

Ante Meridiem  
by Rus Robert Blemker

1.

EXT CHICAGO SKYLINE - NIGHT

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

EXT NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The last few stragglers stumble out of the club.

EXT CHICAGO COMMERCIAL STREET - NIGHT

The sounds and blinking lights of a diner sign bounce off a sidewalk. Rat-a-tat-tat-rat-a-tat.

The intense on and off rhythm of the sign's bulbs may cause a change to our heartbeats. Leaving the sign, reveals a long desolate street. No sign of of life in any shop or flat. One man, DAVID (26) stumbles along.

His walk is broken by periods of sad clutching of the head and moaning. He reacts negatively to a bunch of wedding cakes in a pastry shop window.

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

His face is covered in sadness, lazy eye movements of a drunk. He rubs his head like he's trying to extract some bad memory. As he stumbles forward again...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT APARTMENT - NIGHT

A stumbling David with a composited background of a coffee table full of half consumed cocktails, cigarettes, and trash. A used up joint smolders in an ashtray.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Another composite of David and a row of VARIOUS WOMEN (20s). The women take turns speaking as they come in to view behind David.

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

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

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2.

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!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT NIGHTCLUB

The background is now filled with a DUDE (20s), in a shiny shirt, and TWO HOT WOMEN. They laugh as they look towards the composited David. The Women instantly start looking disinterested and the Dude gives off-putting expression.

DUDE  
David, what? Get yourself  
together.

He turns back to women. David rubs his head and ...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT CHICAGO COMMERCIAL STREET

David searches his khakis and ill fitting shiny shirt for something. He is not a skinny man, but then he is not obese either. He finds a pack of matches then drops them.

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 belt is only masked by part of his big ass. 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 confronts his reflection bare chested.

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3.

DAVID  
Unloved pig - shit! I hate you!

David violently rubs his fat this way and that making weird creases in his torso.

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 an introspective study of his reflection. Eyes droop and his body rocks, his hands go to his man breasts and he pushes them together.

DAVID  
To fat to get laid, not fat enough  
to shut up and enjoy dinner.

David now sees in the reflection four of the women that delivered rejections earlier. They are dressed in white and caress his belly and man breasts.

He is taken in by the erotism of their movements.

David snaps out of it - back to the desolate street. David is exposed, he covers his bare chest, pulls his shirt closed. He sees a familiar twenty-four hour convenience store and stumbles on.

INT CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

OFFICER DABROWSKI (45) thick chucklehead, is yelling at someone while violently ripping packages of chips and gum off the counter display.

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

OFFICER SMITH (35) a wiry fellow, casually chews a stir stick while judging his partner.

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4.

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

The smallish and poorly dressed Asian American female CASHIER (50s) defiantly stands up to the abuse.

DABROWSKI  
Can you believe this bitch?

Behind the officers David stumble outside and bangs in to the 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 lazily closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

David retreats at super speed out the door (backwards) and across the street away from the cops who remain inside the store.

CUT TO:

David lazily opens his eyes and looks to the back of the store.

CUT TO:

His view travels at super speed down the aisle and searches, with mechanical-like movements, the shelves for items. There are a bizarre mixture of products - logs, Campbell's Tomato Soup, meat, etc. His view finds 'Phallic Farms' cucumbers, then 'Cops Be Gone' spray, before stopping at a box of 'Low Self-Esteem Pork Rinds' with David's picture.

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5.

One of the (6) boxes magically disappears before the view retreats the way it came.

CUT TO:

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

CUT TO:

Slow-mo of David slightly shaking his head and looking hard at a distance object.

CUT TO:

In the back of the store is a distant animated clown display. His view whirls and zooms to it.

CUT TO:

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

His view bobbles along toward the distant clown display.

Smith is thumbs through a magazine as Dabrowski's watches David. 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?

David's feet carefully walk over linoleum floors.

His face is a study in concentration. He smiles under his drunken gaze as he proceeds further into the store.

SMITH (O.S.)

Look at that bitch, you like those  
tits Dabrowski?

Kerplunk! David is rocked by a half step and runs in to the shelves. A devastated expression engulfs his face.

CUT TO:

INT DARKEN ICE RINK - NIGHT

The space is pitch black except for a lone spotlight that illuminates a six foot circle of ice.

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6.

David dressed in white stockings, ice skates, and a pink tutu comes sliding into the spotlight. 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 bizarre clown makeup and female skater outfit is crying. His makeup flows down his cheeks.

CUT TO:

INT CONVENIENCE STORE

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

Dabrowski looks off towards David and Smith turns too.

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 hope fades.

DABROWSKI (FLAT)

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

Smith looks at Dabrowski giving David the death stare.

David comes to rest on the cool glass face of a beverage locker.

DABROWSKI (O.S.)

Her property taxes have gone  
through the roof because....

Dabrowski 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 door and opens it.

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7.

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 been living here for forty  
years...

CUT TO:

EXT GRASSY MEADOW - DAY

A white park sign with 'Apathy Zoo' stamped on it. A  
collection of YOUNG WHITE MALES on a large grassy hill. Two  
groups (5) mingle about as another group (25) gallop across  
the face of the hill like a herd.

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 15 to 21), wear the required sports  
jerseys and ball caps dictated by the herd. Their wardrobe  
and mannerisms are the same. They move like a pack of hyenas  
roaming the meadow; they appear to be following a DOMINANT  
MALE (21) wearing a white tank top.

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

Three WHITE MALES(40s)lounge in the shade. They observe the  
younger members of their herd. One licks his hand and press  
down his hair. The summer locust squawk as the day burns on.  
One pants in the heat as the other starts to enter his  
personal space, he growls at him violently.

FOUR WHITE MALES (20s) surround a lone AFRICAN AMERICAN  
FREEDOM FIGHTER and reach out to strike and kick him.

MAN ONE  
Get him! Get him!

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8.

MAN TWO  
Come here you monkey!

The Black Male throws his body violently to the left and right trying to protect himself.

FREEDOM FIGHTER  
Eeeeeeh! Aaaaaaah!

They have the Freedom Fighter on the ground. As they reach back to strike....

Officer Smith, against the bright blue sky, is chewing his cud like a cow. Field grass 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, Dabrowski rises from below with a mouth full of greens. Both chew peacefully while wearing white tank tops.

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

CUT TO:

INT CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

David is brought back to reality by the rapping of Dabrowski's nightstick on the glass door.

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.

David weakly saunters up the aisle to the front of the store. Both Officers have him in their tractor beam-like stares.

David reaches the counter and the Cashier turns around to checkout his items. David sees the television she has been watching, it plays a safari documentary. David stares slack jawed at the TV as the officers approach from behind. The cashier's scanner beeps...

DISSOLVE TO:



EXT LION VIDEO

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.

A pack of gazelles looks 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:

INT CONVENIENCE STORE

David is 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 lets go shit! Pay the bitch.

Dabrowski turns to Smith and nervously laughs.

SMITH

(laughs, eggs him on)

It's like that guy Freddy - with the stutter. The one you made bite his own tongue.

David digs in to his front pocket and pulls out a wad of crumpled bills. Along with the bills falls a joint.

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10.

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

The joint bounces in slow-mo across the counter. Loud huge thuds are heard.

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

The cashier raises her head in slow-mo 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.

In real time the Cashier, David, and the Cops watch a luxury car outside the store jumping the curb near the front door. It stops and the passenger door flies open. PAUL (52) dressed in coat and tie stumbles out.

EXT CONVENIENCE STORE

Paul, bent over at the waist, runs to a trash can and throws up half-in and half-out of it's opening.

INT CONVENIENCE STORE

The Officers laugh.

DABROWSKI

(laughs, sing song voice)  
Drunk rich guys a puking 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.

DAVID  
(self-pity, humorous)  
Not that it matters if they beat me  
up. 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?

EXT CONVENIENCE STORE

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 (45) sitting in the drivers seat and wearing a evening dress.

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

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

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12.

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 man and marriage. He race-walks straight as an arrow away from the scene.

INT CONVENIENCE STORE

On the TV a herd of gazelles race away from death scene.

EXT CHICAGO STREET

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