

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 college-age rocker appears in a video chat window, strumming his bass guitar.

ROCKER
A little fogginess is okay, frat
bro.

ALEX
What is this?

ROCKER

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

ALEX

But you're dead.

ROCKER

Far out, right?

Alex looks at the drugs.

ALEX

I must be hallucinating.

ROCKER

What's wrong with that?

ALEX

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

ROCKER

Life never meant anything, dude. It's all a big party.

ALEX

That's because you never cared about anything. You just wanted to get high, and look how that turned out.

ROCKER

If you stopped caring, you wouldn't be so miserable. You'll see. You'll like oblivion!

ALEX

No, I need this to have some meaning.

Alex clicks on the window with his note and puts the rocker in the background.

ROCKER

What meaning?

(plays guitar)

Just enjoy your 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, a little pain never
hurt nobody. What's wrong with you?

ALEX

Mom? How is this happening? You
also died!

SOLDIER

That's pretty freakin' obvious,
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.