

Important

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

ALEX GOODSMAN, 52, stands in front of a mirror in his MILITARY DRESS UNIFORM, within a bedside lamp's isle of light. He breathes slowly and deliberately as his heavy eyes rest on the collection of EMPTY PILL BOTTLES on his nightstand. He offers himself a salute.

ALEX
Rangers lead the way, buddy.

Alex takes another swig from the BOTTLE OF VODKA in his other hand, but then stops abruptly, his tired eyes showing pain.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Shit! The note!

Unsteady footsteps traverse the shadows. A body flops into a chair. A bottle slams onto a desk. A laptop screen lights up with a double beep to reveal an impatient, sleepy Alex and a vodka bottle fighting to regain balance.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Why is this thing always so slow?

Alex drums his fingers as it finally finishes booting. He shakes his head, then a notification window appears.

ON THE SCREEN

Zoom video chat reminder, 8:30pm

With a couple of clicks, Alex closes the window and opens a word processor. He forces himself upright and begins to type.

ON THE SCREEN

Every day has been a struggle. My mind is in a fog.
Whatever I do, it all seems so meaningless. I'm so
sorry, but I can't go on like this.

The ghastly visage of a seemingly dead rocker chick appears in a Zoom video chat window, strumming her bass guitar.

ROCKER
That's some cheap booze ya got
there, hombre. I like schnapps. Do
ya like schnapps?

ALEX
What? Who are you?

ROCKER

I'm just a gal with a foggy mind.

ALEX

What's with the costume?

ROCKER

Hey, unlike you macho heroes, I gotta work for the nookie!

ALEX

Look, I'm not joking around. Just stop bothering me.

ROCKER

You do what you gotta do, but you don't want that swill to be your last drink, kemosabe. How 'bout some top-shelf tequila?

ALEX

This isn't a celebration.

Alex sneers and takes another drink.

ROCKER

Just ride it out, and stop worrying about other people. You're not dying for them. You'll like oblivion, trust me!

ALEX

No, I need to write this note. I need this to have some meaning.

ROCKER

What meaning?

(plays guitar)

The only thing with meaning is the music. Just enjoy the song, dude.

The rocker's image fades to black and her window disappears.

ALEX

I need to focus on what's important. The ones I hurt.

Alex continues to write.

ON THE SCREEN

I keep thinking of that explosion. Why did I survive? Any one of them would have done something with their life. I let them down. Knowing how worthless I am to everyone is painful.

A window with a loud and aggressive dead soldier wearing a World War 2 combat medic helmet pops up.

MEDIC

Hey soldier, you think you know about pain?

ALEX

Again? C'mon, just go away.

MEDIC

Look, they can handle it. What they can't handle is having to bury your sorry ass. It's bad enough you risked your life so a bunch of fat cats can line their pockets.

Alex slams his hand on his desk in anger.

MEDIC (CONT'D)

You can sulk and throw your little tantrums all you want. Congrats, you've earned it!

ALEX

It's been far worse than that.

MEDIC

Meanwhile we had to handle our faces made pretty with bullets, shrapnel, tank shells, and, have ya seen what a flamethrower does for your complexion?

ALEX

Not funny.

MEDIC

You wanna know what's not funny, chuckle head? I get my balls shot off by a sniper while saving you mud-eaters, and now you wanna go AWOL? You've got some nerve!

ALEX

Hey, I tried! I just can't get their faces out of my head.

Alex points at his head.

ALEX (CONT'D)
You can stop the bleeding, but you
can't stop the misery. You can't
fix this!

Alex switches back to the window with his note. The combat medic disconnects in the background.

ALEX (CONT'D)
I have to write to my family.
That's what's important.

He continues to write.

ON THE SCREEN

Patricia, my brilliant, and beautiful wife. I'm sorry
for all the complaints and arguments. It was just mood
swings. I don't deserve you and I can't keep putting you
through this.

Another window intrudes and Alex watches a dead man wearing a
white barrister's wig and spectacles clear his throat.

LAWYER
Sorry to trouble you, but...

ALEX
I just need to finish. I'm so
tired.

LAWYER
Sir, perhaps you need your Last
Will and Testament drafted?

ALEX
This is more important.

LAWYER
Well, shall we find you some
supplementary life insurance then?
I'm afraid your policy will not
cover suicide after a recent
unfortunate edict. We wouldn't want
your claim of worthlessness
becoming a self-fulfilling
prophecy, now would we?

ALEX
Either way, my wife will be fine.
Once I'm out of the picture, she'll
move on. Let me finish, please!

LAWYER

About that... Well, you haven't exactly been earning medals in bed, good trooper. I'm afraid she already has moved on.

ALEX

It's for the better. Hopefully she deserves to find someone who will be there for her and our daughter.

LAWYER

Well, she's been looking. Bloody hell, where is it...

The lawyer squints his eyes to the side and types.

LAWYER (CONT'D)

There it is. She's had this online dating profile up for months now, without much luck I'm afraid.

ALEX

Hey, I really don't need to hear this.

LAWYER

You know, if you want to forgo this whole suicide thing, I can help you with a divorce from... ehh...

The lawyer adjusts his glasses.

LAWYER (CONT'D)

FilthyMilfy is it? I don't suppose you have a prenup?

ALEX

Go away!

The lawyer disconnects.

ALEX (CONT'D)

That's not important. Abigail. I'll need to write something for her.

ALEX leans his head back, peeking through nearly closed eyelids, as he types ever so slowly.

ON THE SCREEN

Abigail... my little Abby. I'm sorry I've failed you, and you'll have to grow up without a father.

You'll be better off. Treat your mother right, work hard in school, and Daddy will be watching over you.

A dead little girl connects.

ABIGAIL

Daddy?

ALEX

No, it can't be...

ABIGAIL

I did as you said, Daddy. I did all I could for Mommy! And I worked really hard in school!

ALEX

Abby, what happened?

ABIGAIL

There was a boy at school with a gun. I was brave, Daddy, just like you. I helped my friends escape.

ALEX

But... but...

ABIGAIL

He shot me. I saw Mommy crying, but I couldn't stay awake.

Alex breaks down, tears flowing from his eyes. His cries soften as his head lowers to the desk.

ALEX

It can't be true.

An elbow hits the desk's surface as he pushes himself back up while shaking his head. Abigail is gone.

ALEX (CONT'D)

She's still alive.

Alex moves the mouse cursor toward the send button, and clicks it. He sees a blue screen with an error on it. He finally loses consciousness and his head thumps onto the desk.

FADE OUT.