

**MY OWN PRIVATE
HIGH FIDELITY
by
Lee A. Chrimes**

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White captions fade up and down.

CAPTION - The events you are about to see are all true. They have been reproduced as faithfully as possible to make sure that nobody escapes.

CAPTION - Some names and details have been altered to protect that fairly innocent, and some have been left exactly as they are to expose the not very innocent.

CAPTION - And if anyone has any complaint about the way they are represented..

CAPTION - Well, what can I say..

CAPTION - Except..

MUSIC - 'I'm So Happy You Failed' by Laptop plays as the final two captions appear.

CAPTION - You had it coming.

CAPTION - 'My Own Private High Fidelity.'

CAPTION - White lettering at the foot of the screen - JANUARY 2004

MUSIC - 'I Don't Have Anything' - VAST

Upstairs in a typical franchise coffee house, all sanitised paintwork, comfy chairs and young cosmopolitan customers sipping their overpriced coffee cups, and music piping softly through concealed overhead speakers.

In the centre of the frame is ALEX and KIRSTEN, two young mid-twenty year olds, sat at a table for two set against one wall. Alex is a bookish type, while Kirsten looks like the art student she is.

She's talking, and Alex is looking at her, around her, out the window - we can see his mind is racing as she talks. We can't hear them, and Alex's voiceover speaks over the scene.

ALEX (V.O.)

This must be how people break up when they're in their twenties. No screaming rows, no plate throwing, no sulks, four hour long phone calls, or turning up at a party or a night out and seeing your intended examining the tongue of some other random bloke.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

No, when you pass your teenage years you get none of that, instead you get to have mature, sensible conversations with the person you're dumping, or being dumped by, talking things over and trying to keep your emotions in check. While, of course, said emotions are doing their best to claw their way out of your mind and scream the place down, kicking over tables and burning old ladies and kittens in righteous indignation at the injustice of it all.

(beat)

At least, that's what it felt like when Kirsten broke up with me. I mean, I knew it was coming. Things hadn't been right between us for some time and I was trying to think of ways to talk to her about it, but she beat me to the punch and left me flat on my back at the end of it all.

We pan the camera around to watch Alex over Kirsten's shoulder. His hands are clasped in front of him, covering his mouth as though he's afraid of letting himself speak.

By now we know these two are having The Talk - they're breaking up. Alex looks like he knew this was coming but he didn't know how it was going to work out.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

This isn't the best place to start, but in a way the end of the story is also the only place you can really start it, sitting in the upstairs lounge of the local Costa's coffee house, the burbling conversations of a half dozen random groups of students filling the air around us and between us, an ice cold vanilla frescato gradually warming up and oozing out of the restraints of its plastic cup on the table before me.

(beat)

So let me rewind things, tell you who I am and why I'm telling you all of this, then we can get things started.

We pan round to watch Kirsten from over Alex's shoulder. She's running her hand through her hair a lot, looking genuinely sympathetic as she talks.

2 CONTINUED: (2)

She looks down at the untouched drink and nods with her head to it, but Alex just shakes his head and leaves it where it is.

FADE TO BLACK:

3 INT. COMIC SHOP - DAY

3

CAPTION - A few months earlier

Alex is at work in the comic shop. It's a large building with two floors, the main shop floor and a mezzanine gallery above the entrance, connected by a staircase leading up from the left-hand wall.

We start on a dolly shot in the upper right corner of the room, panning down to pick up Alex, making his way along the racks putting out items from a pile in his hands. We hear his voice over again.

ALEX (V.O.)

My name's Alex. I'm twenty four years old, and have been since I stopped being twenty three. I work in a comic shop, although my manager would rather I use the phrase 'cult memorabilia' instead. Whatever.

Alex finishes stacking the items, answers a question from one of the exasperated mothers trying to find something by pointing her in the right direction, and makes his way behind the counter to join his three workmates, ZOE (pretty Northern brunette), DAVE (average in every way) and LIZ (frumpy and sour-faced).

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

The three misfits I work with are Zoe, the escaped northern star who has been the nearest I've got to a big sister in the time we've known each other. By which I mean she takes the piss out of me a lot and keeps borrowing all my CDs. The guy is Dave, a guy with a great sense of humour and a stream of one-liners, usually mixing that in with stories about drinking. And Ireland. And drinking in Ireland. The sourpuss over there is Liz, bane of the life of the rest of us. Technically the lowest-ranked person here, but possessed of the rare ability to suck up to the management enough to get her own way most of the time.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (cont'd)

That's the last of that lot then.
What's up for the rest of today?

DAVE

Same as yesterday, really.

ALEX

We sit around and talk rubbish
about old cartoon shows from when
we were little?

DAVE

Yer, sounds about right!

Alex makes his way behind the counter and settles down,
rescuing one of the preview comics from its protective bag on
the wall behind the counter, and puts his feet up to read.

ZOE

Oi! Don't just sit around, you,
we've still got plenty of work to
do in here.

ALEX

What?

ZOE

There's stock to check, we've got
about a million back issues to sort
through, Mr Player, and there's all
those faulty X-Men figures that
we've got to box up and send back.

ALEX

What was wrong with them again?

Alex retrieves one of the figures. It's a Wolverine doll with
extendable claws, but when he pushes a button on its back,
the claws fly straight out of the figure, poking him in the
eye. He crumples to the floor with a shout of pain.

ZOE

(looking down at Alex)

There was a worry that children
could hurt themselves playing with
them...

DAVE

Heh, time to use your healing
factor then, mate!

Alex flails out with one fist and catches Dave in the
stomach, who also falls to the floor with a grunt of pain.

(CONTINUED)

Zoe sighs and knocks Alex's jacket off the counter as she lifts the partition and walks out, disappearing through a door painted to resemble another shelf of comics into the storeroom at the back.

Alex pulls himself back to his feet, painfully wrenching the embedded plastic claws from his face.

DAVE (cont'd)

There's an American band I think
you'd like, you know, they're
called Third Eye Blind..

Alex glares at him through his one good eye, the other being bloodshot from the claw wounds.

ALEX

We need some lively music so we can
get moving. Otherwise, the
temptation to spend all day sat
here reading comics will just be
too much..

CAPTION - White lettering on black screen - "Two hours later..."

ON SCENE - Alex, Dave and Zoe are all sat on stools or perched on the counter, reading novels and comics.

ALEX (cont'd)

So this is where I work. It might
not be much, but it feels like
home. In fact, it may as well be my
home for the amount of time I spend
here! When we have an early opening
for some new movie, book or game
release we'll camp out upstairs in
these hammocks we set up, and when
I clock off I usually knock around
here for a bit longer before I head
home. I know the comics industry is
a very Americanised place, but we
at least manage to get a sense of
Britishness to it by the staff
here, and that's why I stay.

Alex scans the wall behind him - we see the rows and rows of anime videos on a shelf above his head and then a TV screen mounted on the wall, easily viewable from his current reclined position.

ALEX (cont'd)

Well, that, and the fact that I get
to sit on my arse and watch videos
when there's no customers..

4 EXT. ALEX'S STREET - EARLY EVENING 4

We see Alex walking along a quiet urban street, keys in hand and backpack on shoulder. The street itself is pleasant enough - lined with cars and small detached houses, it seems fairly middle class without seeming like any serious money is floating around.

Alex is walking towards a new-looking set of flats up ahead, the camera walking along a few steps behind. He speaks to us over his shoulder.

ALEX

I live here, on Baker Street. Yes, I know the reference. Just so happens that I love Sherlock Holmes so it suits me fine. I may only be able to afford a flat but it's just great for me. I don't have any brothers or sisters so I'm used to being by myself. Carries over from childhood.

5 INT. ALEX'S OLD ROOM - NIGHT 5

The teenage Alex in his room. A small room filled with musical equipment, old consoles and posters. It's the early 90s, given the kinds of things on display.

Alex himself is sat on the floor, playing on his Amiga computer as we watch night turn into day and then back into night again via time-lapse photography through the windows behind the TV screen.

6 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - EVENING 6

We're watching the front door to Alex's flat as he turns the key and opens the door. Stepping inside, he slips off his trainers and throws his leather jacket over a clothes peg on the wall next to him.

Mewling noises are followed by two CATS racing up to him from off screen, rubbing against his legs. One is a ginger and one is tabby, they're both quite small. Alex picks them up.

ALEX

Hello Calvin, hello Hobbes. Glad to see you too. Huh? What's that?

Alex holds Hobbes (the ginger cat) to his ear as though he's whispering something to him. He nods and looks back at the cat.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

ALEX (cont'd)
 Meow. Roughly translated as 'Feed
 me.'

7 INT. ALEX'S KITCHEN - EVENING 7

The automatic can opener grinds open a tin of cat food. The cats scurry about on the kitchen surface, mewing in anticipation of their dinner.

He walks over to his bedroom door and opens the door slightly to throw his bag onto the bed - the glimpse of his room we get is that it follows the same design ethic as the rest of the place.

ALEX
 This is home. It's the place where
 I hide from the rest of the world,
 somewhere that never fails to keep
 me safe and warm. Plus, my stereo
 is great and I have lots of films I
 can sit and watch.

FADE TO:

8 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - EVENING 8

Later in the evening. Alex is sat watching the TV, the curtains drawn and a few lights on to give the room a dim lighting. An empty plate lies at his feet, which Hobbes is systematically licking clean.

Calvin is curled up on Alex's lap, and Alex is absently scratching the cat behind his ears. He talks to us as he keeps one eye on the TV.

ALEX
 Of course, this happy little
 domestic scene has taken a bit of a
 knock recently. We're still before
 that opening scene, at the coffee
 shop, so maybe we ought to do a
 quick fast forward to that night.
 Then I can start the story proper.

DISSOLVE TO the same scene, the sofa is empty and the cats are sniffing around.

CAPTION - JANUARY 2004

The lights are out but flick on as we hear a door slam off screen. Alex slumps into view and falls, face first onto the sofa. His arm falls to the floor and Hobbes starts to lick at his hand.

(CONTINUED)

Alex moans, his face buried in a pillow, before sitting up, a frown on his face as he seems to be thinking something over. He talks to the camera.

ALEX (cont'd)

Have you ever read 'High Fidelity'? It's this excellent book by Nick Hornby. that's the story of a record shop owner who breaks up with his girlfriend and then goes on a mission to revisit his old flames to try and find out what went wrong. To see if there's anything he can learn from it all. Sitting here, a few hours after having broken up with yet another woman, I think back to the first time I read that book..

DISSOLVE TO:

CAPTION - NOVEMBER 1997

Alex is sat with twenty other students in a top floor university class, reading through a dog-eared copy of 'High Fidelity' as the teacher talks to a few other students. He seems utterly engrossed in the book, only broken by his friend KATY nudging him on the arm.

KATY

You still reading that, mate? We're only supposed to look at the first bit of it!

ALEX

(rapt)

This book... this is my life! At least, this is what my life should be.

KATY

Why?

ALEX

Guy breaks up with a girl, wonders what it's all for, goes on a quest to revisit his past and learn from his mistakes... it's just brilliant! This should be required reading for every guy in the world, it'd save a lot of trouble.

(CONTINUED)

KATY

So what, you're going to go ringing up all your exes or something?

ALEX

Not sure yet. Maybe I'll wait till I get dumped again and then see how the mood takes me!

The teacher finishes and the class gather their books and get up to leave. Alex leaves the room, still flicking through the book. Dissolve back to:

10 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

10

Alex's front room, as before the flashback.

ALEX

Turns out it took me a lot longer to go on that voyage of self-discovery that I needed. It probably wouldn't have lasted as long if I'd done it back then. No, it was last year when I finally hit the trail..

DISSOLVE TO:

11 INT. THE FLOCK - NIGHT

11

CAPTION - SEPTEMBER 2002

It's a low-ceilinged, smoky pub, a themed place with dark woodwork and mismatched chairs. Alex and a group of friends sit round one of the larger tables.

Everyone is busy chatting away but Alex keeps glancing over at SCARLET (cute, petite brunette). The camera closes in on her and freezes to display the caption, then resumes.

CAPTION - SCARLET.

ALEX (V.O.)

It was late September, 2002, when I first met Scarlet. She was friends with my mate Jess's sister, a Cambridge uni geography student and possessed of that rare kind of kooky charm that I always go for in student girls. You know, Doctor Who scarf, unusual music tastes, often glasses as well to add to the sexy librarian fantasy all men have.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
Anyway, I didn't pay her too much attention at first, she was back up from Cambridge to my hometown of Walsall for the weekend, and I still had a strange thing going on with Tara at the time, but more on that later. Fate was to play Scarlet into my hands courtesy of our overly-emotional friend Ruby, who can always be counted on to be having a crisis about something...

CUT TO:

12 EXT. OUTSIDE THE FLOCK - NIGHT

12

The friends from before are making their way out. RUBY, KELLY, Scarlet and Alex are left as the others break up and make their ways home.

RUBY

Do any of you guys want to go on somewhere else?

KELLY

What did you have in mind?

RUBY

(shrugs)

Anywhere, really, I just wanna carry on drinking, you know?

ALEX

Uh-oh, that sounds like an emotional fallout situation...

RUBY

Can we just go somewhere, please?

KELLY

Come on, Mr Alex, let's drive.

SCARLET

Yeah, let's go off into Wolverhampton or somewhere, there's bound to be a place open at this time of the night.

ALEX

Okay dokey then, follow me.

The group walk over to Alex's car, a purple Honda Civic. He opens the doors and lets everyone in. His voice over talks as Alex starts the car and drives off screen.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
Now, little Ruby was having a bit of a crisis, as it happened, and she wanted to relieve this in two time-honoured ways - getting drunk and telling somebody all about it. And fate was to play things into my hands again once we finally found somewhere else to sit and drink some more. Well, I wasn't drinking, obviously. I'm a bad enough driver already.

13 INT. THE CITY BAR - NIGHT

13

Trendy inner city bar, full of students. The furniture is all steel chairs and sharp lines, mixed bizarrely with the homely wallpaper and European exchange students who run the place.

Ruby and Kelly are sat next to each other - Ruby's face is so long it may as well be scraping the floor as she recounts her sorry story to Kelly over a pint of beer she never gets round to sipping from.

Alex and Scarlet are sat together a little way away from them. Inoffensive indie music plays in the background.

ALEX
Lucky escape there, I think.

SCARLET
Yeah, she looks like she's doing some serious emotional counselling!

ALEX
So anyway, Miss Scarlet...

SCARLET
Yes?

ALEX
This is the part where you tell me all about yourself and I go 'mm' a lot while I try to think up witty answers for you.

SCARLET
(giggles)
Not much to say, really. I'm a student, I like my indie schmindy music and going out with my mates, and I'm most glad that I'm not sitting where Kelly is right now.

Alex laughs. His voice over comes back in as the two chat.

ALEX (V.O.)

She was a nice girl, we managed to spend the rest of that evening talking about absolutely nothing at all. I know I should have been a little concerned by this, namely that we didn't seem to have a great deal in common besides a taste in foreign films and a couple of bands, but to be honest I really didn't care. All too often, you find the warning bells start to go off early on in your conversations with a new person, because your psyche is trying to warn you of something, but it's the decision you make there and then as to whether you listen to them or not that decides how things are going to work out. And for my sins, I chose to ignore mine at that point.

DISSOLVE TO:

14 EXT. KELLY'S STREET - NIGHT

14

Alex's car pulls into frame and stops, and Kelly and Scarlet get out. Alex winds down his window to speak to them.

ALEX (V.O.)

After a little machinations to make sure we dropped the depressed Ruby off first, because she wanted us to help her wallow in self-pity a while longer, I took the girl's to Kelly's house, where they were staying.

ALEX (cont'd)

So, thanks for a good night out, girls!

KELLY

You would say that, you didn't have to put up with her all night!

ALEX

I'm sure you will be rewarded in the next life.

KELLY

I'd better...

SCARLET

Thanks, Mr Alex.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

You staying in town for much
linger?

SCARLET

Till Friday, so yeah.

ALEX

Okay, groovy. You two want my
mobile number so you can let me
know what's happening?

The girls exchange a look, grin and then take their phones
out of their bag. Alex hands over his number.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

Always better to do it that way.
See, now I'm spared having to ask
for theirs and potentially getting
turned down, and also the ball is
in their court when it comes to
getting back in touch.

ALEX (cont'd)

Nice meeting you both, then, see
you around soon!

Alex drives away as the girls head into Kelly's house.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

Now, I'll be honest, Because I may
as well be honest with the kinds of
things I'm telling you about. At
first I did kind of prefer Kelly,
if only Because she was a good-
looking redhead and, as you will
soon find out, I am an absolute
sucker for those. But I did like
Scarlet too, she had that student
indie kid thing that's always quite
appealing, plus she seemed a bit
ditzzy and I always like that too. I
guess I'm quite easy to please.
Now, life went on as normal until I
started to speak to Scarlet via
text message, usually while I was
out somewhere.

Alex and his friends are stood inside the Planet - a low-
ceilinged circular rock club, packed with heaving sweaty
rocker bodies as they jump about to some tune or other.

Alex's phone beeps and he takes it from his pocket. CLOSE UP on the phone as we read the text message.

TEXT (ON PHONE)

Heya! Am bit drunk n bit stoned.
What you doin?

Alex grins and types a reply.

ALEX'S TEXT

Out at Planet. Good night. Could do
with better company tho!

Alex sends the message, looking up and over to TARA, dancing away absently at the edge of the dancepit. The camera zooms in on her and freezes to display the caption.

CAPTION - TARA.

ALEX (V.O.)

Aah, Tara.

As before. Alex is walking round his apartment, swigging from a bottle of Budweiser as he paces. Hobbes is sat on top of the TV set, peering at Alex.

ALEX

Tara Ryder, to gift her with her full name, known to me and my friends only as Tara. I'd first met her a few years back whilst on a night out with my mate Chris, before he was seeing Jessica and before I really knew any of them.

CAPTION - Late 2000.

Alex stands in a crowd of people who are leaving and milling around a town centre nightspot. Chris is visible, talking to a few girls.

As Alex watches, his coat wrapped around him and his breath misting in the chilly night air, Chris starts to snog Tara, only for a few moments. Alex raises an eyebrow.

ALEX (V.O.)

Chris was most definitely a man on a mission that night - the mission to kiss as many girls in one night as he could!

(MORE)

17 CONTINUED:

17

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 I was never much good at that particular mission, which is probably one of the reasons why I'm in such a mess now! But anyway.

As Alex watches, Chris wanders over to Jessica and after a few moments chatting starts to kiss her as well. Alex laughs.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Chris would, of course, eventually end up going out with Jessica and remaining very happy with her in due time, but this evening she was point number two for his libido.

18 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

18

Alex crouches before the TV, we look at his reflection in the screen.

ALEX
 But the point I'm trying to make is that I should have realised way back then what kind of a girl Tara was. She loves attention. And she will flirt with anyone and anything to get it.

Alex turns the TV on, and the screen fills with static before we:

DISSOLVE TO:

19 INT. THE PLANET - NIGHT

19

As before, as the camera pulls back from Tara and focuses back on Alex. Alex talks to the camera, shouting over the loud music playing.

ALEX
 I'll get to Tara in due course, but in a nutshell at that particular moment in time I was still in a bit of a situation with her, and as a result the ability to safely flirt with Scarlet was proving to be a good tension breaker.

Pull back and away from the scene as Alex checks his phone again, reads the message on it and laughs.

20 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

20

Alex is sat on the sofa. Calvin is asleep at his feet. We can see through the windows that it's raining lightly outside.

ALEX

Things went on like that for a few weeks till she came to visit me on the eve of what would turn out to be my then band Digital's last gig together. We were playing at the Wolverhampton Varsity, and it was the middle of November...

DISSOLVE TO:

21 INT. BACKSTAGE - VARSITY - NIGHT

21

We're in a dingy room, two scruffy sofas against opposite walls, a table with a few cans of beer on it and a set of windows overlooking the city streets outside.

Alex is sat on the third armchair, tuning up a guitar, as ROB (tall goth), his bandmate, struts around the room in his large-platformed New Rock boots.

The door to the room opens and STEVE, the short sound engineer of the venue, pokes his head in.

STEVE

Five minutes!

ALEX

Thanks.

Stan gives them the thumbs up and disappears again. Rob stands up, a little shakily as he is obviously already well-oiled up from the cans scattered around him, and makes his way to the door.

ROB

Come on then, time to rock this place down.

ALEX

(mock japanese bow)

Hai.

There is a low bassy rumble from outside as their backing track starts to play, and cheers and applause from the crowd.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
Now, I knew she was going to be out there, which was precisely why I was currently hiding out backstage. For the average musician, someplace you can lock yourself away before a gig is absolutely essential. Keeps you sane before you walk onto that stage and bare your soul to the slaving hordes out there. Or, at least, as many of your mates as have bothered to show up.

ALEX (cont'd)
(looks up from guitar)
But that wasn't the main point of tonight. That had come about two hours earlier...

DISSOLVE TO:

Over Alex's shoulder as a group of people walk up the stairs - Alex's friends are among them, as is Scarlet. She waves as she sees him.

SCARLET
Hiya! We just got here, what time are you on?

ALEX
Not for ages yet! You, er, wanna go grab a drink downstairs?

SCARLET
Yeah, okay!

ALEX
Oh, no, actually, I can't just yet, we've still got to finish soundchecking. I'll try to come down for a bit when we're done, alright?

SCARLET
Alright!

CHRIS
See you in a bit, goth boy! We must answer the call of beer.

Scarlet heads back downstairs with the others. Alex watches her go then turns and walks off screen with a big grin on his face.

23 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

23

Alex sits on his bed, guitar on his lap as he strums absently on it. His room is decorated in darker colours than the rest of the house, but the framed cult posters still line the walls.

ALEX

The gig itself was okay, not one of our best but bear in mind I had no idea it'd be the last. I might have tried smashing a guitar up or punching Rob out if I'd have known. After we'd finished, I headed back downstairs to seek the guys out.

24 INT. VARSITY - BAR - NIGHT

24

Alex walks up to a large table that all his friends are sat round. The place is full of typical city boys and girls, chattering loudly as muted disco music plays overhead.

Everyone at the table cheers as Alex walks over, shuffling round to let him sit. He ends up a few people away from Scarlet and Tara, one on each side.

CHRIS

Hey, rock star!

JESSICA

You were brilliant.

ALEX

We were okay. But thanks anyway.

RUBY

No, really, mate, you really were good. I thought you were good, anyway.

ALEX (V.O.)

See, if Ruby hadn't told me once at a gig of mine that she thought she made eye contact with me mid-set and fallen in love with me, I might have thought she was being unbiased.

ALEX (cont'd)

Well, here's to more nights like this one then!

(CONTINUED)

He drinks up. He tries to catch Scarlet's eye but she's busy talking to Kelly, although Alex does notice that Chris seems uncomfortable with having Scarlet around. Ruby shoves up to get next to Alex and gives him an over-enthusiastic hug.

ALEX (cont'd)

What's the plan now? I'm all fired up with no place to go at the moment.

JESSICA

We're off to the Planet for a bit.

ALEX

Aye, sounds good.

KELLY

Yeah, so you can go dance with all your smelly rocker friends.

ALEX

(grins)

They've never let me down yet.

Cut to: The group leave the Varsity and walk up the road towards the Planet, which is a few streets away. Alex tries to walk with Scarlet without making it too obvious, but he can't manoeuvre himself next to her.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

Now, what I didn't know at the time was that Scarlet wasn't just some old school friend of this lot that I hadn't met before.

POV - INSIDE THE FRIDGE

Alex opens the fridge and peers in, picking out a random packet of food. He goes to close the door, but pauses and speaks to the camera, which is looking out at him from between two of the shelves.

ALEX

See, Chris and Scarlet used to go out with each other a few years back. And she dumped him just before she went away to start uni, and he never really forgave her for it. Let me make it quite clear that I knew absolutely none of this until much later on.

26 INT. THE PLANET - NIGHT

26

Same scene as before - packed dance floor, loud rock music, but this time Alex and Scarlet are sat up on the raised seats that line the room, talking away. We catch glimpses of Tara glaring suspiciously at the two of them.

ALEX (V.O.)

We talked all night about, as usual, nothing at all. And it was great. She seemed interested in all the random stuff I like to talk about, and she always had something to say too. That suits me, because present monologue notwithstanding I'm normally quite a quiet guy. This went on until I eventually drove her back home. She was staying at her gran's house this time, just up the road from where I lived.

CUT TO:

27 INT. ALEX'S CAR - SCARLET'S GRAN'S STREET - NIGHT

27

Alex's car pulls to a stop in frame. Alex turns to Scarlet.

ALEX

Well, there you go. You know, I only live a few minutes away from here.

SCARLET

(grinning)
Could be handy.

ALEX

(grins back)
It'll be fun finding out.

Alex looks out through the windscreen. It's a tense moment - it'd be a perfect time to go in for the kill, but does Alex have the nerve to do it. Scarlet looks across at him, as though she's waiting for his next move.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

It was a tough call. Go for the kill or let her off home and save it for the next time?

Alex looks over at Scarlet and returns her Cheshire Cat grin.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
Fuck it.

ALEX (cont'd)
I'd like to kiss you now, if that's
okay.

SCARLET
I don't mind..

Alex leans over and the two kiss. The camera pans up and scrolls them off the bottom of the shot, focusing on the pub across the street.

ALEX (V.O.)
All in all, it had been a pretty
good night.

28 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT. 28

Alex is standing by the windows, looking out through the rain into the night waiting beyond. He doesn't look at the camera as he speaks.

ALEX
So that was that. One of my better moments, I think. We stayed in the car for what seemed like a long time before she went inside, and we arranged to meet up again the next night. We went to the cinema, although the film we both chose wasn't your average 'first date' kind of subject...

MONTAGE - clips from the film '28 Days Later' - zombies, people screaming, blood splattering.

29 INT. ALEX'S PLACE. NIGHT. 29

As before.

ALEX
What the hell, we both enjoyed it. After that we ended up back at my place.

30 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - PARENT'S HOUSE - NIGHT 30

Alex and Scarlet are curled up on his bed, sitting watching the TV on the other side of the room.

(CONTINUED)

His room is much like his apartment - dark wallpaper, framed posters and shelves full of action figures. A huge bookcase stretches from floor to ceiling next to the bed.

ALEX (V.O.)

I wasn't planning on having anything else happen, but when she made the first move I didn't exactly try to stop her.

Scarlet looks up at Alex. Without saying a word, she straddles him and kisses him. The ever-present grin of hers still in place, she lets him kiss back and start to run his hands over her. They steadily begin to undress each other.

FADE TO BLACK:

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

Dream on, no gory details here. Let's say that it was a good experience and leave it at that, okay?

FADE UP TO:

He's sat on the sofa again, staring out through the windows. Bringing these memories up is obviously putting a pretty dark cloud over his head. He grins as he remembers a few little details.

ALEX

She used to laugh when she.. well, you know. Some girls scream, some slap you, a few bark, apparently, but she... she just giggled. It was always pretty sweet. She loved being tickled too. She had a nice belly for it.

(chuckles, sighs)

Anyway, the five months that we spent together passed pretty quickly. She'd go back to Cambridge for uni and I'd go see her every few weeks. It suited me just fine. I'm used to spending a lot of time by myself, if I don't do that I get very twitchy, so whenever I did see her it was always great fun and I didn't regret a second of it.

32 EXT. CAMBRIDGE CITY CENTRE - DAY 32

Alex and Scarlet walk hand in hand down the street, historic buildings lining one side of the road and shops the other. Students and other academic types wander the streets as well, but we keep Alex and Scarlet in the middle of the shot.

ALEX (V.O.)

So I'd spend my every other weekend in the seat of learning, the historical city of Cambridge. We'd wander around in the day, absently shopping and doing lunch in random student cafes...

33 INT. CAMBRIDGE STUDENT CAFÉ - AFTERNOON 33

Alex and Scarlet sit at a table in a small cosy café, full of other chattering students and the Italian staff wandering past the shot as the couple sip coffee and eat slices of cake.

ALEX (V.O.)

And then in the evening we'd sample the Cambridgeshire nightlife...

34 INT. CAMBRIDGE UNI BAR - NIGHT 34

A crowded dancefloor as a horde of sweaty students boys and girls bounce around to a random punk track. Scarlet and Alex are in the middle of it all, laughing as they get jostled around.

ALEX (V.O.)

Which turned out to be about the same as everywhere else, really. There was only one thing that really bugged me a little about it all.

35 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT 35

He turns to the camera with a raised eyebrow and a cynical grin.

ALEX

'Here it comes...' you must all be thinking.

36 INT. CAMBRIDGE BAR - NIGHT

36

Alex and Scarlet are sat at a table with about a dozen of her friends. Scarlet is busy talking to about four of them at once, everyone laughing and joking around, but despite game attempts to join in, Alex is very obviously outside the group.

The camera gradually zooms in on him, pushing the rest of the table out of shot.

ALEX (V.O.)

I couldn't shake the feeling that her social life meant a lot more to her than anything else. Including me. We'd go out and I'd be able to chat to her friends, but at the end of the night I just felt as though I was a tourist in her world, and when you add this to the fact that I generally went to see her because her whole life was in that city and she was reluctant to leave it, well...

37 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

37

Alex sits on top of the kitchen surface, tearing strips of bread from a baguette and eating some, throwing the others over to the cats on the opposite side of the kitchen, who meow and playfight each other to get at them, sniffing them before starting to chew.

ALEX

Don't get me wrong, times were good with her. We had fun, we sat around and talked crap about things, watched movies that I like together, instead of the usual trap of having to go with girlie movies. And then, there was the sex. Which was pretty good. And surprisingly frequent too, which meant that I needed those two weeks between visits to refuel my mojo.

38 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

38

Alex settles down on his bed and turns the stereo on as Calvin comes sniffing into the room, curling up on Alex's belly to sleep after clawing at him for a few moments.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

ALEX

So that was the situation. I had a few doubts but then I always do, and I was just starting to settle down when I went for what Roxette would call 'The Big L.'

39 INT. ALEX'S ROOM AT PARENTS - NIGHT

39

Alex and Scarlet are in bed together, snuggled up and cosy.

SCARLET

(clearly very loved up)
Mmm... I feel I could tell you anything, you know... anything at all...

ALEX

What do you want to tell me then?

SCARLET

(dreamily)
I dunno... tell me something.

ALEX (V.O.)

This was it. I'd held back on this for a while, we'd been together a few months and things were tip-top and groovy so far... so it was time to Flame On.

ALEX (cont'd)

Can I tell you I love you?

Scarlet looks up at him with a grin.

SCARLET

Yeah... yeah, I love you too...

They kiss.

MUSIC - Powerman 5000 '- Strike The Match'

40 INT. ALEX'S ROOM. NIGHT.

40

As before.

ALEX

Yeah, that was a pretty good night too. Which was why things caught me by surprise a month or so later...

41 INT. ALEX'S ROOM AT PARENTS - DAY

41

Scarlet is sat on the end of his bed, dressed and with her coat on - her bags are on the bed in front of her, she's obviously ready to set off home.

Alex is over on the other side of the room, finishing combing his hair. He turns to her with a smile.

ALEX

You all set then?

SCARLET

(seems distracted)

Huh? Oh, yeah, yeah.

Freeze frame. An ALARM BELL rings for a few seconds.

ALEX (V.O.)

And there it was. There's always a moment when you realise that things have just started an Icarus-worthy nosedive, screaming in flames till they crash and burn on the rocks below. Or at least, to be a bit less melodramatic, that things have just taken a turn up shit creek and your boat's full of holes.

Resume action. Alex pauses for a second but then carries on, grabbing one of Scarlet's nags and then following her out of the room.

42 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

42

The TV is switched on and the lights are off, bathing the room in a flickering blue light. Sombre music plays from the stereo, as the TV is on mute, showing some kind of police camera show, with crashing cars and flashing lights.

Alex is slouched, still fully dressed, in his bed, the covers wrapped around him as he turns to talk to the camera.

ALEX

It's hard to explain it, but you know it when you see it. If a girl is having second thoughts, or she wants to break up, or something equally terminal for your relationship, then you'll see her do something like that.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

ALEX (cont'd)
 Seem distracted, seem like she
 wants to say something but doesn't
 know how to, or that a strange
 deadening vibe has just been thrown
 over the two of you. And right
 there, at that moment, I felt it
 again.

43 INT. NEW STREET STATION - PLATFORM 9 - DAY

43

Alex and Scarlet are running along the platform for a train. She jumps up onto it, turns and gives him a quick kiss and then waves as the doors close and the train starts to pull away.

ALEX (V.O.)

If I'd have known that would be the
 last time I'd have seen her while
 she was still my girlfriend, I may
 have made a bigger deal out of it.
 She was away in Wales visiting her
 sister for a few weeks, but when
 she came back, the cloud that she'd
 left hanging over me came back to
 piss on my chips.

44 INT. ALEX'S ROOM AT PARENTS - DAY

44

CAPTION - APRIL 19, 2003

Alex is sat in front of his computer, playing 'Planescape Torment.' It's a sunny Saturday afternoon and he seems to be in reasonable spirits.

ALEX (V.O.)

When she was next coming home, it
 was only for a few days before she
 went to spend Easter with her
 parents down in London. I was sat
 playing computer games when she
 rang me.

Alex's phone rings, he answers.

ALEX (cont'd)

Hello?

SCARLET

(filtered, through phone)
 Hiya, I'm back in Birmingham now.

ALEX

Okay, cool, want me to come pick
 you up?

(CONTINUED)

SCARLET

(beat)

Uh, no, do you want to meet me in the pub over the road from my gran's in about an hour or so?

ALEX

(a little confused)

Um, okay, if you like.

SCARLET

Alright, see you in a bit then.

Alex hangs up and sits back in his seat, a concerned look on his face.

ALEX (V.O.)

And there was the black cloud again. Why didn't she want me to pick her up from the train station, Because it'd take her a lot longer to get home otherwise? And what was this 'meeting for a drink' stuff? That was very unusual. My Spider Sense was prickling and I knew that trouble was on the horizon.

45 EXT. OUTSIDE THE ARMS PUB - DAY

45

Alex's car pulls into frame on the pub's car park. Scarlet's gran's house is visible over the road as Alex exits the car and heads inside.

46 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

46

Alex is further cocooned in his bedclothes.

ALEX

What happened next should have been made up, or exaggerated, but I swear to you that all of what I'm about to say is the unadulterated truth.

(beat)

Sadly.

47 INT. THE ARMS - DAY

47

A typical Toby pub, very middle aged in its décor and choice of music, which appears to be a 'Sad Love Songs From The Eighties' megamix.

Alex wanders into the pub, full of families and middle-aged couples, as Joy Division's 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' starts to play. He sees Scarlet sitting at a table against one wall and heads over.

ALEX (V.O.)

I knew right then that it was over.
But the masochist in me needed to
go through with things anyway.

ALEX (cont'd)

Hey you! Have a good trip?

SCARLET

Yeah, yeah, it was fine.

An awkward silence passes for a few moments. Alex knows what's up but is still trying to act like nothing's wrong. He reaches out a hand to touch her cheek, and she places one of hers against it and closes her eyes.

ALEX (V.O.)

I thought for a second that it was
actually going to work out fine.

SCARLET

(sighs)

This isn't working, Alex.

ALEX (V.O.)

For at least two or three seconds,
anyway.

Alex's hand zaps away from her as though he's been shocked. He looks down for a second as the reality of it sinks in, then looks back up at her.

ALEX (cont'd)

Why? Why is it that bad?

SCARLET

We hardly see each other. We just
live too far apart.

ALEX

I thought that didn't bother you?

SCARLET

It does and it doesn't. My whole
life is down there, Alex, and all
I've got up here is you.

ALEX

And I'm not enough?

'Do You Really Want To Hurt Me' starts to play. Alex looks up as he hears the song playing, taking in the gallows humour of the choice of song.

SCARLET

(shakes her head sadly)
I'm sorry, but no. It's not enough to keep coming all the way back for. I mean, I'm going to be spending all of this summer in Australia, and after that, who knows? I'm never in the same place for more than a few weeks at a time, and..

WOMAN (O.S.)

Excuse me, you two...

Alex turns to look - it's a woman, holding a mobile phone with an apologetic look on her face.

WOMAN (cont'd)

Sorry to bother you both, but you're both young so I hoped you could help me work this thing. I just want it put on to silent, if you could help!

ALEX

Yeah, sure, pass it over.

Alex takes the phone and presses a few buttons.

WOMAN

So are you two madly in love then?

ALEX (V.O)

I am Jack's sledgehammer of irony.

Alex and Scarlet share a look.

ALEX (cont'd)

Something like that, yeah...
(hands the phone back)
There you go.

WOMAN

Thanks, sorry to bother you!

She goes back to her table. Alex smiles at the irony of it all.

ALEX (V.O.)

I wanted to stand up and scream. I wanted the world to know what was happening to me!

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 To jump onto the table and yell
 'NO! THINGS ARE NOT FUCKING OKAY!
 WE ARE NOT MADLY IN LOVE ANY MORE!
 I AM BEING DUMPED!!'

(beat)
 But I didn't.

ALEX (cont'd)
 Looks like life still goes on.

SCARLET
 I'm really sorry, Alex. It's
 nothing you've done at all, you're
 a really great guy. I just don't
 think it's a good idea for me to
 have anything tying me down at the
 moment. I move around too much.

ALEX
 So I guess that's it, then. Not
 much point trying to keep things
 going when there's only one of you
 who wants to.

SCARLET
 (nods)
 Yeah, guess so.

ALEX
 I'd best be going. You've got
 another train to catch soon,
 anyway.

SCARLET
 Yeah, I have.

ALEX
 (puts his coat on)
 So I guess I'll-

WOMAN (O.S.)
 Sorry again...

Alex turns to look at her again. For a brief second we see a shudder of suppressed anger ripple over him, but he keeps his cool and manages to calmly reply.

ALEX
 Yes?

WOMAN
 I'm still, er, having a bit of
 trouble with it all, could one of
 you two help again?

ALEX
 Yeah, no problem.

(CONTINUED)

We close up on Scarlet, watching Alex as the woman explains her problem and he tries to help, the two of them going out of frame as we zoom in on Scarlet.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

Not an ideal way to finish things off. I mean, there's never a good way, I guess, but having the pub's jukebox mock me with its choice of tune, and having that random woman get the situation so horribly wrong kind of puts that in the top ten.

48 EXT. OUTSIDE THE ARMS PUB - DAY

48

Alex is walking back to his car, angry and upset. He talks to the camera as he crosses the car park and gets into his Honda.

ALEX

Too far apart? Why did that bother her and not me? For the first time in living memory I had a girl I could not see for weeks at a time and not be bothered by it, and now she uses that as a reason to dump me? And explain to me why I rank below getting drunk with her friends every night in and around one of the most elitist universities in the country? What is so bad about me that makes that such a better option?

Alex slams the car door shut and drives off camera.

49 INT. ALEX'S CAR - DAY

49

Alex talks to us as he drives, still angry.

ALEX

I got in my car and headed straight home. I should have just found somewhere to sit for a while and clear my head, but I went for plan B instead.

50 INT. ALEX'S ROOM AT PARENTS - DAY

50

Alex is at his computer, playing 'Max Payne' and gleefully blasting criminals to bits with automatic weapons.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Videogames may not have a link to gun crime and street violence, but I can honestly say that coming home after that and shooting people point blank with grenade launchers gave me a worrying amount of satisfaction.

51 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

51

Alex is staring up at the ceiling. Hobbes is sniffing around him.

ALEX

I spent the next few days in a state of shock. I didn't tell anyone about it, mainly because my good buddy Jay was up from London for the weekend, and I didn't want to make a scene about it because of that.

(beat)

That wasn't a good weekend to be sociable.

(beat)

That night when I got back home, I decided to do a few things. I was going to spend the rest of year getting my new band up to arse kicking strength, I was going to move out and get my own place, and I was going to lay my demons to rest at last.

He finds what he was looking for, retrieves the book and holds it up to the camera - a well-read, slightly battered copy of Nick Hornby's 'High Fidelity.'

ALEX (cont'd)

This is what gave me the inspiration for that last part.

Alex sits down on the bed and starts to leaf through the book.

ALEX (cont'd)

Shortly after that weekend, I sat down and saw this book on my bookcase, calling out to me.

52 INT. ALEX'S ROOM AT PARENTS - NIGHT 52

Alex is sat on his bed, looking glum, when he notices something glowing out the corner of his eye.

He looks over to the bookcase and sees one of the books is GLOWING softly, Holy Grail style.

He stands up slowly and reaches out, his fingers taking the book out. The glow dies down as Alex reads the cover and realises what it is.

53 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT 53

As before.

ALEX

It'd been a few years since I'd last looked at it, but it all suddenly seemed to have taken on an almost prophetic relevance. The story of a guy who breaks up with someone he felt happy with, despite a few reservations that he seemed to have, followed by his backtracking through his most memorable relationships to try and find answers to the question 'Why does this keep happening to me?' - well, it could have been written about me. Or at least, it would be by the time I'd finished going back through all my past girls...

54 INT. COSTA'S COFFEE SHOP - DAY 54

Alex is in his plainer work clothes, sat at a table with one of the ever-present vanilla frescatos in front of him as he continues to read from the book.

ALEX

It became my mission, my calling, to follow the path that Rob follows in the book. Even though that meant getting a shovel and digging up my old skeletons to ask them if I could play spoons on their bones.

(beat)

Or something. It's a metaphor. I think.

(closes the book)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED:

54

ALEX (cont'd)
 The first stop was my longest
 affair to date, the feisty little
 package of red that they call
 Gemma.

55 INT. THE IMPERIAL - WALSALL - NIGHT.

55

CAPTION - XMAS EVE, 1998.

Alex is sat in one of the booth tables at the old-fashioned, large pub. ALICIA and Rob are sat next to him, and GEMMA sits opposite with two friends. The group are chattering excitedly. The camera closes on Gemma and freezes to display the caption.

CAPTION - GEMMA.

ALEX (V.O.)
 I'd been set up with Gemma by my
 then best mate Rob's girlfriend
 Alicia. Alicia would play her own
 part in things later on, but for
 now she was just the instigator of
 all this.

Alex and Gemma keep talking to each other - there's an obvious mutual attraction.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 I'm missing out one thing here,
 though, which I should just mention
 before I go on. Selma.

56 EXT. THE FLOCK BEER GARDEN - NIGHT

56

Alex, Rob and Alicia are out, sat at one of the wooden tables on the 'beer garden' to the rear of the pub. The 'garden' is misleading because it's really just an eighteen foot square outdoor area, paved with concrete slabs.

Next to Alex sits SELMA, a blonde bombshell in a black miniskirt, dark tights and a loose-fitting white shirt. Alex looks petrified of her, but pretty enraptured by her at the same time. Selma and Alicia are jabbering away as they're old friends. Freeze frame on Selma to display the caption.

CAPTION - SELMA.

ALEX (V.O.)
 Gemma wasn't the first person
 Alicia had tried to set me up with,
 that rare honour goes to her old
 mate Selma.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 I think Alicia took pity on me only
 ever having her and Rob to go
 around with, and in her mind having
 someone who she already knew was
 just better for her as well!

57 INT. COSTA'S COFFEE - DAY

57

As before.

ALEX
 Alicia's like that.

58 EXT. THE FLOCK BEER GARDEN - NIGHT

58

As before. Alex's voice over is still running as Alex watches
 Selma talking.

ALEX (V.O.)
 Anyway, she got me to meet her
 friend Selma, who I thought was a
 damn fine piece of woman.
 Sarcastic, pretty, and also
 interested in me... well, what else
 could I ask for? Things didn't work
 out because I was still too shy,
 too nervous and too generally
 clueless about women to do anything
 right. I called her house about
 eight times one weekend to try and
 talk to her, and that didn't leave
 a great lasting impression.

59 INT. COSTA'S COFFEE - DAY

59

As before.

ALEX
 It did, however, mean that while
 watching 'Swingers' with my mates
 we could have a good laugh at one
 of the scenes. You know which one.
 (woman's voice)
 Don't ever call me again.

Alex groans and slaps his forehead.

ALEX (cont'd)
 Yep, that one. Anyway. We had one
 good date together, Selma and I. We
 went to the cinema with Rob and
 Alicia to see something, and I
 bought her some ice-cream which we
 shared. Very romantic.
 (MORE)

59 CONTINUED:

ALEX (cont'd)

I found out later on that we'd both saved the spoons we'd eaten the ice-cream with on that night. Kind of makes me wonder what could have been between us, but in the end it never really got off the ground. I'll consider that in more detail later. Back to Gemma.

60 INT. THE IMPERIAL - NIGHT

60

As before, with Alicia and Rob busy canoodling and Alex joking with the other girls.

ALEX (V.O.)

I liked Gemma straight away. A petite, curvy, good-looking redhead? What wasn't to like? I was jetting off for a week's holiday in Florida in the morning so I made the most of the night.

61 INT. COMIC SHOP - DAY

61

Alex is back at work, pricing up a huge pile of plastic-sheathed comics as he talks. His friend Chris is in the shop, reading a Dr. Who magazine in the background.

ALEX

We got on well and arranged to meet up after I got back, which ended up with her meeting me each day after the work experience I was doing at the local newspaper. She'd come round my house too, we spent a bunch of good days together watching 'Sunset Beach.' In fact...

Alex looks down at his left hand, then holds it up to the camera to show a lump of scar tissue at the base of his second finger.

ALEX (cont'd)

That was one of the first things she gave me.

62 INT. ALEX'S PARENTS HOUSE - DAY

62

CAPTION - JANUARY 1999.

Alex and Gemma are curled up on his sofa, watching the TV. She's laughing and making jokes about the people on screen.

(CONTINUED)

GEMMA

Oh my god, would you look at her!
She must be the ugliest woman I've
seen on this show!

ALEX

(laughs)
Shh, I missed the bit where we find
out that Greg's got an evil twin...

GEMMA

Oh yeah, this is a good bit, see
what happens is that Greg asks -

ALEX

(jokingly)
Oi! Quiet, you!

He puts his hand over her mouth to pretend to gag her, and in
return she BITES him!

Alex yelps in pain and wrenches his hand away. Gemma looks
shocked, then laughs, then shocked again, not sure whether to
find that funny or not.

GEMMA

Oh god, sorry, I didn't mean to...

ALEX

That's alright... woah, you managed
to draw blood!

GEMMA

I think I just got a bit carried
away!

ALEX

I think maybe you did... no more
orange squash for you, young lady!

They laugh and snuggle back down, Alex wincing as he nurses
his wounded hand.

Alex is putting the priced up comics onto the shelves as Dave
plays with one of the action figures from the display behind
him.

ALEX

Gemma was my first real girlfriend,
in a way.

(MORE)

63 CONTINUED:

63

ALEX (cont'd)

We did plenty of stuff together - she used to love watching films, listening to music, and thankfully she could stand a lot of my odd music tastes, and she also liked to have an awful lot of sex.

(beat)

You probably didn't need to know that.

64 INT. GEMMA'S ROOM - DAY

64

High speed film montage of Alex and Gemma sitting on her bed, watching the TV. They don't move much as day fades into early evening, and then into night, until eventually the TV is switched off and the two fall asleep.

ALEX (V.O.)

And in a way, that was the problem with it all. Whether it was down to me not really knowing what I was doing or her general apathy towards doing too much, we spent an awful lot of time just sitting around, watching TV. Or, to be more accurate, me watching her flick endlessly through cable channels for hours at a time.

65 INT. COMIC SHOP - STOREROOM - DAY

65

We're looking at the other side of the painted storeroom door as it opens, revealing Alex as he walks into the back room of the shop.

Alex starts plucking the odd action figure from the boxes as he walks round, ticking off items on a clipboard in front of him as he finds them. He talks to the camera as he works.

ALEX

Don't get me wrong, it wasn't all bad. We had a lot of fun together when things were good, it's just that things weren't good as often as they were bad. She was depressed about an awful lot of things, stuff that old boyfriends had done to her, things that this one girl she'd been involved with had done to her, and I spent a lot of my time with her feeling like I should be apologising for things.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED:

65

ALEX (cont'd)

The main thing that started to show up the cracks was when she tried to stop me doing things, to control how I spent my time. She was probably just paranoid that I was going to leave her, but it turned into one of those self-fulfilling prophecies.

66 INT. ALEX'S HOUSE AT UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

66

CAPTION - SPRING 1999

Alex is sat in the front room of the small semi he shares with two other people at university, although they're both in bed because the clock on the wall tells us it's after 4am.

Alex is on the phone, struggling to stay conscious as the TV flickers away in the background, lighting up the dark room.

ALEX (V.O.)

When I went back to uni, she wanted me to call her every day. I didn't mind most of the time, but when I'd been out late the last thing I wanted to do when I went out was sit up for another two hours on the phone to her, listening to her sulk about something. Usually me.

ALEX (cont'd)

No, no, I am here, I'm just really...

(yawns)

... really tired.

GEMMA

(filtered through phone)

You never want to talk to me. Why don't you just stay up there and never call me again if it's so much effort to speak to me?

ALEX

Gemma, don't be daft. I'm just worn out.

GEMMA

Well, it's alright for you, being able to go out at all, I have to work all day and night and I never get the chance to do anything I want...

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

ALEX (V.O.)

You get the idea. She'd work till 3am then hit the casino over the road with her friends, then still expect me to be up when she got back home. She was an insomniac and I started to turn into one as well!

67 INT. COMIC SHOP - STOREROOM - DAY

67

Alex is leaning against the boxes, absently playing with a Star Wars toy.

ALEX

Which is why things became a whole lot more complicated when Selma came back on the scene...

68 INT. ALEX'S HOUSE AT UNIVERSITY - DAY

68

CAPTION - SUMMER 1999

Alex sits in the kitchen of the house, where there is another phone mounted on the wall. Alex is looking at the phone, as though trying to make his mind up to do something.

ALEX (V.O.)

Gemma and I had been having a rough few months. We'd been together seven or eight months already but they hadn't all been good. So I decided one day to call up an old friend.

Alex reaches up and grabs the phone, dialling in a number. It rings a few times before a girl's voice answers.

SELMA

(filtered, through phone)
Hello?

ALEX

Hello stranger, it's Alex.

69 INT. COMIC SHOP - UPPER BALCONY - DAY

69

Alex is filing away a selection of collector's editions and rare comics in the upper floor of the shop as pimply fanboys mill around him.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Yes, I know it was a bad idea. But I was still young and clueless in the ways of love. I just wanted to try and make myself happy, and I was prepared to look around to find that. Plus, to be honest I hadn't really had any time to get over Selma before I'd met Gemma, so I hadn't given myself enough chance to forget her. Which is why I kept thinking about her.

He pauses, a comic halfway from the pile in his hand to the box in front of him. A fanboy is lurking next to him, ready to strike the second the comic hits the box.

ALEX (cont'd)

It was very stupid of me. Why didn't I just try to work things out with Gemma, and then if they really were terminal just end it, and if not just make a better go of it. Because I was weak, that's why. It's a mistake I made a few times and every time I paid for it. Like most men, I rarely learn from my mistakes.

The fanboy's hand creeps out and tries to make a grab for the comic, but Alex spots it, swats the offending hand and stuffs the comic rudely into the box before him.

He heads back downstairs after glaring at the fanboy. We follow Alex as he walks down the stairs, past the Boba Fett standee.

ALEX (cont'd)

So I rang up Selma and asked her if she wanted to meet up next time I was home. There was a strange, almost comic kind of air to it all - we both knew that what we were doing was wrong but we didn't care. The excitement came from the fact that we shouldn't have been talking. Gemma and Selma used to be great friends but had fallen out years ago, so you could say I was sleeping with the enemy.

The Walsall Arboretum is a large park in the middle of the town centre.

Alex and Selma walk into the shot and make for a pair of swings in front of us, sitting down next to each other.

ALEX (V.O.)

So, next time I was home, I met up with Selma and we just talked. There was this strange vibe between us, like we should have gotten together but didn't because I'd lost my bottle with it, and now here was a chance to maybe start again. It was a strange atmosphere.

SELMA

(lights up a cigarette)
So what, are you and Gemma like on a break now?

ALEX

No, no, nothing like that. We're just... just not working too well at the moment.

SELMA

So you thought you'd give me a call?

ALEX

Yeah. I needed to speak to a friendly face.

SELMA

Sure you're not just trying to make yourself a way out?

ALEX

What do you mean?

SELMA

Give yourself an excuse to break up with Gemma by getting up to no good with me.

ALEX

(grins)
And who says I want to do that?

SELMA

(grins back)
Oh come off it, Alex, I'm not that stupid.

ALEX (V.O.)

She was right, that was exactly what I was doing. But things weren't meant to be.

(MORE)

70 CONTINUED: (2)

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
I think the moment had passed for me and Selma, and despite the bits of feelings that were still there, we didn't do anything except talk. I'd get back in touch with her every now and then but nothing ever happened between us.

71 INT. COMIC SHOP - DAY

71

Alex heads behind the counter. Dave is there, finishing serving a customer.

ALEX

After a while she quite rightly got fed up with me only calling her when me and Gemma were having problems, and we haven't spoken much since then.

(sighs)

Which serves me right.

(beat)

Emily was a different story.

72 INT. TRAIN - DAY

72

CAPTION - SUMMER 2000

Alex sits in his seat on a passenger train as it pulls to a stop, the sign on the platform visible through the window reads 'Sheffield.' Alex is reading a book and listening to his walkman.

ALEX (V.O.)

I was on my way home for the weekend when I saw her. She was a housemate of my good uni buddy Richie in the first year, and I'd always gotten on well with her. I hadn't seen her since then, and by now we were into the third year, so I'd almost forgotten all about..

VOICE (O.S.)

Alex?!?

ALEX (V.O.)

Emily.

Alex looks up and we see EMILY - a medium height Northern girl with shoulder length dark hair and tanned skin. Freeze frame for the caption.

CAPTION - EMILY

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (cont'd)
(removes headphones)
Emily? Hey! I haven't seen you for ages!

EMILY
And I haven't seen you since I moved out of Richie's place! How are you?

ALEX
I'm good, I'm just off home for a few days. You?

EMILY
Same thing, I'm here to see my dad for a bit.

ALEX
Whereabouts are you living now?

EMILY
Still not far from uni, I got a place with Susan and a few other people.

ALEX
Really? Groovy, you'll have to give me your number so I can come round or something.

EMILY
Yeah, sure.

She scribbles the note down on a piece of paper, wrestling with her bags as she does so. The conductor's whistle blows outside.

EMILY (cont'd)
Ooh, this is my stop, I'd better go. Call me soon, alright?

ALEX
Yeah, course I will!

EMILY
Bye!

She hops off the train and away into the station as the train pulls away. Alex sits in his chair, looking at the scrap of paper.

72 CONTINUED: (2)

ALEX (V.O.)

Fate was playing all sorts of tricks on me, but here she'd slipped me an ace under the table while no-one was looking. I spent that weekend at home with Gemma, not saying a thing about Emily. She was my guilty little secret, my back door out of the increasingly spiralling thing with Gemma.

73 EXT. WOLVERHAMPTON CITY CENTRE - STREET - DAY

73

Alex is out on his lunch break, walking around. He wanders through the streets, passing various shops and businesses by as he talks to the camera, eating a huge Subway sandwich as he does so.

ALEX

See, Gemma had done two things that had really put a coffin nail in our relationship. I'm not saying I wasn't to blame for not talking to her more about how I was feeling, but these two things did make a difference to me.

(counts them off on his fingers)

One - Nine Inch Nails at Glastonbury 2000, and Two - The Last Weekend Of Freedom.

74 EXT. GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL - MAIN STAGE - NIGHT

74

CAPTION - GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL, SUMMER 2000

Alex is bouncing around inside a huge crowd of people watching Nine Inch Nails play on the main stage. He shouts to the camera over the music.

ALEX

I love this band! And this was their only UK date for a few years, so I was damned if I was going to miss them. The festival was pretty good, but these guys were the main reason I was here. And I had to go through a lot of crap to get here, Because...

75 INT. LEAVER'S BALL - BOYS SCHOOL - NIGHT

75

(CONTINUED)

CAPTION - SUMMER 1999

Alex, dressed smartly in tuxedo and bowtie, is dancing with Gemma, who looks good in a white Fifties style dress. They're in a marquee erected out the back of Alex's old school, dancing alongside several other couples. Tables lined with drinks and food line the edges of the marquee.

We can make out Selma in a blue sleeveless dress watching Alex and Gemma.

ALEX

The summer ball. This was the final social event in the school calendar, and because Gemma was a few years younger than me she still had hers to go. She actually had two, though. This one she went to even though she had another year of school to go after changing her A-Levels, because all of her friends were here, and the second one was on the same weekend as Glastonbury. And I'm sure you can imagine the arguments as we tried to sort this out.

Alex looks across to Selma, who has turned away and started to leave the marquee, her date for the evening having vanished. Alex watches her go, then turns back to Gemma.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

That was an okay night, all told. Gemma looked great and the only bad thing was that I felt sorry for Selma being left out like that.

As before.

ALEX

The next year's summer ball fell on the same weekend as Glastonbury, which I'd already told Gemma I was going to before we'd found out the date for the ball, and when I said to Gemma that given the choice between an evening of polite social dining and dancing, and rocking my arse off in a muddy field to the soundtrack of one of the greatest bands in the world, I was going for the mud.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

ALEX (cont'd)
(beat)
That did not go down well.

77 INT. GEMMA'S ROOM - DAY

77

Gemma and Alex are in full, decibel shattering argument mode.

GEMMA
(shouting)
I can't believe you'd rather go to
that stupid festival!

ALEX
I've already ordered my ticket! You
knew I was going before we found
out about the damn summer ball!

GEMMA
Cancel it then!

ALEX
What?!?

GEMMA
Cancel it!

ALEX
No! Why the hell should I? I've
already been to one of these
things, you only really know a
couple of the people who are going
to be there, why do you need to go?

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
Thinking back, it was a pretty
stupid argument.

GEMMA
That's not the point! You should
want to go with me!

ALEX
Oh, I should, should I? Thanks for
telling me!

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
It went on like that for a while. I
managed to get my way in the end,
but Gemma as good as dumped me for
the duration of the weekend. At
least, I think she did...

78 EXT. GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL - CAMPSITE - DAY

78

Alex is sat outside his tent with Rob, listening to a message on his mobile phone.

PHONE

You have one new voice mail waiting.

GEMMA

(filtered, through phone)
I can't believe you went, you didn't even want to call me when you got there and I just-

The phone beeps once. Alex looks down at it, confused as to why it cut out.

CLOSE UP - The phone's screen. It's blank, so the battery must have run out.

ON ALEX - He laughs, shakes his head once and puts the phone back in his bag. Rob passes him a can of beer, which he cracks open. They clink their cans together and drink.

ALEX (V.O.)

I never found out what that message said, but when I got back she didn't speak to me for a few days at first. Then everything was fine again. It was never brought up again.

79 EXT. WOLVERHAMPTON CITY STREET - DAY

79

As before.

ALEX

The Last Weekend Of Freedom was something that had been a bugbear for a while, however, and even though it happened quite early on in our relationship, it remained a sore point up till the end of it all.

80 EXT. A BEACH SOMEWHERE IN WALES. NIGHT.

80

A campfire burns, and around it sit all of Alex's male friends, drinking, smoking and laughing.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

ALEX (V.O.)

It was the last time all my old posse from school would get together. A weekend's trip out to Wales, to a deserted beach somewhere. with a car loaded up 'Fear & Loathing' style with booze, food and, er, herbal remedies.

81 EXT. WOLVERHAMPTON CITY STREET - DAY 81

As before.

ALEX

You know what I mean.

82 EXT. A BEACH SOMEWHERE IN WALES - NIGHT 82

As before, as the boys start mock fighting in the sand and throwing things into the sea. Including Ian.

ALEX (V.O.)

It was our last blowout before we all settled in for the second year at university. It would end up as being the last time we'd all be out anywhere together, and as such it was a weekend of total, unrivalled hedonism on a grand scale. Death, arse, bash, death, bong and more death.

FADE TO BLACK from the campfire scene.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

And where was I for this weekend?

83 INT. GEMMA'S ROOM - NIGHT 83

Alex and Gemma sit on Gemma's bed, watching TV as in the earlier scene. Alex looks VERY disgruntled with the whole thing.

ALEX (V.O.)

Letting her get her own way then is most likely what made me so determined to go to Glastonbury the following year. I mean, it was largely my own fault for not standing up to her and saying 'screw you!

(MORE)

83 CONTINUED:

83

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 I'm going and that's that,' but in
 my defence she made it a really big
 deal and she knew I'd crack under
 the pressure.

84 EXT. WOLVERHAMPTON CITY STREET - DAY

84

Alex is sat on a grassy bank outside the local church,
 sharing the spot with skateboarders and sunbathing students.
 He tosses crumbs from his sandwich to the birds as
 pedestrians and buses rumble past in the foreground.

ALEX

So anyway, back to Emily. Just
 wanted to set the scene for how
 things were. I'm not trying to
 justify anything, but what I am
 trying to do is show that things
 weren't wine and roses between us.

85 INT. ALEX'S HOUSE AT UNI - FRONT ROOM - DAY

85

CAPTION - SUMMER 2000

Alex is sat in his third year house, a neater looking, white-
 painted semi with the feel of a freshly renovated house to
 it. He's staring at the phone, Emily's number in his hand.

ALEX (V.O.)

I found myself in a very similar
 situation then, with things up the
 shitter with Gemma again and an
 opportunity to meet up with
 somebody I used to have a real
 crush on again.

Alex picks up the phone and dials.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

The phrase 'glutton for punishment'
 springs to mind for some reason...

ALEX (cont'd)

Hello, is that Emily?

VOICE

(filtered, through phone)
 Hang on, I'll just get her.

EMILY

(filtered, through phone)
 Hello?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Hey there, it's Alex.

EMILY

Hiya! You alright?

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, I'm good. I was calling to see if you wanted to go for that drink.

EMILY

Sure, yeah. Do you want to meet me at the Stag tonight then? About eight?

ALEX

Eight sounds great, see you later.

Alex hangs up, chuckles to himself then gets up and walks upstairs to his room. We follow him up the stairs.

His room is small but heavily decorated - posters, frames with magazine cutouts and home-made collages, his stereo and TV, guitar and other things all crammed into a space half the size of his current room.

Alex switches on his Playstation and flops down onto his bed, grabbing the controller pad.

ALEX

Now, there was one important fact that I was not aware of at this point that made a lot of difference to the eventual outcome of the night. I knew I kind of liked Emily, but I had no idea how she felt about me. Had never really considered it, even. So imagine my surprise when...

Alex and Emily, dressed up for the night, sit at a table laughing and drinking.

88 EXT. THE ROAD TO EMILY'S - NIGHT 88

Alex and Emily walk along the streetlamp lit road, still busy talking as they reach the front door of her house, a modest semi in a nice quiet area of the village that is home to Alex's university. He follows her inside.

89 INT. EMILY'S ROOM - NIGHT 89

The two are sat on Emily's bed, one empty bottle of wine and one half-empty next to it on the bedside table, as the TV flickers away in the background. There's a relaxed atmosphere.

The conversation stops for a moment, and as Alex and Emily lock eyes, she leans forward and kisses him once on the lips.

EMILY

(smiles)

Well, one of us had to do it.

Alex grins, places his wine glass down and wraps his arms round her. The two start to kiss as the camera pulls to one side and focuses on the wine glasses.

DISSOLVE TO:

The same scene, several hours later by the small alarm clock on the table. Alex and Emily are asleep in bed together.

ALEX (V.O.)

I was a very, very bad boy. In my defence, and I already know how crap this is going to sound, but Gemma and I, we were kind of on a break.

90 INT. ALEX'S HOUSE AT UNI - NIGHT 90

Alex is on the phone, looking like he's in a foul mood.

ALEX

Well, maybe I want to go on a break or something, then!

GEMMA

(filtered, through phone)

No, no if we take a 'break' then that's it.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

(sighs)

I just need some time to myself up here. We're not working out right now and I need to get my head together about a few things.

GEMMA

You mean you just want to see other women.

ALEX

Oh, I don't know. This is me we're talking about, I probably couldn't find another girl even if I tried!

GEMMA

I don't care, if you say we're on a break, it's over.

ALEX

I don't want to do that.

GEMMA

Tough.

There is a tense silence for a few moments.

ALEX

I'll call you later. Bye.

He hangs up and rubs his eyes wearily.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

That's how we always left our arguments. She loved to fight and I didn't, so I always ended up backing down. This time I knew I needed some space from her. I didn't want to definitely break up with her, but I knew that if we carried on, things would just get worse. So that's how we left it for a while.

It's the morning after, and Alex and Emily leave her house, kiss once and then go their separate ways. We follow Alex as he walks back to his house, which is about ten minutes' walk away.

91 CONTINUED:

ALEX

What I had failed to mention to Emily was that Gemma was still in the picture. I mean, how do you explain something like that, anyway? 'Right, I know we're about to make with the sex and all, but first there's something you should know - I'm sort of on a break with someone right now...'

(rolls eyes)

Okay, I admit it. I had an opportunity with her and I took it. When she told me-

CUT TO:

92 INT. EMILY'S ROOM - NIGHT

92

As before, Alex and Emily still clothed but getting very friendly with each other. She looks up at him.

EMILY

I always did like you, you know. Remember back at Richie's when you left that last time at the end of the year? And you kissed me on the cheek as you were going?

Alex thinks for a moment.

93 INT. RICHIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

93

Emily is in the kitchen washing up, wearing her dressing gown. Alex walks past, hugs her and kisses her on the cheek.

ALEX

See you next year then, Em.

He leaves. Emily waits till he's out of the door then races back into the living room, to talk to RICHIE and SUSAN.

EMILY

Oh my god, oh my god! Alex just kissed me!

94 INT. EMILY'S ROOM - NIGHT

94

As before. Alex raises an eyebrow at Emily and she laughs and nods.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

ALEX

Heh. Cool.

CUT TO:

95 EXT. THE ROAD TO EMILY'S - DAY

95

Alex walking along as before.

ALEX

Try to imagine how that must have felt. To have this great looking girl who you had a crush on two years ago turn round and tell you she felt the same way? I was blown away.

(beat)

Literally.

(beat)

Sorry. Anyway, things happened, and somehow the subject of Gemma never really seemed all that appropriate.

Alex suddenly stops in the street as he realises something.

96 INT. COMIC SHOP - DAY

96

Alex walks back in through the door with the same expression on his face as in the last scene.

ALEX

I'm a complete bastard! In that one instance I managed to turn into those guys I used to hate so much at school. You know the ones. The guys at school who got all the girls, then treated them like dirt, dropped them and found some more. For reasons I never fully understood, women were always in plentiful supply for these guys. And in that one night...

97 INT. COMIC SHOP - DAY

97

Alex throws his bag underneath the counter, his thoughts still filled with the past.

ALEX

I'd become the thing I hate.

He wanders off, looking a little dazed.

98 INT. COMIC SHOP - BALCONY FLOOR - NEXT

98

Alex mans the upstairs counter, making an inventory of the busts and statues in the display cabinet on top of the counter.

ALEX

That night, I called her up and tried to explain things to her as best as I could. Which, it turned out, was very badly.

99 INT. ALEX'S HOUSE AT UNI - STAIRS - NIGHT

99

Alex has moved the phone out onto the narrow and dark stairway to get some privacy. The front door faces him, and through the door leading to the front room we can hear the TV and his housemates talking.

ALEX

Emily?

EMILY

(filtered, through phone)
Yeah, hello.

ALEX

Emily, there's something I should have explained to you last night.

(beat)

I'm still kind of involved with someone. It's messy and not going very well, and it's making things very complicated for me right now.

EMILY

(long beat)
Why didn't you tell me?

ALEX

I don't know. I didn't want to spoil the night.

EMILY

You mean you didn't want to blow your chance with me.

ALEX

It wasn't like that.

EMILY

You used me, Alex. You used me.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
(sighs)
I'm sorry. I should've been more honest with you.

EMILY
So what do we do now?

ALEX
I don't know. Look, I'll call you, meet up with you again soon. Try and make up for this. Okay?

EMILY
Alright.

Alex finishes the call and hangs up as the voiceover speaks.

ALEX (V.O.)
I ended up making up for it in a different way to what I had planned...

100 INT. EMILY'S ROOM - NIGHT

100

Alex and Emily are at it again, getting friendly on top of the bed. Alex stops what he's doing and leans back a little. Emily looks back up at him.

EMILY
What's wrong?

ALEX
I can't do this. It's all still too complicated.

EMILY
Dump her, then.

ALEX
(laughs)
I wish it was that simple.

EMILY
So what are we going to do then?

ALEX
I think I'd better leave. It's not that I don't want to stay, but I can't do this to you. Or her. It's not fair.

Emily looks sad as Alex gets up and pulls on his coat.

100 CONTINUED:

EMILY

Let me know if you ever get things sorted, okay?

ALEX

You bet. Bye.

He leaves. FADE TO BLACK.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

And I never saw her again.

101 INT. COMIC SHOP - BALCONY FLOOR - DAY

101

As before.

ALEX

I spoke to her a couple more times, she called me one day to say she'd found out she was pregnant, and after a brief moment of panic I managed to realise it couldn't possibly have been me. Unless my sperm were really fast swimmers. We left things on good terms, she was a bit frazzled after the abortion that she went for, but not long after that I lost her number. I don't know whether I lost it or Gemma erased it off my phone, because Gemma had kind of found out about this..

102 INT. ALEX'S ROOM AT UNI - NIGHT

102

CAPTION - AUTUMN 1999

Alex is in bed, asleep, when he hears banging and crashing noises from downstairs.

He wakes up and sits up in bed, yawning. His housemate, SOPHIE, can be heard talking downstairs.

ALEX (V.O.)

Now, I lived with this nice Welsh chap called Griff, and this borderline schizophrenic control freak called Sophie, who on that particular night was in a sufficiently bad enough mood with me to play a pretty dirty trick on me.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED:

102

Alex hears Sophie on the phone and listens in.

SOPHIE (O.S.)

Hello, is that Gemma? Sorry to call you so late, but I think there's something you ought to know. Alex went out on a date with another girl, and he ended up -

Alex is already out of bed and running down the stairs.

103 INT. ALEX'S HOUSE AT UNI - STAIRS - NIGHT

103

Alex wrenches the receiver from Sophie's hands. Sophie is a stocky girl with a resemblance to Sophie Dahl.

ALEX

What the fuck do you think you're doing?

SOPHIE

I want you to tell her the truth!

ALEX

What?

SOPHIE

About you and Emily!

104 INT. COMIC SHOP - BALCONY - DAY

104

As before.

ALEX

I'd stupidly told Sophie and Griff about what had happened a few weeks ago. Big mistake.

105 INT. ALEX'S HOUSE AT UNI - STAIRS - NIGHT

105

Back to the Alex/Sophie standoff.

ALEX

Sophie, let me talk to her.

SOPHIE

I want to hear you tell her what happened!

ALEX

Sophie! Get lost and let me talk to her!

(CONTINUED)

SOPHIE
Tell her!!

ALEX
SOPHIE!!

Sophie gives up and goes into the front room, muttering. Alex sits down and starts talking to Gemma.

GEMMA
(filtered, through phone)
What's going on? What did she mean?

ALEX
It's nothing, it's nothing. She's drunk and angry.

GEMMA
What's she talking about? Who's Emily?

Alex sighs.

As before.

ALEX
So I told her what had happened. Except I didn't. I edited out the part where we slept together, and made out that Emily had come on to me and I hadn't done anything about it.
(puts his head in his hands)
My god, I am such a bastard.. I managed to lie my way out of the situation, but Gemma never liked the idea of me staying in touch with Emily. Whether she deleted her number from my phone I don't know, but either way it was all over. Not long after that, so were me and Gemma. I'm not entirely sure exactly when or how it happened, but all I know is that I told Gemma it was over, went out with my mate Rob to get wasted, and after a few weeks gave in and said I'd get back with her.
(sighs)
Then she dumped me. Did I ever fall for that one...

Dave calls up for Alex from the ground floor.

DAVE

Alex! You up there?

ALEX

Yep!

DAVE

Gemma's here, she wants to say hello.

ALEX

Right.

Alex gets up and heads down the stairs. Gemma is there with STUART, her new boyfriend.

She looks good - her hair is cut a little spikier and flicked out to the sides, she looks slimmer and she's dressed in trendy skater/goth clothes.

Stuart is a tall, slim guy with pale skin and long, dark hair. Gemma waves at Alex as she sees him.

GEMMA

Hi! We were just swinging by to pick up some Emily Strange stuff for my housemate's birthday and thought we'd say hello.

ALEX

Groovy. Hi, Stu.

STUART

Mmm.

ALEX (V.O.)

He'd never really spoken to me much since he'd started seeing her. He was funny about his current partner's exes like that.

GEMMA

We're all going to be heading out to Edwards on Friday, you coming along?

ALEX

Yeah, may do.

GEMMA

I, uh, heard about you and Kirsten. Sorry to hear that, she seemed nice.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
Yeah, she did. That's the way it is.

GEMMA
Well, we'd best be getting back to uni, but I'll maybe see you at the weekend?

ALEX
I'll give you a shout if I'm out.

GEMMA
Okay. Bye!

Alex watches her go then heads back upstairs. The camera is following him up and he talks over his shoulder to it.

ALEX
Gemma got together with Stuart about the same time I got with Amber, more on that later. He's good for her, he's good at arguing and they've seemed very much in love since then. Best of luck to her. We agreed that we weren't right for each other eventually, and so I hold no bad feelings towards her whatsoever. I'm a little jealous that she's gone from me straight into a new relationship that's worked out, while I've gone from disaster to disaster, but that's life. Or rather, that's my life. Anyway, back to the story.

CAPTION - XMAS 2000

A night out with Gemma and her friends, including SHIRI among the others. Alex is sat next to Gemma, seeming happy with everything as he jokes around.

ALEX (V.O.)
Gemma and I actually kind of stayed together for another six months, though, stretching things out to a running time of almost three years. What we found was that we'd alienated ourselves so much from our respective friends that we only really had each other for company.
(MORE)

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 And so things went on pretty much as they had done. Gemma had university while we were still together, but by the time she hit the second year than we were no longer an item. We still spent a lot of time together, though, which led to me getting a shot at someone I'd liked for a while..

The camera closes up on Shiri, a Daria-lookalike with glasses and long black hair. Freeze frame for caption.

CAPTION - SHIRI

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Shiri was one of Gemma's schoolfriends, and I have to admit I'd always kind of liked her. I got a lot more friendly with her after me and Gemma split up, much to Gemma's anger because she damn sure didn't want me hooking up with any of her friends. Even though those 'friends' had been telling me I should dump her for months... Anyway, at a New Year's party at Shiri's house, things took a turn for the better.

Alex is following Shiri up the stairs of her large, 3 bedroom detached house as a New Year's party rages on below them - music, laughter, drinking etc.

Shiri goes into the bathroom and starts handing out blankets and sleeping bags to Alex.

ALEX (V.O.)
 She was a bit down already, Because her ex was giving her a lot of hassle too. He was still bugging her a lot, so we had something in common at least.

SHIRI
 That ought to be enough.
 (sits down on the edge of the bathtub)
 Whew. Long night.

ALEX
(sits next to her)
Ah, it's not been so bad. You
holding up ok?

SHIRI
(nods)
Not too bad.

ALEX
That guy still giving you a fair
bit of grief, then.

SHIRI
Yeah. He doesn't seem to get the
message.

ALEX
(puts an arm round here)
For once, I know exactly what you
mean, hun.

Shiri smiles and looks round at Alex. He grins back, and in a moment they're kissing. They wrap their arms round each other as the camera pulls to the side and looks out of the window, where we can see the headlights of a car approaching.

Alex is locking up the shutters to the front door of the shop. We follow him as he starts to walk back towards where his car is parked.

ALEX
Gemma arrived literally moments
later to break up the party and
take me back to hers, but the seeds
had been sown for what turned out
to be one great big fuck up. Things
I have learned by this point in the
journey are - don't cheat. Be
honest. Always tell your partner
when something is wrong. And try
not to go for one of her best
friends not long after you break
up.

(beat)
Makes sense when you think about
it. I have also learned that
despite my best intentions, I have
already done a lot of things that I
am not very proud of.

(beat)
And there's plenty more to come.

110 EXT. BARR BEACON - DAY 110

CAPTION - WINTER 2001

Alex and Shiri are chasing each other round in the snow-covered fields, round an old bandstand, dressed up to guard against the cold as they giggle and throw snowballs at one another.

ALEX (V.O.)

It couldn't have been more romantic if I'd tried. Arseing around in the snow, retiring back to her house for hot chocolate and marshmallows, and best of all Gemma knew nothing about it all.

111 INT. SHIRI'S HOUSE - FRONT ROOM - NIGHT 111

Alex and Shiri are sat on her big squashy leather sofa, watching videos from the selection of cases in front of the TV. A roaring open fire keeps the room toasty.

ALEX (V.O.)

Nothing physical happened apart from that first kiss, and things had been on and off for most of the year to that point, but I didn't mind. I felt sure that this was a slow burner, that we were going to end up in a good relationship that I'd taken my time with, and that would thus hopefully avoid the pitfalls of me and Gemma.

(beat)

And I was very, very wrong.

112 INT. WARWICK UNI STUDENT DINING HALL - NIGHT 112

A beer festival is in full swing, with students milling around the rows of tables sporting kegs and bottles of a variety of different ales and beers, wandering around with glasses of the drinks in their hands and gradually getting more wasted.

Shiri and Alex sit on a sofa in one of the common room areas, watching drunk people play pool badly as they sip at their drinks and talk.

ALEX (V.O.)

There were lots of things that made me think I was in with a shot.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED:

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
Apart from the cosy fireside hours
in her company, and the fact that
her parents seemed to like me,
there was the weekend where she
smuggled me up to her university to
hit a beer festival with her...

113 INT. SHIRI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

113

Shiri is getting ready to go out, with Alex helping her pick
an outfit from the selection of half hippy, half gothed-up
clothes that she favours.

ALEX (V.O.)
... and all the times we went out
together. She seemed to genuinely
like my company, which is why when
I received a phone call at work one
day, things went ugly very fast.

114 INT. COMIC SHOP - DAY

114

CAPTION - EARLY 2002

Alex is playing a tabletop wargame on top of the counter
against Chris when his mobile phone rings. He answers it.

ALEX
Yello?

GEMMA
(filtered, through phone)
Hi Alex, it's Gemma.

ALEX
Oh, hello. What's up?

GEMMA
There's something you should know
about Shiri.

ALEX
(tenses up)
What is it?

GEMMA
She's already got a boyfriend.
She's been seeing this guy from her
uni called Walter for a few months
now.

(beat)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GEMMA (cont'd)
I'm sorry, Alex, I know this must sound awful coming from me, but I don't want to see you getting hurt by it all.

ALEX
How sure are you about all this?

GEMMA
Very. I met the guy at the weekend.

ALEX
Oh.
(beat)
Thanks.

GEMMA
I'm sorry. She should have told you.

ALEX
Yes, she should. Thanks, Gemma.
Bye.

Alex hangs up his phone.

CHRIS
What's the matter then?

ALEX
(dark look)
I just received some very unsettling news.

CHRIS
Oh no! Don't say they've commissioned a new series of 'Spooks'!

ALEX
Worse than that, my friend. I'm just gonna go use the phone upstairs, be right back.

CHRIS
Okay.

Chris waits until Alex is halfway up the stairs before quickly shuffling round the pieces on the game board to his advantage. He settles back in his seat with a satisfied grin. A fanboy comes up to the counter.

FANBOY
Excuse me, do you have the latest copy of -

114 CONTINUED: (2)

114

CHRIS

No.

The fanboy sheepishly turns and walks away. Even though he doesn't actually work here, Chris cackles with the temporary power he has.

115 INT. COMIC SHOP - BALCONY - DAY

115

Alex gets the phone down from the wall and dials up Shiri's number.

ALEX

Hello, is that Shiri?

SHIRI

(filtered, through phone)
yes, hello Alex.

ALEX

Oh, hi. Just wondering if you
fancied doing something tonight.

SHIRI

Er... I don't think I can, I think
I'm busy with uni stuff.

ALEX

Okay, fair enough, just asking.
(beat)
How's Walter?

SHIRI

(long pause)
He's fine.

ALEX

Good, glad to hear it. Well, I
guess I'll see you around then.

SHIRI

Alex...
(beat)
We're still friends, aren't we?

ALEX (V.O.)

(makes alarm buzzer noise)
Wrong answer!

ALEX (cont'd)

We'll have to see. Goodbye, Shiri.

Alex puts the phone down and runs his hands through his hair to try and calm himself down. He gets up and heads back downstairs.

116 INT. COMIC SHOP - DAY 116

Alex walks past Chris, reaches under the counter and grabs his coat.

ALEX
I just need to pop out for a second. Won't be long.

CHRIS
Righto.

ALEX
And Chris?

CHRIS
Yes?

ALEX
Put the Space Marines back where they were by the time I get back, you little gimp.

CHRIS
Will do.

Alex leaves the shop.

117 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT 117

CAPTION - BACK IN THE PRESENT

Alex comes in after another day at work. The cats run round his feet, meowing happily as he takes his coat off.

118 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - KITCHEN - NIGHT 118

He talks to the camera as he feeds the cats.

ALEX
So that was that for Shiri. Seems she'd spent all that time with me just for the hell of it, while she kept things on simmer with this other guy. I met him a few months later, tall guy, kind of weedy looking. I'm sure they're very happy together, if indeed they are still together. I haven't spoken to Shiri much since then, apart from when people started to accuse me of having made the whole thing up.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

ALEX (cont'd)
Thankfully, I was able to convince a few people of what really happened between us, so I can safely leave it at that. Me and her, well, we've spoken about it all, I apologised for the nasty things I did say and told her I had nothing to do with the other stuff flying around, and we left it at that.

Alex pets the cats as they eat and grins.

ALEX (cont'd)
So what did I learn from that? I learnt that you can never be fully sure of someone's motives. And a sure thing is never a sure thing until it actually happens. And after Shiri, there was Amber. I first met Amber in the middle of 2000, and it wasn't until over a year later that anything happened between us. Let's rewind to that hazy summer of anticipation first.

119 INT. EDWARDS NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

119

CAPTION - SUMMER 2000

A typical goth nightclub - black walls, main dancefloor filled with swaying goths to the music the large speakers at the back of the room are pounding out.

ALEX (V.O.)
Edwards No. 8 nightclub in Birmingham has been home to many things in the past, but for me it's a the place where lots of memories now stay. I met a lot of people through this place that I would never have found otherwise, both good and bad. It's also the only place in the country where you can play the world famous 'Alex's Exes Sweepstake' competition. Anywhere between zero and four...

(beat)

Zero and five of my ex-girlfriends can be in the building at any one time. When I go there, my friends and I pick a number each, and the person who gets the appropriate number gets free drinks off the others for the night.

(CONTINUED)

Alex walks into the club, dressed in black combat trousers, a black Rob Zombie t-shirt and a dark grey short sleeved shirt, with the customary big chunky boots. He looks around a bit before spotting his friend LOLA, who waves him over.

Lola is a little shorter than Alex, slim and very attractive, with black hair in bunches with purple streaks, wearing a skintight and revealing PVC corset and skirt combo. She sips from a drink through a black straw, already standing next to the rest of her posse - TONY, GREG and VIJAY.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

I met Lola and the rest of my friends there after Rob and I started going there a lot. All our old school friends were away at university and not coming back, so we needed a new posse to hang around with. Rob made his friends and I met Lola, and we've been mates to this day.

LOLA

'Ello.

ALEX

Evening Lola, boys.

TONY

Alright, mate.

ALEX

Much on tonight?

LOLA

Naah, just another Friday night at Edwards.

GREG

(slurred)

Yeah, same as always.

ALEX (V.O.)

Greg may as well have been called 'Jay' for the amount of herbal remedies the guy used - he'd got the classic stoner slur when he spoke.

ALEX (cont'd)

(spots someone)

Hang on, be right back.

LOLA

K.

Alex leaves the four of them standing by the bar and ventures onto the dancefloor, weaving in and out of the flailing arms and bodies on there till he locates AMBER.

ALEX (V.O.)

And there she was, my vision of gothic beauty. Well, after Lola, anyway.

Amber is dancing away, dressed in a cleavage-revealing black corset, long spiky black skirt, stripey tights and spike-heeled boots. She has long, jet black hair and is of an average height and build. Freeze frame for the caption.

CAPTION - AMBER.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

I know not many people liked her, and even fewer do these days, but back in those sunny days I thought she was just great. Looking back, I guess the rose-tinted glasses were firmly in place to a lot of things about her, but I have to admit she was pretty good looking.

Resume action as Amber notices Alex, waves and gives him a quick hug as he walks over. He shouts something in her ear then mimes drinking, she nods and indicates 'two' with her fingers. Alex nods and heads back over to the bar.

LOLA

I don't know why you spend so much time talking to her, you know, she's not a nice person.

ALEX

I know not many people like her, but I get on with her just fine.

LOLA

You want to be careful.

TONY

Yeah, remember the bondage tape incident?

ALEX

The what?

Alex is in his front room, getting ready to go out for the night. He pulls on his trainers as he speaks.

120 CONTINUED:

ALEX
Boy, was that ever a weird story.
It seems that Amber had once...
(beat)
Actually, no, I'll save that one
till later.

121 INT. EDWARDS NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT 121

Alex and Amber are sat down at one of the tables near the entrance, chattering away excitedly to each other. They seem very relaxed together, there's an obvious vibe between them.

ALEX (V.O.)
I have a weakness for goth babes.
It's been very well documented, and
has brought me a fair amount of
happiness and an unfortunately
larger amount of unhappiness over
the years, but when it comes down
to it, I'm a sucker for a good
looking girl in black. At this
point in time, Amber had recently
split up with Stu. Yes, the same
Stuart that Gemma is now seeing. If
that isn't proof of the circular
nature of life then I don't know
what is.

122 EXT. OUTSIDE EDWARDS - NIGHT 122

Alex and Amber walk outside into the cold night air, wrapped up in their big coats. Alex is carrying a boxful of CDs, and is followed out of the steps that lead from the inside of the club out onto the street by SAM, also carrying a box.

ALEX (V.O.)
That particular night ended up
being the first time me and Amber
hooked up. I'd admired her from
afar for a while, but after I went
back to the house she shared with
her friends Sam and Rachel
following a night out, things took
a brief but memorable upward turn.

123 INT. THE WIGWAM - NIGHT 123

Alex, Amber, Sam and Rachel sit around in their house's front room, known as 'The Wigwam' for reasons nobody really knows. They sip mugs of coffee as they absently watch the TV, Amber and Alex still talking away to each other as they share the sofa.

(CONTINUED)

The room's décor could use some work - peeling paint, chipped plaster and large, messy piles of books, clothes, videos and furniture litter the place liberally.

ALEX (V.O.)

I found myself at the house till something like 4 o'clock in the morning, and I have to say I didn't notice the time pass by one bit.

Alex and Amber walk up the stairs together, Amber pausing by the entrance to her room.

ALEX (V.O.)

It was just after 5am when I made my move.

ALEX (cont'd)

So, uh, thanks for a good night out.

AMBER

Good night and morning, you mean..

Their eyes lock for a moment, then Alex leans in and kisses her. They step up onto the landing floor and kiss some more. Amber giggles.

AMBER (cont'd)

You need to go to bed.

ALEX

(nods head towards her room)

We've got a bed.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

I make every apology for that line.

AMBER

(kisses him again)

And you've got a girlfriend.

ALEX (V.O.)

Shit. She had a point, although this was in the middle of, you guessed it, another 'break' period between me and Gemma. This one was my idea, though, because I had as good as asked her for a weekend off to go after Amber...

(MORE)

124 CONTINUED:

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
Like that old Aerosmith song goes,
seemed like we were making up more
than we were making love.

ALEX (cont'd)
(reluctantly)
Yeah, yeah I do.

AMBER
(kisses him again)
You'd better go.

ALEX
Yeah. I'll see you in the morning.

AMBER
(smiles)
Okay.

Alex heads back down the stairs. Amber watches him go, then with a smile goes into her room.

ALEX (V.O.)
I'd like to say things improved
from there, but that little
moonlight liaison turned out to be
the high point of this phase of
things.

125 INT. THE WIGWAM - NIGHT

125

Alex is sat on one of the armchairs, walkman on as he stares out towards the front windows. Four more people are sleeping on the floor in front of him, but Alex is obviously unable to sleep. His coat is wrapped round him like a blanket but he still seems very cold.

ALEX (V.O.)
For months, I came up with
increasingly convoluted excuses to
get back to their house after a
night out, and every time I'd try
to get Amber to myself again. But
it never happened again and I
eventually gave up hope. There was
one last event in this sorry little
tale, however.

126 EXT. OUTSIDE ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

126

Alex locks the front door to his apartment and starts to leave the little complex of flats, heading towards the main road that leads down into the town centre.

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED:

ALEX
The Weekend in Wales.

127 INT. ROTHLEY BURN - MARKETING OFFICE - DAY 127

CAPTION - EARLY AUTUMN 2000

Alex, dressed smartly in shirt and tie, is sat behind a desk in a large open-plan office, typing away into a computer. His phone beeps, and he reads the message on it.

ALEX (V.O.)
I was working at my dad's place, office work to get me started on my post-university hunt for work and a way to slot into the 9 to 5 grind of daily existence. I hated it for several reasons, but the text I received that day brought me much better news. Amber was off to her family's place in Wales at the weekend, and would I like to come along? Now, I was obviously overjoyed at this.

128 EXT. WALSALL - STREET - NIGHT 128

Alex is walking along on his way in to the town centre.

ALEX
I mean, why wouldn't I be? I was being asked to spend a weekend away with this girl who I was still, for my sins, absolutely nuts about, despite everyone I knew telling me she was bad news. I packed my bags and met her at the train station that Friday night, still holding out that she saw me as more than just another non-threatening male friend, and instead as a potential lover.
(beat)
And was I ever wrong about that one.

129 INT. TRAIN - NIGHT 129

Alex and Amber sit opposite each other, talking as the train speeds along through the darkening skies and countryside on the way out to Wales.

(CONTINUED)

AMBER
Word association then. You ready?

ALEX
Yup.

AMBER
Trains?

ALEX
Noisy. Goths?

AMBER
Funny. Love?

ALEX
(chuckles)
Overrated.

130 EXT. WELSH TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

130

Amber and Alex walk step off the small local platform, complete with long, unpronounceable place name on a sign behind them, and head for the lights of a caravan park at the seashore a few minutes walk away.

ALEX (V.O.)
Basically, Amber invited me along to spend a weekend down in Wales with her, her mother and a few other members of her family, staying in the caravan they owned and generally just chilling out. Looking back on it, I can see that I was still so desperate to spend time with her that I said yes without thinking that she may not actually have been all that interested in me at all. It was a pleasant enough weekend though.

131 EXT. CARAVAN PARK - WALES - MORNING

131

Alex steps out of the caravan, sunglasses on as he looks out over the great view of the beach and sea, nearby islands just visible through the mist.

Amber steps out of the caravan behind him, a shortsleeved black vest top on. She's just washed her hair and shakes it free in the breeze.

SLOW MOTION - Amber shakes her hair loose in glorious foxy lady slow motion.

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED:

131

ALEX (V.O.)

I was on holiday in the fresh air
and sea breeze, with a hot girl for
company and not a care in the
world.

132 EXT. WALSALL - STREET - NIGHT

132

Alex turns a corner and down onto the street that holds most of the pubs in the town centre, his destination being the Varsity on the corner.

Crowds of laughing Ben Sherman lads and tottering girls heckle each other from the queues to get into the trendier nightspots, but Alex ignores them and the disapproving looks he gets from the bouncers as he walks along.

ALEX

The more things change, the more
they stay the same, I guess. We
went shopping, hunted out shells on
the beach, went to a record fair
where I picked up a copy of one of
my favourite films...

133 INT. INDOOR RECORD FAIR - DAY

133

Alex picks up a video from the table in front of him and holds it up to the camera.

ALEX

'The Princess Bride'!

134 EXT. WALSALL - STREET - NIGHT

134

As before.

ALEX

And all the while I was hoping that
at the end of it all I'd get my pot
of gold, the prize at the finish
line. Her.

135 INT. CARAVAN - NIGHT

135

It's late at night, and Amber is asleep, tucked up in a sleeping bag on the sofa of the caravan's main area. Alex is sat up next to her, also in a sleeping bag but looking down on Amber with a forlorn, lovesick look on his face.

(CONTINUED)

135 CONTINUED:

ALEX (V.O.)

But there was nothing. She even told me about how she was getting very close to her best friend Coop, and how things had happened between them already. So by the end of the holiday, I felt like I'd just spent a few days locked in my own personal, privately tailored Hell.

136 INT. THE VARSITY - WALSALL - NIGHT

136

Alex wanders into the crowded pub and fights his way through the milling people to locate his friends at a table in one corner. He makes his hellos and takes a seat. Ian heads for the bar as Alex carries on talking to us.

ALEX

When I got back I was in a pretty down mood for a while, and I had to gradually stop seeing her to get her out of my system. It worked, and I managed to forget all about her by the end of the year. Just in time to get mixed up in Shiri, but you know that bit already. We'll have to hop forward a bit now to early 2002. I'd e-mailed towards the end of the previous year and we were back in touch, and by this time Gemma was just getting together with Stuart. Never having been in the situation of seeing an ex out with their new partner before, I was a bit weirded out by it all, so Amber had been on the phone to me to try and keep me in one piece.

Chris plonks a beer down in front of Alex, which he drinks.

137 INT. EDWARDS NIGHTCLUB - ENTRANCE TO TOP FLOOR - NIGHT

137

CAPTION - MARCH 2002

Alex stands outside the two doors that lead into the main upstairs room, talking to Amber on his phone.

ALEX

(to phone)

They'll be here soon then. Gemma and Stuart, making their public debut. Can't wait.

(CONTINUED)

AMBER

(filtered, through phone)
You'll be alright. They probably
won't say much to you or anyone
else - if I know Stuart, and
believe me I do, they'll just sit
in a corner and snog each other all
evening.

ALEX

Oh joy.
(sighs)
Why do I feel so weird about this?
It's not like I haven't moved on
since me and her broke up, and it's
not like it hasn't been ages since
that happened either.

AMBER

That's the way it is. It's always a
bit strange at first but you'll be
alright, it soon goes.

ALEX

Hope so. I'll call you in a bit,
alright?

AMBER

Okay.

Alex hangs up and walks into the main room.

Alex is standing at the bar, sipping a drink as Gemma and
Stuart walk in. She looks good, her hair dyed pillarbox red,
and Stuart has the same toothy grin as always on his face.

ALEX (V.O.)

There's this unwritten rule that
states that the first time you see
your ex after you break up, you
have to look absolutely fabulous.
You can't show any sign of
weakness, or despair, or sadness,
you have to show that you're doing
just fine without them, thank you
very much, and that life has gone
on without them. On this occasion,
Gemma managed that with flying
colours, while I was still lost in
the wilderness.

Gemma and Stuart nod to Alex at the bar as they get their drinks, then they head over to the tables where we saw Amber and Alex talk earlier.

They sit down and start kissing, and as Alex turns back to the camera with a raised eyebrow and talks, we can see them kissing non-stop in the background throughout.

ALEX (cont'd)

I hate it when people are right. Sure enough, all they did was sit and make detailed maps of one another's throats, leaving me with a new and unpleasant feeling in the pit of my stomach. I decided to bite the bullet and head out to see Amber.

Alex kicks open the doors to the club as he pulls his coat on with one hand, the other holding his phone to his ear as he calls Amber.

ALEX

Hey, it's me. Yes, it was weird and I have now left the building.

AMBER

(filtered, through phone)
Aw, I'm sorry. Do you want to come round?

ALEX

Yeah, okay. Give me some directions and I'll be there as soon as.

Alex carries on talking as he walks down the street towards the multi-storey car park over the road.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

I still liked Amber at this point but had long since given up any hope with her. Although there was one small spark of possibility rattling round the back of my mind, courtesy of the blessing and curse that is known as Yourdiary.com.

Alex sits at his desk with his PC on in front of him, displaying the front page of the Yourdiary website.

ALEX

Yourdiary is a website that offers people an online diary, updateable whenever you like and also very user friendly and customisable. That 'spark' I was talking about earlier came through a comment Amber had left on hers earlier that week.

Alex taps a few keys and brings up a journal post, with user pictures and comments in little boxes underneath it.

ALEX (cont'd)

She'd said that she knew someone that had feelings for her, or at least used to, and now she thought she was starting to get feelings for them too, and she wondered what to do about it. I told her to go for it, not thinking for a moment...

(beat)

Well, for no longer than a couple of moments, that it could be me.

141 INT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT

141

Alex is driving to Amber's, phone in one hand as he navigates out to her place.

ALEX

Which is why the events of the rest of that evening caught me by surprise.

(to phone)

So, just this next turn and then I'm there, right?

AMBER

(filtered through phone)

Yup! I'll come outside and look out for you.

Alex turns the car and then parks up.

142 EXT. AMBER'S STREET - NIGHT

142

As he steps out of the car, we see he is on a sidestreet leading up to a pub tucked away behind a few rows of houses. Amber walks down towards him, silouhettted from behind by security lights outside the houses.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (V.O.)

She looked a lot different to the last time I'd seen her, but she was still the same girl despite it all.

Amber walks into view. She does indeed look different - gone is the long, straight black hair, replaced by an explosion of multi-coloured dreadlocks, she's also put on a bit of weight and is dressed in baggy skater wear instead of the goth chic of the past. Alex smiles as she hugs him.

ALEX (cont'd)

Hello, stranger.

AMBER

Hey, you. Glad you could make it, my dad's place isn't easy to find.

ALEX

Ah, no worries. Shall we go in? It's kind of cold out here.

AMBER

Yeah, follow me.

They head inside.

Alex sits on an armchair and Amber on the sofa as they talk. The house is a two-floor detached place, the rooms are small but cosily furnished with plenty of wood panels and plants to give it a homely atmosphere. Cable TV plays in the background but Alex is only half watching it.

ALEX (V.O.)

I told her about how strange it felt to see Gemma with another guy for the first time. When someone's been such a big part of your life for so long, it's always a little unusual to see them with someone else. You know that they're not your property anymore, but at the same time you get this weird chemical reaction in your brain that goes 'Hey! She's cheating on you!'

(beat)

And yes, I know how ironic that is coming from me, seeing as how I hadn't exactly been Mr. Faithful to Gemma. In a way, I'd made my own bed and now I was having to sleep in it.

(MORE)

143 CONTINUED:

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
We had a good chat about it all,
Amber was actually a handy person
to talk to because of how long
she'd been with Stuart. She knew
what I was going through at least.

144 EXT. AMBER'S STREET - NIGHT

144

Alex walks over to his car and Amber follows.

ALEX (V.O.)
I made my exit a few hours later.
And that's when it happened.

ALEX (cont'd)
Thanks for talking, I needed to get
those things off my chest.

AMBER
Any time, just call me when you
need me.

Amber leans in for a hug, then looks up at Alex. It's that
moment again. They kiss. Alex starts to laugh and Amber
smiles, looking coyly down at the floor.

AMBER (cont'd)
You knew I was talking about you in
my journal. You knew.

ALEX
I honestly had no idea! I'm very
flattered though. Nice to know you
thought of me after all this time!

AMBER
Don't ask me, I just woke up one
morning and realised it.

ALEX
Wow.
(beat)
And wow again. Look, I hate to
break this up, but it's gone 4am
and I really should be getting
home. But, ah, do you want to meet
up tomorrow night?

AMBER
Okay, yeah. I'd like that.

ALEX
Groovy.

144 CONTINUED:

144

They kiss a little more before Alex gets into his car and backs off the road up to Amber's, a Cheshire cat grin on his face.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

Well, that was a turn up for the books! I met her the next evening as arranged, we had a good night out at the now sadly deceased rock club, XL's.

145 INT. XL'S NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

145

A packed main room, with a heaving mosh pit in the middle and people stood all around the outside of it. Loud music plays as Alex and Amber dance, her dreads making a good space for the two of them as she flails them around.

ALEX (V.O.)

Before too long, I invited her round to mine. My parents were away so I had the place to myself. I cooked her a meal and we settled down to watch the same kind of romantic movie I always seem to end up with on a first date.

MONTAGE - A series of clips from Oliver Stone's 'Natural Born Killers.'

146 INT. ALEX'S PARENTS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

146

Alex and Amber are cuddled up on his sofa, watching the movie. It comes to an end, and he turns to her.

ALEX

You ready for bed?

AMBER

(nods)

Yeah.

He smiles, kisses her and then they get up and head upstairs, Alex locking up and turning all the lights out as they go.

ALEX (V.O.)

And yes, we did the dirty that very night. Quite soon, I know, but I always seem to end up that way. That's probably a bad thing.

147 INT. THE VARSITY - WALSALL - NIGHT 147

Alex is standing at the bar, jostling for attention with the heckling trendy lads yelling at the bar staff.

ALEX

I did find out something odd about her that night, though.

(beat)

And I'm not quite sure how to describe it.

He gets served, and his drink is placed before him. He looks up at the camera, opens his mouth to speak and then decides to knock back some of the drink first. He finishes, and takes a deep breath.

ALEX (cont'd)

Amber had a thing about body hair. The 'thing' being that she didn't have any. No armpits, no eyebrows, and no... well... you know.

Alex nods downwards. One of the guys at the bar looks at Alex with a surprised expression.

ALEX (cont'd)

(to guy)

Yeah, I know.

(back to camera)

But that wasn't so weird. Things were okay for a few weeks.

148 INT. AMBER'S DAD'S PLACE - LIVING ROOM - DAY 148

Alex sits on the floor, Amber on the sofa behind, her legs draped over his shoulders. He's playing on the Nintendo 64 which is hooked up to the large TV opposite them, playing 'Legend Of Zelda - A Link To The Past.'

ALEX (V.O.)

We even played Nintendo together, which is a reference that only the five people who saw 'Hudson Hawk' will get..

149 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT 149

Alex is slumped on his sofa, cat asleep on his lap as some sombre music plays in the background. His coat and shoes have been thrown off and lie nearby. He looks thoroughly miserable.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

And three weeks in, I made the one
mistake that killed it all.

150 INT. AMBER'S ROOM - MORNING

150

Alex is up and dressed and about to leave, Amber is still in
her nightshirt in the bed.

ALEX

So, I'll catch up with you later,
alright?

AMBER

(yawns)
Yeah, okay. See you later.

ALEX

(kisses her on top of the
head)
Love ya.

AMBER

(long pause)
Love you too.

Alex grins and leaves. Amber stays in the bed, looking
surprised and then quite worried.

ALEX (V.O.)

(shouting)
No, no, no!! Fuck, that was stupid.
I mean, I know in a way I meant it,
but after just three weeks? Stupid,
stupid!

151 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

151

As before.

ALEX

I had no idea of the consequences
of that. I've been making that
mistake for a while. I've never
liked the fact that the English
language has only one word to cover
such a wide-ranging emotion, one
word that has to stand in for so
many degrees of feeling, and on
this occasion I managed to get it
all completely wrong.

(beat; scratches cat
behind the ears)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED:

151

ALEX (cont'd)

I meant it in a kind of 'I need a stronger word than just 'like' kind of way, and she thought I meant it in a 'love, honour and obey' kind of way.

(sighs)

So from that point on, the downward spiral had begun.

152 INT. COMIC SHOP - DAY

152

Alex is serving a customer when his phone rings. He answers it.

ALEX (V.O.)

First she just kept cancelling dates on me. And then when I did get to see her, the atmosphere would be different. It was as though some vampire Cupid had sucked away all the emotion from our relationship, and I was left scrabbling for pieces.

153 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

153

As before. Alex looks extremely bummed out now.

ALEX

Sometimes it'd be a bit better, and then it'd slip away again. One day I realised we hadn't had sex for a month and I started to freak out. I texted her a few times an hour, I needed constant updates and reassurance that she was still there, that she wasn't breaking up with me. The day I met her after a heavy night out with her friend, the oddly-named Sushi, I knew it was all over.

154 EXT. BIRMINGHAM - OUTSIDE TOYS 'R' US - DAY

154

CAPTION - MAY 2002

Amber is standing outside the brightly-painted shop doors, looking pretty spun out. Her dreadlocks are all green now, and as Alex's Honda pulls into frame she looks less than thrilled to see him. Alex winds the window down and calls over to her.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Hey there. Ready to go?

Amber nods and walks over to the car, getting in without a word. She just nods or shakes her head to answer his questions.

ALEX (cont'd)

How you doing? Still pretty tired?
Well, I'll get you back home in a
sec. Are you hungry at all? I've
eaten but I can stop off if you
like. No?

(beat)

Sushi okay? Did you have a good
night at least?

AMBER

Alex, I'm just tired. I'm gonna
sleep if that's alright.

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, sure.

Alex shuts up and drives on.

ALEX (V.O.)

She'd been away at the Glastonbury
festival and I hadn't seen her for
almost a fortnight, and since she'd
got back it had been getting
progressively worse. As I drove her
home, not a word passed between us,
and I could hear the doomsday clock
ticking down the moments we had
left together inside my head.

Amber sits slumped on the sofa, Alex is next to her.

ALEX

(off TV)

Oh, this is a good one,

AMBER

Mmm.

ALEX

You want a drink or anything?

AMBER

Uh-uh.

155 CONTINUED:

ALEX
(beat)
Still tired?

AMBER
Mmm.

ALEX
(long pause)
Amber, are you okay?

AMBER
Look, Alex, I just want to be on my
own, okay?

ALEX
(hurt)
Right. Right then. I'll be off.

Alex gets up, grabs his coat and leaves the tense atmosphere behind.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
That was Saturday. On Monday...

156 INT. COMIC SHOP - OFFICE SUITE - DAY

156

Alex is sat at the desk, sorting through a huge pile of invoices and ticking them off in an order book as he goes.

The PC beeps to tell him a new e-mail has arrived, and Alex taps a key to bring it up. We look over his shoulder as he reads.

AMBER (V.O.)
(from the e-mail)
Alex, I'm sorry for the way I've
been the past month and I'm sorry I
haven't talked to you about it, but
I just can't.

ALEX
(to camera)
That's never a good start.

AMBER (V.O.)
I've got so much going on at the
moment, with college, my family,
desperately trying to get my life
back on track and right now,
nothing is working out.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AMBER (V.O.) (cont'd)

I just don't seem to have the time to sit down and get my head straight and if things carry on the way they are now, I can see myself ending up back in hospital.

ALEX

That was one of those 'cry for help' teenage suicide attempts from a few years back.

AMBER (V.O.)

The situation between you and me isn't helping either. I just haven't got the time to see you as often as you want to see me. I'm not in the position to have a relationship. I need to sort my head out and I don't need passengers. I spent nine months devoting my life to one man and nothing else and it ruined my entire existence. I'm still not over Coop. I hate him, but he's still in my head. I don't want to hurt you because I really care about you and I love your company, but I don't feel the same way as you do about me.

ALEX

(obviously upset)

In other words, that day I decided to tell her I loved her was the beginning of the end.

AMBER (V.O.)

I wish I could have said something sooner but every time I see you, I chicken out because you always seem so happy to see me and I don't want you to be upset. Please understand.

(beat)

Amber.

Alex reads, one hand over his mouth as he tries to take it all in. He finishes reading and sits back in his seat, hands behind his head.

ALEX (V.O.)

Chillingly, Kirsten would echo these words a few years later when we had The Talk.

(beat)

(MORE)

156 CONTINUED: (2)

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
The time had come to say something
dramatic enough to mark the
monumental occasion of getting
dumped... BY A FUCKING E-MAIL!!

ALEX (cont'd)
Shit.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
Well, that's better than nothing, I
guess. I spent the rest of that day
in a complete state of mental
disarray. I didn't know what was
going on - I have vague memories of
replying but I honestly couldn't
tell you what I said. I spent a few
days out of my head at work before
I arranged to meet up with her that
Friday night.

157 EXT. OUTSIDE DI-VISION NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

157

Alex stands with Rob, shivering the cold evening as a light
drizzle of rain falls, waiting in the line to get into the
club. Cybered-up goth types populate the queue - neon
coloured clothes and hair.

ALEX
You know, I'm not so sure this is a
good idea, mate.

ROB
You'll be alright. Just go in there
and talk to her, sort things out.

ALEX
I don't think I'm going to like
what she's got to say.

ROB
(shrugs)
That's the way it goes.

158 INT. DI-VISION NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

158

A hazy, smoky atmosphere that combines with the dim lighting
to create a very indistinct clubbing experience. Alex looks
across to Rob but he's already at the bar, gratefully
chugging a bottle of beer.

Alex sighs and looks round, and spots Amber on the other side
of the bar. She's cybered up too - pink dreads and a black
and pink Cyberdog all-in-one outfit. He moves round the bar
to see her. She smiles as he approaches.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

(to the camera as he
approaches Amber)

This was it. Ladies and gentlemen,
we are at Def Con One, brace all
systems for impact, parachute at
the ready.

AMBER

Hi.

ALEX

Hey there. I made it in at last,
then.

AMBER

Yeah, yeah you did. You getting a
drink?

ALEX

I think Rob's getting them in for
me. And the rest of the bar, it
would seem.

AMBER

Phil and I are Djing in a bit, you
want to come see what CDs we've
got?

ALEX

Yeah, okay.

Alex follows her as she heads for the DJ booth.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

Hang on just a cotton-picking
minute, what's going on? Surely we
broke up a few days ago? Or did we?
Did she mean it? Were we back to
just being friends? Was this night
how it was going to be from now on?

They arrive at the DJ booth, separated from the rest of the
room by a wall covered with camouflage blankets, and Amber
lifts the partition to step inside. Her small-faced friend
PHIL is manning the decks, a tall, thin lad with narrow eyes
and long hair tied back in a ponytail.

Amber hugs him to say hello and starts flicking through the
boxes of CDs on a table behind him. Phil sets a song off and
takes his headphones off, turning to Alex and shaking his
hand.

PHIL

Hiya, Alex. You alright?

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
 (a little confused)
 Yeah, I'm fine...

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Seeing the way Amber had been acting with me thus far, like nothing at all had happened, I had an epiphany of sorts.

ALEX (cont'd)
 (turns to camera)
 I'd been dumped. And I was now just a friend.
 (beat)
 Shit!

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 The noble thing to do would have been to cut my losses and get the hell out of Dodge as quick as I could, but like a fool I spent the rest of that evening following her around. I managed to get a word with her later on that night.

CAPTION - A few hours later...

Alex and Amber stand to one side of the dancefloor. Amber smokes while Alex talks, having to shout a bit over the music and trying not to get distracted by the glowstick-wielding dancers nearby. Alex has one arm half round her.

ALEX (cont'd)
 So...

AMBER
 (blows out smoke)
 Mm-hmm.

ALEX
 Where do we stand then? I mean, with us? Are we broken up?

AMBER
 (matter-of-factly)
 Yeah.

Alex's hand zaps back like he'd just stuck it into a fire.

ALEX
 Oh.

AMBER
 We're still friends, though.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

What?

AMBER

Still friends. Us.

ALEX

Oh...

(beat)

Oh, right.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

I am Jack's broken heart.

(beat)

So that was that. Our relationship status had been spontaneously downgraded, and now here she was, dictating what the lay of the land was to me, like it was no big deal at all. What about me? What about how I felt about all this? Hadn't she considered even for a moment what I might have to say about all this?

FADE TO BLACK:

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

Of course she hadn't.

MUSIC - Fiona Apple - 'Shadowboxer'

The Honda is screaming along the main road back out of Birmingham as Alex sings along at the top of his voice, wiping the tears from his eyes.

ALEX (V.O.)

I bailed out of the club, got in my car and drove home, singing my favourite sad songs so loud that I half hoped some angels would hear me, take pity on me and just take all the pain away. The tears in my eyes got so bad I could barely see the road at some points, I'm actually quite surprised I made it home in one piece, considering the state I was in.

160 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

160

Alex is wrapped up in his duvet on the sofa, watching the TV absently. Still looking pretty down. Hobbes is sniffing round him.

ALEX

I gradually came to realise that there were two factors that doomed this relationship.

(counts them off on his fingers)

One. I told her I loved her way, way, way, way too soon. I may not have meant it as strongly as she seemed to think I did, but I should have given that more thought. And two...

(he pauses as Hobbes licks at his fingers)

Two. She didn't have the courage to break up with me properly, leading to the fact that she decided that we would be 'friends' afterwards and thus broke what has now become my First Rule of Breaking Up.

161 INT. COMIC SHOP - DAY

161

Alex stands in the middle of the shop floor. Close up on him then swift pull back shot as he screams:

ALEX

Never ask to be friends straight afterwards!!

We pick up Alex again as he walks through the shop, throwing items around on the shelves as he rages at he camera.

ALEX (cont'd)

Of all the stupid, lazy, insensitive things you can ever do to an ex, the most insulting, most degrading and most... just... stupid thing you can ever ask is:

(mock female voice)

'Let's just be friends...'

(back to shouting)

No!! That never ends well. You can't just switch off how they feel about someone one day, just Because the other person said so! These sorts of feelings take time to fully resolve themselves.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

161 CONTINUED:

161

ALEX (cont'd)
 We're talking months, years in
 extreme cases. Not three fucking
 days!!

VOICE (O.S.)
 Excuse me...

ALEX
 What?!?

He spins round to see a small boy, clutching a Spider-Man toy, looking up at him. The boy's lip starts to tremble and he runs away in tears as Alex reaches out a hand to apologise for snapping.

He runs a hand through his hair and looks up to see Liz glaring at him from behind the counter.

162 INT. COMIC SHOP - UPPER BALCONY - DAY

162

Alex sits behind the desk, having been banished to the top floor for his outburst. He glares out of the window for a few moments, sulking, before spinning on his chair to face the camera again.

ALEX
 See, guys like me, and hopefully
 lots of other guys as well, we need
 closure. We need a period of time
 after the end of a relationship to
 allow us to adjust, to allow us to
 gradually reset our body's internal
 workings, and most importantly, to
 give ourselves time to get all the
 poison out.

STOCK FOOTAGE - A snake's head as a handler presses its fangs against the side of a glass, gently squeezing out all of the snake's venom.

163 INT. COMIC SHOP - UPPER BALCONY - DAY

163

Alex raises an eyebrow, hoping that the stock footage has illustrated his point.

ALEX
 I'm positive the door swings both
 ways, that girls need that time too
 if a guy dumps them, but I'm just
 looking at it from my side. See,
 after Shiri, I never really spoke
 to the girl again, so it was simple
 to go cold turkey and flush it all
 away with her.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

163 CONTINUED:

163

ALEX (cont'd)
With Scarlet, I had four months
break before I saw her again.
Although...

164 INT. THE WHARF BAR - NIGHT

164

CAPTION - AUGUST 2003

Alex sits at one of the neat wooden tables in the trendy Wharf Bar, which is full of pretty boy indie guys and their fashion-conscious girlfriends, and then Alex's lot in one corner sticking out like a sore thumb. Alex is sitting by Scarlet, a few other people are just about visible to their right.

ALEX

The first time I saw Scarlet after we broke up was four months later, in reasonably neutral ground out at the Wharf Bar, this trendy indie place just outside town. Unfortunately...

The camera pans across to the right, and we see WILL, CHRIS and TONIC, along with Tonic's girlfriend and two of her friends, all drinking and talking.

ALEX (cont'd)

It was on the same night that my good buddy Tonic was back home from Northampton, and I hadn't seen him for over a year. And he was back for one night only. Not exactly ideal.

165 EXT. LEEDS FESTIVAL - CAMPSITE - DAY

165

Alex sits outside a tent in the campsite field, part of a cluster of four in a little group. Chris and Jessica share one, BILL has one to the left, STACEY has one to the right, and just back from Chris's tent are Kelly and Scarlet. MICHELLE sits next to Alex, they're sharing the tent he's in front of.

ALEX

Neither was the next time I saw her, a few weeks later, when I spent five days camping about six feet way from her at the 2003 Leeds Festival. 'Distance' didn't seem to be in the vocabulary.

166 INT. COMIC SHOP - UPPER BALCONY - DAY

166

As before.

ALEX

So that time of healing was mixed up a bit by the 'Next time I see the ex, I look and feel great' thing not working out. Scarlet seemed at ease with the world and everything else that first time I saw her again, but I managed to get my point across to her when I took her home that night.

167 INT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT

167

CAPTION - AUGUST 2003

Dressed as they were in the Wharf Bar scene, Alex's car pulls into shot as he parks on Scarlet's gran's house's street. He turns the ignition off and turns to her.

ALEX

Well, this evening turned out to be a lot more populated than I was expecting...

SCARLET

Yeah, yeah it did.

ALEX

It's good to see you again. I'm glad we can just talk like this.

SCARLET

(nods)
It's all good.

ALEX

I don't think I'm quite ready to be proper friends with you just yet, though. I know it's been a few months, and we haven't been in touch at all which has helped, but in the past, whenever I've made friends with an ex too soon afterwards it's all gone to shit, and I don't want that to happen again.

SCARLET

I hope it won't.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Me either. So I hope you can appreciate that. It's good that we can be civil with each other, and we'll be fine again in due course.

(beat)

Just not yet.

SCARLET

Okay.

ALEX

Well, this is your stop.

SCARLET

Yeah, it is. Goodnight, Mr Alex, thanks for the lift.

ALEX

No problem.

Scarlet gets out of the car and heads back inside. Alex watches her for a bit then starts the car up and pulls away.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

That's pretty much how I left it. Last time I saw her I was a bit of a shit because I didn't speak to her at all, but in my defence I was in a bad patch with Kirsten, and kept winding me up by saying he was going to try and pull her that night. Jay had recently broken up with his girl, a nice blonde ditzy girl who was called Heather, and he was just fucking with people's heads while he sorted his own out.

Alex is back on the shop floor, standing by the racks of comics as he uses a stepladder to grab a box set off the high shelves overhead, passing it down to a waiting customer.

ALEX

I felt like I'd turned a corner, however. I'd made progress with how I felt about Scarlet and I felt like I could cross her off my list of issues at last. Which was good. Back to the story and the proper order of events. After Amber, there was a few months of feeling crap and then there was Claire.

169 INT. EDWARDS NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

169

CAPTION - AUGUST 2002

Back in Edwards again, Alex gets a drink from the bar and turns round to see his friend ERIC - a short goth guy with long, curly brown hair, a cheeky grin and a very dapper way of dressing. Eric is surrounded by people he knows, being a popular kind of guy.

ERIC

Ah, Alex! Good evening to you, sir.

ALEX

(raises glass)

Word.

(takes a sip)

ERIC

I'm just introducing everyone to everyone else, have you met this lot?

ALEX

Uh, not sure...

ERIC

This is Ian, this is Penny, this is Helen...

Everyone says their hellos. Eric steps to one side and motions his hand to a girl standing behind him - we can't quite see her.

ERIC (cont'd)

And this... is Claire.

Alex looks up. He sees CLAIRE, a drop-dead gorgeous goth babe, who smiles as they make eye contact. She has long, dark curly hair, porcelain skin and is slim so that corset and long glittery black skirt she's wearing show off her figure perfectly. Freeze frame for caption.

CAPTION - CLAIRE

ALEX

Guh...

ERIC

Alex, Claire. Claire, Alex.

(spots someone else he knows)

Ah, Pete!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

169 CONTINUED:

ERIC (cont'd)
 (to Alex)
 Be right back.

Eric whizzes off, leaving Alex and Claire alone at the bar together.

ALEX (V.O.)
 That little bastard! He'd just thrown this... this angel of gothic beauty at me, and then he'd gone and left me with nothing but my own conversational skills to defend myself with. I was doomed... doomed!

ALEX (cont'd)
 Hey there. Sorry about the brief introduction, but I'm sure you know what Eric is like.

CLAIRE
 (chuckles)
 Yes, yes I do.

Claire's ordered a bottle of wine which shows up with one glass. She picks them up and motions towards the tables by the entrance.

CLAIRE (cont'd)
 Want to sit down for a minute?

ALEX
 (a little surprised)
 Uh, yeah, okay.

They sit down and start chattering away, obviously getting on well straight away.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Oh. My. God. Okay, control, Alex, control. This girl is beautiful and you must NOT do anything that would screw this up. Try not to act too weird. Engage in chit-chat for as long as is needed

Claire makes a joke and the two of them laugh.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Humor! Aha! My greatest ally... Quickly, man, make some jokes! Make her laugh!
 (beat as Alex makes Emily laugh again)
 Excellent...

170 EXT. OUTSIDE EDWARDS - NIGHT 170

The two of them step outside and join the milling crowd of people leaving the club. Alex throws his leather jacket round Claire's shoulders as they hit the cold night air, and she smiles gratefully back at him.

ALEX (V.O.)

Somehow, I ended up taking the girl home. I think she was trying to avoid her creepy ex-boyfriend, but the fact that she went to some lengths to get me to herself was a pretty good sign, I thought.

171 INT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT 171

Alex drives out of Birmingham towards Claire's house, the two still talking.

ALEX (V.O.)

She lived in some student digs in Selly Oak, just outside the city centre. It was a nice place, once we got there.

172 INT. CLAIRE'S ROOM - NIGHT 172

A large student room, with plenty of bookcases and a large make up table. Alex and Claire are sat on the bed, cuddling. He runs his hands through her hair as they talk.

ALEX

I'd just like to make it absolutely clear at this point that I had no ulterior motive whatsoever in bringing you home.

CLAIRE

(sighs)

I know. You're very gentlemanly.

ALEX (V.O.)

But my god I was thinking about it...

ALEX (cont'd)

Are you okay? You seem a bit... well, sad.

(CONTINUED)

CLAIRE
(sighs again)
I'm alright. I've just got a lot on
my plate at the moment.

Alex looks towards the windowsill next to the bed's
headboard, and takes in the many boxes of tablets, noticing
the Prozac box among them.

ALEX
I did get that impression..

CLAIRE
I'm sorry, Alex. I'm just a mixed-
up little bunny right now.

ALEX
You seem like you need someone to
hold you, though.

Claire nods and squeezes him a little tighter.

ALEX (cont'd)
Do you want me to stay over? Just
to sleep, just so you've got
someone nearby.

CLAIRE
I think I'd like that.

ALEX
Groovy.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
I was ignoring every instinct that
told me to cut my losses and go,
that this girl wasn't someone I
should be getting involved with,
who clearly had a lot of issues to
deal with, but, well...

DISSOLVE TO:

The same scene, but the lights are out and Alex and Claire
are snuggled up in the bed together.

CAPTION - A few hours later.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
The way I was feeling, spending the
night with a beautiful woman was
still a better plan than going
home, even if nothing happened that
night at all. I didn't care one
bit.

(CONTINUED)

CLAIRE
(sleepily)
Will you promise me one thing,
though?

ALEX
Yeah, anything.

CLAIRE
Can you go before I wake up
tomorrow?

ALEX
If you want me to. Why?

CLAIRE
(beat)
Before I take my pills in the
morning.. well, I'm a different
person, and I don't want you to see
me like that.

ALEX
Are you sure?

CLAIRE
(nods)
Yes.
(beat)
I'm sorry.

ALEX
Hey, don't worry about it. Now go
to sleep.

They curl up a bit closer. Dissolve to:

Sunlight creeps in through the curtains as we see Alex,
dressed and just pulling his boots on, creep as quietly as he
can out of the room, leaving Claire still asleep in the bed.

ALEX (V.O.)
I did as she asked and made an
early exit the next morning. I
briefly thought about staying just
to see what was so about her before
she took the happy pills, but I
didn't want to risk pissing her off
so soon.

174 EXT. OUTSIDE CLAIRE'S HOUSE - MORNING 174

Alex leaves the house and walks over to his car, unlocking it and getting inside.

ALEX

So there you go. A pretty unusual start to the relationship, if you could ever call it that, but it was good enough for me.

175 INT. ALEX'S CAR - MORNING 175

Alex drives back home.

ALEX

The next few times I saw her it was the same story - have a good night, drive her home, stay over and then leave in the morning. Nothing ever happened and that was the way she wanted it - she kept making a point of how messed up she was, and how she didn't want me getting too involved in her.

176 INT. COMIC SHOP - DAY 176

Alex sits behind the counter, reading one of the comics, his feet up on the desk.

ALEX

So, naturally, I got too involved.

177 INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT 177

A proms concert is in full flow, with the packed audience watching a large orchestra play on stage, with a choir arranged behind them.

We close in on the choir, picking out Claire, who is singing along with the others.

ALEX (V.O.)

Now, Claire was a choir singer, and she was off to London to perform in a big concert a few weeks after we first met.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

177 CONTINUED:

177

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
Our time together to that point had been pretty frustrating from my point of view - I wanted her to let me in but she was keeping the doors very firmly closed. So I decided to do what remains one of my finest blunders to date.

178 INT. ALEX'S ROOM AT PARENT'S - DAY

178

Alex sits on his bed, typing in a text message.

ALEX (V.O.)
The old 'text message so long you have to send three to say everything' trick. I tried to tell her that no matter what she was going through I wanted to be there for her, and that I wanted to help in any way I could, if she'd just let me.

179 INT. COMIC SHOP - DAY

179

As before.

ALEX
Big mistake.

180 INT. EDWARDS NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

180

Alex props up the corner of the bar furthest from the dancefloor, sipping his drink and looking very miserable as he watches Claire talking to her uni friends on the far side of the room.

ALEX (V.O.)
When she got back, she replied to tell me that I wasn't helping at all, and it'd be better for both of us if I stopped spending time with her. She just had too many things going on to be able to settle down at the moment, and it wasn't that she didn't like me, it was just that she couldn't let anyone in to her world while she was still sorting it out herself.

(CONTINUED)

180 CONTINUED:

ALEX (cont'd)

Along with Selma, Claire remains one of my best 'Things That Never Were.' We spoke a few times more after that, but I'd killed the spark of everything deader than Corey Feldman's career post-Lost Boys.

181 INT. MANZIL'S CURRY HOUSE - NIGHT

181

CAPTION - AUTUMN 2003

A meal for Alex's goth mates, twenty of whom are sat around a long table in the restaurant as they tuck into various plates of food and curries.

An empty chair is next to Alex, and as someone moves it back to sit down, he looks up and smiles.

Claire looks stunning in a black corset top, short length jacket, pleated black short skirt and stripey knee-high tights. Yowch, in other words.

ALEX (V.O.)

When I did see her after that, we always got on well. We could talk and laugh and be okay with each other, as long as I didn't think too much about the disgraceful things half of me still wanted to do to her. She'd started seeing someone, she was taking it slow but all well and good so far, and despite there being this odd vibe between us still, we both knew the moment had passed.

182 EXT. OUTSIDE MANZIL'S - NIGHT

182

The goths are all leaving. Alex talks to Claire for a bit, then hugs her as they wave goodbye and go their separate ways.

ALEX (V.O.)

I did get chance to speak to her properly when I started to do my High Fidelity thing, and I think I left things pretty well. I was on a bit of a roll thus far in - two things resolved and all well and good!

183 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - KITCHEN - NIGHT 183

Alex is cooking up his evening meal.

ALEX

Of course, after Claire there was Scarlet, and I've already covered that one in detail. But after Scarlet dumped me, I found I suddenly had a big gap in my life. My life had been full of comforting warmth and fuzzy goodness while I had Scarlet, and then that was all just taken away from me one day. I wasn't conscious of it at first, but I was looking for something to fill up that hole, to try and give me something to hold on to again.

(beat)

Which brings things back to Tara.

184 INT. THE FLOCK - NIGHT 184

CAPTION - AUTUMN 2002

Alex sits at one of the old wooden bar tables with his friends. Tara keeps looking over at him, and he keeps returning the looks.

ALEX (V.O.)

You may remember that Tara and I had been showing an interest in each other before Scarlet came on the scene.

185 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT 185

Alex is searching through his CDs for a particular album.

ALEX

Well, that interest did start to make itself known not long before I first met Scarlet.

186 INT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT 186

Alex's car is parked outside Tara's house, a quite detached place outside Walsall.

As we look into the car, we see Alex and Tara in an embrace, kissing each other.

187 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

187

As before, as Alex finds the CD he was looking for and opens up the stereo to put it on.

ALEX

Tara and I had developed the nasty habit of sneaking away after nights out with our friends to sit and get friendly in my car, right outside her house. A lot of the time we'd just sit and talk for hours, but the kissing always came along sooner or later. When Scarlet came along all that stopped, but once I'd lost her then it wasn't long before I ended up back with Tara.

188 INT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT

188

CAPTION - SUMMER 2003

Alex's car is parked outside Tara's house. Alex stares out of the windscreen, a distant look on his face. Tara watches him.

TARA

So are you alright?

ALEX

(sighs)

I don't know. It's like for the first time in my life I felt secure in something, you know? I never had one moment where I worried about what was going on between me and her, never had one crisis of confidence, never doubted things at all. I can honestly say I've never had that with anyone before.

TARA

Must be nice.

ALEX

It was. Probably why we shouldn't be doing any of this at all.

TARA

(shrugs)

You can like more than one person at a time.

(CONTINUED)

188 CONTINUED:

188

Alex reaches out a hand and affectionately strokes the back of Tara's neck. She smiles at him.

ALEX (V.O.)

It wasn't much, but it was all I had. And even though every time I drove away from that house I felt worse than when I'd arrived, I just kept going back.

189 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

189

As before, as the CD starts to play.

ALEX

When you don't have much, you cling to what you've got. I'd done it with Amber and then with Claire, I was doing that with Tara and I ended up doing it with Kirsten.

(sighs)

I need professional help.

190 INT. BLAST OFF - WOLVERHAMPTON CIVIC - NIGHT

190

CAPTION - AUTUMN 2003

A student indie disco night, set up in the local concert venue. We pick out Alex, sitting at one of the tables, watching someone on the dance floor.

ALEX (V.O.)

This all went on for another month or two until the last straw hit the camel's back, and he went crashing to the ground.

(beat)

Or something like that, anyway.

We follow Alex's gaze and see Tara, slow dancing with one of her old boyfriends.

Alex glares at them for a few moments, then gets up and walks out of the main hall, straight past the two of them. Chris and Jessica notice, and their other friend MICHELLE goes after Alex.

191 EXT. OUTSIDE THE CIVIC - NIGHT

191

Alex has his coat on and appears to be heading for home, but instead he heads towards the steps leading up to the entrance to one of the university buildings nearby, sitting down and talking to the camera.

ALEX

See, I had to leave that night because I couldn't watch Tara making a fool out of me like that. People had started to figure out what was going on between us but no-one was talking, so my little petulant display had finally proven what everyone was thinking. The main thing was that Tara already had a boyfriend, this country guy called Edward, one of those guys who hits middle age before his 25th birthday - you know the sort, the kind of guy who tucks his polo neck shirts into his blue jeans. With a belt.

(beat)

Anyway, Tara was already cheating on him with me, and then she goes and starts getting friendly with that creepy ex of hers right in front of me. I thought I was using her but she ended up using me. Tara's the kind of girl who craves attention and affection, and she isn't too bothered where it comes from. Which left me all alone, out in the cold.

Alex looks up as Michelle, a pretty girl with very long, spiral curled hair sits down next to him. She looks concerned but he grins back at her, the look of a man who can appreciate the gallows humour of the situation.

MICHELLE

Hey you.

ALEX

Hey.

MICHELLE

Are you okay?

ALEX

People seem to be asking me that a lot just lately.

(CONTINUED)

MICHELLE

Jess and I saw you leave, and kind of put two and two together when we saw Tara with that guy...

ALEX

Yeah, well...

(beat)

I've really made a fool of myself, haven't I?

MICHELLE

That's a bit harsh.

ALEX

That's how I feel, though. It's like everyone knew what was going on but kept quiet, and now it's all blown up in my face and I'm the one left feeling like an idiot.

MICHELLE

Tara's evil. You shouldn't worry about her.

ALEX

Wish I couldn't. I really do.

MICHELLE

Come on. Kelly'll be out soon, we're off back home in a bit.

ALEX

How long have people known?

MICHELLE

(sighs)

We've suspected it for a while.

ALEX

I knew it...

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

What I didn't know was that Tara herself left in a huff when that guy asked her to go back with him, and in an indignant moment she told him to get lost. A week later, my friends confronted her about it.

Alex plays a Playstation game as the stereo plays.

ALEX

The little minx actually tried to turn it round and say it was all my fault! That I'd misinterpreted it all, and that I was making some of it up! She changed her story a few times, classic sign of guilt as any detective will tell you, and so she's ended up being left out of most things with our friends now. It suits her really, she's in with her bloke's friends and living with him on the other side of Birmingham now, so not much has really changed back home.

(plays the game for a few seconds)

Between Tara and Kirsten, though, there was the biggest surprise yet. A little redhead called Alicia. You may remember her. To get this story in its true perspective, we need to quantum leap back to the middle of 2002.

CAPTION - SUMMER 2002

Alex sits on the bed in the large uni room, watching Alicia as she works on her architecture project, making small buildings out of carefully-cut pieces of cardboard. They chat as she works.

ALEX (V.O.)

Alicia and I had always got on well. She was the one who'd introduced me to Selma and then to Gemma, remember, and apart from a few fallouts we were good friends. I'd always held something of a torch for her, but I never thought anything would happen between us. I used to go and see her when she was studying architecture down at UCE in London, mainly because her messy breakup with Rob when she'd left had ostracised her from everyone she knew back home.

(CONTINUED)

CAPTION - AUTUMN 2002

New room, new university - a smaller place, but the same kinds of things decorating it. Alex and Alicia are both lying on her bed, watching the TV up on the desk to her right.

ALEX (V.O.)

When things didn't work out for her at uni, she moved up to Sheffield to continue her course, and I carried on seeing her. I wasn't telling anyone about this, mainly because Gemma would still have popped a nut at that point if she knew I was sneaking away to see her mates behind her back, and also because it seemed that Alicia was keeping it quiet as well.

195 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

195

Alex sits on the sofa and tucks into his dinner.

ALEX

And yes, I am fully aware now of the very ironic parallels between this and the situation with Shiri the previous year.

196 INT. ALEX'S ROOM AT PARENT'S - NIGHT

196

CAPTION - WINTER 2002

Alex is sat in his bed, up late on the internet, his dad's laptop in front of him as he talks to Alicia via MSN Messenger.

ALEX

(off PC)

But this... this conversation we had in late 2002 really opened up a new door for us.

ALICIA (V.O.)

(as her typing appears on screen)

No, what have I got to be happy about, it's not like anybody likes me at all.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
(as he types)
Don't be daft! I think you're lovely.

ALICIA (V.O.)
Really?

ALEX
Yeah! Remember that school play you did back in the fourth year?

ALICIA (V.O.)
Midsummer Night's Dream, yeah.

ALEX
Well, I thought you were really cute back then, even when you started seeing Rob. Still do.

ALICIA (V.O.)
Aww!

ALEX
(to camera)
This went on for a bit. Until things started to take a very unexpected turn..

ALICIA (V.O.)
So what do we do about this then?

ALEX
I don't know.

ALICIA (V.O.)
We've gone from saying we thought each other was cute, to fancying us, to here...

ALEX
We seem to have done that, yes.

ALICIA (V.O.)
Well, Alex, I want to fuck you. Can I?

ALEX
(grins)
Sure.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
Woop! Woop! Woop! This is your conscience alarm!

ALEX (cont'd)
Let's get together soon and see
what happens, okay?

ALICIA (V.O.)
Yeah, okay, I'm home next week.

ALEX
Groovy.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
I am Jack's raging libido.

Alex and Alicia are sat on his bed, watching TV. They keep looking at one another, then cracking up and looking away again.

ALEX (V.O.)
She came round a few weeks later
and that's when it all went upside
down.

ALICIA
This is so weird... I mean, it's
like, it's you, you know? It's
Alex! I've known you for years!

ALEX
Yeah, it is a little strange...

ALICIA
Yeah...

Their eyes lock again and then she kisses him. They kiss for a moments and then she pulls back.

ALICIA (cont'd)
(smiling)
This is going to sound a little
weird... but could you go out for a
few minutes?

ALEX
Leave the room?

ALICIA
Just for a bit. I had a very...
specific way I wanted things to go,
so I just need a few minutes to get
ready for it. Okay?

197 CONTINUED:

ALEX
(grinning)
Okay.

He gets up and leaves the room. We follow him outside as he heads downstairs.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
I went and got a drink and came
back a few minutes later.

198 INT. ALEX'S ROOM AT PARENT'S - NIGHT

198

CAPTION - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Alex taps on the door then pushes it open slowly. All the lights are out, so the room is lit by the glow of Alex's stereo.

ALEX
Alicia?

ALICIA (O.S.)
I'm here. Come in and close the
door.

Alex steps inside, and Alicia steps into frame, wearing his dressing gown.

ALICIA (cont'd)
Push me up against the wall.

Alex does so, pretty softly. She smiles and lets the gown fall open, revealing that she's stripped down to her elaborate lingerie.

ALICIA (cont'd)
Now kiss me.

He does, running his hands through her hair.

ALICIA (cont'd)
Let's get onto the bed.

ALEX
Okay...

They move onto the bed, Alicia lying down as Alex crouches over her, kissing her.

DISSOLVE TO:

199 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGH

199

Alex is slouched on the sofa, looking out through the front windows.

ALEX

And things went on from there. It was... strange. I wish I could say that I was the world's best lover on that particular occasion, but I'm afraid my nerves got the better of me... let's just say that Alicia was still on the 1500 metres while I was on the 100m sprint.

(beat)

Well, what can I say. You try having sex with a good-looking girl you've had a thing about for four years, and see if you keep your cool! Things got a bit weird after that. I think she was hoping that we'd have this incredible night together, and when it came down to it I was something of a disappointment. We ended up not speaking for almost a year, when I e-mailed her again to see how she was doing and ended up going to see her for the weekend at university.

(beat)

And yes, I know I did the same thing with Amber. See what I mean about not learning from my mistakes? That's why we're having this little discussion.

200 INT. ALICIA'S ROOM AT SHEFFIELD - DAY

200

CAPTION - SUMMER 2003

Alex sits on the bed as Alicia sits at her computer, talking excitedly about an e-mail on the screen. Alex looks distinctly unimpressed.

ALEX (V.O.)

She spent the whole weekend talking about this American guy she'd fallen for. Alicia was a notorious flirt when it came to men. She got bored very easily and was also very easy to get distracted by new guys coming along. The classic Girl Who Didn't Know What She Wanted.

201 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT 201

Alex sits on his bed, strumming on his white Fender guitar.

ALEX

I don't know what I was expecting to happen, to be honest. My visit to Alicia was part of my own High Fidelity trip, trying to smooth out the past after what had happened between us. She already had an American boyfriend, but she wasn't the most faithful person in the world with him. Maybe some little part of me was hoping I'd get lucky again. Anyway, selfish thoughts of my own sexual appetite aside, I came back home and prepared to get on with things again.

202 INT. ALEX'S ROOM AT PARENT'S - NIGHT 202

Alex sits on his bed in a t-shirt and boxers, as Alicia sits next to him, in her pyjamas. They're talking away happily.

ALEX (V.O.)

Which is why I was quite surprised when she finished uni and spent four nights a week round at my house, having seemingly decided that she was now my new bestest friend. We'd be up till the small hours, talking about everything and nothing at all. She said that I seemed to be the only person who understood her at all.

203 INT. CINEWORLD WOLVERHAMPTON - NIGHT 203

Alex and Alicia sit in the cinema, watching 'The Italian Job.' Alex turns to the camera and whispers over the film playing in front of him.

ALEX

This went on for a few months. I didn't know what to make of it, I didn't think she was interested in me again but I was getting all manner of odd signals from her. Did she like me again? Or was it just wishful thinking?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

203 CONTINUED:

203

ALEX (cont'd)
 Did I want her, knowing full well
 how fickle she was, and all the
 hassle it'd bring from our
 respective exes?

204 INT. THE SQUARE PEG - NIGHT

204

CAPTION - AUGUST 2003

Alex is sat in the Square Peg pub, round a long table as he talks to his goth friends. Lola and Tony are there, along with Eric, SIOBHAN and a few other people.

A chair moves next to Alex and Kirsten sits down, with her friends GEORGETTE, TRACEY and SUZI. Alex looks over to Kirsten and his eyes light up as she sits down. Freeze frame for caption.

CAPTION - KIRSTEN

They say hello and start talking straight away.

ALEX (V.O.)

When Kirsten appeared on the scene,
 things got a lot more complicated.
 I didn't tell Alicia about her for
 a week or so, mainly Because of how
 quickly Kirsten and I got together.
 We met at the pub on Thursday...

205 INT. THE MERCAT PUB - NIGHT

205

A dimly lit goth pub, filled with black-clad men and women, along with Alex and his usual posse.

Kirsten and Tracey arrive, Kirsten is obviously pretty drunk. She waves to Alex and then pulls Tracey into the ladies with her.

ALEX (V.O)

... arranged to meet up on
 Saturday, and then by Saturday
 night...

206 INT. TRACEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

206

In a scruffy spare bedroom full of abandoned furniture and bedding. On a hastily made sofa bed, Alex and Kirsten get friendly with each other underneath the mis-shapen duvet.

CUT TO:

207 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

207

As before.

ALEX

Like I said, it all happened quite fast. She was as surprised by it as I was. She later used that against me when we broke up, saying that we should have taken longer getting to know each other before letting anything like that happen.

(beat)

She's probably right, but I wonder how many of you people have ever been able to stop yourselves when both parties quite obviously want to just get it on, and damn the consequences?

208 INT. WETHERSPOON'S PUB - NIGHT

208

Alex and Alicia sit at a table inside one of the booths, talking.

ALEX (V.O.)

When I eventually saw Alicia again, I told her what had happened. She seemed to be pleased for me, so I took that as my last signal that no, she wasn't interested after all. Until I saw her at Edwards a few weeks later.

209 INT. EDWARDS NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

209

Back in Edwards again. Alex and Kirsten are stood with their friends talking, and as Gemma and Alicia walk in, dressed up for the night. Alex breaks away to say hello.

ALEX

Hey there! So how goes it, Little Miss Bar Mitvah?

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

Alicia had recently converted to Judaism. Nobody really knew why, she did a lot of faddy things like that. I reckoned it was one of two reasons.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 She'd either done it so that if she did end up back with her American boyfriend, the Jewish heir to a fortune, she'd be in the right religion at the right time, or two, she'd seen Charlotte do it on Sex And The City that week and thought it'd be fun.

ALICIA
 Not so bad. We spent, like, three hours making bread for the ceremony! Can you believe it?

ALEX
 With you, yes, I can. This is Kirsten.

Alex motions towards Kirsten and the two girls lock stares. For a moment, there is a sting of the 'Jaws' theme music, before Alex steps back in the way again.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Clever. Very clever, introducing new girlfriend to old flame. Not going to cause any potential trouble at all. Heavens no.

Cut to: An hour later, and Alex is ready to leave. He walks over to the dancing Alicia and Gemma to say goodbye.

ALEX (cont'd)
 I'm off then, kids, see you around.

GEMMA
 Okay, bye!

ALICIA
 Bye.

Alicia hugs Alex then leans in close and whispers into his ear.

ALICIA (cont'd)
 Call me, you bugger. I miss you.

Alex nods, waves to them both then heads off back over to Kirsten. The two get their coats and leave.

ALEX (V.O.)
 I hadn't seen much of Alicia for a few weeks, I was in the New Girlfriend Zone.
 (MORE)

209 CONTINUED: (2)

209

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
When you have female friends,
especially close ones, it's an
almost impossible compromise to get
that exact middle ground between
spending quality time with the
girlfriend and keeping up the old
patterns with the friend.

210 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

210

Alex switches off the Playstation and turns the TV on as he starts looking for a DVD to watch from the shelves above his desk.

ALEX

Lola is always moaning at me for ignoring her when I see someone new, which I don't think I do as much as she accuses me of, but Alicia was especially bad about it when I started seeing Kirsten. And when this next scene went down, well, it all went to heck.

211 INT. ALEX'S ROOM AT PARENT'S - NIGHT

211

Alex and Alicia sit on his bed, watching 'Spaced' on DVD. They are cuddled up, but nothing untoward is happening.

Alicia then turns to look at Alex, the same look on her face as that night a year ago when they ended up sleeping together. Alex looks down at her, sees the look, and isn't sure what to make of it.

ALICIA

I miss you, you bugger...

She kisses him. Alex doesn't stop her.

212 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

212

Alex stares out of the window again as the rain starts to fall.

ALEX

I was really stupid. I should have seen it all coming but I really never thought that she'd go for me again. I let my desires get the better of me for a moment but I managed to pull myself back from the Dark Side this time.

213 INT. ALEX'S ROOM AT PARENT'S - NIGHT

213

Alicia goes to kiss Alex again, but he pulls away. They're both in a state of undress by now.

ALICIA

What's wrong?

ALEX

I... I can't do this, Alicia. We shouldn't do this. I've only just started seeing Kirsten, I can't do this to either of us so soon. I'm sorry.

ALICIA

(beat)

Yeah, yeah, of course.

(laughs)

It's all sort of stupid, really, isn't it? What were we thinking?

ALEX

I really don't know.

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)

I still don't. I think it was the fact that Kirsten was a new and unknown quality to me, but then here was Alicia, someone I knew well and knew well very intimately, and here she was offering herself to me on a plate. I guess it just got too surreal. What was scary was watching Alicia's systems kick into damage control mode within seconds of me turning her down. It was frighteningly efficient.

214 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT

214

As before. Alex looks sad.

ALEX

What hurt the most was that I'd let myself cheat on Kirsten, and we'd barely gotten together at all. I'm glad I managed to stop anything happening, but I feel like absolute shit for letting even that one kiss happen, for letting the thought enter my mind again.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

214 CONTINUED:

ALEX (cont'd)

For what it's worth, I never looked at another girl all the time I was with Kirsten. Not out of guilt, either, because I didn't want anybody else. That's the funny thing about it all - I knew I didn't want to go out with Alicia, I knew what she was like too well for that. Men just have this strange mental disease that allows their groin to take control of their body at inopportune times, and I almost became a victim to that.

Alex walks out into the front room.

215 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

215

Alex flops down on the sofa and lets his cats come to him.

ALEX

Maybe her breaking up with me was punishment for what I almost did? Who knows. All I do know is we're pretty much at the end of it all. I just have a last few things to say about the time Kirsten and I spent together, and then we can start to draw some conclusions.

216 INT. KIRSTEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

216

CAPTION - AUTUMN 2003

Alex and Kirsten sit on the sofa in her front room, watching the television. Kirsten is curled up against Alex, as are her two white cats, Floss the adult and Cruella the kitten.

ALEX (V.O.)

The first few months we were together were just great. Kirsten was an art student, and she was also a part-time goth, and she was pretty and had red hair. I was as happy as a pig in shit.

217 INT. KIRSTEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

217

Alex and Kirsten spoon in her bed as they sleep.

(CONTINUED)

217 CONTINUED:

ALEX (V.O.)

She lived way out in Kidderminster so it was a long drive out to see her, but we'd have a relaxed evening in when I got there which was just groovy. We had the same circle of friends so we went out to the same places a lot too, and that's why she invited me to come along to the bi-annual Whitby Gothic Weekend 2003 with her.

218 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

218

As before.

ALEX

A little background first. We're about three months into the relationship by now. Kirsten's a little stressed as she tries to get on with her art degree, but things between us are okay. I have, by this point, told her that I loved her.

(beat)

This time, it seemed to have been at the right moment.

219 INT. KIRSTEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

219

Kirsten and Alex are in the bed, both awake. Kirsten is crying and Alex is holding her close to him.

ALEX (V.O.)

She'd recently gone back to work with her ex, the Mr. Big guy in her life of over three years, a nasty piece of work called Drew. This guy had treated her like shit for the whole time they were together, but for her sins she loved him and put up with it until one day it just got too much. She never really got used to the fact that he started up with a new girl and carried on as if nothing had happened, and she was left to try and get her life back together. It seemed to her that he'd gotten away with everything he did to her, and she was the one who was left with all the baggage.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

219 CONTINUED:

ALEX (V.O.) (cont'd)
He'd also doomed our relationship
from the start.

220 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

220

As before.

ALEX

See, after breaking up with him at
the start of the year, Kirsten had
stretched her legs a bit, had a few
brief affairs, just finding her
feet in the world again. Nothing
wrong with that at all. Thing is,
when I met her she still wasn't
looking to settle down. And by
'settle down,' I don't mean get a
mortgage and cats, I just mean
staying with someone for a while,
building up a good relationship,
spending your time together and
just, you know, being a couple.

(beat)

Seems Kirsten didn't see it that
way.

221 INT. KIRSTEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

221

As before.

ALEX (V.O.)

Kirsten found working at the same
place as him, even only part time
to give her some extra cash for
university, just too damn hard for
her. She sent him an e-mail telling
him that she had to quit, which he
used as the opportunity he'd been
looking for to say 'okay, then
that's it for us for good then,
have a nice life Because I know I
will be!' She didn't take this too
well.

222 INT. ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT

222

CAPTION - HALLOWEEN 2003

Alex is driving Kirsten and Tracey to Whitby. The car is
heavily loaded with bags of clothes, mainly belonging to the
two girls.

(CONTINUED)

222 CONTINUED:

ALEX (V.O.)

Whitby is twice a year, a goth festival that hires out this hotel on the beachfront to host shops during the day and bands by the night. It's an opportunity for goths to gather with their friends and get hideously drunk.

(beat)

Not that they normally need an excuse, of course, it's just that Whitby, a quiet coastal town up in the north of England, is much prettier than where the majority of them come from.

223 EXT. WHITBY - BEACH - DAY

223

Alex and Kirsten stroll across the sands, the high seafront wall to their left and miles of blue sea to their right. It's cold and windy but the sun is out.

Other couples stroll up and down the beach, but we can already notice that while those couples are hand in hand, hugging or generally looking very cosy, Alex and Kirsten are walking a few feet apart. And Alex does not seem at all happy by this.

ALEX (V.O.)

So there we were, a couple away on a few days' holiday, our friends populating the pubs up and down the town, the stage was set for a weekend of fun and sunshine. Right?

224 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

224

Alex flicks through TV channels.

ALEX

Wrong.

225 INT. DREW'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

225

Alex, Tracey and Kirsten are sat in the front room of a large, two floor terraced house, with a couple in their fifties and their ten-year old son. The house is decorated in quite an old-fashioned way, and is filled with military memorabilia. These are Drew's parents, and they're hosting the trio for the weekend.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (V.O.)

There were two reasons why the weekend ended up being the beginning of the end. One - We were staying with her ex's parents. They still liked Kirsten and she still liked them, having stayed with them at the last Whitby. Thing is, she didn't think it was a great idea to advertise the fact that we were a couple, so we had to stay in separate rooms and not act like we were together. The entire weekend. Two - Tracey. Trace was one of Kirsten's friends, and a nice girl apart from the on-off thing she had going with her ex George, a big sleazy guy who liked to get his hands on skirt whenever he could. He was blatantly messing Kim about while he went on the prowl, but despite all that she still loved him. And that caused no end of problems as she was moody the whole time we were there over it, and also prone to acting like a frightened child who needs constant reassurance and guidance before being able to do anything.

226 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

226

As before.

ALEX

What all of this boiled down to was a weekend of frustration. I couldn't relax Because of the environment I found myself in. Not that Drew's parents weren't nice people, they were warm and welcoming and I have nothing but good things to say about them. What caused the problem was Kirsten not wanting to come anywhere near me the whole time we were there.

227 INT. WHITBY PAVILLION - BAND ROOM - NIGHT

227

A concert hall, decked out with black netting in cobweb patterns, and balloon animals of spiders and ghosts deck the netting.

(CONTINUED)

All About Eve play on the stage at the far end of the room, with crowds of happily swaying goths getting into the music. A bar is at the back of the room, and it is near that where we pick up Alex and Kirsten.

Kirsten looks gorgeous - her red hair in bunches, a black shirt and tartan pleated miniskirt on, with fishnet stockings and big chunky New Rock boots. Alex is looking at Kirsten like a man with no money standing outside a shop window. She isn't looking at him.

ALEX (V.O.)

We'd go out, surrounded by people we knew and more people that we didn't, but still she wouldn't come near me. I started to fall into a very dark mood - I was seeing the old pattern come around again. Was this like when Amber went cold on me because I'd moved too fast all over again? Was there stuff in her head that I was never going to overcome, like Claire?

228 INT. ALEX'S ROOM AT DREW'S PARENTS - NIGHT

228

Alex lies in the bed in the guest room, the lights out but he's wide awake. His face shows the signs of a man who just doesn't know what the hell to do.

ALEX (V.O.)

What was I supposed to do now?

229 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - NIGHT

229

As before, as Alex turns the TV off and picks the sleeping cats up off him.

ALEX

When we got back, it was business as normal. But something had changed. Some great, unseen god of emotion had reached his heavenly hand down and flicked our relationship to 'off' without anyone realising.

(beat)

The last time we made love was before Whitby in mid October. We never got together again after that.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (cont'd)

Now there's all sorts of reasons as to why that could be the case - she honestly didn't feel like it, she was still in a mess mentally after effectively breaking up with Drew all over again, or maybe I was just a really bad shag.

(beat)

I hope that wasn't it.

(beat as he looks

thoughtfully out of the window)

Anyway, things just stayed like that for another few months. I tried asking her about it but she just snapped my head off and I kept things to myself. I talked to my friends about it, and they told me that I needed to have it out with her or we'd have to just end it all. I knew that already, but I'm sure you'll agree that sometimes you just need to hear someone else tell you what you're already thinking before you're able to trust your own judgement. 9 out of 10 cat owners can't be wrong, and all that.

CAPTION - NEW YEAR'S 2003/2004

Alex sits at a table next to Jay, the two talking and having to shout over the loud party music blasting out of the DJ booth a few feet away.

The pub is decorated for Christmas and New Year, with banners and balloons all around. It's quite full as well, boasting a lively party atmosphere.

ALEX (V.O.)

It was over discussion of the situation with Jay at New Year's that I finally decided on a course of action. I was going to confront Kirsten about what was going on, and ask her if there was any chance of the things that were wrong changing, and if not then we'd have to break up.

Alex and Jay finish their conversation. Alex looks pretty satisfied.

231 INT. COSTAS COFFEE - UPSTAIRS - DAY 231

CAPTION - JANUARY 13, 2004

Back to the first scene of the movie. We know where we are now.

ALEX (V.O.)

When she beat me to the punch just over a week later, it was a very strange experience. I mean, I was half expecting it from her behaviour up to that point.

232 EXT. WOLVERHAMPTON CITY CENTRE - STREET - DAY 232

Alex is walking along with Kirsten alongside him. He's chatting away to her.

ALEX

So then, this guy goes 'But I ordered it three weeks ago!' And Dave says to him 'Look, mate, you didn't order it at this shop! We do not have a magic orders link to every shop in the country!' So the guy gets all angry and says...

(beat)

Kirsten?

KIRSTEN

(distracted)

Hmm?

ALEX

You okay? You seem a bit... distant.

KIRSTEN

Oh, I'm fine. We just need to find some- where to sit for a bit.

ALEX

Okay. Coffee?

KIRSTEN

Yeah.

233 INT. ALEX'S ROOM - NIGHT 233

Alex is lying in his bed, clearly not able to sleep still. Calvin is curled up and asleep on the pillow next to him.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Remember how Scarlet was that last day I saw her before she dumped me? Kirsten was showing all the same symptoms. Sudden sense of distraction, not looking at or talking to me much, and generally seeming like the whole weight of the world had suddenly been dropped on her shoulders and she didn't know what to do about it.

(beat)

You know what happened next. In case you've forgotten, here's a summary of it.

Alex and Kirsten at the table as earlier.

ALEX

So what's up?

KIRSTEN

Woo, my heart's pounding...

(beat)

Right. This is going to be tough. Look, you know we haven't been getting on lately, and you know how busy I've been with work and uni, and -

ALEX

(interrupts)

You want to break up with me?

Alex tries to stay calm. Kirsten looks a little surprised that he just came out with it, but with a sad smile just nods her head.

KIRSTEN

I'm sorry. I've just been so stressed with everything I've got going on with uni, starting this new course, and then work, and the house, and I just feel...

(beat)

I just feel like I haven't got enough time to see you. Not as much as you want to see me, at least.

ALEX (V.O.)

The parting words of both Amber and Scarlet came rushing back to me as she said that. Was I really such a big drain on people's time?

ALEX (cont'd)

So it would seem.

KIRSTEN

And to be honest, I don't think I really want a boyfriend at the moment.

ALEX (V.O.)

Woop! Woop! Lie detector just registered a spike, sir!

ALEX (cont'd)

That's something I worked out too. I thought it was either that, or that you were seeing someone else.

KIRSTEN

Oh no, no, nothing like that.

ALEX (V.O.)

That statement was true. Well, it would be for the next two weeks, anyway.

ALEX (cont'd)

So you've had enough then?

KIRSTEN

(looking like she doesn't know how to do this)

This was never meant to be anything serious, and if you thought it was, well...

(beat)

I'm sorry, but it just wasn't,

ALEX (V.O.)

I am Jack's poor, dying soul. Of course, the way this conversation should have gone was actually something like this... The version you are about to see didn't actually happen, but it sure should have...

235 INT. COSTA'S COFFEE - DAY

235

As before, Alex sits opposite Kirsten. The vanilla frescato is still untouched.

KIRSTEN

Woo, my heart's pounding...

(beat)

Right. This is going to be tough. Look, you know we haven't been getting on lately, and you know how busy I've been with work and uni, and -

ALEX

(interrupts)

You want to break up with me?

KIRSTEN

(beat)

Yeah. To be honest, I went off you after a couple of months but I just never got round to doing anything about it. I've actually realised that I should have been with the guy I liked before you came along.

ALEX

You... what?

KIRSTEN

See, the thing is, you want to settle down, and I don't. I'm still too busy finding my freedom again after so long with Drew, and you wanted this to be a lot more serious than I did.

ALEX

But...

KIRSTEN

And as for telling me you loved me, well...

(laughs)

It wasn't like that at all, was it.

ALEX

I thought...

KIRSTEN

Things went off the boil before Whitby and never got any better, which was when I realised I should have been with Malcolm all along.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX
I tried to talk to you! You
wouldn't tell me what was wrong!

KIRSTEN
(shrugs)
Didn't know how to. We can still be
friends, though.

ALEX
We're... what?

KIRSTEN
Yeah, I mean, I'm going to hook up
with Malcolm and I don't want to
hurt you by it, so if we stay
friends that'll be best for all of
us.

Alex looks down for a moment, trying to take in all these
horrible revelations.

He then looks up, fire in his eyes. Standing and throwing the
table to one side, he balls up his fists and pulls them back
against his side, a ball of blue energy forming.

It crackles and rumbles as Alex struggles to contain it,
before with a cry he unleashes it fully at Kirsten.

ALEX
HA-DO-KEN!!

The energy ball hits Kirsten and she explodes into flames.

CUT TO:

The scene as before. No fireballs, no death.

ALEX (cont'd)
Well... I mean... we'll...

He slumps forward and bangs his head on the table. He starts
to thunk his head as Kirsten gets up and walks away.

Alex is lost in his thoughts. We watch him for a few moments
as he contemplates what happened.

MUSIC - 'Sandpit' by Curve.

ALEX
So that's what should have
happened.

(MORE)

ALEX (cont'd)

She dumped me because she'd decided she was with the wrong guy, but took several long, painful months to get around to telling me about it. Something I am not amazingly sympathetic about.

(beat)

I suppose when I sit down and think about it all, my High Fidelity journey has managed to achieve a few things. I put things to rest with Scarlet and Claire, I'm on speaking terms with Tara after we managed to talk to each other about what had happened, I've left Amber firmly in the past after telling her what I thought of her, although I did have Amber's new boyfriend e-mailing me the other day to complain about said thoughts, and demanding that I meet up with him to 'explain myself.'

(beat)

Twat. Shiri and I had a long conversation that ended with me taking responsibility for badmouthing her, and while we know we can't be friends again there's no more bad blood between us. Alicia, well, she's gone back to America and into the arms of her loverboy, and she seems to have decided that the way things went was actually much different, and I'm a... now what did she call me? Oh yeah, a 'fucking, lying wanker,' and a 'skinny, ambitiousless loser.' Thanks, Alicia. Luckily, she started sending me some sniping e-mails again after Kirsten dumped me, so I was able to deliver the greatest parting shot known to man... 'Fuck you. No, wait, did that already. Well, how about that?'

(laughs)

I know that was petty, but damn it felt good! Gemma and I, well, we're not exactly bosom buddies but we can have a laugh together. She was the one girl who seemed to get me the best out of anyone, and I think that's why we're still friendly. Well, as friendly as I can be with someone when I've done so many evil things with her friends...

(MORE)

236 CONTINUED: (2)

ALEX (cont'd)

I mean, Gemma was forced to stick up for her friends when all this stuff started flying around, accusing me of making things up about what happened between me and Shiri and me and Alicia, but that's more out of a sense of duty than anything else.

(beat)

Selma I see sometimes while I'm out on lunch, but she got sick of me and I can't say I blame her. She's back at uni studying law and by all appearances doing just fine. Best of luck to her.

237 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - MORNING

237

Alex wanders around in his dressing gown, having just woken up. His hair is scruffy and he yawns as he heads for the kitchen to make himself a cup of coffee.

ALEX

Kirsten wants to stay friends with me, but I had to tell her that I want to keep contact down to a minimum with her for now, give myself chance to get over it all. The spark may have been gone from our relationship for a lot of it, but that doesn't mean I'm not sad that we couldn't work it out.

(beat)

Of course, just over two weeks after she left me, Kirsten got together with that guy she'd been after before I came on the scene. Now whether her breaking up with me was a coincidence, or just very convenient, I haven't worked out yet. When I saw them out together for the first time I got the standard gut wrench, which I was prepared for, but I didn't say much to her all night. As any normal person would.

(pours some milk into two little bowls for the cats)

The fact that she bitched about that, saying I was immature for not being able to 'deal with it' so soon afterwards told me a lot about her.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

237 CONTINUED:

237

ALEX (cont'd)

I'm sure she didn't mean to hurt me, but the fact is she did, and getting together with a new guy so soon afterwards just shows a massive lack of respect for me.

(beat)

So that leaves me here. Single again, and a little wary of getting involved again for a while. I mean, I still jump through hoops every time a fit ginger girl walks by, or if I'm out and I see a cool goth babe wander past me, but I think I'm going to do the right thing and stay out of the loop for a while. I've made a lot of important realisations about my life over the past few months and I need to sit down and think about how to act on them. Maybe then I can work on that happy ending.

(beat)

Someone once told me that when it comes to the pains of the heart, then every day it hurts a little less, till you wake up one day and it doesn't hurt at all.

(beat)

I hope they were right. If they weren't, well...

238 INT. ALEX'S PLACE - DAY

238

Alex is getting ready to leave for work.

ALEX

The Rolling Stones once sang 'You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you might find you get what you need.' Wise words indeed, and I intend to make it my new life philosophy.

He leaves and we stay inside the flat as he shuts and locks the door.

239 EXT. WOLVERHAMPTON CITY CENTRE - STREET - DAY

239

Alex is walking along the city streets on his way to work.
MUSIC - 'You Can't Always Get What You Want' by The Rolling Stones.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

I know I've probably not done much more than catalogue my love life from one disaster to the next. But I know I've learned a lot about myself from doing it, so maybe you can too. Try it. Get a copy of 'High Fidelity,' read it, then do the same with your life, especially if you've just come out of a broken relationship, and even if you haven't. Look back over what you've been through over the years, see if there were lessons you should have learned but didn't, things you'd do differently if they happened to you again and if there's anything, anything at all that can help you make the next thing you get into be one that works out, well, then you've done the right thing. I'm about done with my story now, so it's up to all of you to finish yours. I'm still holding out for a happy ending one day, but now I feel a bit more optimistic that I won't make a mess of it when I get the chance.

He gets to the door of the shop and pauses to say the last words before he goes inside.

ALEX (cont'd)

Thanks for listening.

The shop door closes and we stay outside.

END CREDITS roll as the music continues to play.

FADE OUT: