

Last Chance

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. CHEAP HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

ALEX GOODSMAN, 33, stands in his MILITARY 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
Last chance, Ranger.

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 then switches the tab on the video program from CALL to RECORD. He adjusts the webcam, clears his throat, and clicks the red RECORD button.

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...

The program suddenly switches to the CALL tab and shows 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.

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

You're so uptight. That's why you're so miserable. But don't worry, you'll like oblivion! Just like Mom.

At the mention of "Mom" Alex sits up, infuriated.

ALEX

You don't get to talk about her. Not after... You're a disgrace.

ROCKER

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

The rocker's image fades to black and his window switches back to the RECORD tab.

ALEX

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

Alex clicks and the red RECORD button.

ALEX (CONT'D)

It started with the blast. I don't know why I was the only one saved. I keep thinking about what I could have done differently, and it just... hurts.

The program suddenly switches to the CALL tab and shows a dead woman in desert fatigues, a matching helmet, and an unflinching, harsh gaze.

Alex is both frightened and confused.

SOLDIER

Hurts? 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

The mine. We... my unit, we didn't see it. 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! I can't get their faces out of my head.

Alex's tone frosts over.

ALEX (CONT'D)

You had it easy.

The soldier's resolve fades as her call disconnects and switches back to the RECORD tab.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Come on... you need to finish this.

Alex continues his recording, his words increasingly slurred.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Hi Ashley. I'm sorry for being so on edge lately. My mind drifts, and I just see it happening over and over. We've been through so much. You deserve better.

The program suddenly switches to the CALL tab and shows the Ashley, 33, letting her already graying hair drape onto her lab coat.

Alex squints and chews his lip.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Ashley? You're ... okay?

No response.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Ash?

The woman turns startled.

ASHLEY

Oh, Alex, I 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 do you mean by that? 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 clicks and the tab shifts back to RECORD.

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.

The tab switches back to CALL and 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. Gabrielle 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.