

ADAM

by

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ADAM

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - AERIAL SHOTS - DAY

MAIN TITLES

A dirty brown cloud filters the early morning sun's rays, like a thick amber gauze. We HEAR a lone saxophone jazz solo -- slow, sad, bluesy.

EXT. DOWNTOWN INTERSECTION FREEWAY - AERIAL SHOTS - DAY

Like a huge diseased artery, the DOWNTOWN INTERSECTION freeway is clogged in the early morning rush. Nothing moves.

EXT. SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES - AERIAL SHOTS - DAY

The brownish haze hovers over poverty-stricken houses, apartments, businesses, and vacant lots. It's no man's land.

EXT. SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES - DAY

Mixture of HISPANIC, ASIAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN RESIDENTS leave their small bungalows and apartments with tiny yards for work, ignoring each other. With bars on their windows and heavy metal doors, houses and apartments are in various states of disrepair. Abandoned and stripped cars litter the street.

EXT. HOWE CORPORATION'S ELECTRONICS PLANT - SOUTH CENTRAL LOS ANGELES - DAY

Morning traffic backs up as WORKERS enter a large, four-story plant which stands like a fortress with its 10-foot high chain link fence and acres of sterile asphalt parking areas. Security guards patrol the site.

EXT. BRENTWOOD - AERIAL SHOTS - DAY

Through less haze, we see the various mansions and sedate streets.

EXT. DOBBS' HOUSE - AERIAL SHOTS - DAY

A large English Tudor-style house is seen.

EXT. REAR DOBBS' HOUSE - GROUND LEVEL - DAY

Mist rises from a heated swimming pool surrounded by tastefully manicured landscaping. Approaching the house, we hear the faint sound of an ALARM CLOCK breaking the stillness of the morning air.

THE TITLES END

CAMERA MOVES IN toward a second story white-shuttered window facing the pool. The buzzing of the ALARM CLOCK grows louder as the saxophone music slowly ends.

INT. DOBBS' BEDROOM - DAY

Alarm buzzing, we see a DIGITAL CLOCK change from 6:30 to 6:31 and a MAN'S HAND gropes to turn the alarm off. The hand belongs to ADAM DOBBS, a good-looking man in his early forties. He turns to his other side and blindly reaches over to hold CATHERINE, his very attractive wife of 20 years. She pushes him away as she sits up in the bed.

CATHERINE

No.

(beat)

Not today.

ADAM

Come on.

CATHERINE

No, I can't. I have to be in court by ten.

Adam tries again to hold her but she resists.

ADAM

It's only 6:30. There's plenty of time.

CATHERINE

No, there isn't.

Catherine rises and sluggishly walks to the dressing room.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - MOVING CAMERA - DAY

As she switches the lights on, CATHERINE pulls her night shirt over her head, revealing her well-conditioned body. She slips on her running shorts and bra, and puts on her UCLA T-shirt.

CATHERINE

Besides, I've got to stay focused.

INT. DOBBS' BEDROOM - DAY

ADAM sits up in bed and wipes the sleep from his eyes.

ADAM

Why?

Switching the lights out, CATHERINE walks out of the dressing room, carrying her running shoes. She sits on the edge of the bed to pull on her shoes.

CATHERINE

Because if I don't, they'll walk all over me.

ADAM
Who are you talking about?

Catherine walks out of the bedroom, ready for her morning run.

CATHERINE
You know who!
(beat)
Don't play games with me. I'm in no
mood for them today.

CLOSE SHOT - ADAM

As he watches Catherine leave, Adam slumps down in bed.

ADAM
Today and every day.

Adam looks at the clock and wearily swings his legs over the side of the bed. Wearing a Chicago t-shirt and plaid boxers, he goes to the shutters and opens them, letting the morning light flood into the bedroom. He walks to the bathroom doorway, hesitates, and then turns and walks into the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - MOVING SHOT

ADAM walks over to another bedroom and tries to open the door but it is locked. He knocks on the door.

ADAM
Michael . . . Michael? You up?

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Under a sheet, MICHAEL, Adam's 15-year-old son, is in the throes of beating-off.

ADAM O.S.
Michael? Did you hear me?

Heavy breathing as Michael is about to come.

MICHAEL
Yeah . . . I'm . . . I'm up.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

ADAM listens to the thrashing sounds, coming from Michael's bedroom.

ADAM
Is everything okay in there?

MICHAEL O.S.
Oh, yeah. It couldn't be better.

Adam shakes his head in disgust and continues his walk to the next room and opens the door. He sticks his head in the room.

INT. ROBERT'S BEDROOM - DAY

ADAM sticks his head into the bedroom.

ADAM
Robert . . .

ROBERT, Adam's 12-year-old son, lies in the bed with his eyes open.

ADAM
(continuing)
It's time to get ready for school.

ROBERT
I don't feel good, Dad.

Adam walks over to the bed.

ADAM
What's the problem today?

ROBERT
I don't know. I just don't feel good.

Adam reaches out to feel Robert's forehead.

ADAM
You don't feel like you have a fever.

ROBERT
What does that have to do with anything?

(beat)
I don't feel good.

ADAM
I'll have your mother come and look at you when she gets back.

As he is about to walk out, Adam turns around and looks at Robert.

ADAM
(continuing)
But in the mean time, you better get up and get dressed.

Robert watches as Adam leaves the room and then turns on his side.

INT. HALLWAY - MOVING CAMERA - DAY

ADAM returns to his bedroom and walks to the bathroom. Adam switches on the light and goes to the sink. He stares at his reflection in the mirror as if the face belongs to a stranger.

Pulling off his t-shirt, he turns on the tap and slaps some water on his wan face. He picks up his shaving-cream can and shakes it.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Morning light filters through the window. Dressed in dark suit and tie for work, ADAM stands at the kitchen counter, drinking his COFFEE and devouring a BOWL OF WHEATIES and reading an article from the business section of the LOS ANGELES TIMES. The headline of the article reads: INCREASING ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS . . . THE ADVANTAGES OF RELOCATING BUSINESS OPERATIONS IN MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA. He reads the article with interest.

He looks up from the article as MICHAEL enters the room sheepishly. They look at each other in awkward silence for a couple of moments. Turning away, Michael opens the REFRIGERATOR and takes out the ORANGE JUICE.

ADAM

'Morning.

MICHAEL

'Morning.

ADAM

Sleep okay?

MICHAEL

Yeah . . . why shouldn't I?

ADAM

I don't know.

Adam watches Michael as he pours himself a LARGE GLASS and gulps it down. As Michael starts to leave . . .

ADAM

(continuing)

Is that all you're having for breakfast?

Michael stops but doesn't look at his father.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

ADAM

Oh yeah?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

Adam reaches into one of the cabinets and takes a bowl. As he starts to pour the cereal . . .

ADAM

Let me get some cereal for you . . .

MICHAEL

I don't want any!

ADAM

Look Michael, you're not going to
. . . .

Just then, CATHERINE walks in the kitchen after her run, talking on her portable phone. Adam and Michael continue to have their daily morning argument.

CATHERINE

. . .and I need to have Johnston's deposition as well as the copies of his medical files and insurance claims. Excuse me for a moment.

Annoyed, Catherine puts her hand over the mouthpiece.

CATHERINE

(continuing)

Do you mind? This happens to be important.

ADAM

So is your family.

CATHERINE

What do you mean by that?

Michael pointing to Adam.

MICHAEL

(To Catherine.)

I've been trying to tell him that I'm not hungry but he doesn't get it.

Catherine loses patience.

CATHERINE

That's enough!

(To Adam.)

If he doesn't want to eat anything, that's fine. Don't fight with him.

ADAM

But he . . .

CATHERINE

I don't care if he eats or not. He's old enough to decide for himself.

ADAM

I thought you'd side with him. You always do.

CATHERINE

I do not.

(beat)

Look . . . I'm trying to talk with my assistant about a case I'm representing in court today. It's a big case . . . and I don't want to blow it.

(beat)

So if you don't mind having your conversation someplace else, I would appreciate it.

(Into the phone.)

Sorry about that. As I was saying

. . . .

Michael and Adam look at each other, saying nothing as Catherine pours herself some orange juice and continues with her conversation.

CATHERINE

(continuing)

Did you check with Anderson about the discrepancy in the files?

Looking in disbelief at his mother and then at his father, Michael shakes his head and laughs to himself as he leaves. Adam looks at his watch, folds the newspaper, dumps the remaining cereal down the garbage disposal and turns it on. Putting her hand on the mouthpiece, Catherine turns to Adam.

CATHERINE

(continuing)

Will you please? This is important.

ADAM

Don't worry, I'm leaving.

(beat)

Oh . . . by the way, Robert isn't feeling well today.

Catherine tries to place the name.

ADAM

(continuing)

Your other son . . .

Catherine watches Adam leave, taking the newspaper with him.

CATHERINE

What do you expect me to do about it? Stay home with him? It's your turn

. . . .

EXT. SANTA MONICA FREEWAY - DAY

Morning rush. Traffic is at a standstill. In the middle lane, we see ADAM, sitting in his BMW and talking on his car phone.

INT. DOBBS' BMW - DAY

Looking at his watch, ADAM starts to become impatient with the traffic congestion as he talks with his co-worker on his CAR PHONE.

ADAM

(Into the car phone.)

Okay, I'll talk with you later. Don't worry. Nothing is going to happen. Okay? Okay. Now switch me to Bill.

(beat)

Bill . . . this is Adam. What in the hell is going on?

(beat)

Yeah, I've heard the rumors and there's no truth to them. Our department alone grossed over \$30 million last year. And besides, Howe stood there and gave us his word at the management meeting that if there were going to be any staff reductions . . . and he emphasized the word "if" . . . he would probably do it with attrition. So do your work and don't worry about it.

(beat)

Look . . . I've been with the company over 20 years and believe me, I've seen tougher times than this. So don't worry.

(Beat.)

Listen . . . I'm stuck on the freeway so I'm going to be a little late to the 8:30 meeting. Could you handle it until I get there? Thanks.

As he gets off the phone, Adam catches a glimpse of a TEENAGER, sitting in another car. He is similar to his son, Michael.

CLOSE SHOT - ADAM

Adam thinks about Michael.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (ADAM'S MEMORY)

ADAM and MICHAEL are in the midst of their morning shouting match when Catherine walks in, talking on her portable phone. Irritable, she complains about the commotion and giving up on the situation, she leaves. Michael looks at Adam and then walks off, laughing in disbelief. Adam stands alone.

INT. DOBBS' BMW - DAY

ADAM is still reflecting on the morning's events as the traffic begins to crawl around him. A HORN BLAST by an impatient motorist startles Adam.

ADAM

Fuck you!

Adam quickly puts the car into gear and moves a couple of feet. He looks in the rear view mirror at the motorist behind him.

CLOSE SHOT - ADAM

Adam catches his reflection in the mirror as if it belongs to a stranger.

INT. ROBERT'S BEDROOM - DAY (ADAM'S MEMORY)

ROBERT lies in his bed, looking feverish. ADAM walks over and feels his forehead. Robert looks up at Adam, yearning for some love and attention. Not knowing what to do, Adam walks away.

INT. DOBBS' BMW - DAY

Realizing that his son needs him, ADAM frantically turns side to side as he tries to switch lanes. But he is stuck in the middle of traffic and he can't move.

EXT. SANTA MONICA FREEWAY - DAY

Traffic comes to a standstill again.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DAY

Dobbs' BMW crawls through the heavy traffic of downtown Los Angeles.

INT. DOBBS' BMW - DAY

Frazzled by the traffic, ADAM waits for the traffic light to turn, and then he goes.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PARKING LOT - DAY

Dobbs' BMW pulls into a downtown parking lot. ADAM stops the car alongside of a small shack. As Adam gets out of the car, CHAVEZ, a small Hispanic man, walks up to Adam.

ADAM

Here.

Adam hands him his car keys.

CHAVEZ

You okay?

ADAM

Yeah. Why shouldn't I be?

CHAVEZ

Heard lots of people losing jobs.

ADAM

Who did you hear that from?

Chavez points to a building.

CHAVEZ

People who work there.

Turns to the direction where Chavez is pointing, Adam sees the building . . . a massive glass monolithic skyscraper. He lowers his sun glasses slightly when he sees it is Howe Corporation offices that Chavez is talking about . . . his employer. Adam walks out of the lot across the street, moves toward the building.

INT. HOWE CORPORATION - DAY

A brightly lit windowless room with the high-tech look and sound of the computer age. The office is all very neat, antiseptic, and impersonal. ADAM sips a cup of coffee, ignoring greetings from some of his CO-WORKERS as he passes them along the way to his office. Unspoken fear is heavy in the air.

INT. DOBBS' OFFICE - DAY

As he arrives at his office, ADAM is met by his secretary, MICHELLE, a middle-aged, African American woman. She carries Adam's daily schedule and a file of correspondence that need Adam's signature.

MICHELLE

'Morning, Mr. Dobbs.

ADAM

So what's going on?

MICHELLE

You tell me. You're closer to the "man."

Adam looks over the correspondence and starts to sign the letters.

MICHELLE

(continuing)

All I know is that I don't know how I'm going to survive if anything happens to my job.

ADAM

As long as you work hard and do your job well, you have nothing to worry about.

MICHELLE

That's what they told me at my two last jobs . . . just before they gave me my pink slips.

Adam finishes signing the letters and hands the file to Michelle.

ADAM

Besides, what would I do without you?

MICHELLE

I've heard that one before, too.

Michelle starts to leave and turns around as if she has forgotten something.

MICHELLE

(continuing)

You better get a move on or you're going to be late for the managers meeting.

(beat)

And you know that "the man" doesn't like that.

Michelle looks at him with concern. A moment of apprehension lingers between them. Adam gets up and walks out.

INT. HOWE CORPORATION - DAY

ADAM walks down the main corridor. Some CO-WORKERS say hello to him as they pass by and he acknowledges them with a nod. He gets to HELEN, Robert Howe's secretary, a self-important woman in her 50s. He startles her as she transcribes some meeting notes onto the computer.

HELEN

Oh! I didn't . . .

ADAM

I'm sorry.

Flustered, she stands up and starts to move papers around her desk as if to hide them from public view.

HELEN

You're late.

ADAM

I know, I got stuck in traffic and I

. . .