

Virus-99

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. WILLIAM'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

WILLIAM BUTLER, 30s, argues on speakerphone with his sister ERICA, 30s. William's hair--untamed, unwashed--cascades over his collar. His bloodshot eyes show traces of kindness.

WILLIAM
It's not that easy.

ERICA (V.O.)
But we're back to normal.

WILLIAM
No.

ERICA (V.O.)
Go check your window. You'll see people outside. The quarantine's been lifted.

WILLIAM
That's misinformation.

ERICA (V.O.)
The vaccine is real. The virus mitigation is real.

WILLIAM
No. Those are deep-fakes.

ERICA (V.O.)
Check your window. The world's re-opened. See for yourself.

A glance at his curtains: bulky, untouched, dark.

WILLIAM
Erica, I know that it's not really you I'm talking to. You're a computer-generated deep fake. You sound like my sister, but you're not.

ERICA (V.O.)
William...

WILLIAM
The real Erica is long-dead.

She sputters for a response.

WILLIAM

Long-dead. That's how they get you.
Friends. Family. Deep fakes.

ERICA (V.O.)

We're coming over there now to show
you. Get you outta there...

WILLIAM

But you died. You all died.

ERICA (V.O.)

We're coming over. We're an hour
away.

WILLIAM

That's against health protocols.
I've got a family to look out for.

ERICA (V.O.)

We're your family, William...

He ends the call. No more Erica. He sits. Alone.

WILLIAM

(a whisper)

I loved you too, Erica.

Then he shouts.

WILLIAM

Looks like someone's coming over!

He stands, shouts again.

WILLIAM

We'll meet about this in the dining
room. Talk over lunch.

INT. WILLIAM'S KITCHEN - DAY

With a spatula, William presses a grilled cheese sandwich
against a hot skillet.

WILLIAM

Grilled cheeses for everyone.

He presses down again--harder. Cheese oozes and sizzles.

WILLIAM

Wendy, can you make sure everyone
washes their hands before lunch?

INT. WILLIAM'S DINING ROOM - DAY

William swings into the room, five plates balanced precariously.

He sets them on the table and takes a long look at his assembled family.

They sit silently in chairs: WENDY, DANNY, and the TWINS.

They're all stuffed dummies. A stuffed wife. Dummy kids. Propped into chairs and perched forward.

Their bodies--towels shoved into clothing. Their faces are pillowcases with crudely drawn faces.

A smile for Wendy, his wife. A smirk for Danny, his son. The twin girls have scrawled mouths--crazy, Helter-Skelter zig zags.

William exits.

He returns with a blowtorch and an unsheathed hunting knife, blood dried to the blade. He sets them aside.

WILLIAM

All right. Everyone's washed.
Everyone's good. Let's dig in.

He deals out plates to his family and takes a greedy bite of his sandwich.

WILLIAM

I'm not going to lie to you, things are about to get hairy in just a few minutes, but we've prepared for this, haven't we, Danny?

Danny "stares" with wild, round, magic-markered eyes.

WILLIAM

So I want to tell you a story right now that will give you some hope. It's called Apollo Thirteen.

William confiscates Danny's sandwich, bites it, chews.

WILLIAM

See, it's 1970 and three astronauts are headed for the moon.

He waves his arms slowly to mimic weightlessness.

WILLIAM

There's no gravity in space, so everything floats. Your grilled cheeses would float.

William pretends to float over to the twins. He hovers over them and makes silly faces--a father entertaining his kids.

WILLIAM

Oh, that's silly, isn't it? You girls would love anti-gravity, wouldn't you?

He "floats" around some more. Makes rocket-ship noises. A goof-ball dad. The center of the universe.

WILLIAM

But there's a problem. Kevin Bacon stirs the oxygen tanks and bam! Explosion.

William whirls/spits out destructive sounds.

WILLIAM

They have to retreat to the LEM and circle the dark side of the moon.

He covers his face with a napkin.

WILLIAM

You didn't know the moon had a dark side, did you, Danny? Well it does. And it swallows men up.

William drifts to the twins/eats some of their sandwiches.

WILLIAM

There are more problems: the crew is using too much power. And there is a complication with the oxygen filter. They gotta make their own.

William frantically stacks sandwiches, plates, and napkins to simulate the construction of a makeshift air filter.

Stop.

WILLIAM

No, Wendy, I am not trying to scare the children. I'm preparing them.

A gentle knock on William's front door. Visitors are here.

A glance at the knife. Close. Within reach.

WILLIAM

Okay, back to the astronauts. Long story short: they lived.

Forceful knocks. Bam. Bam. Bam.

WILLIAM

So what's the point of the story? The point is that they found a way. Just like we'll find a way.

ERICA (O.S.)

(from outside the door)

William, open up. It's Erica.

He slides his hand around his hunting knife. Sharp as hell.

WILLIAM

Okay. It's time to protect our home. Don't be scared, Danny. We've fended off intruders before, do you remember?

William runs his finger along the blade's dried blood.

ERICA (O.S.)

William, I love you. Please open.

William sets the knife aside and takes up the blowtorch.

WILLIAM

Apollo Thirteen was never real, just a fairy tale. A deep fake.

He stands close to Danny.

WILLIAM

Your aunt is a deep fake, too. It's not really her at the door. It's disease and death and killers.

More knocks--increased urgency.

ERICA (O.S.)

William, please. Open up.

William bounds to Wendy and kisses her cheek--100 percent cotton. He turns to his son.

WILLIAM

Okay, Danny, I need your help. We've gotta fend them off.

William flicks his blowtorch and holds the flame to Danny's pillowcase head.

WILLIAM

I love you, son. I'm protecting you. This's what love is.

A small flame catches hold. Danny's face melts/shrivels away.

WILLIAM

(to Danny)

Your job is to distract them.

William takes the knife in one hand and the burning Danny dummy in the other and rushes toward the door.

Then he and Danny are off to confront Erica--or whatever scoundrel poses as Erica.

As Wendy and the twins stare lifelessly, all hell breaks loose in the other room. A door forced open. Muffled shouts. Pleas. Cries. Crashing. Coughs. A scream...

Silence. A standstill.

Soft rustling. Someone writhes. Gasps.

William crawls into the room, elbows pressing into the floor.

Coughing. Blotches on his skin. A gashed face and knuckles.

He reaches, pulls Wendy to the floor. Some of her stuffing tumbles out.

William pulls her close, coughs, shushes into her fabric ear: Shhhhh.

WILLIAM

(whispers, gasps)

I'm infected. Shhhh.

Winces. Shushes. He can barely speak.

WILLIAM

Don't look. Don't look. Don't ever go in that room. Wendy.

He pulls Wendy close. A tear drops down his face. He closes his eyes, gives in to the exhaustion. Silence takes hold.

Wendy's eyes are lifeless dots staring at the ceiling. The twins' mouths are crazy zigzags.

FADE OUT: