

Let's rewind

A man enters an apartment, slowly pacing through the hallway and observing every little trinket scattered on the shelves, as if committing everything to memory. Two women show him the way to the living room, where the Lumineer notices the older woman in a white hospital bed, life support devices rhythmically beating in time with her vitals.

„Is this her?“ the man asks.

„Yes, this is Maria,“ Lily answers.

„Well, we best get started right away, right?“

„Yes, I agree,“ Sophia says.

„I'm going to need both of you to sit down at your mother's side and hold her hands.“

The sisters comply.

„Now you're going to have to close your eyes.“

„Is it going to hurt?“ Sophia asks.

„A bit, considering this is your first time, but don't worry, it's only a few seconds.“

Sophia closes her eyes wearily and gestures for her sister to do the same.

„Well, now, here we go.“

The man extends his hand over the mother's forehead, his eyes beginning to glow like two little stars. As for the sisters, the darkness of their eyelids soon begins to swirl in front of them. Images and echoes appear, and the ground beneath them suddenly disappears. The images in front of them begin to clear and before they know it, they stand in front of an old family home somewhere in the country. It's an Old West-style manor, with a dark brown porch and window shutters. The second story is held up by stone support beams.

„Where the hell are we?“ Sophia asks.

„You're in a memo...“

Sophia screams as the Lumineer silently appears behind her.

„JESUS! Don't do that again.“

„My apologies. As I was saying, you are in a memory, your mother's memory.“

„So we survived, huh? We're inside Mom's head?“ Lily thinks.

„It looks like it,“ Sophia answers.

„Wait, I know this place... Lily isn't this grandma's and grandpa's old house?“

„Yeah, you're right. It is. I haven't seen this place in so long.“

„We haven't been here since we were 8. Why are we even here?“

Sophia looks at the Lumineer.

„I don't know. I sensed this is one of your mother's strongest memories, so we came here first,“ the Lumineer explains.

„What should we do, Soph?“

„Go inside, I guess.“

The sisters both walk up to the front door. To their surprise, it's unlocked, and they enter.

Inside, the hallway leading to the living room is quiet. In the living room there's a big shelf filled with encyclopedias, novels, children's stories, etc.

„When was the last time you read something longer than a news paragraph on your phone?“
Lily wonders.

„I really can't remember,“ Sophia answers.

As they approach the dining room, they realise the radio is playing, and there are kids in the hallway singing along and dancing.

„Cousin Sarah!“ Sophia yells.

Lily smiles at Sophia as they approach the dining room.

„This is really it,“ Sophia says.

„I haven't seen our family together like this since I was five, I think?“ Lily recalls.
„Tell me about it. Let alone to have them actually talk instead of having their phones out,“
Sophia laughs.

Lily thinks about her own husband and son back home, and how distant all of them are compared to this. Her husband is always working at his computer, she's so focused on caring for her mom and her son is always in his room on his phone. She cannot remember the last time she sat with her own family like this, and her eyes start to tear up.

„I have an announcement to make!“ a woman at the table shouts.
„Oh my god, that's Mom!“ Lily says.

The woman looks at the whole group with an excited smile.

„I'm pregnant.“

The room erupts in joy.

„She means us, doesn't she?“ Lily says.
„Of course she does,“ Sophia says.
„You said this is her strongest memory?“ Sophia asks the Lumineer.
„Yes, it is, her emotions were the most condensed around this point. We landed here because of that.“
„So we really are her happiest memory?“ Lily asks.

The sisters both turn around back to the dining room and are shocked to see the woman staring at them. The rest of the dining table is stuck in their conversations and cheers, like a scene in a TV show put on a loop, but the woman isn't.

„What the hell?“ Sophia exclaims.
„This is a memory, I thought nothing was supposed to be able to see us,“ Lily questions.
„Well, it was supposed to be like that, but your mother's consciousness is still within one memory, that's why she's in a coma. I'm guessing we just struck the right one. “

The woman's eyes well up with tears.

„My girls, my beautiful girls,“ the woman rushes to embrace Sophia and Lily, who both hug her back.
„What are you... how are you... what are you doing here?“ their mom says in shock.
„We paid a Lumineer to help us. We just knew we had to reach you,“ Sophia says.
„What do you mean?“ their mother asks.
„Listen, Mom, I know it may seem like it, but all of this, it's not real, it's a memory. You're stuck inside your mind.“

The family in the dining room unanimously turns towards the trio.

„The time you paid for is running out,“ the Lumineer says.

„NO! No! Listen, Mom, you need to leave. Lily and I are out there, in the real world. We're waiting for you.“

„Please, Mom, come back to us!“ Lily says.

The Lumineer gives them a pat on the back, and the ground beneath the sisters' feet gives way. They are again thrown into a dark whirlwind, twisting and turning, before ending up back at the apartment.

The Lumineer left the apartment. Sophia runs to her mother's side, Lily follows suit.

„Come on Mom, wake up.“

„Please.“

The sheets rustle as the woman begins coughing.

The sisters embrace their mother.

„Breaking ribs,“ the mother says gently.