.

DABROWSKI (O.S.)
It was fine when it drove the
wetbacks out.

David, hearing the officer's words, takes a deep breath and lowers his head. His eyes squint with a pained expression.

DABROWSKI (O.S.)
Now it's driving out the old folks
that lived here for 40 years...

CUT TO:

10 EXT GRASSY MEADOW - DAY

10

We see a white park sign with "Apathy Zoo" scribed on it. Panning to the right, a collection of YOUNG WHITE MALES are seen on a large grassy hill. Two groups of five mingle about as a group of twenty-three gallop across the face of the hill.

SMITH (V.O.)
What you going to do - pay her
taxes?

DABROWSKI (V.O.)
(instant anger)
With what money?! Fuck, I know
what I want to do...

All of the men, ages from fifteen to twenty-one, wear the required sports jersey and ball caps (with tightly cupped bills) required by the herd. Their wardrobe and mannerisms are the same. The horde moves as a seamless pack roaming the meadow. They appear to be following a lone twenty-year-old DOMINANT MALE in the front of the pack wearing a white tanktop. The group could be mistaken for a pack of hyenas if one squinted their eyes.

DABROWSKI (V.O.)
Kick some yuppie ass. Show them
their place.

We see three WHITE MALES, mid-forties, lounging in the shade. The group watches the other males out of the view. One of the men licks his hand and press down his hair. We hear the weeping of the summer locust as the heat of the day burns on.

We see one of the members panting in the sun. Another starts to enter his personal space and he jaws and growls at him violently.

A group of FOUR WHITE MALES surround a lone AFRICAN AMERICAN FREEDOM FIGHTER and reach out to strike and kick him.

MAN ONE
Get him! Get him!

MAN TWO
Come here you monkey!

The Black Male throws his body violently to the left and right to avoid the others and take a defensive poster.

FREEDOM FIGHTER
Eeeeeeh! Aaaaaaah!

Soon the men have the freedom fighter on the ground. As they reach in the air to strike....

We see Smith against the bright blue sky chewing his cud. He is chewing on field grass which sticks out of his mouth.

His pacified expression is in contrast to the violent screams of the fight he is watching.

FREEDOM FIGHTER (O.S.)
Aaaah! Aaaaaaaaah!

Smith continues to chew. In the foreground, Dabrowski rises from below with a mouth full of greens. Both chew peacefully. They wear white tank tops.

DABROWSKI (V.O.)
You got a problem?

CUT TO:

11 INT CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT 11

David is shook back to reality by the rapping of Dabrowski's nightstick on the door to the locker. He glares at David.

DABROWSKI
You got a problem Punk?

David's involuntary muscles take over and he instantly nods his head "no". He randomly grabs a quart of milk, turns and leaves.

We see David weakly saunter up the aisle to the front of the store. Smith is seen in the far aisle watching as David walks like a person trying to carry a dime between their butt cheeks. Dabrowski, passing in the aisle closest to us, also stares at David. Both Officers have him in their tractor beam-like stares.

David reaches the cashier counter and the Cashier turns around revealing the television she has been watching. As she grabs the quart of milk, David sees the TV is showing an African documentary. David stares slack jawed at the TV as the officers sway into the background. The cashier's scanner beeps...

DISSOLVE TO:

12 EXT LION VIDEO 12

A beautiful cheetah is chasing a gazelle on the African plain. The cheetah leaps and the gazelle is brought down.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
The cunning cheetah is too much for the gazelle. She plants her jaws around his neck and it is over.

We see a pack of gazelles looking back at the carnage before racing off.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
The other gazelles don't stay
around to help their comrade lest
they befall his misfortune.

CASHIER (V.O.)
One dirty stick.

CUT TO:

13 INT CONVENIENCE STORE

13

David is seen standing in a trance. The Cashier looks up at him.

CASHIER
One dirty stick.

David snaps out of the trance.

SMITH (O.S.)
(laughs) Dumbass. (barking noise)

Dabrowski ominously appears over David's shoulder.

DABROWSKI (GLARING)
(laugh)
All right let's go Shit. Pay the
bitch.

Dabrowski turns to Smith and nervously laughs.

SMITH
(laughs, eggs Dabrowski
on)
It's like that guy Freddy - with
the stutter. The one you made bite
his own tongue.

David digs into his front pant's pocket and pulls out a wad of crumpled bills. Along with the bills falls a joint.

The lights of the store go out leaving the joint, David and the Cashier in a spotlight.

The joint (in slow-mo) bounces across the counter with huge thuds.

David(in slow-mo) raises his head toward the Cashier.

The cashier (in slow-mo) raises her head and looks at David. She slowly opens her mouth. Car tires are heard screeching. The Cashier looks to the left as the lights come back on.

Resume regular speed. We seen over the tops of the Cashier, David and the Cops a luxury car outside the store jumping the curb near the front door. It stops and the passenger door opens. PAUL (age 52, white) dressed in coat and tie stumbles out.

14 EXT CONVENIENCE STORE 14

Paul, bent over at the waist, travels to a nearby trash can and begins to throw-up half-in and half-out of it's opening.

15 INT CONVENIENCE STORE 15

The Officers begin to laugh.

DABROWSKI
(laughs, sing song voice)
Drunk rich guys a puck and a
pissing!

CASHIER
He no can stay.

Dabrowski turns in the direction of the Cashier.

DABROWSKI
I see him you bitch!

Smith goes to Dabrowski and leads him through the door.

SMITH
You're the master of restraint.

DABROWSKI
Well hell, she is like a limp dick!

David fumbles sleepishly with the money and joint as he stuffs the items in to his pockets.

DAVID
(self-pity, humorous)
Not that it matter if I was beaten
tonight. No one at home to care.

He looks to the Cashier as he slurs his words. He clutches the money in his hands and speaks with intensity.

DAVID

If I had someone at home to hold me
things would be better, you know?

The Cashier gives David the most slack jawed emotionless expression you've ever seen.

David gives off a "that's typical" expression as the front door bell is heard.

CASHIER

Why he no go?

David turns and steps to the side of the two cops coming in. The cops joyful banter has been replaced by mournful expressions and silence. Dabrowski locks eyes with David before looking away and moving into the store. David makes his exit, but looks back with a confused expression as he stumbles through the door.

CASHIER (O.S.)

Why he no go?

16

EXT CONVENIENCE STORE

16

David comes through the door to the sounds of a man sobbing. He looks around and sees Paul on the ground with one hand holding his face. Paul shakes from the force of his sobs.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Paul get in the car - don't be a
fool.

David turns and sees a WOMAN, age 45, sitting in the drivers seat of the car wearing a evening dress.

WOMAN

Paul, you need to relax - couples
divorce all the time.

David looks back at the shaking Paul. Paul rocks back and forth and lowers his hand to the ground.

PAUL

(sobs)
My kids...my home...

WOMAN (O.S.)
The kids will be fine. Get in the
car!

Paul begins to raise his head and David is gone. He race-walks away from the scene down a residential side street.

INT CONVENIENCE STORE

In dead silence, we see the burning tube of the cashier's old TV. The image on the screen is of a bloated and bloody cheetah above the carcass of the fallen gazelle.

EXT CHICAGO STREET

A confused/pained expression is on David's face as he walks away from the carcass of a broken marriage. He race-walks straight as an arrow away from the scene.

INT CONVENIENCE STORE

We see the TV with a slow-mo image of gazelles racing away from the death scene.

EXT CHICAGO STREET

David continues on into the night further away from the older couple. He walks with a determined resolve and not a hint of his drunk stumbling. His eyes are wide and alive.