

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

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 video chat window, strumming her bass guitar.

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

ALEX
What? Wait...

Alex's head tilts.

ROCKER
That's right, Mommy's here for ya,
darlin'.

ALEX
But, you're dead.

ROCKER
Far out, right? Looks like you've
got the same plan.

ALEX
I must be hallucinating.

ROCKER
A little fogginess is okay, turtle
dove.

ALEX
Look, I need to be alone. Please,
don't.

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 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, baby-
doll.

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 the blast. 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
Grandpa?

MEDIC
What's wrong with you, kid?

ALEX
I didn't see the mine. You saved so
many, while I got my unit killed.

MEDIC
Look, those soldiers knew what they
were signing up for. They
shouldn't have to bury your sorry
ass too.

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 died getting my
balls shot off by a sniper, trying
to save 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 man wearing a suit
and spectacles, apparently still alive, clear his throat.

LAWYER

Sorry to trouble you, but...

ALEX

Whoever you are, I just need to
finish. I'm so tired.

LAWYER

I'm an attorney, Sir. I won't
require much of your time.

ALEX

Wait, why aren't you dead?

LAWYER

Let us dispense with the dead lawyer jokes, shall we? I thought perhaps you might need a Last Will and Testament drafted.

ALEX

No, this note 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 bleary-eyed eight year old girl connects.

ABIGAIL
Daddy?

ALEX
Abby! How did you find me?

ABIGAIL
I did as you said, Daddy. I helped
Mom and worked really hard in
school!

ALEX
Abby, what happened?

ABIGAIL
I missed you and was sad. I found
pills you took when you were sad. I
don't feel so well.

ALEX
No... You didn't...

Alex tries to shake off the impenetrable drowsiness.

ABIGAIL
I'm so tired.

Abigail's image morphs into her sleeping corpse.

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.