

The Alexiad

Scene 2

Setting: A café table. 2008.

At rise: ELLEN is sitting. ALEX has been at the table for a few minutes.

ELLEN

What is that?

ALEX

A Bloody Mary.

ELLEN

Jesus, Alex.

ALEX

Just one. For my head.

ELLEN

It's 7:30 on a Tuesday morning.

ALEX

It's a Bloody Mary, not a double bourbon.

A beat.

ALEX

Nice to see you, too.

A beat.

ELLEN

All right. (gesturing toward the drink) That's what I wanted to talk about.

ALEX

You drag me out of bed ...

ELLEN

I do appreciate your making the effort.

ALEX

You should try one. It might take off some of the edge.

ELLEN

I have to be at work by nine.

ALEX

Just one. I didn't say you should get shitfaced.

SERVER

Can I get you coffee or an orange juice to start?

ELLEN

Coffee, please!

SERVER

Are you ready to order or do you need a minute?

ELLEN

Give us a minute, thanks.

SERVER exits.

ELLEN

When is the last time you've gone a day without a drink?

ALEX

Not this again.

ELLEN

Don't evade the question.

ALEX

I don't know. Maybe the last time I didn't have a shitty day at work?

ELLEN

You don't work seven days a week.

ALEX

Who doesn't party on their days off?

ELLEN

You'd be amazed at how many regular people don't drink all day Saturday and all day Sunday.

ALEX

Listen. I show up for work every day. On time! I pay my bills. So don't start lecturing me like I have some kind of problem. I have my life under control.

ELLEN

Do you know what a pain in the ass you are when we can be together?

ALEX

Oh that's nice.

ELLEN

You don't want to do anything that gets in the way of your drinking. If I suggest going to a museum or taking a hike, you either refuse or you are jittery and anxious the whole time.

ALEX

We go to the movies.

ELLEN

With you reeking of booze.

ALEX

I may have a drink or two with dinner. Not a federal offense.

ELLEN

I know you can't stop drinking if you don't want to ...

ALEX

And I don't want to.

ELLEN

But I don't want to deal with your drinking anymore.

ALEX

I'm a package deal.

SERVER

Your coffee.

ELLEN

Thanks.

SERVER

Do you want another, sir.

ALEX

I do, but I'd better not.

SERVER

Still need more time to order?

Yes. Thanks,

ELLEN

No problem.

SERVER

SERVER exits.

Happy now?

ALEX

See, this is what I mean ...

ELLEN

What?

ALEX

You don't have a drink for my sake, but you're such a martyr about it.

ELLEN

You're just pissed because I didn't have another so you could make your point. I can stop whenever I want or need to.

ALEX

So here's the deal.

ELLEN

The speech you got me out of bed on a work day to give.

ALEX

I don't want to deal with your drinking and you don't want to stop, that only leaves me one option.

ELLEN

A beat,

ALEX

You're not serious...

ELLEN

Oh, but I am.

ALEX

How can you do this to me?

ELLEN

You are doing it to yourself.

ALEX

You're the one good thing in my life.

ELLEN

That might give you something to think about.

ALEX

Well you know how the rest of my life sucks.

ELLEN

What do you do besides work and drink?

ALEX shrugs

ELLEN:

You have the perfect set up for your drinking. Work from 4 to midnight, drink until you pass out, sleep 'til noon and go to work. With maybe a belt or two to help you get going.

ALEX

Listen, I have never shown up to work drunk. I work hard and it's difficult and there aren't enough of us on any shift and if I deal with that stress by having a drink after work ... I don't think that makes me some kind of monster.

ELLEN

It makes you someone I can't imagine building a life with. Someone I couldn't consider starting a family with.

ALEX

Because of my work schedule?

ELLEN

Because of your drinking, Alex.

ALEX

Fine.

ELLEN

Really? That's it?

ALEX

If you can't accept me as I am ...

ELLEN

If I try to come between you and your drinking ...

ALEX

You make it sound like we don't have any good times.

ELLEN

You're a good guy when you're not drunk.

ALEX

Thank you, I think. And I can have a few drinks without getting drunk.

ELLEN

You never have just a few drinks and you always end up drunk.

ALEX

I'm sorry to be such a burden.

A beat.

ELLEN

You're not even going to consider quitting?

ALEX

No.

ELLEN

Wow.

ALEX

You throw down a crappy ultimatum and expect me to roll over and beg?

SERVER

Are you folks ready?

ELLEN

I'm just going to have the coffee, thanks.

ALEX

I'll have two eggs, sunny side up. Hash browns. Rye toast. A short stack of pancakes. And another Bloody Mary.

SERVER

Thank you. I'll be right back with your drink.

ELLEN

And there's my answer.

ALEX shrugs.

ELLEN

It's not even a difficult choice for you.

ALEX

You're the one making a choice.

ELLEN

Okay, I am.

ELLEN stands and takes \$5.00 from her purse.

ELLEN

Here's for my coffee.

ALEX

You don't have to ...

ELLEN

But I do. I'm not going to have my ex-boyfriend buying me coffee.

ALEX

Thank you for not saying we should stay friends.

ELLEN nods and exits. ALEX sits still for a moment. He looks around the diner. He fiddles with his empty glass. The SERVER returns.

SERVER

Your Bloody Mary, sir.

ALEX

Thank you.

SERVER

I should have your breakfast right up.

ALEX nods.

ALEX

This is exactly what it looks like.

SERVER

Sir?

I just got dumped.

ALEX

I'm sorry, sir.

SERVER

ALEX shrugs.

ALEX

I'm probably better off.

SERVER

I hope so.

ALEX

You in a relationship?

SERVER

Sir?

ALEX

Sorry, none of my business.

SERVER

Let me check on your breakfast.

ALEX

If you are, accept the person as they are. Don't try to change them.

SERVER

Of course.

SERVER exits.

ALEX take a sip of his drink and visibly relaxes.

Lights fade to black.

End of scene 2.