

**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, opens his mailbox and finds a single envelope.

As he walks back inside, we linger on the front porch and the row of three chairs that sits 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. You're gonna have to talk to him about that.

Samantha hangs up.

BRUCE (INTO PHONE)

Hello?

Bruce picks up the invitation from the kitchen table. He reads it 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