

HOW GREAT IS THAT DARKNESS

by

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As he races to stop a spreading plague that threatens to plunge the world into blindness and death, a brilliant but self-centered scientist discovers the darkness of his own heart.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The luxurious board room is furnished with a huge mahogany conference table and stuffed leather chairs. The company logo: Mallory Pharmaceuticals is displayed over a wet bar set with scotch and cigars.

ON ADAMS

Dr. ADAMS, clad in an expensive suit with a lab coat over it, sits in a plush leather chair. He looks confident, poised.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Dr. Adams, everyone here knows your reputation. Three world patents, world-renowned researcher in viral epidemics, noted author and lecturer, et cetera.

Adams acts mildly interested, impatient.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

You've been brought here because of your current research on viral neurological degeneration.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

There is a situation in South America unlike anything we have ever seen: A new virus that attacks the nervous system beginning with the optic nerve causing blindness. Then it spreads to the motor nerves resulting in paralysis.

Adams distractedly swirls his drink.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

The final stage, total neurological shut-down, brain death. We have no idea how to combat this. Thousands have already been infected. There are isolated cases in France and China, but no one knows what it is yet. Our projections show that in fifteen to twenty-four months there will be sufficient cases to bring about world-wide awareness, and probable panic.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

And when the panic hits, the company that has the cure stands to make a LOT of money.

ADAMS
(arrogantly)
So, obviously, the world needs my
help. Why would I give it to you?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Well, how should I put this? Two of
our researchers here at Mallory
Pharmaceuticals have been Nobel
Prize recipients. And it is no
secret, doctor, that you feel
denied.

Adams glances up from his scotch.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Let's just say that our influence
extends beyond Washington and the
FDA. The person who discovers this
cure will win the Nobel Prize.

Adams looks up again. And a grin spreads across his face.

EXT. HANGING FROM A JUNGLE TREE - DAY

Shot of a tree in the jungle. CAMERA TILTS UP to see Adams
hanging from a harness high in a tree. Labored Breathing. He
lifts himself by pulling on the rope.

SUPER: Amazon Rainforest, Two Months Later.

An ominous cracking noise from above. Adams freezes, then
grabs for the tree. Adams falls. His hands scraping the bark.
His ropes get tangled around another limb which violently
stops his fall. Background JUNGLE NOISES resume and Adams
breathes a sigh of relief.

Scanning the bark of the tree, he reaches for a hand-hold.
Suddenly, he stops moving. Something catches his eye.

ADAMS
(triumphantly)
There you are.

INT. JUNGLE RESEARCH TENT - DAY

Tent door opens and Adams bursts in holding a sample jar full
of the fungus.

ADAMS
Tommy! You owe me twenty-five
bucks!

Tommy sits at a table with his back to the camera.

TOMMY
So you found it.

ADAMS (O.S.)
Of course I found it. I said I
would.

TOMMY
Well, that's good, doc. Real good,
'cause...

Tommy turns. Eyes bulge and bobble from their sockets!
They're plastic glasses with eyeballs dangling from springs.

Tommy laughs out loud and moves toward the doctor.

Adams stares back unfazed.

ADAMS
You're an idiot, you know that
right? Let's get to work.

Tommy, still laughing, tosses the glasses to the side. The
two of them move to the laboratory table. There are test
tubes, microscopes, and other lab equipment.

INT. JUNGLE RESEARCH TENT - NIGHT

Adams looks into a microscope and intensely writes notes. He
looks at his watch and it is 4:30 am.

Tommy knocks over a beaker, it breaks. Adams never looks up.

ADAMS
Clean it up.

As Tommy starts to pick up the pieces, he cuts himself. There
is a bead of blood coming through a cut in his glove.

TOMMY
Sorry Doc, just a little tired.

He quickly removes the glove and pours antiseptic over the
cut. He applies a band-aid and puts on a new glove.

ADAMS (O.S.)
We've been at it for eighteen
hours. You're getting clumsy, and I
can't afford that. Get some sleep.

Tommy turns to go into the adjoining room where the cots are. As he walks by Adams, he pauses.

TOMMY

Doc, I think what we are doing is really great. I was at the hospital this morning and I saw four more patients coming in. One was a little boy, maybe six years old. The look on the mother's face... I mean, what we are doing here...it's gonna make a difference.

The doctor still not looking up from his work.

ADAMS

Tommy, I don't think you're seeing the real picture here. Even if we find a cure, we aren't going to make a difference. Do you know why this disease is here, and why diseases always strike places like this? It's the people - they're uneducated, poor, and the place is over-populated. They are not like us, they have no initiative. They are never going to better themselves. And this is the majority of the world. Nature has a way of rebalancing itself. This same scenario will play again and again and again. About the only benefit here is that you are going to be well compensated, and I will finally get the Nobel Prize.

Tommy turns to look at Adams. He looks confused.

TOMMY

Doc?

Adams continues to peer into the microscope.

TOMMY

Doc!

Adams finally looks up at Tommy.

TOMMY

...is that how you see what we're doing here?

Adams stares coldly at Tommy for a moment. And then returns to his microscope.

ADAMS

Get some sleep, Tommy. It will be dawn in a couple hours.

INT. JUNGLE RESEARCH TENT - MORNING

Tommy and Adams are on their cots. Light streams through the plastic window in the tent. Tommy stirs and opens his eyes.

TOMMY'S POV

Tommy looks up at the ceiling. His gaze is out of focus. He sits up, looks around. Vision is blurry then comes in focus.

He nervously looks at his finger and takes off the band-aid (slowly). What is revealed is ugly infection. He covers it again with the band-aid.

INT. JUNGLE RESEARCH TENT - AFTERNOON

Adams and Tommy are still at work.

ADAMS

Tommy, pass me that beaker.

Tommy gropes at the beaker through blurred vision. His hand shakes. He jerks his hand back and grabs it.

His elbow hits a stand of empty test tubes knocking them to the floor. They shatter.

Adams immediately turns to Tommy.

Tommy is standing with his head down. He slowly lowers himself into a chair. Still looking down.

TOMMY

(almost a whisper)
Doc, I am so sorry.

Adams, somewhat impatiently.

ADAMS

They're just test tubes. Get Dan to clean it up and go back to work.

Hands trembling, Tommy removes protective goggles. His eyelids are swollen and red. His pupils have begun to cloud.

TOMMY

Doc, I don't think I can.

Adams's face changes from frustration to realization.

ADAMS

No.

He goes to the tent door and calls out.

ADAMS

Dan! Bring the jeep around now!

He spots a box of surgical masks, hesitates, grabs one. Puts it on as he rushes back to Tommy and begins to help him up.

ADAMS

It's going to be all right, Tommy.
We are gonna evac you to the
states. Stabilize you. You know how
close we are to the cure.

TOMMY

Doc, you know there's no time. Just
take me to the hospital with
everybody else. I know you will
find the cure. My best chance is
here.

INT./EXT. IN THE BACK OF THE JEEP - AFTERNOON

MOVING/TRACKING

On the way to the hospital. Tommy, wrapped in a blanket, lies on a stretcher in the back of the jeep. Adams sits beside him.

Dan, a leather-skinned guide and driver, is behind the wheel.

They ride a few moments in silence.

TOMMY

I've been thinking about our
conversation last night. When you
said these people - they're not
like us. And I guess I realized I'm
not like you either. I had the
freedom to pick any research
assignment I wanted. I chose to
come here...because sometimes you
use your freedom not to get but to
give.

Tommy wearily closes his eyes.

Adams frowns slightly from behind his mask. He slowly turns his head and looks out at the passing jungle.

ADAMS

Dan, can't you go any faster?

INT. MISSIONARY HOSPITAL - WARD - AN HOUR LATER

There is one large ward for patients with rows of beds filling the room.

Adams and Dr. RAMÓN stand beside Tommy's bed. He has an IV and an oxygen mask.

ADAMS

Do everything you can for him, my company will see that you are well-paid for his special treatment.

The doctor motions around the room.

RAMÓN

We are doing everything we can. Which is basically nothing! We try to make them as comfortable as possible, and then watch them as they die.

Adams turns to look. The beds are filled with dying patients of all ages. Some crying, some praying, some dazed.

Adams turns and walks out.

INTO

HALLWAY

He encounters Nurse SOSA. She has a kind, angelic face.

ADAMS

Please keep an eye on my friend. The "good doctor" in there seems to have given up, but I haven't. I will find a cure.

The nurse walks with him toward the door. She stops before the door and touches his arm.

SOSA

Of course I'll keep an eye on him. That's the choice we made. That's why we are here, "to serve one another humbly in love."

As she says this she is looking up at a scripture verse painted on the wall over the doorway: *"To serve one another humbly in love." Galatians 5:13*

Adams just looks at her for a moment. He turns and walks out of the hospital. It is late afternoon.

INT. RESEARCH TENT - NIGHT

MONTAGE: ADAMS WORKS FEVERISHLY

-- Adams looks into a microscope and writes notes.

-- Adams examines a test tube in the light, replaces it on the desk and shakes his head.

-- Adams paces the room speaking inaudibly into a recorder.

-- Adams places test tubes into the centrifuge on the desk.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. DAN'S TENT - NIGHT

The room is cluttered with empty beer bottles, scattered clothing, and various debris. Dan is passed out at his desk. A half-empty bottle of Jack Daniels sits beside him. The phone RINGS, jostles him awake; he picks it up.

DAN

Hello...Ok.

INT. RESEARCH TENT - NIGHT

Adams picks up a microphone and speaks.

ADAMS

I think I'm really close to synthesizing the compound. It is in the centrifuge now. When its finished I will need to run a couple more tests to be sure its safe. But I am so close.

He puts down his microphone. Hand shaking slightly. He rubs his eyes with the back of his sleeve and shakes his head.

He walks over to pour himself a cup of coffee.

Dan steps in the door.

DAN

(groggy and slurred)

The hospital called and s-said you need to get down there.

Adams turns quickly and bumps the table as he moves toward the door. He says under his breath.

ADAMS

No, it's too fast. I need more time.

(louder)

Did the doctor say anything else?
Did they say why I must come NOW?

Dan stands by the door swaying a little.

DAN

N-no. At least I don't think so.

Adams brushes past Dan.

ADAMS

(disgusted)

You're useless.

EXT. MISSIONARY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Adams skids the jeep to a stop in front of the hospital. Jumps out and runs in the door.

INT. MISSIONARY HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

He encounters Nurse Sosa. She looks up at him sadly.

SOSA

I am so sorry, Dr. Adams.

Adams hurries past her.

INTO

WARD

The sheet has been pulled over Tommy's head. Adams stands beside the bed. Defeated. Looks down at the motionless body.

ADAMS

(whispers)

I'm sorry. I have failed.

He turns wearily and finds Dr. Ramón standing beside him.

RAMÓN

I told you there was nothing we could do. There's nothing any of us can do. The disease... it's spreading, faster than projected.

(MORE)

RAMÓN (CONT'D)
 (sees Adams' symptoms)
 You're out of time, Dr. Adams. We
 are all out of time.

Adams says nothing and leaves the ward.

INTO

HALLWAY

As he walks toward the door he looks up. For the first time
 he sees the scripture over the doorway.

Realization comes across his face.

ADAMS
 (softly)
 There is still something I can do.

INT./EXT. MOVING JEEP - NIGHT

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Adams speeds down the jungle road.
- ADAM'S POV: The road goes in and out of focus.
- The jeep swerves, side-swiping a tree and continues on.
- The jeep skids to a halt in front of the tent. He jumps
 out, stumbles, and runs inside.

INT. JUNGLE RESEARCH TENT - NIGHT

Adams bursts in the door and goes directly to the centrifuge
 which has stopped. He reaches to take it out. Hand shaking.

He grips the vial with both hands and places it on the table.
 He picks up the microphone with both hands.

ADAMS
 Tommy is dead. The disease is
 spreading faster than we projected.
 I am exhibiting symptoms of the
 disease. There is no time for
 tests. I am injecting myself with
 the serum. It's in...
 (beat)
 ...it's in God's hands now.

Adams, shaking, struggles to fill a syringe from the vial.
 His vision is dimming.

ADAMS

(muttering)

If you are really there, its up to you. There's nothing else I can do.

He plunges the needle into his vein.

ADAM'S POV

He looks around. As he collapses onto the floor, still grasping the syringe in his hand, the room tilts, dims and then fades to black.

INT. HELICOPTER - MORNING

BLACK SCREEN

The sound of HELICOPTER BLADES.

DAN (O.S.)

I found him on the floor of his tent this morning gripping a syringe. When I called Mallory, they said to skip the hospital and bring him back to the states. They are setting up for him now. I brought everything - his notes, recordings, and the serum he injected himself with. He's still breathing so that's good, right?

HELICOPTER CREWMAN (O.S.)

The evac plane will meet us at the airport. Wait a minute he's moving.

ADAM'S POV

A glow in the center of the screen gets brighter until he can see the sun coming through the helicopter window.

As his vision comes into focus there are two men in hazmat suits leaning over him. He hears Dan's voice.

DAN

Hey, Doc, can you see me?

ADAMS

(hoarsely)

Yea, Dan, I see you. Can you help me sit up?

They help Adams sit up and prop himself against the hull.

ADAMS

I feel like I have your hangover.

They all smile as they realize that Adams's serum has worked.

DAN
(shouting)
So it works Doc. You did it. It
really does work!

ADAMS
Yea, Dan, it seems we have a cure.

HELICOPTER CREWMAN
Congratulations, sir. I'll radio
Mallory.

He moves toward the front of the helicopter.

HELICOPTER CREWMAN
It seems their investment paid off.

Adams's face grows solemn.

DAN
Let me congratulate you, too, sir.
I think you just won a Nobel Prize.

Tears fill Dr. Adams's still swollen eyes.

ADAMS
Dan, we have to turn around and go
back.

DAN
Wait a minute. You don't have to go
back. You have done what you came
to do. I brought everything the lab
will need to make more serum. It's
time for you to head home and get
some rest. After all, you just came
back from the dead. Besides, you
have an acceptance speech to write!

ADAMS
Funny how unimportant that seems to
me right now, Dan. Tell him to turn
around.

EXT. HELICOPTER - MORNING

Helicopter makes a graceful arc as the morning sun breaks
over the jungle canopy.

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