

Virus-99

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 (O.S.)
But it's over, William.

WILLIAM
It's not.

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

WILLIAM
That's misinformation.

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

WILLIAM
No. Those are deep-fakes.

ERICA (O.S.)
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 (O.S.)
William...

WILLIAM
The real Erica is long-dead.

Erica sputters for a response. What's the proper follow-up?

WILLIAM

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

ERICA

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

WILLIAM

But you died. You all died.

ERICA

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

William, listen. I love...

He hangs up with an angry poke at his phone. No more Erica.

A low, sad sound grumbles from deep down.

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 about it 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 wolfish 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 1969 and Captain James--
Jim, that's what we'll call him, is
headed to the moon with two others
in his capsule.

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

Imagine how desolate that would be.
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 stacks sandwiches, plates, and napkins to simulate
the construction of a makeshift air filter.

WILLIAM

There's more. Bill Paxton gets sick. They have to burn the tanks to get back on trajectory. The heat shields might be damaged.

Stop.

WILLIAM

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

A gentle knock on William's front door. They're here.

A glance at the knife. Close. Within reach.

WILLIAM

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.

ERICA (O.S.)

William, I love you. Please open.

William sets the knife aside and takes up the blowtorch.

WILLIAM

Now here's the thing about Apollo Thirteen and the space program: It was never real, just a fairy tale told to the people. A soothing fantasy.

He stands close to Danny.

WILLIAM

The space program was a fairy tale, and your aunt is a fairy tale, too.

(MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

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

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

Before he goes, he plants a soft kiss on Wendy's cheek.

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.

Footsteps. Slow. Unsteady.

William staggers into the room, gulping for air, his face filled with pain, blotches in his skin.

He reaches--tries to explain it all to Wendy and the Twins.

He cannot explain. It's no longer possible. Beyond all hope.

He agonizes for breath. Gulp. Gulp. He drops. That's it.

The dummies are all that's left.

Wendy's eyes are lifeless dots upon the fabric. The twins' mouths are crazy zigzags.

FADE OUT:

THE END.