***The Potential Break-Up***

“You can't keep hiding in here, Aaron.”

“I know man, I know.”

“So just do it already!”

“I just can’t, Ronnie.”

The smell of the locker room is starting to get stronger and stronger. I don’t know how much more I can take of this, but she’s out there. Waiting for me. And once she finds me, she’s going to smile and play with her curly hair and lure me in. It's been almost two hours and Ronnie hasn’t stopped reminding me that I can't hide from my girlfriend in here forever. This is stupid, I know. Why am I still in here? I have to do it. I have to do it now.

“That’s it! I’m leaving!” Ronnie yells at me.

“Just hold on for a sec Ron, what if she’s outside the door? What am I supposed to say? I’m not ready yet!”

I had more than enough time to get ready and breakup with my girlfriend. I just haven’t found the right words yet. Don't get me wrong, I care about Alexandra. We've been dating for seven months now. Eight in two weeks and I know she probably has something fancy already planned, which requires me to dress accordingly. She's usually excited about these things, as for me, not so much. Monthly anniversaries are not really on my to-do list. It's just not me. Alexandra is just not for me.

I met Alex in my Science class, we first started exchanging notes and then all of a sudden we exchanged numbers. It was early November and Mr. Low assigned Alex and me to be science partners. We sat together and discussed ideas, (she mostly spoke) and I kept staring at the white ribbon tied in her hair. She could obviously tell, and then told me that her grandmother bought it for her on her 13th birthday. At first I thought it was kind of lame, considering the fact that she’s definitely not a thirteen year old anymore. But then she tugged on the ribbon, and put her hair back in place, and suddenly I found it adorable. She leaned over me to explain the project, and she smelled like cream soda. I could tell she enjoyed Science unlike the rest of the girls in my class.

Then the bell suddenly rang and she was gone. I never wanted Monday to arrive so soon before. That weekend I couldn’t stop thinking of her. I knew I wanted to know more about her. Well I thought I did.

There was definitely more to Alex than her impressive passion for Science and the smell of her hair. Let's just say… She`s the type to bottom up the last button on your collared shirt, even after telling her repeatedly you don’t like it that way. She always wants to fix me up. It’s so annoying. Alex is barely ever sad for God's sake; she’s cheery 24/7 and that scares me. I don't even think I can make it to eight months with Alex.

"Dude, c'mon. We've already missed first period, and second is almost over. I'm definitely not missing lunch so you can hide in here all day." Ronnie gives me an annoyed stare.

"What am I supposed to do? As soon as I come out, Alex will find me, and I don’t know how to tell her yet. I'm not good with this break up junk." I shrug back.

"Well, you can’t keep avoiding her. Just dump the girl. It won't be the end of the world, Aaron."

Ronnie thinks it's so simple. Just dump her and you'll never to have to face her again. On the contrary, I will have to face her, every day in the school hallways. It's just not that easy. Alex is way too nice. I even already met her parents, and they loved me. Mostly because of the formal clothing I once wore to dinner that Alex obviously picked out. They think I’m a “gentleman” and a “decent guy” fit for their daughter. What if she doesn’t take it too well and cries to all of her friends, including her parents? The whole school would hate me. I’ve tried breaking up with her for the past two weeks, but I’ve already guessed the names people will call me after I do break up with her, and it’s made it much harder for me to go through with it.

*Awful Aaron, Arrogant Aaron* or even *Aaron the Asshole.*

I wouldn't be able to get through high-school being known as the jerk that broke Alexandra's heart.

Ronnie interrupts my thoughts and threatens to do the dirty work for me if I don’t.

“I’m seriously leaving this time Aaron, and if I see Alex, I’m going to tell her you don’t want anything to do with her anymore, since you don’t have the balls enough to do it.”

“Seriously, Ron, that’s not funny! Don’t you dare say anything to Alex.”

Ronnie means well, we’ve been bros since preschool, but he’s not the *gentle* type. He’ll say all the wrong things to Alex and It has to be done right. It has to come from me. But unfortunately Ronnie’s right, I can’t keep hiding. I need to finally break up with Alexandra. Today.

The lunch bell rings right on time, and Ronnie literally grabs me by my shirt to ensure I don’t run the other way and back out of this. We walk towards the cafeteria, and the first thing I see is Alexandra’s bright blue hoodie and the back of her golden hair with her white ribbon in it and I almost immediately duck down to be unseen.

“Get up you coward, she already saw you. Now go!”

I step forward, and as I look back I see Ronnie laughing to himself, clearly finding amusement in all of this. I breathe out, fix my shoulders and head towards my soon to be ex-girlfriend. Almost 100% confident.

She turns around as if she heard me coming and leaves her table of friends to approach me.

*Hey, Alex, I’ve been meaning to tell you that I’m not sure if I’m ready for this relationship thing. Maybe it’s best if we gave each other some space, and took time for ourselves. You’ve been a great girlfrien;, it’s definitely not you. It’s me. I think it’s best if we break up, I hope you understand.*

Yeah, that’s what I planned to say, but instead I choked on my own words and could barely even say hi. She knew something was wrong and asked me if I was okay, but I straight up lied and said I was sick and couldn’t pick up her calls last night.

She gave a sympathetic but unpleased smile, and I already felt like a jerk for lying to her.

“Uh, maybe… We can catch up at the library tonight? Around 6-ish if you want?” I blurted out stupidly. Her smile suddenly turned to a joyful one. She agreed and walked away before I could say anything else. I’m hopeless! “Pathetic” just might as well be written on my forehead.

I walked home with knots in my stomach. What is wrong with me? Why can’t I just be a cold-hearted dude and break up with her already? I headed home with my head down towards the pavement, then unexpectedly a hand brushed my shoulder, and I turned around to see the last person I wanted to face right now. Ronnie. Ready to mock and torment me, as if I haven’t suffered enough.

“Hey dude, where you goin’ in such a hurry?”

“Home, Ron, to hide my humiliation.” I’m so stupid. I sigh.

“Gosh, you’re such a girl. Look, here’s what you have to do.”

Ronnie always seems to have these solutions that unsurprisingly tend to fail. But I listened anyways. After all, I am desperate. I need to get rid of Alex.

“Think about all things you dislike about Alex. Think of all the things that annoy you, and that should make it much easier to dump her.”

My confidence rose for a bit. Maybe he’s right. Maybe I just need to really dislike Alex, that way I can’t stand to spend another second with her. Then I thought of the possibility of Alex tearing up, and my confidence immediately decreases.

Ronnie looks at me as if he can read the fear on my face.

“You can do it man. Don’t you dare punk out again.”

I pull out my phone and begin to send a text I know I’ll regret.

*Hey, Alex… I was thinking, library at 5:00 instead? The sooner we talk, the better.*

Immediately my phone beeps and Alex replies back.

*Sure, can’t wait! See you there. – Alexandra*

Suddenly, I just can’t wait to get this over with.

It’s already 4:30, and Ronnie has to go. We pass by his block, and before I turn the opposite direction, he nods at me, and says good luck. I’m not sure if he means it or not, but I take it anyway and head towards the library. It was 20 minutes before five and I knew I’d get there before Alex, so I figured I might as well sit and practice the perfect break up speech.

I enter the library with my stomach less heavy and begin to take Ron’s not so brilliant but worth the try advice. I start to picture Alex as if she was right beside me, going on about the boring things she learned in class or the pre-planned dates she’s already arranged as usual. Alex loves to pick out my clothes, she has a very loud taste and enjoys being seen. However, I would rather not. She’s always begging me to throw my white shoelaces in the wash because she says they look untidy and unpleasant. She says yellow is a good color on me; I happen to disagree. She never lets me sulk without giving me a positive pep-talk. She hates when I chew loudly because she think it’s embarrassing and she definitely lacks a sense of humor. One day she wore this purple hat to school and I said she looked like Loonette the Clown. She got very upset. It was just a joke, but she clearly didn’t take it well. I continued my list, and then noticed Alex walk right in. She spotted me then walked towards me with a smile.

Her teeth are very white. They’re whiter than mine. Whenever she smiles, people smile with her. It’s so radiant, it’s hard not to smile back. I try my best to avoid smiling, but then her curled hair catches my attention. Alex always takes a shower before she goes anywhere, and I could tell she just finished one by the wave pattern of her hair. It was so shiny and flowed perfectly. She walked closer to me and started to fix the white ribbon in her hair. She always did that when she was nervous. I realized that when we were just science partners. She’ll get shy and play with her hair, or she’ll talk really fast in this really innocent voice. Alex is always talking. Her voice is actually more fascinating than it is annoying. She says the most endearing and clever things. I love listening to her. When Alex is silent it’s the most dreadful thing ever. It’s like a piece of joy is being taken away from you. When she speaks, she lights you up. She’s literally always happy. Happy Alex. I don’t know where she gets the courage and strength to be so cheerful all the time, but it’s impressive. The way she tries to make everyone else just as happy is amazing. She’s kind of wonderful.

“Aaron… Aaron? Aaron, are you okay?”

I take the goofy look off my face and I’m instantly drawn to her eyes.

They always sparkle in the library. They sparkle in every room actually. I can’t keep my eyes off of her. She’s wearing this really bright turquoise T-shirt, and only she can pull off something like that. Her entire personality is vibrant.

“You wanted to talk to me about something Aaron? I’m here… What did you want to talk about?” She politely cuts me off from my own thoughts.

*This is it Aaron. You can do it. Dump her already, you idiot.*

“Yeah, I’ve been really meaning to talk to you about something,” I pull myself together and continue.

“I just really couldn’t hold this any longer, and I… Iii-I-I,”

I stutter on my words and at this very moment, I knew I was a weak man. She fidgets with her white ribbon again and I can’t resist but stare at her once more. She stares back at me with concerned eyes and I let out a heart-breaking sigh.

“I… I miss you, Alexandra.” 2,140 words