

AVERAGE DAD

Written by

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INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

ADAM wakes to the sound of his wife getting ready for work in the adjoining ensuite bathroom.

He rolls over to reach for his bedside table's top drawer, pulling out a small pipe and tic tac box full of weed, plus a zippo.

EXT. BALCONY - MORNING

Adam bristles a bit at the morning cold, putting his feet into a pair of woolly blue slippers, which ooze rain water, evidently soaked.

He jumps out of the slippers, padding barefoot across wet tile, crouching down to sit on a plastic storage bin that looks like a tree stump.

Adam taps some previously-chopped weed from the tic tac container into the pipe, lighting it with the zippo in short inhaleds that he then holds in for an uncomfortably long time.

He lets it all out at once, taking a few quick breaths. Adam stands, flips up the lid of the tree trunk, then stashes his gear. He takes a peppermint breath spray, sprays it on his tongue once, then an asthma spray, gives it a couple of shots, and then douses himself in some aftershave, also from the trunk.

Adam throws everything back in, quietly closes the lid, and slips back inside.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

The sound of the hair dryer fills the master bedroom as Adam ninja jogs to the foot of the bed, slipping under the bottom of the doona, before his head appears at the pillow, eyes closing, pretending to sleep, just as--

The hair dryer sound stops and the ensuite door swings open, revealing HARMONY--heavily pregnant, dressed for work in the city somewhere that makes you dress up a bit.

HARMONY

Hey, are you up?

Still pretending to sleep, his brow creases.

HARMONY

Babe?

He slowly opens his eyes, looking back at her.

ADAM

Oh hi. Hello. Good morning,
sleepyhead. Yawn.

HARMONY

What?

ADAM

Huh?

HARMONY

Did you just say yawn?

ADAM

No I yawned.

Harmony frowns.

HARMONY

How's the job search going?

Adam rolls back onto his elbows, awkwardly pretending to rub sleep from his eyes.

ADAM

Man. All the recruiters jerk you around, you know? I keep wasting my time on these meet and greets. They tell me the role they originally called me about has already been filled and then want you to sign up for like an adult skills course and they turn out to be *from* the unlicensed university selling the courses, and maybe there never was a job.

Harmony gathers a bag and coat from her bedside table.

HARMONY

Does this happen a lot?

Adam shrugs.

ADAM

More than once I guess.

HARMONY

Well just hit that pavement today maybe, get out of the house, go for a walk.

Adam nods.

ADAM
I will, yeah.

HARMONY
Not with Pete.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Adam and PETE walk to a public soccer field, Adam carrying a ball under one arm.

They sit for a while, stretching.

PETE
Are you gonna stop smoking weed
when the baby comes dude?

Adam thinks a moment.

ADAM
Am I supposed to?

Pete shrugs.

PETE
My mum said she quit smoking when
she found out she was pregnant with
me. Fifteen times!

Adam slowly nods.

ADAM
You know something man, I've been
wanting to quit smoking for a
while. It makes me really nervous
sometimes, like I get this feeling
of anxiety, and then
disconnectedness from whatever is
going on, like watching your life
in a theater.

PETE
Yeah I get that sometimes.

Pete stands, jumping a couple of times, then twisting at the hips. Adam stands too.

ADAM
What do you do?

PETE

Smoke more weed. Ever heard of smoking yourself straight?

ADAM

That's fucking genius. I'd only ever thought of that as a bad thing. I never thought the cure for too much weed would be more weed, if I'm being honest.

Adam kicks the ball to Pete.

PETE

Not with edibles though. The formula breaks down there.

Pete taps it back.

PETE

What about pills and mushrooms?

ADAM

I only really do those on special occasions. Or when I'm offered. By you mostly.

PETE

Want to go eat some now?

Adam shrugs.

ADAM

Sure.

They begin to walk home. Adam remembers the ball, running back for it while Pete waits.

PETE

What about violent movies and shit?

Adam returns to Pete at a jog before they resume walking to Pete's house.

ADAM

What do you mean?

PETE

Well you can't put on the latest episode of Thrones when you have a kid.

ADAM

"Thrones"? No one calls it that.

PETE

Some people I know say it like that.

ADAM

I'm pretty sure I read that kids can't see a 2D surface anyway. And they don't understand language until they're what--two years old? Three?

PETE

Yeah but you can't just have a show on where someone is screaming or fucking in nearly every scene.

Adam frowns.

ADAM

Shit. Yeah the kid will grow up all messed up in the head from the sounds of--oh hey, headphones.

Pete taps Adam on the arm.

PETE

Nice. Headphones.

They walk a bit further before Pete gets a curious look on his face.

PETE

Okay, hang on, how old is the kid before he starts being able to understand images on the screen. Is it like if you don't take him outside he doesn't know what a tree is, so when he sees one on TV his mind just goes oh okay that's a green curtain.

ADAM

Green curtain? Huh?

PETE

I don't know, sorry. I can't remember what I was saying. The shrooms are kicking in a lot right now.

ADAM

We haven't even eaten them yet.

PETE
No from earlier.

ADAM
Oh. How often do you do mushrooms
now?

Pete thinks.

PETE
About every three days, I guess?

ADAM
Holy shit. I *wish* I could do it
that often but with all these
pregnancy appointments I feel like
the doctors can tell if I've smoked
weed that day or eaten mushrooms
within the last week. I think they
learn how to spot that shit at
medical school. I'm paranoid
they'll peg me as a drug fiend and
try to make me quit.

PETE
Why's that? Harmony's cool about
it.

ADAM
Yeah just not specifically the
extent, and how often. She thinks I
smoke a bit of weed on the
weekends. Her parents were kind of
mental about that stuff growing up
so even though she's cool, she
still has the idea that anything
more than an occasional toke is
trending toward, you know,
"problematic behaviour".

They walk a bit.

PETE
Which neither of us would deny,
necessarily.

Adam shrugs.

ADAM
Fuck no. I just don't want it to
come up in a conversation. I have a
long term plan to quit all drugs,
inappropriate spending, *and*
excessive masturbation.

PETE

Go on.

ADAM

I'm just going to do it so much that I lose interest.

Pete nods.

PETE

That's just crazy enough to work. Do you have some pamphlets or anything? What system did you say this is?

ADAM

System? No this is just my personal philosophy.

PETE

So will this happen before or after your kid comes?

Adam thinks.

ADAM

Before, I guess. Hopefully. I know there will be math homework and parent teacher nights somewhere down the line--that will probably be the same shit as doctors, just don't get high all morning and put some eye drops in, you know--but for the first few years at least, I figure I just need to be in the same room. Give the baby a banana or a bottle when it needs, and put Teletubbies on. Is Barney still around? That dinosaur show, do you know?

Pete nods.

PETE

Probably. That dragon has plot armour.

ADAM

(counting on fingers)

Put everything in a lockbox on the top shelf of the wardrobe, never smoke in the house, and only do hard drugs when I leave the home with someone else babysitting. Three basic laws of robotics. Boom.

MONTAGE:

As the opening credits roll, accoustic guitar music floods audio.

A high speed montage compresses FOUR YEARS of Adam's life into about one minute:

The delivery, bringing a baby home, late night nappy changes and running around grabbing items while Harmony breastfeeds, the rooms changing rapidly from nice modern furniture and empty space to toy and barrier-strewn demarcations of kid-friendly items and toys. A second pregnancy, revealed on ultrasound, and then Harmony swelling up again to the size she was in the opening scenes, while the first kid grows into a four year old.

The montage ends with the second delivery, seeing their second BABY for the first time, then the extended family all pouring in with the first KID to meet his brother.

As the high speed footage begins slowing to realtime, Adam smiles and nods, gradually fading into the background, before rolling out of the crowd and the room, into a hallway, and onto the roof, crossing a skywalk to a multi-level car park, where he enters a compact SUV, leaning over to retrieve a brass smokeless torpedo pipe and lighter. He lights the tip of the shiny tube, lowering the window a crack to exhale.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Adam wakes again to the sound of Harmony getting ready in the ensuite.

He stealthily rolls out of bed, ninja-running to the balcony.

EXT. BALCONY - MORNING

Adam almost baseball-slides into the tree trunk, frantically pulling out his equipment to fill the pipe and light it quick as he can.

He leans back, holding it a moment, then gasps it out, running back to the door, stopping, returning to the trunk to spray mint in his mouth and douse himself in aftershave.

Adam jumps up again, going to the door.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Adam ninja runs to the bed, seeing Harmony standing, dressed for work again, at the open bathroom door as he takes a huge leap onto the mattress.

He locks eyes with her mid-air before landing comfily amongst the doona and pillows, bouncing a little. He rolls into a casual sideways pose, leaning his head on one elbow, twirling the blanket with his other finger.

ADAM
(casual)
Morning, crazy.

HARMONY
Crazy? Huh? What are you doing?

Adam looks down at the bed.

ADAM
Hm? Oh, don't be crazy. I'm just testing the springs. The bed's about to go out of warranty so I figured it needs a good jumping-on before we lose our chance to get a replacement, should we need it.

Her demeanour softens.

HARMONY
Oh, well that's actually pretty productive and proactive, thanks.

ADAM
You're very welcome. That's a little less crazy of you.

He rolls out of bed.

HARMONY
What?

The sound of a CRYING baby from the other room.

HARMONY

Can you walk him to daycare while I do the feed?

ADAM

How? He's a baby? Oh you mean the other guy.

Harmony frowns.

HARMONY

Are you high?

ADAM

Psh. No. I just woke up. Are you... crazy?

Harmony picks up her bag and coat, leaving the room.

INT. NURSERY - MORNING

Harmony picks up the crying BABY, now six months old, settling him on her lap.

INT. SECOND BEDROOM - MORNING

Adam enters the toddler's room, seeing little STEVE asleep still. Adam gets his phone out, browsing reddit for a bit.

After a while, Harmony leans in.

HARMONY

What are you doing?

Adam nods toward the still sleeping kid.

ADAM

He's asleep. They say you're not supposed to wake them up.

HARMONY

Who said that?

ADAM

The Morning Show. Or the Today show. The one that comes on after Today. What is that? M*A*S*H?

HARMONY

I've got to go to work.

Adam looks at the baby in her arms.

ADAM

What's he doing today? Is your mum coming by?

HARMONY

She can't 'til the afternoon, remember? You're supposed to have Steve at daycare by now, to look after this one.

The sleeping toddler stirs. They both watch a moment.

ADAM

Hm. Okay cool, I can handle two of them while I get him ready.

She seems a bit doubtful, handing the baby over with mild hesitation.

HARMONY

Call me if you can't find anything. I've gotta go.

While she exits, Adam holds the baby out in front of him, contemplating it. It smiles at him. He nods.

Steve now rolls over and sits up, looking at Adam and the baby briefly before bursting into tears.

The baby also begins to cry in response.

Adam runs out of the room with the baby, putting it down in the hall.

ADAM

(to baby)

Don't worry, he always does that when he wakes up. Don't take it personally. I will be *right* back.

Adam returns to the still crying toddler, patting him on the head.

ADAM

Want to get ready for kinder?

STEVE

(crying)

No!

ADAM

Breakfast?

STEVE
(howling)
No!

Adam thinks.

ADAM
Playstation?

The kid stops crying instantly.

STEVE
Okay.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - MORNING

Steve plays Playstation while the baby crawls around on the floor and Adam wedges shoes onto socks that don't match on Steve, also picking up toast to shove into the kid's mouth while he's distracted by the menus of the PS4.

Adam twists back to look at the screen, double-taking.

ADAM
Dude you need to do something other
than just browse around the menus.

Adam distractedly shoves toast into the baby's mouth while trying to reach over to the Playstation controller, which Steve yanks away, continuing to browse menus on the screen, with an annoying custom tone every time the cursor moves.

ADAM
What is that obnoxious sound every
time you move the stick? This theme
looks like dog... poo. Hey don't go
into settings! We talked about
this! Don't--hey! Don't change the
language, I can't change it back
again.

Adam notices the toast, pulling it out of the baby's mouth.

ADAM
Oh shit, wrong one. Do you eat
toast yet? You don't... *not* eat it,
right?

STEVE
Shit. Wrong one. Shhhhhit!

Adam freezes.

ADAM

Oh no, don't um, that's an adult word bud.

STEVE

It's a *shitty* looking theme.

ADAM

Hey we talked about this. Your teacher talked to me like a lot about this. Remember the whole teacher annoying daddy thing, buddy? Remember all that threatening I did, to make you stop doing it. Remember all the screaming mate? That day you wouldn't stop saying fuck?

STEVE

I would *not* stop saying fuck.

Adam frowns a little.

ADAM

Yeah, I... can't help feeling you're trolling me a little bit right now. Like you know it's going to get me in a lot of shit--*shit*--ah, shirt! It's going to get me in--a shirt. You know? That saying?

STEVE

Shit shirt!

ADAM

No I mean, shirt is what I've been saying this whole time, you were hearing me incorrectly there, little... sausage ears. Shirt! Am I right guys?

Adam looks at the baby for backup--he begins to scream so loud that it fills audio and visibly hurts Adam and Steve's ears. No reason apparent, just something to do.

ADAM

(wincing)

Fucking--Fudge! FUDGE-ING!

Steve looks away from the the menus long enough to make an angry face at the baby.

STEVE
 (shouts)
 Fucking fudge guy, stop that shit!

Adam puts his head in his hands. The baby screams again. Adam lifts his head, sniffing the air.

ADAM
 Okay which one of you just took a poo in his pants?

STEVE
 Not me, I shit in the toilet now.

ADAM
 Can you *please* stop saying--

The baby's next scream drowns out a few words.

ADAM
 --and never use the phrase "asian drivers" in front of your teacher again.

STEVE
 The teacher annoys daddy.

ADAM
 I know but you can't tell *her* that, okay? (pause) You... didn't tell her that did you?

Steve keeps playing Playstation, completely silent. Adam sighs. The baby screams again. Adam gets up.

ADAM
 (to baby)
 Okay wait here, let me get you a nappy. (to Steve) Can you watch him for a second?

Steve looks at the baby, then the screen, then the baby again, then Adam.

STEVE
 (cold)
 No.

Adam sighs again, more drawn out and pained, leaving the room a moment.

When he returns, the baby is shredding a dry Weet-Bix, having dragged it across the entire floor's carpet from corner to corner in the few seconds he was gone.

ADAM
(incensed)
Who gave you a fucking *Weet-Bix*?

STEVE
(shouts)
Fucking Weet-Bix!

The baby chews on pieces of Weet-Bix, laughing at Adam.

ADAM
Yeah it's hilarious when you're not
the poor asshole who has to clean
it--ah for frog sake how do I *stop*?

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Adam carries the baby in one arm, dragging Steve, who watches ABC Kids on Adam's phone, barely paying attention to walking, constantly stumbling. Adam has a small purple backpack that barely fits over his shoulder and keeps sliding down the arm holding Steve's hand every time he stumbles.

They proceed like this down the block before reaching the exterior gate of Steve's KINDER.

INT. KINDER - MORNING

Entering through the interior door, Adam puts the baby down on a pile of kids' shoes, snatching his phone back from Steve.

Steve's face immediately contorts into pre-tantrum, but Adam quickly whips a five dollar note out of his pocket, waving it in Steve's face.

ADAM
Hey! Look! Look at this! You get
this if you don't cry.

Steve opens his eyes, sees the note, and takes it, calmly joining the other children while MARIE, the teacher walks over to Adam with a falsely pleasant warm smile. She has a vaguely hippie/artistic/unwashed vibe about her, and is generally condescending, only having that gear that interacts with children.

MARIE
Hi Adam.

Adam gives her half a wave while bending down to pick up the baby.

MARIE

I noticed Steve has had a bit of trouble with his food recently.

Coming back up, Adam frowns, a bit confused.

ADAM

Trouble? What kind?

MARIE

Well, for one thing, he just keeps licking the salt off his crackers without eating them.

Adam nods.

ADAM

Ah, yeah, he loves salt. If you were to ask him his favourite food-- and he was in the mood to answer-- he'd definitely say salt.

MARIE

He's already very limited in what he will agree to eat, it might be a good idea to encourage him at home to eat more things.

ADAM

Oh we try. My wife made him chips the other day, he just licked all the salt off them. I came inside and thought she'd just put vinegar on them. I kept saying, "man this vinegar is really weak tasting", but she wasn't listening so it took us a while to figure out what happened. I ate half a bowl and they were still soggy. Who knows how much salt that is. (pause) Probably a lot.

Her passive stare has twisted into a sort of confused frown.

MARIE

Also he keeps hitting the other kids.

ADAM

Did they hit him first?

MARIE

Why?

ADAM

I taught him never hit first. I said only hit back. I think I said harder, but I stressed only hit *back*.

MARIE

The rule we try to enforce here is never hit at *all*.

Adam frowns again.

ADAM

Oh. (pause) What if you kind of need to though?

MARIE

Why would you need to?

ADAM

Like in prison. People will think you're a soft target if... you...

He trails off, distracted by Steve in background, over her shoulder, putting another kid in a headlock completely unprovoked, snatching the toy off him, then tossing him onto a beanbag.

MARIE

We wouldn't want the children to feel like prisoners here, Mr.--

ADAM

Ah you know what, I can have a word with him tonight, really play up the nonviolence angle.

She pivots back to the false pleasant smile and nods, returning to the class.

(Contact for further info)