

Last Chance

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. CHEAP HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

ALEX GOODSMAN, 33, stands in his US ARMY DRESS UNIFORM looking at himself in the mirror. A near-empty bottle of whiskey in one hand.

He's drunk and barely standing on his own two feet. He looks at the collection of EMPTY PILL BOTTLES on a nightstand. He offers himself a shaky salute.

ALEX
Rangers lead the way, buddy.

He takes the last few pills in his hand, tosses them in his mouth, and takes a swig from the bottle. A nod to himself to seal his fate.

He stumbles in the dimly lit room to the desk. He sits and powers up a laptop.

ON THE DESKTOP: a video program shows Alex taking another swig. The bottom right shows a notification "3 Missed Video Calls."

Alex clicks to dismiss the notifications. He looks to the LAPTOP CAMERA, clears his throat, and clicks the red RECORD BUTTON. A TIMER starts.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Almost forgot to record this.

Alex grimaces.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Everything has just been a fog or something. Doesn't really make sense.

Alex looks up again.

ALEX (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I just can't... I don't want to...

Suddenly a video call comes in -- UNKNOWN CALLER. He answers, revealing the ghastly visage of a seemingly dead high school-age rocker, strumming his bass guitar.

ROCKER
A little fogginess is okay, dude.

Alex is confused.

ROCKER (CONT'D)

Hey, that's some nasty stuff you're drinking. Have ya tried butterscotch schnapps? It's really good.

ALEX

You're...

ROCKER

Far out, right?

Alex looks back to the pill bottles, trying to piece things together.

ALEX

I'm seeing things.

ROCKER

What's wrong with that?

ALEX

I didn't want to end up like you. I wanted my life to mean something.

ROCKER

Don't buy into that, kemosabe. It's all a big party.

ALEX

Easy for you to say. All you ever cared about was getting high. Look how that turned out for you.

ROCKER

A little late for you to be acting so righteous toward me, big bro. But don't worry, you'll come to like oblivion! Just like Mom.

At the mention of "Mom" Alex sits up and knife-hands.

ALEX

You don't get to talk about her. No... No, you don't know what she was like after you...

ROCKER

Hey, chill out!
(plays guitar)
Just enjoy your song, bro.

Alex ruminates, then looks up to see the rocker gone and the video recording timer still ticking away.

ALEX

Focus, Alex. Focus on what's important. The ones I hurt.

Alex addresses the camera once more.

ALEX (CONT'D)

My platoon... we were ambushed. For whatever reason, no one else made it. Why me? I keep thinking about what I could have done differently, and it just... hurts.

A VIDEO CALL ALERT pops up and Alex reflexively answers. A new window displaying a dead woman appears. She wears desert fatigues, a matching helmet, and a harsh gaze.

Alex flinches and inhales sharply, his eyes showing incredulity.

SOLDIER

"Hurts" you said? A little pain never hurt nobody, Corporal. I raised you stronger than that.

ALEX

Mom?

SOLDIER

Look, kid, you can either keep talking nonsense to yourself or tell me what this is all about?

ALEX

We... my unit, we didn't see them until it was too late. They all died.

SOLDIER

Yeah, shit happens sometimes, didn't you ever hear that? But those soldiers knew what they were signing up for. They don't need your sorry ass to join them.

Alex slams his hand on his desk in anger.

ALEX

You don't get it.

SOLDIER

You think I don't understand loss?
What the hell do you think the life
of a soldier is?

Alex breaks apart, and tears flow.

ALEX

When you didn't come home, it still
meant something. You saved lives! I
just... got lucky and let down the
ones depending on me.

SOLDIER

And now you're letting everyone
else down by going AWOL.

ALEX

I tried! But their faces...

He closes his eyes. FLASHES of the faces of his fellow
soldiers, bloodied, dead.

Alex's tone frosts over.

ALEX (CONT'D)

You had it easy.

The soldier's eyes meet Alex's, and as her resolve fades,
Alex eyes slowly blink. Only the video recorder window
remains, the timer still running.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Come on... you need to finish this.

Alex takes another swig from his bottle, his words
increasingly slurred.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Ashley -- I'm sorry for how I've
been lately. My mind... I just keep
seeing it happen over and over. You
don't deserve all this. You deserve
better.

Another call pops up and Alex clicks on it. A window opens
showing Ashley, 33, stepping away from the camera while
taking off her lab coat.

Alex squints and chews his lip.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Ashley? You're ... okay?

No response.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Ash?

Ashley rushes to her seat.

ASHLEY

Oh, Alex, I just got home and
wasn't expecting you to be still
awake.

ALEX

Yeah.

Alex yawns beneath heavy eyes, and relaxes.

ALEX (CONT'D)

As long as you're okay.

ASHLEY

You don't look well, Alex. What's
going on?

ALEX

Everything will be fine.

ASHLEY

What does that mean? Did you take
something? Where are you?

ALEX

Is Gabby there?

ASHLEY

You're making me really worried.
Where are you?

ALEX

You deserve better.

Alex's head nods down and up in micro-sleep. Ashley inhales
sharply and calls 911 on her phone

ASHLEY

Yes, I need help! It's my husband.
Yes, hello?

Ashley glances into her camera then gets up.

ASHLEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Can you hear me? Yeah, looks like
he's in some hotel room.

Ashley's voice fades. Alex leans his head back, peeking through nearly closed eyelids, as he drags the video call window out of the way, once again revealing the recorder.

ALEX

Gabrie- Gabby. I'm sorry you won't have a Dad. Treat your mother right. Daddy will be watching.

A mouse cursor clicks to save the video. It shakily drags the video file into an email entitled "Final Goodbye" and clicks send after a couple of attempts. Alex notices the email address ends with ".com.com" just before the mail vanishes. A failure message soon appears in the inbox.

Alex's face lowers as he trembles and his eyes water.

In the call window, an 8 year old girl's head peeks out from the corner, with a soldier action figure in her hand.

GABRIELLE

Daddy, look what Mommy got me!

Alex's eyes spring open and he leans forward.

ALEX

Gabby! Hi baby girl.

GABRIELLE

Are you coming home soon?

Alex averts his eyes. Gabrielle plays with the soldier, making it march in front of her.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

Hup, two, three, four..

ALEX

Sweetheart. I just wanted to tell you...

His eyes return, and he smiles warmly.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I love y--

Gabrielle's skin turns paler, speckled with ridges, as she continues to play.

GABRIELLE

Hup, two, three, four...

Alex's mood drops as he watches with alarm.

Gabrielle's eyes droop as her lips tighten. Her veins darken. The soldier continues to march.

ALEX

Gabby! No!

Alex's breath quivers as he stands and claws at his scalp. The deathly visage of Gabrielle, now wearing a scarred military helmet, considers the toy soldier.

GABRIELLE

You were supposed to protect me.

Alex pleads to his dead daughter.

ALEX

It... It was for you.

Gabrielle puts the toy down and looks up.

GABRIELLE

I reminded Mommy of you.

Alex, at a loss for words, touches the screen, and crumbles back into his seat, tears streaming.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

I wanted to be with you, Daddy.

ALEX

(stuttering)

I... I'm... s...s...sorry.

Alex cries into his arm, sobbing, letting it all out. Alex's vision fades to black.

ASHLEY (O.S)

Alex? Are you there?

GABRIELLE (O.S.)

Daddy, wake up!

ASHLEY (O.S.)

Alex! Alex!

Alex's arms shake and strain as he pushes himself back up, his eyelids fighting consciousness. The call window shows Ashley and Gabrielle, both very much alive and frightened.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Tell us where you are! Alex, can you hear me? Where are you?

ALEX
9th Street... Motel...

Alex's head thumps back to his arm.

ASHLEY (O.S.)
He's at the motel on 9th Street.
Please, hurry...

FADE OUT.