

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 elderly hippie rocker appears in a video chat window, strumming his bass guitar.

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

ALEX  
You look... dead.

ROCKER  
Far out, right?

Alex looks at the drugs.

ALEX  
I must be hallucinating.

ROCKER  
Hallucinating? You've got my genes,  
dude!

Alex's head tilts.

ALEX  
Wait... grandpa?

ROCKER  
Look, a little fogginess is okay,  
muchacho.

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

ROCKER  
You do what you gotta do, but you  
don't want that nasty swill to be  
your last drink. 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,  
kemosabe.

The rocker's image fades to black and his 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 appears with a dead woman in desert fatigues, a  
matching helmet, and unflinching, harsh gaze. Alex's eyes  
meet hers and widen, his brow wrinkling.

SOLDIER

Hey Corporal, you think you know  
about pain? What's wrong with you?

ALEX

Mom! How are you here? You died!

SOLDIER

It's pretty fucking obvious I'm  
dead, kid. Now are you going to  
tell me what all this is?

ALEX

We didn't see the mine. My entire  
unit is gone and I barely felt it.

SOLDIER

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.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

You can sulk and throw your little  
tantrum, sure. Congrats, you've  
earned it!

Alex breaks apart, and tears flow.

ALEX

I just want it all to mean  
something. When you didn't come  
home, Mom, it at least meant  
something. You saved lives!

SOLDIER  
Honey, I lived my life. I wanted  
you to live yours.

ALEX  
But ... but I let down the ones  
depending on me.

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

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

Alex's eyes turn to stone.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
You had it easy.

The soldier's resolve fades as her window disconnects. Alex  
clicks on the window with his note.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Why am I seeing ... family -- 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!

Alex's fist smashes against the keyboard. 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.