

BROKEN HOMES

FADE IN:

A BLACK SCREEN.

White text fades in:

"This story is inspired by true events."

After a beat, the text fades out.

FADE TO:

INT. FUNERAL HOME CHAPEL - DAY

Around 50 people are gathered in the stuffy chapel of a funeral home. Some people are fanning themselves with brochures. There are tears and stern faces. Portraits of the deceased, MONA and ABE, are propped up on easels in the front. A cane is leaning against the portrait of Abe, and a red clown's nose is hanging over the top right corner of the frame.

In the front row sits LILLIAN, their daughter. In her 30s, Caucasian, brown hair, pony tail, freckles. She is attractive, hardened by life, and visibly tired.

Behind a lectern at the front of the chapel stands ALEJANDRO/ALEX, Hispanic, short hair, tall, athletic, also in his 30s. Without using any notes, he addresses the people in the audience. He is confident, a talented public speaker.

ALEX

...to be judged by what we leave
behind. It is what they would have
wanted more than anything else. What
both Abe and Mona have given me, what
they have taught me, is what really
matters in life.

He looks at Lillian.

ALEX (cont'd)

I remember the first day I met both
of them. We drove up in this old
beat-up Chevy that my uncle had given
me. I had nothing, no degree, no job,
and the shirt I was wearing that day,
well, that was a Goodwill shirt.

(MORE)

ALEX (cont'd)

Abe didn't care about any of that. He didn't say a word about that beat-up Chevy, the shirt I was wearing, not a word about what that brown kid from the other side of town is doing dating his daughter. Because the thing he cared about most in others is whether they are good people or not. That's all that mattered to him.

(Pause)

Thank you for everything, dad. I will miss you. Always. (in Spanish) *Que descanse en paz.*

INT. SHRINK'S OFFICE - DAY

Lillian is sitting in a modern egg style armchair, one knee pulled towards her chest. The scene is captured by a close-up low- or knee-level shot from the left. We see details of her hands, face, hair. The background is out of focus. In the blurriness, we can make out a man in a suit. His legs crossed, holding a notepad, taking notes.

LILLIAN

The eulogy. The fucking eulogy. Everyone loved it. And it was beautiful.

A beat.

LILLIAN (cont'd)

Only that it was entirely about him.

INT. FUNERAL HOME CHAPEL - DAY

Alex has just finished his eulogy. The audience is moved. Some people are crying. Alex walks back to his seat. An OLD MAN puts his hand on his shoulder, nods approvingly, his lips miming a 'Well done'.

LILLIAN (V.O.)

And then it was my turn.

Lillian is walking up to the lectern, takes out her phone, starts reading off of the screen.

LILLIAN

I also want to say a few words about my parents. Forgive me for- I just- I'm not good at this. I didn't- I just didn't have much time.

She trembles. This isn't going well.

LILLIAN (cont'd)

My dad grew up in the Bronx and after school, he became an optometrist and joined the Navy.

FLASH:

INT. A BAR IN NEW YORK — DAY — FLASHBACK

It's the late 1970s. ABE walks into a bar in Soho, wearing a black suit and tie. MONA is standing by the bar, talking to a friend, laughing, drink in hand. Their eyes meet. They smile.

LILLIAN (V.O.)

I always pictured him wearing a suit and tie when they first met. Or should I say - when he first laid eyes on mum.

(laughs nervously)

FLASH:

EXT. FAMILY HOME — DAY — FLASHBACK

Abe, again in suit and tie, with thick-rimmed glasses and a 1980s mustache, is standing next to Mona, outside the house they will be moving in to. She is leaning against his shoulder, her long, wailing hair flowing over a summery dress. It is a beautiful summer day. Their eyes gleaming with joy.

LILLIAN (V.O.)

They were quite the couple then. My dad, glasses, always well dressed, with an impressive mustache, and she this tall, gorgeous Irish artist.

FLASH:

INT. A SUNROOM — DAY — FLASHBACK

Mona, visibly pregnant, working on a beautiful painting in a light-flooded sunroom. Some of the windows are open. Outside, trees are gently moving in a light breeze. Abe is standing in the background, leaning against the door frame, taking in the scene. What a lucky guy.

LILLIAN (V.O.)

In many ways, they were the perfect match. He saw her in a whole new light, and she painted him a beautiful picture of their future.

We are back in the chapel. Lillian laughs nervously, scans the audience for a reaction.

Nothing.

Crickets.

LILLIAN

Dad really liked puns. He was always seeing the funny side of things. And she was so passionate about color, she once tried to paint a rainbow on a black cat.

(pauses, looks at audience)

They say hindsight is always 20/20. I wish I had known. I just wish I could have been there more.

Silence. She puts her phone away. Walks back to her seat in the front row.

INT. FUNERAL HOME RECEPTION HALL — DAY

People are gathered, drinking coffee.

WOMAN

(to Alex)

This was the most beautiful eulogy I have ever heard. Lilly is so lucky to have you.

ALEX

Thank you. I'm just trying to help, you know? Be there for her.

On the other side of the room, AUNT ANNIE is hugging Lillian.

AUNT ANNIE

(to Lilly)

Losing both of them in the same week,
I can only imagine what you are going
through. If you need anything, and I
mean anything, you let me know,
honey, yes? You must be very proud of
Alex! That eulogy he wrote - it
really meant something.

A beat. Then:

AUNT ANNIE (cont'd)

Yours was also nice.

MELANIE, 30s, short blond hair, a slim figure and a warm
smile, is pulling Lillian away.

MELANIE

(to Aunt Annie)

Sorry for interrupting, I just need
to ask her something about the dinner
later. They've been calling a million
times.

She is pulling Lillian away from the crowd.

MELANIE (cont'd)

(to Lillian)

Are you okay? How you feeling?

LILLIAN

I'm fine. It's just all a bit much.

The two hug.

MELANIE

That eulogy- What the fuck was that?
The poor Latino kid with the Goodwill
shirt, are you fucking kidding me?
For a second there I thought you were
gonna start screaming.

LILLIAN

(quietly)

It was a nice eulogy. I mean, that's
all he worked on these past few days.

A beat. Her gaze directed towards the floor.

LILLIAN (cont'd)
I was up until midnight last night,
going through their stuff, trying to
find some stupid insurance papers.
And then-- I have no idea how to
write a eulogy for one parent, never
mind two. I had like half an hour
this morning.

A beat, then, with a lot of sadness:

LILLIAN (cont'd)
I really wish I could have done a
better job. With this. With my
marriage. With being a daughter.

INT. SHRINK'S OFFICE - DAY

Lillian shifts in the chair, tugging a strand of hair behind
her ear.

LILLIAN
And just like that, it's done. Your
parents, the two people who raised
you, gone. Except they're never
really gone, are they?

A beat.

LILLIAN (cont'd)
I have some good childhood memories.

INT. FAMILY HOME - DAY (LILLIAN, AGE 10)

Early morning. Lillian is jumping down the stairs in her
pajamas, running outside into the backyard. A few seconds
later, she comes running back in.

LILLIAN
Mom! Dad! Come and look! There's
carrots! Carrots!

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mona and Abe are still in bed. It's the weekend. Lilly's
voice is echoing in the background.

MONA

(to Abe)

You know one day we'll have to tell her.

ABE

Maybe. In a decade or so.

MONA

And then she'll have trust issues for the rest of her life!

Abe takes a beat to think about it, then shrugs.

ABE

Eeeeh...what can you do?

Both are laughing. LILLIAN opens the door, jumps onto the bed. Very, very excited.

LILLIAN

MOM! DAD! Get up! Come oooooon, you need to look at this.

Abe and Mona getting out of bed. Looking at each other, knowingly.

ABE

Alright, alright. What's all this noise about, huh?

EXT. FAMILY HOME – BACKYARD – DAY

The three are standing in front of a small, raised flower bed. Carrots greens are visible.

LILLIAN

(points at flower bed)

Look! I made carrots! They grew over night!

Abe and Mona are smiling.

MONA

Oh wow! That's great! Well done, Lilly! Now we can have salad, and carrot juice. You know what carrot juice is really good for? Your eyes!

Mona jokingly pretends to poke Lillian's eyes. Laughter.

MONTAGE:

Lillian riding a bike through the neighborhood. On a beach, riding a pony. Practicing the violin. With her friends at the local pool. On a plane for the first time, excited. Watching *The Muppet Christmas Carol* with her parents, singing along to 'Scrooge'.
END MONTAGE

INT. A DINER — DAY (LILLIAN, AGE 12)

Abe, Mona and Lillian are sitting at a table. Abe is drinking a glass of water. Mona's gaze fixated at the floor. Lillian is drawing on a place mat.

LILLIAN (V.O., ADULT VOICE)

But there were always cracks.
Hairline cracks. Too thin to notice.

A waitress approaches, carrying a jug of ice water.

WAITRESS

Y'all want some more water?

ABE

Well, bring it on. Can't say no to free water.

The waitress tops up his glass. Lillian looks up from her drawing.

LILLIAN

How many glasses did you have, dad?

ABE

That would be number 5 now.

WAITRESS

Well, someone must be thirsty today.

ABE

For sure am, ma'am. For sure am.

Polite laughter. Ceiling fans are running. It is a hot day. The waitress puts down the jug, takes out her notepad, grabs the pen she has pinned behind her ear.

WAITRESS
Are y'all ready to order then?

ABE
(looking at the menu)
Yes. I'll have the chilli, but
without any cheese or sour cream,
please.

The waitress nods, writes down the order.

WAITRESS
Got it, chilli, no cheese or cream.
And for you, young lady?

LILLIAN
Maccaroni and cheese, please.

She is looking at her dad.

LILLIAN (cont'd)
Oh, and can I get a strawberry
milkshake?

Abe nods. The waitress is taking notes.

WAITRESS
Okay, mac and cheese, and a
strawberry milkshake. And for you,
ma'am?

Mona isn't reacting. Something is off. She keeps staring at the floor to the left of where her husband is sitting, her head slightly tilted.

Abe is gently touching Mona's leg.

ABE
Honey, have you decided what you want
to eat?

Mona looks around, surprised, as if she had just been woken up.

MONA

What? Oh, yes. I'll do a burger and fries.

WAITRESS

Burger and fries, coming up.

ABE

And I might need some more water soon.

All are laughing.

EXT. LILLIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL - DAY (LILLIAN, AGE 18)

It's the early 2000s, the end of a school day. Students are leaving the school building. Lillian and two of her friends are walking home. They live locally.

MELANIE

It kind of makes me sad that these are our last couple of weeks together. Much as I hate this place, but I'll miss you, guys. Like, a lot!

FRIEND

I'll still be around! Community college, baby!

The friend and Melanie fist-bump.

A car is driving past. Three boys inside, windows down, Blink 182 playing.

FRIEND (cont'd)

Lilly is the only one who can't wait to get out of here.

Lillian is jokingly putting on airs.

LILLIAN

Well, ladies, please do enjoy your measly 'school'. I have a career to build, money to earn. You wouldn't understand.

She flicks back a strand of hair. Her friends are body checking Lillian. Laughter all around.