

ORANGE ALERT

A Play by Jeremy Gable

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JENNIFER, late teens, female

GREG, early 20's, male

SONYA, early 30's, female

MARK, early 30's, male

LINDSEY, early 20's, female

DANNY, early 20's, male

NIKKI, early 20's, female

- ☺ -

The action throughout takes place at various
locations in Orange County, California.

- ☺ -

Time: Autumn

- ☺ -

WGAw Registration Number: 991847

ORANGE ALERTACT ONE

(Lights up on a hotel room. JENNIFER sits on the edge of the bed, holding a remote control. She is attractive, though she tends to hide it in her posture and clothing. She fidgets while watching television. The sound of a beep and a click. JENNIFER quickly turns the TV off, bathing the room in a silence that will be sustained throughout the rest of the scene. She stands up, and looks over at the door in anticipation. It opens and GREG enters, carrying his jacket in one hand and a key card in the other. He is a handsome man with an instant charm and likeability. He spots JENNIFER and nods. She gives a small wave and smiles to herself, pleased with his appearance. He sticks his hand out and JENNIFER promptly shakes it. A moment of silent \ awkwardness. He looks for a place to put his jacket. He holds it up inquisitively. JENNIFER holds out her hand for it. He gives it to her, and looks around. Not finding a place for it, she tosses it on the back of a chair. They smile at each other. JENNIFER takes the remote control and places it next to the TV. As she does, GREG takes off his shirt and tosses it on the chair with his jacket. JENNIFER turns around, sees GREG shirtless, and gives a small gasp. He looks at her with a look of "Is this okay?" JENNIFER regains her composure, and nods. He motions for her to do likewise. She hesitantly takes off her shoes and looks at him as if saying, "How's that?" A long, awkward silence, with neither of them knowing what to do. GREG slowly walks up and gently kisses JENNIFER. She goes with it for a second, but pulls away. She almost instantly regrets it as there is another awkward pause. GREG, feeling that his presence is not wanted, nods and picks up his shirt. JENNIFER quickly reacts by standing in his way. In a \ moment of what must be extreme boldness, she takes off her shirt, exposing her bra. She shrugs at him with a mixture of fear and satisfaction. He smiles at her brave gesture. She kisses him. The awkwardness is gone. They smile at each other and kiss again. As they fall onto the bed, the sound of an airplane passing overhead is heard. Lights change. Spotlight on two airplane seats. In one seat sits SONYA, who reads a magazine, trying to distract herself. Next to her sits MARK, a handsome though slightly nerdy man, staring intently into a handheld electronic game that he is playing. A cane sits next to him.

The plane hits some turbulence, makes some noise, and starts to shake. SONYA looks around, nervously. The turbulence subsides. She looks at MARK, then at his game)

SONYA

Why do--?

(MARK jumps, startled)

MARK

Jesus!

SONYA

Sorry. God, I'm sorry.

MARK

No, that's...You just...

SONYA

Yeah, sorry.

MARK

What were you gonna...?

SONYA

I...don't remember. Something profound and terribly important, I'm sure.

MARK

Mmm, I bet.

(He returns to his game. SONYA stares at it)

SONYA

That's an unusual game.

MARK

Yeah.

SONYA

What are you doing? I mean, how do you play it?

MARK

Well, you create these people, and you build them a house, and then you basically help them live their life. Like this guy, his Food Meter is low, so I'm telling him to make himself lunch. And this girl, her Bathroom Meter's going to run out in a couple of minutes, so after she's done practicing the piano, I'll tell her to go to the bathroom.

SONYA

Well, what if you ask them to do something they don't want to do?

MARK

They do it, anyway. Just with a lot of complaining.

SONYA

Well that's...odd. Instead of living life, you're staring at a screen, playing a game about living life. You know, instead of telling a computer person to practice the piano, why don't you just practice it yourself? It just seems... And plus the idea that they don't have free will, that this...thing, the guy playing it is making them do things that they wouldn't normally do. It's...

(SONYA stares at the game. Beat)

MARK

Would you like to play it?

SONYA

I'd love to. But I shouldn't. Trust me, I'm fantastic at breaking electronic things. I don't know how I do it.

MARK

Oh yeah?

SONYA

Yeah. I don't have a computer, I don't have a cell phone--

MARK

Wow, that's very medieval of you.

SONYA

Yeah, I'm a Neanderthal. An Orange County anomaly. I don't have cable, or automatic transmission--

MARK

Do you have one of those toilets, you know, with the chain that you pull to...?

SONYA

(Overlapping)

Yeah, yeah, right next to the butter churn.

(MARK smiles and turns back to the game. Awkward pause)

I'm coming back from vacation. In case you were wondering. My work made me go.

MARK

They MADE you go?

SONYA

Yeah, well...

MARK

Where do you work?

SONYA

Why does that matter?

(Awkward moment. The plane hits some more turbulence.
SONYA grips the armrest of her chair)

MARK

Are you--?

SONYA

Mm-hmm. Fine.

(The turbulence subsides. Pause)

They made me go on vacation because...I had an...incident.

MARK

What, you peed the carpet?

SONYA

Almost. I just, okay, couple of weeks ago, I was sitting at my cubicle, staring at my computer screen, just... feeling my eyes ache, and suddenly, I didn't know where I was, or what I was doing, or my name. I forgot my name!

MARK

Wow.

SONYA

My mind just...

MARK

Blanked?

SONYA

Yeah, just blip and gone. Earlier that week, my computer crashed and lost everything, and now my brain was doing the same thing. I thought for a second that I'd somehow turned into a computer. So I kind of freaked out. And I just realized how crazy that makes me sound. I don't know why I told you that. I'm kind of an idiot.

MARK

No, it's okay, you're not an--

SONYA

How about this, I'm going to turn this way and think about the days when I had some dignity.
 (She turns away. MARK gives a small smile and turns back to his game. Some more turbulence. This one is worse than the others. As it subsides, SONYA turns back to MARK)
 Have you ever had anything like that? You did something you couldn't really explain?

MARK

Um...Well, yeah, I guess.

SONYA

What was it, if you don't mind me, you know, prying?

MARK

I don't know if, um...Well, a few years ago, I decided I wanted to go to California. Just while I was driving to White Castle, I decided I was going to drop everything and drive to California with a new...life, I guess.

SONYA

Really? Did you, you know, have everything packed?

MARK

No, I was completely unprepared. I had no food in the car, very little money. I was driving from Illinois, where I live, and I actually made it to the Missouri border before I turned back.

SONYA

Seriously?

MARK

I didn't know what I was gonna do when I got there, or where I was gonna settle. I just wanted to get away. Personal low point in my life.

SONYA

Why California?

MARK

Um, I heard there was gold in them hills.

SONYA

What hills? Everything's paved. Is that why you're going now?

MARK

No, my mom's dying.

SONYA

I'm sorry.

MARK

No, no, it's okay. You spend half a century with a cigarette in your mouth, emphysema's not a surprise. It's like, I dunno, getting punched in slow motion. You saw it coming, so it's your own fault.

(He reflects on this and returns to his game)

SONYA

So, how long will you be here?

MARK

Until...you know.

SONYA

Right.

MARK

My work gave me plenty of time off, so--

SONYA

(Changing the subject)

Oh, what do you do?

MARK

I test video games for bugs.

SONYA

I didn't know bugs played video games.

MARK

No, what I do is--

SONYA

I know.

MARK

Oh.

SONYA

(Embarrassed)

It was a joke. A really bad joke. Did you test that one?

MARK

No, that's why I still like playing it. You get tired of the games pretty easily.

SONYA

Oh, yeah, I guess it's still a job, huh?

Yeah. MARK

A job's a job. SONYA

Yep. MARK

A job is a... SONYA

(Another sudden burst of turbulence)
Okay, you know what? I'm going to make this easier. Hi, what's your name?

Mark. MARK

Hi, Mark. I'm Sonya. SONYA

Oh, like "Mortal Kombat". MARK

Hmm? SONYA

Oh, nothing, a...a game. MARK

Right. SONYA

Anyway, it's nice to meet you. MARK

(He sticks out his hand)

Back at ya. SONYA

(She shakes it)

See? Easy. Now we can go back to our lives. You can keep playing your game, and I'll read about women I could never be.

(MARK goes to return to his game. He looks at the screen, confused. He presses a few buttons and hits the game)

What's wrong?

MARK

It froze.

SONYA

See? I told you. I have the magic touch.

(Lights change. A doorbell sound. We are in DANNY's room. DANNY is laying in bed. Another doorbell. He sits up)

DANNY

Whazza?

(The doorbell now comes at a steady rhythm, possibly "Jingle Bells". DANNY gets out of bed and goes over to the door)

Who is it?

LINDSEY

(Off-stage)

Delivery for Daniel Haster.

DANNY

Nikki?

(Pause)

LINDSEY

(Off-stage)

No, it's Lindsey.

DANNY

Oh.

LINDSEY

(Off-stage)

But no, really, I have a delivery. Open the door.

(DANNY opens the door to reveal LINDSEY, who opens her arms)

Delivery!

(She kisses him)

DANNY

Hey, Linz.

LINDSEY

Yeah, so, okay, I was gonna be here earlier, because I know it's about, what...

(She looks at his alarm clock)

One-fif... This isn't right, is it?

DANNY

I think it's ten minutes f--

LINDSEY

(Rapidly; She takes off her jacket and shoes as she talks)

Well, I was going to be here earlier, but I'm walking to my car, and this guy drives by and, get this, he whistles. He whistles, like wolf whistles, like...

(She tries to demonstrate, but can't whistle)

...but like actually whistling. Like that's going to work, like I'll be all, "Hey, that dude can whistle! What's your number?" And so, insult to injury, he drives past, and he's got a bumper sticker telling, not asking, *telling* me to re-elect the President, which immediately tells me everything I need to know about this guy, that he has no idea pretty soon the only place he'll get to whistle at me is at the homeless shelter if he re-elects the President. Goddamn Newport Beach! So I take some time to recover from that, which requires me buying a six-pack of Corona...which I meant to bring in with me so we could share them. I left them in the car. Sorry.

DANNY

That's--

LINDSEY

...and then I get in my car, thinking it's going to be a nice ten-minute drive to get here on our lovely Interstate Five. But no, apparently to be a city developer, or whatever you are that allows you to design freeways, you just have to have a high school diploma, which as you know in California should be made of candy for all of its use.

(She finds a candy in his room)

Speaking of which, do you mind, I haven't had anything to--

DANNY

No, go ahead.

LINDSEY

Thanks. So it takes forever to get here because of construction and people not knowing how to freaking drive, and I can't get off any earlier because if you put a gun to my head, I still can't navigate surface streets and I'll end up in Santa Ana or, I dunno, Rwanda, someplace equally horrible. And then, AND THEN, I'm finally on the off-ramp to your place, and I get cut off and almost run off the road by one of those, what are they, Hummer, Humvee, Hummy, whatever they're called? I just call them the Penis Compensator. Anyway, it almost smashes me into the wall, ending my pathetic life in which I've accomplished nothing that I've wanted to accomplish, and it reminds me about how much I hate seeing military vehicles on the roads, even if they are tricked out with a DVD player and a moon roof. So then after a long-ass amount of time spent trying to find a parking spot in this complex because it's whatever time it is in the morning, you should really get your clock adjusted, I finally ring your doorbell only to have you call me Nikki, and you KNOW how I feel about Nikki.

(Pause)

So in conclusion, happy birthday.

(She puts the candy in her mouth)

DANNY

That's what this is about?

LINDSEY

I wanted to be the first. I am, right?

DANNY

Yeah, of course, who else would come here at--?

LINDSEY

Success! You should consider yourself lucky. Not every girl would nearly sacrifice her life just to wish you happy birthday, especially with as tired and, might I say, scraggly as you look right now.

(Pause)

DANNY

You don't like Nikki?

LINDSEY

What? Oh, well, it's not that I don't *like* her, it's... yeah, I don't like her.

DANNY

Well, um...

LINDSEY

What? Oh, no. Oh, no, I said something wrong, right? I did, didn't I?

DANNY

No, no, I...I've been talking to Nikki a lot lately.

LINDSEY

(Unhappy)

Oh. Okay.

DANNY

And we're um...you know--

LINDSEY

You're back together?

DANNY

Surprise!

LINDSEY

Yeah.

DANNY

She's like this whole different person now.

LINDSEY

Maybe she is a different person.

DANNY

I was wondering why she had a beard. But, no, all the things she was that annoyed me she's not anymore. Some time away changed her. It's really cool.

LINDSEY

I can only imagine.

(Pause)

So, I'm sorry, I just, um...

DANNY

Us.

LINDSEY

Yeah.

DANNY

Well we were never really, um...

LINDSEY

Right, because you weren't ready to--

DANNY

I know.

LINDSEY

But now you are, just with the woman who treated you like a piece of...

(Pause)

I'm sorry, I'm gonna stop.

DANNY

This doesn't mean that we can't still be friends, right? I mean, I still wanna hang out with you and everything.

LINDSEY

Right, sure. We can still...do that.

(Pause)

Well, congratulations.

DANNY

Are you...?

LINDSEY

What, no, yeah, I'm not...anything bad, I'm good, or okay, or...any other word meaning "not bad".

DANNY

Good, good.

(Awkward pause)

LINDSEY

So, yeah, happy birthday, and, uh, I'll see you later.

DANNY

You're going?

LINDSEY

Yeah, I'm parked in a handicapped spot. Limped up the stairs so they wouldn't suspect.

DANNY

You sure you don't wanna stay and talk, or--?

LINDSEY

No, I have some very urgent sitting in the dark to do.

DANNY

Oh, well, by all means. You wanna have coffee tomorrow or something?

LINDSEY

I'm pro-coffee.

DANNY

Great. Well, see you.

LINDSEY

You can bet on it.

(DANNY heads toward the bed, and LINDSEY heads toward the door)

I am going to die bitter and alone.

DANNY

What?

LINDSEY

Hmm?

DANNY

Did you--?

LINDSEY

No, I did absolutely nothing. Good night.

(The sound of an airplane passing dangerously close.
Lights change. Spotlight on the two airplane seats. MARK
is holding onto SONYA's hand as she breathes heavily)

SONYA

Just so you know, in case we don't make it through this alive, I was really happy to meet you,
and you're a really, really nice guy.

(Pause)

MARK

We're just landing, Sonya. It's okay. Just keep breathing. Now when we hit the ground...

(SONYA gives him a nervous look)

...*touch* the ground, land, there's going to be a small bump, and then a lot of shaking. That's
normal.

(SONYA nods)

You okay?

(SONYA nods again. The plane lands and shakes as it
brakes. SONYA closes her eyes and grabs MARK's hand
tighter. He winces. She loosens her grip and opens her
eyes)

Alright?

SONYA

(Slowly:)

I am really sorry. I thought I would be so much better at this.

MARK

No, it's...Lots of people are scared of flying.

SONYA

Oh, it's not the flying that I'm scared of. It's the crashing and burning that bothers me.

(She realizes she still has a grip on MARK's hand)

Here, that's yours. Boy, I'm sorry. I'm like the Queen of Bad Company. I bet you'll think twice
before talking to strangers again. Ugh.

MARK

No, it's okay. I've met worse, believe me.

SONYA

Really?

MARK

Yeah. Don't worry, you're good company.

(Pause, as SONYA considers something)

SONYA
Don't laugh.

MARK
Don't say something funny.

SONYA
Can I have your number?

MARK
I don't, um...the battery in my cell phone died, and I forgot to bring my charger, and--

SONYA
(Disappointed)
Oh.

MARK
...I don't have the number to the hotel I'm staying at, so...

SONYA
That's, okay, that's fine.

MARK
Um, can I, uh...Can I call *you*?

SONYA
Really? I thought you were just giving me a subtle, um...I mean, you seriously want my number?

MARK
Yeah. I dunno, it doesn't seem like life could ever be boring around you.

SONYA
My old roommate used to say the same thing. But he was a dick. So it's just a case of "for a good time, call..."?

MARK
Pretty much.

SONYA
Well, take 'em where you can get 'em, I guess. Do you have a piece of paper?

MARK
Nope. Product of an electronic age.

SONYA
Friggin' yuppie. Do you at least have a pen?

MARK
I have one of those.
(He hands her a pen)

SONYA
And a hand?

MARK
I have TWO of those.

SONYA
I only need one.
(She takes one of his hands and starts writing her number on it)

A pen and no paper?

MARK
Only weapon I could smuggle on.
(SONYA looks around to see if anyone heard)

SONYA
That's not funny.

MARK
Yeah, that's what makes it funny.
(SONYA shakes her head)

God, I feel like I'm back in high school again. I just had a bunch of bad gym class flashbacks.

SONYA
Are there any *good* gym class flashbacks? There you are.
(She stops writing. A bing sound. They look up)

MARK
Perfect timing.

SONYA
Yeah.
(MARK looks at his hand)

MARK
What'd you write, under the number? "Meet me behind the bleachers"? Oh, I get it. Nice.

SONYA
Thanks. So I'll hear from you soon, then?

Or will you?

MARK

What?

SONYA

Keeping you in suspense.

MARK

Oh. Well...pins and needles.

SONYA

(They smile at each other)

See you later.

MARK

Yeah.

SONYA

(She exits. MARK takes his cane and stands. Lights change. We are at the motel room. GREG lays under the covers. JENNIFER is putting on her clothes. She glances at him and smiles shyly. He continues to stare at her. Suddenly self-conscious, JENNIFER turns her back to him as she puts on her shoes)

Please don't--

GREG

(She quickly turns back to him and urgently lifts a finger to quiet him. He nods and complies. She finishes putting on her shoes. She starts looking around the room, trying to find something. She gets on her knees and looks under the bed. Not finding it, she sits up, eye level with Greg)

You're very--

(She puts a finger up. He quiets. She lowers her finger)

...beautiful.

(She sighs with exasperation and then, realizing what he said, her expression changes. She kisses him passionately, and clumsily crawls onto the bed next to him. Lights change. We are at a coffee house. LINDSEY and DANNY drink expensive coffee in sleek styrofoam cups while LINDSEY peels an orange. There is an awkward silence between the two of them)

LINDSEY

This coffee probably cost them thirty cents to make. And they charge three-fifty for it. I wonder if underprivileged children in Colombia know that the coffee beans they spend all day collecting

LINDSEY
(CON'T)

travel thousands of miles just so they can be put in the hands of a bunch of overpaid, pretentious shits as they talk about TV shows they saw the night before?

DANNY

Probably not.

LINDSEY

You know, I don't actually like coffee that much. And yet, I drink it all the time. Weird, huh?

DANNY

Maybe the overpriced coffee makes you feel good.

LINDSEY

Yeah, but only for a little while. Then I end up feeling worse than I did before.

DANNY

Then why don't you stop drinking coffee?

(Pause)

LINDSEY

I guess I'm hoping for it to get better someday.

(DANNY's cell phone rings)

Hey, there she is!

DANNY

Please be nice.

LINDSEY

Hey, you didn't tell me she was gonna be here, too. Besides, I have to meet my sister in an hour, it's not my fault if she can't be here on--

DANNY

(To telephone:)

Nik, where are you?

NIKKI

(Off-Stage)

I'm walking through the door right now.

DANNY

Great, 'cause you're right on about damn time.

(NIKKI enters, talking into her cell phone. She is strikingly beautiful, though at a second glance she turns out to be overly glamorous)

NIKKI

Well, fuck you, too.

DANNY

We should probably stop talking on the phone, huh, since you're here?

NIKKI

Sounds good.

DANNY

Talk to you in two seconds.

NIKKI

Alright, bye.

DANNY

Bye.

(They hang up their phones. In mock surprise:)

Nikki?

NIKKI

Oh my God, hi!

LINDSEY

Comedy.

DANNY

Be good.

(He gets up to go to NIKKI)

LINDSEY

What?

(DANNY and NIKKI kiss. LINDSEY turns her face away in disgust. Aside:)

Oh Jesus shit, this is going to be so much worse than I thought it would be.

DANNY

Do you want something to drink? Oh, wait, mint mocha, no whip?

NIKKI

You remembered.

DANNY

Of course. I remember you always ordered with the necessary dramatic pause. "Mint mocha...No whip!"

NIKKI

Shut up.

DANNY

Be right back.

(He exits. NIKKI sits down next to LINDSEY, who tenses up)

NIKKI

Hey, stranger. Wanna chat?

LINDSEY

Hi, Nikki. Sure.

NIKKI

How've you been?

LINDSEY

Incredible. You?

NIKKI

Ugh, I'm freaking out.

LINDSEY

Really?

NIKKI

I was just leaving the Seven-Eleven on Euclid...

LINDSEY

Right.

NIKKI

And as I walk by the dumpster, there's this Mexican, and he's holding a possum in his hands.

LINDSEY

A possum?

NIKKI

Yeah, and it's dead and everything, the possum, and he starts saying something in Spanish and walking toward me, holding this dead possum.

LINDSEY

Jesus.

NIKKI

I was like, “Oh no, definitely not”. Got the hell out of there.

LINDSEY

Good.

NIKKI

It’s just like, c’mon, look at me, I obviously don’t speak Spanish. If you’re going to do something freaky like, oh I dunno, hold a dead possum in front of my face, at least speak my language. And I can say that, I’m a quarter Mexican.

(Pause. She notices LINDSEY giving her a look)

What?

LINDSEY

You’re amazing.

NIKKI

What?

LINDSEY

You’re just... You managed to strip down our immigration problem and all of our culture wars into one Hispanic guy with a dead possum. Bravo, a gold star for you!

NIKKI

Great, this is what I missed. You insulting my intelligence.

LINDSEY

You know, sarcasm is for those with no wit.

NIKKI

Yeah, and cockiness is for those who no one really likes.

(Pause. LINDSEY returns to her drink, not looking at

NIKKI)

That was... I just wanna start over again with you, clean slate, you know, and you’re not even giving me a chance.

LINDSEY

I know.

NIKKI

I don’t plan to hurt Danny again.

LINDSEY

Fine.

NIKKI

I'm saying this because I know you're in love with him.

(LINDSEY says nothing)

Just know that you're not the only one.

(A cheerful DANNY reenters with a coffee, which he sets in front of NIKKI)

DANNY

One mint mocha, with liberated wwwhip.

(He sits down and notices the dramatically changed atmosphere)

What'd I miss?

(Lights change)

If you would like to read the script in its entirety,
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