

CHANCES

A short film written by

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EXT. JOHNSON HOME - DAY

A modest suburban home.

BRUCE, 45, a stern man of few words, stands at his mailbox.

Across the street, a BOY catches a football and throws it back to his FATHER.

Bruce studies this for a beat. A wistfulness in his eyes. A single envelope in his hand.

As he moves to the front door, we linger on the front porch and a row of three chairs that sit empty.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - DAY

Bruce holds the envelope. His address is handwritten. He studies it briefly before he opens it. Inside:

A POSTCARD.

BRUCE

(reads)

"You're formally invited to the wedding of Alexander Johnson and Caleb Novak. February 9, 2020, 3 in the afternoon".

Bruce is dumbfounded.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - KITCHEN - DAY [MOMENTS LATER]

Bruce is on the phone with his daughter, SAMANTHA.

BRUCE (INTO PHONE)

Have you talked to your brother recently?

SAMANTHA (OVER PHONE)

Not since last week.

BRUCE (INTO PHONE)

He sent me a wedding invitation and I think it's some kind of mistake.

SAMANTHA (OVER PHONE)

Why would it be a mistake?

A beat.

BRUCE (INTO PHONE)
You know why.

SAMANTHA (OVER PHONE)
No, I don't.

Samantha hangs up.

BRUCE (INTO PHONE)
Hello? Sam?

Bruce walks to the kitchen table and reads the invitation to himself one more time.

FLASHBACK: EXT. JOHNSON HOME, ONE YEAR EARLIER - DAY

Front porch. Bruce sits in a lawn chair and nurses a cold beer. ALEX, 26, stands at the front door.

BRUCE
How long have you known?

ALEX
A few weeks.

BRUCE
And you're giving me three days to say goodbye?

ALEX
It's San Francisco. It's not like I'm moving to the other side of the country.

BRUCE
What about Thanksgiving? Christmas?

ALEX
We'll figure it out.

BRUCE
Figure it out? You wouldn't have pulled this shit with your Mom if she was still around and I don't know why you think I deserve it.

ALEX
It's a great opportunity for us.

BRUCE
It's a great opportunity for Caleb. You don't have a job yet.

Bruce and Alex hold a look. It's one of mutual contempt.

ALEX
Why do you hate him?

BRUCE
I don't hate him.

ALEX
Are you sure about that?

BRUCE
You shouldn't have to put your life on hold for a guy that you met eight months ago. Stay here. Maybe go back to school. Take the time to explore your options now.

ALEX
What options?

Bruce doesn't respond.

ALEX
Did you know Caleb's more afraid to show affection in front of you than he is in public?

BRUCE
How is that my problem?

ALEX
You look at him like an intruder.

BRUCE
He's not right for you. That's just the way I feel.
(beat)
I mean, Monica was a perfectly good girl.

ALEX
(shouts)
Monica cheated on me.

That's it.

Alex steps down from the porch. Bruce follows.

BRUCE
Where are you going?

ALEX

When I came out and told you I was bisexual, did you even believe me?

BRUCE

I didn't care. I still don't.

ALEX

Then, what's the fucking problem?

BRUCE

Whatever you choose to do on a Friday night is your business. If Caleb was a one-off and that was it, I wouldn't need to say anything. But you have a shot at normal life and you're making a choice that makes that really hard.

Alex is left wounded.

ALEX

I'm an embarrassment to you?

BRUCE

No, you're my son.

ALEX

Really? Because I don't feel like one.

BRUCE

You don't understand.

Alex stares back at the house, at Bruce, then smiles to himself.

ALEX

Take care of yourself.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. KITCHEN, JOHNSON HOME - DAY

Bruce sits at the kitchen table. The invitation in front of him. He reaches for his cellphone.

He calls. It goes straight to voicemail.

Bruce walks to the cabinet, pulls out a bottle of Ibuprofen, takes two pills and sips from a glass of water.

He thinks. A mixture of anxiety and regret line his face.

Suddenly, his cellphone RINGS. INCOMING CALL: "ALEX JOHNSON."

For a moment, he hesitates. How could he even begin to apologize? How could his son truly forgive him?

BRUCE (INTO PHONE)

(answers)

Hello, son.

(beat)

How are you?

THE END