

“The Alert”
by
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A Short Film

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Characters:

Ana
Louis
Rob
Announcer

Over blackness:

Three annoying beeps. Followed by a long ten second tone.

Fade in:

Close up: a cheap plastic battery powered transistor radio.
The serious and grainy voice of an Emergency Alert System Announcer is heard:

Announcer: *We interrupt this program. The office of civil defense has issued the following message...*

Close up: the radio's antenna is fully extended all the way up.

Announcer: *This is an attack warning. Repeat, this is an attack warning.*

Ana and Louis sitting/leaning against a silver kitchen island and listening to the report from over the radio.

Announcer: *Attack warning means that an actual attack against this country has been detected.*

Close up: Louis bites his nails.

Announcer: *And that protective action should be taken.*

Close up: Ana runs her fingers nervously through her hair.

Announcer: *Important instructions will follow in thirty seconds.*

The three annoying beeps again.

We are in a big New York City apartment: a nice loft space with large windows, three bedrooms, and two and a half baths. There is also a “great room” which encompasses the kitchen and two living room areas with expensive artwork on the walls and a grand piano.

Although daytime, all of the power in the apartment is out. So there are no lights, no appliances, and no cell phones (all of the cell phone towers are also out). Their only lifeline to the outside world is...

Louis turns the volume down so they can talk.

Louis: There's no new information.

Ana: What should we do?

Louis: Let's get whatever we need and bring it in here.

Ana: Good idea.

The Announcer's message repeats again and again and we hear snippets of the repeat.

Three annoying beeps. Followed by a long ten second tone.

Announcer: *We interrupt this program. The office of civil defense has issued the following message... This is an attack warning. Repeat, this is an attack warning. Attack warning means that an actual attack against this country has been detected. And that protective action should be taken. Important instructions will follow in thirty seconds.*

The three annoying beeps again.

Cut to:

Ana and Louis perform their plan: they get organized, run around the apartment and find the stuff they may need:

Louis walks into a bedroom. Ana enters another bedroom. Louis searches the room: he pulls out the dresser drawers. Ana pulls out dresser drawers. Ana slides open the closet and quickly pushes through the rack of clothes. Louis pushes through a rack of clothes. Louis gives up and heads into the bathroom. Ana enters the master bedroom. Louis opens the medicine cabinet: he riffles through bottles and grabs any pill bottles. He checks under the sink. Ana goes through her closet and pulls out clothes that she tosses on the bed. Survival-type items: hoodie, rain slicker, jeans, sneakers. Louis enters the master bedroom and pulls open the dresser drawers: he

too pulls survival-style clothes and tosses them on the bed, along with a nice watch, passport, etc. They switch positions without missing a beat: Louis pulls items from his closet, Ana grabs jewelry and personal effects from her dresser. Louis finishes first, then he checks the nightstands and moves to the master bathroom. He snags items from the medicine cabinet. Ana enters, looks over his shoulder and grabs her deodorant, moisturizer, and then from under the sink, her hair dryer.

Louis: Electricity.

Ana: (had forgotten) Right. (she tosses the hair dryer back under the sink)

Louis grabs an armful of stuff from off the bed and heads for the kitchen where he drops the items on the kitchen island. Louis pulls out kitchen drawers, removing items he thinks they might need: a knife, can opener, flashlight, matches, votives, etc. Ana performs a second sweep of their bedroom. Louis stands in front of the refrigerator and prepares for battle. He pulls open the refrigerator door and peers into the unlit appliance. He's trying to be quick. He squats down to examine the contents of the crisper.

Three annoying beeps. Followed by a long ten second tone.

The Announcer's message changes:

Announcer: *We interrupt this program. The office of civil defense has issued the following message...Citizens should stay indoors. Repeat, citizens should stay indoors.*

Ana stops what she is doing. Louis cranes his neck up and listens.

Announcer: *It is not safe in public spaces. Repeat, avoid public spaces.*

Louis jumps up.

Louis: Ana!

Louis turns up the volume on the radio. Ana runs into the kitchen.

Announcer: *Citizens should stay indoors.*

Louis has his elbows perched on the kitchen island listening intently.

Announcer: *Important instructions will follow in thirty seconds.*

The three annoying beeps again.

Louis: Well now wh—

Abruptly, there is a loud knock at the front door and Ana and Louis practically jump into the air in fright. Ana and Louis look at each other. They think. There is another loud knock. They don't know what to do. They slowly move towards the front door, tip-toeing to not make noise. A third knock. Ana motions for Louis to look through the peep hole. Finally, Louis gives in to her and motions that he will. Louis tip-toes silently to the front door. He looks through the peep hole and sees...Rob.

Rob is listening.

Louis immediately decides to open the door. But Ana doesn't know what he's doing and is concerned.

Ana: (whispered) What are you—

Louis: (as he opens the door) It's okay.

Rob's face quizzically listening.

Louis opens the door. Louis' and Ana's tone shifts to happy to see Rob.

The same Alert message, about staying indoors and avoiding public places, continues to play on repeat in the background.

Louis: Hey! Rob, are you okay? Get in here.

Rob: Thanks. I'm fine. It's good to see you guys. (he gives her a kiss on the cheek which she is uncomfortable about) Are you two all right?

Louis: Yeah, we're fine.

Ana: We're just surprised to see y—

Rob: Yeah, listen, just give me a second, okay. I've really gotta (he motions to the guest bathroom and then ducks inside)

Ana and Louis whisper argue, unsure how to handle this.

Ana mouths, "What the fuck?" Louis responds: "I don't know! What do you want me to do?!"

Three annoying beeps. Followed by a long ten second tone.

Announcer: *We interrupt this program. The office of civil defense has issued the following message...The attack is a virus. Repeat, the attack is a virus.*

Ana and Louis hear this new message and run into the kitchen.

Announcer: *Stay indoors. Avoid public spaces. And do not let anyone in to your home. Repeat, do not let anyone in to your home.*

Ana's eyes grow enormous. Louis turns his head and looks in the direction of Rob.

Announcer: *Important instructions will follow in thirty seconds.*

The three annoying beeps again.

The flush of a toilet.

Ana: What do we do?!

Louis: I don't know.

Ana: Well that's just great,

The unlatching of the bathroom door.

Ana: He's your stupid friend, not mine,

The sound of Rob's feet walking towards them on the hardwood floor.

Ana: You're gonna just have to tell him he has to—

Enter Rob.

Rob: Hey, guys,

Ana jumps from being startled.

Rob: Sorry.

Rob is not as concerned about what is going on as Louis and Ana.
He treats it like a severe weather warning.

Louis: What's it like out there? They told us to stay inside.

Rob: Oh, it's fine. No big deal.

Rob moseys over to the open refrigerator.

Rob: We should eat this before it goes bad.

Louis: Yeah, I was pulling stuff out before you—

Ana: Why'd you come here?

Rob: (riffling through the refrigerator) What do you mean?

Ana: Why were you out? You're not supposed to be out. (she points to the radio which keeps repeating that same message)

Rob: Is that what they said? No, it's fine. It's quiet out, but it's all right.

Ana: There's a Virus! How do we know you're not infected?

Louis: Ana—

Rob: If you don't want me here, I'll go.

Louis: No, Rob—

Rob: I just came here (directed at Ana) to check up on my Dear Friends, Ana and...(he motions to Louis)

Louis: (points to himself) Lou.

Rob continues looking at Ana. Ana and Rob look at each other in silence. Louis is caught in between them. (The Alert still plays on the radio) Finally,

Louis: Come on, guys...

They stare at each other. Finally, Ana breaks it.

Ana: I'm sorry. You're right. This whole thing has just got me—

Rob: Don't worry about it. Totally understandable.

Ana: I'm sorry, Rob.

Rob: It's okay, Ana. Really. I'm gonna make a sandwich. Would anybody like a sandwich before this (he smells the cold cut package) turkey goes bad?

Ana: Yes.

Louis: Absolutely.

Rob: Excellent.

Louis: (Ana) You hate Turkey.

Rob: I can make something else.

Ana: No, I feel like turkey. (to Rob) A turkey sandwich would be delightful. With mayo.

Louis is shocked.

Louis: I don't know who you are anymore.

Rob laughs, that Rob laugh.

Ana: I want mayo.

Rob: I love mayo.

Ana: Great minds think alike.

Louis is confused.

Louis: Are you pregnant?

Ana: What? No. Where did you come t—

Rob: Can't someone just enjoy some mayo, Lou? Jeez.

Louis: Whatever. Make me a sandwich.

Rob: Will do, kemosabe.

A Crossfade takes us to the three of them finishing up their sandwiches.

Rob places their empty plates in the sink and turns on the water to wash them.

The alert message continues on repeat:
Three annoying beeps. Followed by a long ten second tone.

Announcer: *We interrupt this program. The office of civil defense has issued the following message...The attack is a virus. Repeat, the attack is a virus. Stay indoors. Avoid public spaces. And do not let anyone in to your home. Repeat, do not let anyone in to your home. Important instructions will follow in thirty seconds.*

The three annoying beeps again.

Louis snags a clean glass, opens the freezer, and quickly grabs some ice cubes for his glass. Then he walks over to their bar and pours himself a Dewar's on the rocks.

Ana: That hit the spot. Thank you, Rob.

Rob: (as he does the dishes) You are welcome, Ana.

Ana: (to Louis) What are you doing?

Louis: (finishes his sip) What?

Rob: You know what, Lou, I'll take one too.

Louis: (to Ana) See! (to Rob) Ok. (to Ana) Do you want one?

Ana pauses a moment then she gives in.

Ana: All right. Fine.

Louis gets two more glasses, ice, and makes Dewar's for Ana and Rob. He hands each of them their drink.

Rob: Cheers.

Ana: L'chaim.

Rob: To good friends.

They all drink.

Ana: Mmm, that is tasty.

Rob: Oh yeah.

Three annoying beeps. Followed by a long ten second tone.

Announcer: *We interrupt this program. The office of civil defense has issued the following message...The cause of the virus is unknown. Repeat, cause unknown. At this time there are no known fatalities to the virus. The virus is not fatal. Symptoms of the virus include: (and here he is handed a piece of paper that he reads and then argues with his producer) That doesn't make any sense. I'm not gonna read that... (A Pause) Important instructions will follow in thirty seconds.*

The three annoying beeps again.

Ana, Louis, and Rob have been listening to the new announcement.

Ana: That was a weird message.

Louis: They don't know what's going on right now.

Ana: It's still odd.

Rob: I agree. I think the best thing we can do is hunker down here and try to enjoy ourselves. Try to relax.

Ana: Yeah, you're probably right.

Rob: Of course I'm right.

They all laugh.

Crossfade to Rob placing his drink down on the piano.

Louis and Ana are relaxing on the other side of the room. They both put their drinks down on the coffeetable and lie on the floor staring up at the ceiling.

Rob sits at the piano. He removes a pack of cigarettes from his shirt's breast pocket and tosses it on the piano, next to his drink. He takes a sip from his drink. He clears his throat. Then he shakes out his hands and begins playing.

It starts out instrumental: Rob playing the piano beautifully.

Ana and Louis, lying on the floor, close their eyes and try to relax.

Ana smells something that catches her attention.

Ana: What's that smell? Is that you?

Louis takes a long sniff.

Louis: Yeah, I think it's me. (he smells her too) And you.

Ana: We smell like—

Louis: B.O and—

Ana: Dryer sheets?

Louis: Yeah, you're right! (he laughs about it)

Ana laughs also but she remains puzzled by the smell.

Rob now launches into a song. He begins singing.

SONG – it is an upbeat number

Verse 1

He sings the first verse. Right when he is about to hit the chorus, Ana, still lying on the floor comfortably, opens her eyes as if her insides were suddenly struck by something. She leaps up and runs out of the room, straight into the closest bathroom.

Chorus

Louis is also struck by some inner turmoil. He runs into the other bathroom. Ana poops her brains out. Louis poops his brains out.

Rob is really enjoying singing his song.

Verse 2

Ana and Louis, sweating profusely and exhausted, stagger out of their respective bathrooms and wander back into the main room and towards Rob.

Without missing a beat (and still playing and singing) Rob pulls two cigarettes out of his pack, lights them together in his mouth, and then places each one in Ana's and Louis' mouth.

Ana and Louis don't smoke but they both really enjoy that first cigarette drag, it's almost a spiritual experience for them.

Chorus

They smoke those cigarettes down in record time. Then they immediately light up two more and keep smoking. Those two new smokes get sucked down equally as fast so they light up two more. Soon the pack is finished. They are slightly panicked.

Then Louis starts laughing at the absurdity of the situation. And it is a laugh similar to Rob's laugh from earlier.

Ana also recognizes the ridiculousness of this scene and starts laughing as well, also similar to Rob.

Bridge

The laughter leads to Ana and Louis looking at each other, and looking at each other with sheer passion for the first time since this crisis started. They launch at each other and start making out. Rob's eyebrows rise, he likes the turn they have taken.

And suddenly Ana and Louis are both extremely turned on. They take off for their bedroom.

Clothes fly off of their bodies until they are down to their underwear. In bed together they continue going at it passionately.

Rob keeps groovin' to his tune.

Chorus

In bed, Ana is on top of Louis as they kiss. Louis places his hands on her hips. As they break out of the kiss and Ana rises up, Louis's eyes become enormous. Ana's face is confused by Louis's reaction. Then Louis's eyes show her where to look. Ana looks down and sees: she now has a huge gut, totally disproportionate to her body. Obviously, she is shocked by this sudden occurrence. She dismounts Louis and runs for the bathroom. Louis remains seated in the bed, in a state of shock.

In the bathroom Ana looks at herself in the mirror and runs her hands over her new gut. She is terrified. She turns and looks to Louis in the bed.

Louis is staring down at his own stomach which now also has a huge gut. He doesn't know what to do about this either so he just sits there looking at it in disbelief.

Rob is singing the hell out of his song as it hits an apex.

Ana slowly walks back into the master bedroom. She looks to Louis. Louis now not only has his big gut but he also now has a beard. He looks to Ana desperately.

We see Ana and she now also has a beard, a beard that is not dissimilar to Rob's beard. In fact both of their guts and now their beards look a lot like...

Rob is bring his song home:

Chorus Repeat

Ana and Louis enter the living room and slowly walk towards Rob.

Rob is finishing up his song. Ana and Louis reach the piano just as the song ends.

Rob is breathing heavily, he really gave it his all with the song. He pulls out a backup pack of cigarettes, lights up, turns and looks to Ana and Louis.

Ana and Louis stand before Rob but they now both look exactly like Rob. One Rob wears Louis's underwear, the other Rob wears Ana's bra and briefs. These two Robs stand before the Original Rob with stunned looks on their faces.

Three annoying beeps. Followed by a long ten second tone.

Original Rob: (takes a drag, looks at them, and a sly smile grows across his face. He is about to speak but then:)

The Announcer returns but with a different voice.

Announcer (but now he has Rob's voice): *The alert has passed. The danger is over.*

All three Robs turn their heads and look in the direction of the radio.

Announcer: *We regret to inform you that there never was a virus. Everything is fine. Repeat, there is no virus. Everything is fine. You may travel from your home. Public spaces are perfectly safe. Direct contact with other human beings is acceptable. We will update this message in thirty seconds.*

The three annoying beeps again.

There is a knock at the front door. The three Robs look at each other trying to figure out who that might be.

The three Robs walk to the front door. They all look at each other. The Original Rob motions to the Ana Rob for her/him to go ahead and look through the peep hole.

The Ana Rob approaches the front door. He/She looks through the peep hole. And he/she sees...

Another Rob.

Blackout

In the blackness:

Three annoying beeps. Followed by a long ten second tone.

Announcer (Rob's voice): *Disregard the alert messages you have heard. There never was an alert. And I love you all. You're beautiful.*

The three annoying beeps again.

Credits Roll.