

## **LATE NIGHT MOURNINGS**

Late Night Mournings is a television drama series that depicts a Hispanic family-owned funeral home business

The series traces several of the characters over the course of years dating back to pre-Castro Cuba through the present operation of the business in Miami, Florida.

Real stories will introduce viewers to the dynamics of running a family business as well as the drama and comedy associated with the Hispanic community and its funeral customs

The series will also deal with issues such as the death care business and the role of religion in the Hispanic culture

The series will present 13 episodes of one (1) hour each

## LATE NIGHT MOURNINGS

### Original Idea and Script

Miguel A. Maspons

Third generation funeral home family

Grandson of Leopoldo E. Rivero, Founder of Rivero Funeral Homes in Havana, Cuba in 1948; exiled with family to Miami in 1963; opened Rivero Funeral Homes in Miami in 1965; sold business to Stewart Enterprises in 1994

Owner of Maspons Funeral Homes in Miami, Florida, which opened in 1997 and currently services over 700 families a year

Practicing corporate attorney at Maspons, Sellek Jacobs in Coral Gables, Florida

Graduate of Harvard University (B.S. in Sociology, 1985) and Boston College Law School (J.D. 1988)

## LATE NIGHT MOURNINGS

Viewers will meet the Perez family, which has been involved in the funeral home business since 1952 in Havana, Cuba. The prominent characters are:

**Federico "Paco" Perez** obtained the original Perez Funeral Home business as part of an "arrangement" negotiated by his mother, **Caridad "Aca" Perez** and the owner of a struggling funeral home

The "arrangement" required that Paco end his relationship with the wife of the owner of the funeral home in exchange for the transfer of ownership of the funeral home and real estate to the Perez family

Aca is the shrewd, practical, yet compassionate matriarch of the Perez family, who guides and directs the family until her death in 2001

The rest of the characters include **Julio and Maria Perez**, the children of Paco and his American-born ex-wife, **Barbara Bradley Perez**, who is the daughter of a former American diplomat who was stationed in Cuba until 1960. Barbara lives in Miami but is not involved in the family business

**Julio and Maria Perez**, who were born in Miami, Florida, are the present day owners and operators of Perez Funeral Homes. They grew up in and around the family funeral home business.

**Fr. Antonio Davila** is an excommunicated Catholic Priest and longtime family friend, who is very opinionated on issues ranging from politics to religion. Although he was born and raised in Cuba, he is of Mexican heritage as his family fled Mexico after the Mexican Revolution of 1910

**Juan Maldonado** is a friend and confidant of Paco as well as a funeral home employee with drinking and gambling issues that lead to questionable decisions

**Marta Calvo** is one of the original funeral home mourners ("Lloronas") hired by the funeral home in Miami, Florida to attend funeral viewings and grieve with families

**Elisa Santos** is the current leader of the Lloronas. Elisa created a successful, albeit illegal, local tourist bus business from funds obtained/extorted from grieving families.

## **Premise**

The show follows the family and the business from Pre-Castro Cuba through the present day. Viewers will experience scenes and events from the early years of the business in Cuba through the exile to the United States and up through the current operations in Miami, Florida.

The series depicts the dynamics of running a family business, the unknown elements of the funeral industry, the influence of religion on the death experience and the idiosyncrasies of the Hispanic culture.

## **Structure**

The series is comprised of 13 episodes of 1 hour each. The episodes are interspersed with scenes and events from Cuba in the 1950's through the present day in Miami. On one level, the series is a typical family drama. On another level, it distinguishes itself by focusing on and highlighting Hispanic customs and death care rituals, which are explored on many levels.

Each episode begins by addressing family, business, political or religious issues. These issues are often explored from the comfort of Aca's kitchen.

The series will incorporate scenery from locations in 1950's Pre-Castro Cuba and from Miami from the 1960's through the present day.

## **Major Themes**

The series focuses on the family, the business of death, the crises associated with this environment, grief, religion and the Hispanic culture.

## LATE NIGHT MOURNINGS

### Characters

#### **Caridad "Aca" Perez**

Matriarch of the Perez family

Born in the Pinar del Rio province in Cuba in 1908 to a family involved in the cigar industry. She grew up very poor

Met Jose Perez in 1926 and they married in 1927

They moved to Havana soon after they married and opened a flower shop

She and Jose had their only child Federico "Paco" Perez in 1929

Widowed in 1930 and never remarried

She took over operations of flower shop after Jose's death. Their main customers were funeral homes

Family is her main concern. Devoted her life to raising her only son

She negotiated the "transfer" of funeral home from Jose Diaz to Paco as part of "arrangement" where Paco ended his relationship with Diaz's wife

Helped Paco manage the funeral home business in Cuba and later in the United States

Exiled from Cuba in 1960 when family business was "nationalized" by Castro government

Very simple yet elegant woman; proud and practical

Small in stature but commanded respect

Not educated beyond high school but has much real world experience; common sense astute businesswoman

Lived on second floor of funeral home in Miami until her death in 2001

## **Federico "Paco" Perez**

Only son of Jose and Aca Perez

Born in Havana in 1929

Jose, his father, passed away when Paco was an infant

Brought up by Aca, who was a single mother. She was his role model and mentor

A poor student that was restless in school

Worked in family business (flower shop) throughout his early life

Delivered flowers on his bicycle as a youth and took on more responsibilities as he matured. Very mature for his age

Had few friends his age and spent most of his free time socializing with other (older) flower shop employees

Very passionate about his interests; principal interest was making money

Fiercely loyal

Relatively handsome but his most attractive qualities were his fearlessness and his outgoing personality

Made a point of dressing well despite his limited means

Attracted to older women

Involved in controversial affair with wife of Jose Diaz, owner of Diaz Funeral Home, whom he met when delivering flowers to Diaz Funeral Home

Affair ended when Aca brokered a deal in which Paco ended affair in exchange for transfer of Diaz funeral home business and real estate

He and Aca took over a failing business and grew it into one of the largest and most successful in Cuba

Met and married Barbara Bradley, daughter of American diplomat

Lost his business when Castro government "nationalized" funeral home in 1960

Remained in Cuba until 1963 hoping to regain his business. Was able to send his family to Miami in 1961 with help from his diplomat father-in-law

Exiled to United States in 1963

Worked odd jobs in Miami until he was able to open his first funeral home in 1965

He was obsessed with succeeding in United States

He and Barbara had 2 children, Julio and Maria

Divorced in late 1960's and never remarried

Turned over business to Julio and Maria in 2002 after Aca's death but remained involved

**Julio Perez**

First-born child of Paco and Barbara Bradley

Born in 1960 in Cuba and emigrated with his mother in 1961

Spent much of his youth at funeral home

Very quiet but organized and efficient

Lacks Paco's passion and personality

Educated at finest private schools in Miami and attended local college

Initially not interested in working in family business

Studied engineering in college and first job after college was at aviation repair business

Joined family business after company he worked for relocated out of state

Obtained funeral director's license at local college

Married to Esther Estevez in 1985 and they have 2 children, Mayra (1987) and Barbara (1989)

Lives modestly

Very conservative (socially, politically and economically)

Very close to his mother, Barbara Bradley, who also lives in Miami and divorced Paco in late 1960's



**Maria Perez**

Second child of Paco and Barbara

Born in 1964 in Miami after family exiled from Cuba

Rebellious child who always questioned authority

Very close to Aca but not particularly close to her mother, Barbara or Paco

Attended finest private schools In Miami but constantly in trouble

Attracted to "bad boys" throughout her teenage years

Very intelligent but not motivated in school

After high school, she attended junior college where she studied business

At the insistence of Aca, she obtained her funeral director's license and began working in funeral home

Fascinated by embalming

Never married although involved in many relationships

In the family business, she is constantly challenging the traditional ways of running a funeral home

After Paco decided to "retire" from the funeral home, at Aca's insistence, she assumed primary responsibility for the funeral home business

Has a decent relationship with Julio but does not like his conservative style

**Juan Maldonado**

Born in Cuba in 1945

Left Cuba as a Pedro Pan child in the early 1960's

First job in Miami was as an attendant at the funeral home and eventually became manager overseeing staff

Lives life "hard"

Divorced twice with no children

Heavy drinker and small-time gambler

Despite faults, considered pseudo-family member of Perez family

Frequent visitor to Aca's home at the funeral home

Lives well beyond his means

Becomes "close" with Elisa Santos, current leader of the Lloronas, and provides her with information regarding deceased clients

**Fr. Antonio Davila**

Born in 1933 in Havana to family of Mexican descent

Became a Catholic priest in 1957

Passionate and opinionated on all topics, particularly politics and religion

Was excommunicated by Catholic Church for refusing to leave Cuba after Cuban Revolution

Joined the resistance against the Castro regime and was caught and jailed

Was released from prison in early 1970's and came to Miami

Despite being excommunicated, he wears his clerics every day

Hired by Paco and Aca as "spiritual advisor" to funeral home

Daily visitor to Aca's apartment where they would debate political and religious topics

**Marta Calvo**

Born in Havana in 1940

Engaged to a young Cuban policeman in late 1950's, who was arrested and imprisoned during Cuban revolution

Left Cuba in 1960 and lived in Miami until her death in 2005

Aspiring actress in Cuba

Very attractive in her youth and remained an elegant woman as she aged

Despite limited economic resources always made enough money to survive

Worked at beauty salon in Havana where she met Aca

Aca hired her to be one of the original professional mourners (Lloronas)

Recruited other Lloronas

**Elisa Santos**

Born in 1969 in Miami to Cuban-born parents

Tall, lean and very attractive

Always used her beauty to manipulate and control

Attended acting school after graduating from high school

Was recruited at acting school by Marta to become a Llorona, who became a surrogate mother to her

Worked with and reported to Juan Maldonado in Llorona program and they had a brief romantic relationship

Became aware of Juan's gambling issues and used this information to obtain personal information about family of deceased in order to extort money

Opened a Miami tour bus business where she has laundered much of the money that she has extorted from the families at the funeral home

PILOT SCRIPT

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

Slowly scanning a street in the 1940's in Havana. Cuba, well-dressed men and women are walking along a busy street as classic American cars drive by. Focusing on a three story office building, an elegantly dressed woman in her 40's and a young man in his early 20's are seen entering the building.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING

Two well-dressed men are seated at a table in an elaborately decorated conference room. They are reviewing documents. JOSE DIAZ looks at the other man in the room. JOSE looks nervous but also somewhat irritated.

JOSE

(in Spanish)

Guillermo, you are sure that these documents say what we want? I do not want to give that weasel (comadreja) anything more than I have to.

GUILLERMO FERNANDEZ is seated at the head of the table. He leans back in his chair, looks at JOSE and begins to speak.

GUILLERMO

(in Spanish)

Pepe, do not worry. First of all, the business has so much debt that he will be out of business in no time. I also made sure that all of the liens are attached to the property. When they do not pay, you will get your real estate back. Have I ever let you down?

There is a knock on the door.

GUILLERMO

(in Spanish)

Come in.

The door opens and a female office assistant stick her head into the office

ASSISTANT

(in Spanish)

The Perez's are here. Should I let them in?

GUILLERMO looks over at JOSE and smiles.

GUILLERMO

(in Spanish)

Yes, Maria. Please show them in.

The assistant nods as she closes the door. Several second later, the elegantly dressed woman and the young man who were seen entering the building enter the room. Both JOSE DIAZ and GUILLERMO FERNANDEZ rise from their chairs as the two individuals walk to the opposite side of the table. There are no handshakes and the only greeting from the JOSE and GUILLERMO is a polite nod to the woman. The young man moves to the end of the table and takes a seat. He is clearly uncomfortable and appears upset.

GUILLERMO FERNANDEZ directs the woman to a seat closest to the head of the table. After several awkward moments, they all take their seats. GUILLERMO picks up the documents and places them in front of the woman. He begins to speak to her as he ignores the young man.

GUILLERMO

(in Spanish)

Senora Perez, thank you for coming. The documents in front of you are in order and cover what has been agreed upon. Mr. Diaz has signed them and all we need is for your son to sign in the spaces indicated. I am sure that you will agree that there is no reason to make

this any more uncomfortable  
than necessary.

CARIDAD "ACA" PEREZ stares at GUILLERMO and then glances at JOSE  
without looking the documents. She begins to speak.

ACA

(in Spanish)  
Are these the same documents  
that you delivered to the  
flower shop yesterday?

GUILLERMO

(nods and smiles. In Spanish)  
Yes, they are exactly the  
same.

ACA looks down at the documents, slowly picks them up and  
proceeds to hand them back to GUILLERMO.

ACA

(in Spanish)  
If that is the case, then you  
will have to change them to  
accurately reflect the  
agreement.

Both GUILLERMO and JOSE squirm in their seats; noticeably  
uncomfortable. GUILLERMO looks down at the documents and begins  
to speak.

GUILLERMO

(in Spanish)  
I am not sure what you mean.  
Mr. Diaz is transferring the  
business and real estate to  
your son as we agreed. There  
is only one condition, which  
is addressed in the side  
letter. I have every reason  
to believe that you are a  
woman of your word.



ACA smiles as she looks at GUILLERMO first and then at JOSE. Slowly she begins to speak.

ACA

(in Spanish)

Mr. Fernandez, we are not wealthy or sophisticated people. Do you know that this is the first time that we have ever been inside a building as beautiful as this?

She pauses and looks around the conference room before continuing

ACA cont.

I think we all agree that although awkward, as you say, this arrangement is necessary and in everyone's best interests.

Her voice begins to rise.

ACA cont.

However, this (as she points at the documents) is not our agreement.

GUILLERMO recovers from the initial blow and looks at her sternly. He straightens his necktie and slowly leans toward her.

GUILLERMO

(in Spanish)

I do not understand. I drafted these agreements myself and they are correct. Maybe there are some words that you do not understand. I can explain them to you if this will move this along.

Again, ACA smiles before speaking. However, this time she reaches for the documents, picks them up and begins leafing through them.

ACA

(in Spanish)

Mr. Fernandez, when I said that we are not sophisticated, I did not mean that we are stupid. Our deal was very simple. We are to take over the funeral home and the real estate and assume whatever liabilities existed at that time. We did not agree to assume all of the new liabilities (she emphasizes the word "new") that you created after that time.

ACA picks up her purse and opens it slowly. She pulls out several documents as she continues to speak.

ACA cont.

For example, we did not agree to assume this second mortgage on the property that was recently recorded.

She hands the document to Fernandez as she continues to speak.

ACA cont.

We also did not agree to any of these long-term agreements that were recently signed.

She hands the additional documents to Fernandez. She then straightens up in her chair and looks back and forth at both men.

ACA cont.

As I said, we are simple people. But as Leonardo Da Vinci said, "Simplicity is

the ultimate sophistication".  
We intend to honor the terms  
of our agreement, as painful  
as it will be for my son.

She glances at the young man at the end of the table.

ACA cont.

He will sever all ties to  
Mrs. Diaz and Mr. Diaz will  
remove all of these new  
liabilities and transfer the  
assets in their appropriate  
condition.

She again glances at her son and begins to stand up. GUILLERMO  
begins to speak.

GUILLERMO

(in Spanish)

Senora Perez, I have no idea...

ACA interrupts GUILLERMO as she begins to speak to loudly.

ACA

(in Spanish)

Mr. Fernandez, this meeting  
is over. My son and I are  
leaving now. If you want this  
deal you will correct these  
documents and deliver  
accurate executed versions to  
the flower shop by the end of  
the day. If you do not, I am  
washing my hands of this and  
my son will have no further  
obligations.

She gestures to her son and begins to walk out.

ACA cont.

I trust that I have made  
myself clear.

The young man smiles for the first time as he gets up from his chair and follows his mother out of the room.

INT. COFFEE SHOP.

An attractive woman, ELISA SANTOS, is sitting at a table reading a newspaper. She has a cup of coffee in front of her. The coffee shop is busy but she looks calm. A man, OMAR VALDEZ, in his 40's walks into the shop and looks around. He spots the woman and after looking around the shop suspiciously, begins to walk toward her. She glances up and sees him. She does not acknowledge him but stares at him as he approaches her. He arrives at her table and before sitting down he again looks around the shop. She nods as he takes the seat directly in front of her. He is carrying a folder under his left arm. He places the folder in front of him on the table.

OMAR VALDEZ

I have done as you  
instructed. My lawyer drafted  
a simple confidentiality  
agreement that I will need  
you to sign before we can  
close this out.

ELISA shakes her head and looks down. She appears to be troubled by the statement. She takes a deep breath before speaking.

ELISA SANTOS

Do you think I wanted this to  
be complicated? I am so  
embarrassed by all of this. I  
have not called a lawyer  
although all of my friends  
have warned me that I needed  
to protect myself. All I  
asked for is what your father  
promised me and not a penny  
more.

She collects her purse off the floor and begins to stand up. She appears to be on the verge of tears.

ELISA cont.

Just forget it all. If all of this is going to be public anyway, I will just call a lawyer and go through the probate proceedings. I did not want it to be this way but I have no choice. I did not want to sign anything and I told you that when we met.

OMAR looks uncomfortable and grabs her arm

OMAR

Ms. Santos, I know this has been difficult for you. However, it has also been horrible for us. Can you imagine our shock when we found out that our father was involved with you ? This would kill my mother if she ever found out. We just need to make sure that when I pay you, this will be over.

She sits back down but this time she appears upset.

ELISA

I am not a whore. I did not know about your mother or about any of you. Your father told me that he was a widower. He never mentioned his children. I loved him and I believed that he loved me. I gave up everything for him and now you are asking me to sign something. If I took this to court, I would be entitled to much more than what I am asking you for. I just need to get my life back together. I just want this to be over.

OMAR looks around the coffee shop and appears to be thinking about what to say next.

OMAR

How can I be sure that you will never bring this up again ? If I give you the money and you do not sign anything, you can always come back to us again and threaten to expose this whole thing.

ELISA looks angry and hurt as she responds.

ELISA

Omar, I came to you in confidence. I never contacted your mother out of respect. I never called a lawyer. I did not go to the media. I tried to do the right thing.

She pauses as she tries to control her emotions.

ELISA cont.

I was equally shocked when I found out the truth about your father. I only asked for what was fair. I have never threatened to go public with any of this. I have as much to lose as you do. I will not sign anything and I will not ask that you or your family sign anything. Once this is over, you will never hear from me again. Trust me when I tell you that I need to get my life back in order.

OMAR pauses for a moment as he looks down at the folder. He opens the folder and takes out a single piece of paper. He looks at the paper briefly and then crumples up the paper. He then looks up at her.

OMAR

It seems that I have no choice. I will do as you wish. If my mother or anyone else ever finds out about this, I will spend everything that I have to protect my family. Are we clear?

After he finishes speaking, he slides the folder across the table and stands up. He does not wait for her to respond as he walks away from the table. He never looks back as he exits the coffee shop.

ELISA waits a few moments until he has exited the coffee shop. He walks to a late model Mercedes Benz, gets in the car, backs up and drives away. She then opens the folder and looks inside. The camera shows that inside the envelope there is a stack of money. She closes the folder, collects her belongings and stands up. As she is walking toward the door, she says under her breath

ELISA

It has been a pleasure doing business with you.

INT. INSIDE OF AN APARTMENT.

The scene is a small kitchen. There is a small dining room table with 6 chairs. ACA is cooking and her son, FEDERICO "PACO" PEREZ, is sitting at the dining room table. There is a plate in front of him. He is reading some documents as his mother picks up a skillet and walks toward him. With a spatula in her right hand, she removes a breaded steak and places it on his plate. PACO continues to look at the documents and begins to speak.

PACO

(in Spanish)

Mima, this business is a disaster. Diaz is an idiot. I have no idea how he ever made any money. Roxanna always told me that he was a fraud. Why did we ever do this deal?

ACA walks to the stove and picks up another pot and walks back to the table. She places it in front of PACO and appears to ignore his comments. As she returns to the stove..

ACA

(in Spanish)

Have some rice with your steak. The plantains will be ready in a minute. And Paco, I never want to hear that woman's name again in this house.

ACA pauses and continues as PACO looks up at her. He looks uncomfortable having been scolded. She continues

ACA cont.

(in Spanish)

You are my son and I love you but I cannot believe that you ever got involved with that woman. Respectable women do not cheat on their husband's regardless of how unhappy they are. Now eat your food. You have a lot of work to do. You always wanted your own business and now you have it.

ACA walks back to the stove. The plantains are cooking in another skillet and she turns her attention to her cooking. PACO picks up his fork and knife and begins to eat. As she continues to cook..

ACA cont.

(in Spanish)

I have a few ideas to improve the business. You can take my advice or not. It is up to you.

Before PACO can respond, she continues

ACA cont.



(in Spanish)

I was talking to some of the girls at the nail salon who are always looking for extra money. I think we can use them.

PACO looks up at ACA as he stops eating.

PACO

(in Spanish)

We can barely cover payroll as it is. We cannot afford to hire anyone else even if we needed them.

ACA, still holding the spatula, turns to PACO

ACA

(in Spanish)

We would not hire them as employees. We would only call them when we needed them.

She removes the skillet with the plantains and approaches the table. She places several of the fried plantains on PACO's plate and continues

ACA cont.

(in Spanish)

I have noticed that at many of the viewings, there are very few people attending the visitations. The dead deserve to be honored regardless of how many friends and family they have.

As he is eating, PACO looks up somewhat confused

PACO

(in Spanish)

What are you talking about?

ACA turns and looks at PACO  
with the skillet still in her  
hand

ACA

(in Spanish)

My idea is to hire these  
women to come to funerals  
when the deceased does not  
have many family members or  
friends and have them grieve  
with the family. These  
mourners (lloronas) would  
spend a few minutes with the  
family and help ease their  
pain. We would pay them a  
small amount and the families  
would leave the funeral home  
with a good feeling about  
their experience here.

PACO stops eating and looks at ACA in disbelief

PACO

(in Spanish)

You have to be kidding. That  
will never work. They won't  
even know the dead person.

ACA smiles and continues

ACA

(in Spanish)

Of course it will work. We  
will tell them all of the  
relevant facts about the  
deceased. I will train them  
on what to say and how to  
act.

She pauses but continues

ACA cont.

(in Spanish)

Did you know that lloronas  
were mentioned in the Bible  
and they have existed in  
Eastern and Mediterranean  
cultures for hundreds of  
years? It was a profession  
that was held in high esteem  
in those cultures.

Aca serves herself some food and walks to the table and sits  
down to eat.

ACA cont.

(in Spanish)

It will work and you will see  
the results.

INT. FUNERAL HOME CHAPEL

The scene is the inside of a funeral home chapel in the 1970's. The walls of the chapel are covered in dark wood paneling and the carpet is gray. There are dark "pleather" couches (crimson colored) arranged along the walls of the chapel. There are candelabras throughout the chapel but particularly around a silver casket, which is positioned against the wall in the middle of the longer wall in the 14 x 11 foot chapel. There is a kneeler in front of the casket and a crucifix hanging on the wall behind the casket.

About 20 people are in the chapel. Most are engaged in conversations. Some are standing and some are seated on the couches. An older woman is seated closest to the casket and a man and a woman are standing next to her talking and looking around the chapel. In the far corner there are 3 older women dressed in black. The women are quite emotional as they console each other. The young man standing next to the casket begins to speak to the younger woman.

MAN

(as he gestures toward the  
older crying women)  
Do you know who these women  
are?

WOMAN

No. I guess they knew Papi from work or maybe from church. It looks like they really cared for him. It is nice of them to come.

MAN

Everyone that knew Papi loved him. We are going to miss him.

The scene continues as the camera scans around the chapel and throughout the funeral home. There are several other chapels throughout the funeral home with similar scenes playing out. The scene returns to the original chapel as the 3 older women move toward the casket. One at a time they kneel in front of the casket, bow their heads in silence for a moment, do the sign of the cross and in unison approach the older woman sitting closest to the casket. One of the women speaks as she reaches for the older woman's hand,

MARTA

(in Spanish)

Senora Vega, I am so sorry for your loss. Your husband was a fine man. He did so much for so many. I will be praying him and for your family.

The older woman looks at the woman and smiles weakly.

SENORA VEGA

Thank you for coming. I am sure that he would have appreciated it.

The other 2 women nod to Senora Vega as they slowly follow the first woman out of the chapel.

After exiting the chapel, the women walk down the hallway leading to the front of the funeral home. They pass several chapels where people are attending viewings. You can hear people

praying the rosary as they pass the chapel closest to the reception desk. Upon reaching the reception desk, the first mourner leans over the reception desk and speaks to the receptionist.

MARTA

Clarita, can you please call Santiago for me?  
The receptionist nods and picks up the phone and pushes a button, which is the intercom, and begins to speak.

CLARITA

Santiago, please come to the reception desk.

Her voice can be heard throughout the funeral home as there are speakers throughout. She hangs up the phone and looks up at the woman.

CLARITA

Marta, he should be here in a minute.

MARTA CALVO nods at the receptionist and moves away from the desk. Less than a minute later, a short balding man in a black suit approaches the reception desk. The suit jacket is a size too large and he looks somewhat disheveled. He nods at the 3 women and with a wave of his hand directs them to down the hall, which is in the opposite direction of the chapels. They follow him and enter an interior office. After they all enter the office, Santiago closes the door and walks behind a desk. He opens a drawer and removes three envelopes. As he hands the envelopes to the women, he addresses MARTA.

SANTIAGO

How did everything go?

MARTA takes the envelope, opens it and looks inside. She opens her purse and puts the envelope inside her purse. She then looks at Santiago and speaks.

MARTA

Everything went well. It seems that he was a good man

SANTIAGO

Did the family ask you how you knew him?

MARTA shakes her head.

WOMAN #2

I think I met him at a funeral last year. He was a very handsome man.

Santiago smiles and nods at the women. He looks up at a board on the wall. There are several names on the board as well as times and the names of churches and cemeteries. He begins to speak.

SANTIAGO

Are any of you available tomorrow night? I may need one of you for a viewing at our Hialeah funeral home.

Before any of the women can speak...

MARTA

(Looking somewhat disturbed)  
Santiago, I will let you know tomorrow morning. It is late and we are tired.

She walks to the door, opens it, directs the other 2 women out the door. Before she walks out, she stops and looks back at Santiago and begins to speak.

MARTA

Santiago, my arrangement with Mrs. Perez and her son is that all services go directly through me. In the future, do not speak to my girls directly about any viewings.

I don't want to have to  
involve the Perez's. Do we  
agree?

Santiago looks uncomfortable as he responds.

SANTIAGO

Of course, I apologize for  
any confusion.

MARTA nods at SANTIAGO and exits the office and closes the door.

INT. OFFICE

The scene is set in a simple but modern office. A well-dressed man in his early 50's is sitting behind a desk reviewing some documents. Sitting opposite from him are a similarly well-dressed man and a strikingly attractive woman. The man and the woman are in their late 40's to early 50's.

The man behind the desk looks up and addresses the man and the woman.

LUIS

Julio and Maria, your numbers  
for last year look pretty  
good. It looks like you have  
controlled your overtime, and  
your average revenue per  
cremation has increased.

The man pauses before he continues.

LUIS cont.

Keep in mind that this is my  
first year doing your  
accounting, so I will have  
questions.

JULIO

Luis, the reason we changed  
accounting firms is pretty

simple. Anyone can put together numbers and file tax returns. We want a partner that will be creative, legally of course, and help us to make more money and pay less taxes.

MARIA appears distracted and generally uninterested in the discussion. She is looking around the room as JULIO and LUIS are talking. After JULIO finishes speaking, LUIS pulls a notepad from under the stack of financial documents and begins to speak.

LUIS

I do have a few questions about items that definitely have been affecting your bottom line.

He looks down at his notes.

LUIS cont.

For example, why do you continue to remain open 24 hours, 7 days a week? I don't know the numbers, but I assume that your business is not the same as it was 20 or 30 years ago. How many families spend the entire night at the funeral home?

As JULIO is about to speak, MARIA suddenly becomes engaged and speaks.

MARIA

(raising her voice as she says)  
Thank you. We have been talking about changing that for years, but as usual nothing happens.

Looking at LUIS she continues.



MARIA cont.

Do you know how much it costs us to stay open beyond midnight each and every day?

LUIS

I haven't run those numbers yet, but I suspect it is a lot of money.

MARIA leans back in her chair and with an irritated look and tone says.

MARIA

A lot of money isn't an answer. We changed accountants because we thought we could do better. We want ideas and data, not guesses. Let me answer my own question. Assuming we only have one employee covering the midnight to 8:00 a.m. shift each day even at our meager hourly wages, it costs us \$192 a day, which is \$1,344 a week not including benefits. For our 3 funeral homes, you know how much that is a year, just under \$70,000.

She pauses briefly but continues

MARIA cont.

Now that might make sense if 2 things were happening, number 1, if we had enough demand for all-night viewings, which we don't, and number 2, if we charged extra for the additional viewing hours, which we don't. It's all bullshit.

MARIA turns her head and returns to her previous uninterested pose. JULIO appears uneasy and somewhat uncomfortable. LUIS senses the tension between JULIO and MARIA and begins to speak.

LUIS

Julio, I don't know if what Maria is saying is true or not, but I can tell you that from personal experience when my father passed away, we closed the chapel at midnight. We had no interest in spending all night at the funeral home. Do you ask families if they want to spend all night at the funeral home?

MARIA looks at JULIO as if she is inviting him to answer the question.

JULIO

Luis, you just don't understand our business. We know what our customers want. Our father did it this way, and it worked. As long as he is alive, this is the way that we are going to do it. Let's move on. Is there anything else?

MARIA begins to laugh and dismissively and waves her hand at JULIO.

MARIA

Luis, don't waste your time. This is what I deal with every day. Are we done here?

LUIS looks down at his notes and then looks up at Julio.

LUIS

My only other question is about your petty cash. What do you use it for?

JULIO

We need to have cash to give people change for the vending machines, for emergencies, and for other miscellaneous things.

LUIS again looks at his notes and begins to speak.

LUIS

The problem is your petty cash doesn't balance. Do you have a system in place? From what I see there is a deficit of over \$10,000.00 last year alone. What are you spending it on?

JULIO and MARIA look at each other and again Maria turns away and defers to JULIO.

JULIO

We like to keep extra cash around in the event we need it for extra personnel.

LUIS looks confused.

LUIS

That doesn't make any sense. That would be included in salaries. Please don't tell me that you are paying your employees in cash.

JULIO shakes his head as he speaks.

JULIO

Of course not. We only use cash for independent contractors.

LUIS again looks at his notes.

LUIS  
I'm sorry, but I don't get  
it. What do you mean by  
independent contractors?

Before JULIO can respond, MARIA leans forward and begins to speak.

MARIA  
Have you ever heard of  
lloronas?

LUIS shakes his head. MARIA continues.

MARIA  
It's actually a funny story.  
Back in Cuba, when our father  
first started the business,  
if he didn't expect a large  
turnout for a viewing, he  
would hire professional  
mourners to come to viewings,  
so the chapel would not look  
empty.

LUIS  
Where did you find these  
"lloronas"?

MARIA  
Our first lloronas were women  
that our grandmother knew  
from the nail salon. They  
were looking to make a little  
extra money and also thought  
it was a noble gesture. As  
time passed, we started  
working with aspiring  
actresses. According to our  
grandmother, after a few  
years we had so many women  
wanting to work with us that

we could actually choose whom  
we wanted to use for each  
case.

LUIS looks back and forth from MARIA to JULIO.

LUIS  
Do families actually like  
this or even want this?

JULIO  
We don't ask them and they do  
not know about it. But we  
also don't charge them. The  
way we look at it, we are  
helping families through the  
most difficult time of their  
lives.

LUIS looks at JULIO and MARIA in disbelief.

LUIS  
Are you telling me that you  
pay people to attend funerals  
to mourn for people that they  
don't even know?

JULIO  
It's not a big deal. It's an  
added benefit to families  
that don't have many friends.  
We don't charge them, and  
they leave with a good  
feeling at what is usually  
one of the worst times of  
their life.

LUIS closes his notepad and looks up in a resigned manner

LUIS  
Whatever.

INT. BANK LOBBY

The scene is a bank lobby. There are several customers waiting  
in line. Bank employees are walking around. ELISA SANTOS walks

into the bank and stops as she looks around the lobby. She appears to be searching for someone. She spots the bank employee that she is looking for and begins to walk toward a desk where a woman is sitting and working on paperwork.

ELISA

Hello Miss Delany. How are you?

MISS DELANY

(Looking up surprised, but apparently pleased.)

Hello Miss Santos. How are you? It is always good to see you.

DELANY motions to a chair in front of the desk

DELANY cont.

Please sit down. How can I help you?

ELISA SANTOS sits down as she is holding a large purse on her lap.

ELISA

I am here to make a deposit.

She reaches into her purse and removes an envelope and places it on the desk in front of DELANY. DELANY reaches for the envelope, opens it and looks at the contents.

DELANY

Miss Santos you don't have to come into the branch each time you want to make a deposit. We offer remote deposit capture. You will save time and you can make unlimited deposits.

ELISA shakes her head.

ELISA

I know that, but I only trust  
you. Machines make mistakes.

MISS DELANY smiles and nods.

DELANY

Everyone here can be trusted,  
but I am always happy to  
help. Do you have a deposit  
slip?

ELISA

You know I never have those  
papers. Can you help me fill  
it out?

DELANY opens a drawer in her desk and pulls out several deposit  
slips and begins to write.

DELANY

Where will you be depositing  
these funds?

ELISA

I want to deposit \$9,000.00  
into the little Havana  
account and the balance into  
the downtown location  
account.

DELANY continues to fill out the slips.

DELANY

It looks like business is  
going well.

ELISA

Yes the arrangement with the  
travel agencies is bringing  
us a lot of business. Thank  
God, Miami will always have  
many tourists. If you provide  
a good product at a good  
price you can succeed. I

guess you can say we are  
living the American dream.

DELANY finishes filling out the slips, gets up and moves away from the desk.

DELANY

Give me a minute to process  
this and you can be on your  
way.

DELANY walks up to one of the bank tellers, hands her the deposit slips and the envelope. The bank teller stamps the slips and hands them back to DELANY, who takes the slips and returns to her office. She hands the slips to ELISA.

DELANY cont.

Is there anything else I can  
do for you?

ELISA takes the deposit slips, places them in her purse and stands up.

ELISA

No, I think that will be all  
for now. Thank you and I will  
see you soon.

ELISA walks out of the office through the bank lobby and out the front door. She approaches a charcoal grey Mercedes Benz C class. She opens the driver's side door, gets into the car and starts it. Before she begins to leave the bank parking lot, she takes her cell phone from her purse and places a call, which connects to the Bluetooth.

The phone starts ringing, and after several rings, a man answers the phone. He sounds groggy as if he was sleeping.

JUAN MALDONADO

(V.O. in Spanish)  
Hello.

ELISA

Hello, Juan. Were you  
sleeping?



JUAN (V.O.)  
(sounding confused)  
What time is it? Why are you  
calling me so early?

ELISA  
Juan it's 10 o'clock in the  
morning. Were you out late  
last night?

JUAN (V.O.)  
Give me a minute.

Sounds can be heard in the background. After several seconds,  
the man begins to speak.

JUAN (V.O.) cont.  
Sorry about that. I was at  
the Indian Casino last night,  
and I lost track of time.

His tone changes. He sounds irritated.

JUAN (V.O.) cont.  
What do you want Elisa?

ELISA  
Juan, you know I worry about  
you.

The look on her face betrays her words. As she speaks, she is  
filing her nails.

JUAN (V.O.)  
Elisa, cut the crap. What do  
you want?

ELISA  
You should be happy to hear  
from me. I have some cash for  
you. We were able to work out  
the Valdez case.

JUAN (V.O.)

(Sounding angry)  
I hate when you call them  
cases. You and I both know  
what it is.

There is a pause, and he continues.

JUAN (V.O.) cont.  
When do you want to meet? I  
don't go into work until 4  
o'clock.

ELISA  
I can meet you at the coffee  
shop at 1 o'clock. Do you  
have anything new for me?

JUAN (V.O.)  
Fine, I'll be there at 1.  
Elisa, I don't want to keep  
doing this. It's not right. I  
can get into a lot of  
trouble. I need this job.

ELISA  
Juan, we both have a great  
deal to lose. Your job should  
be the least of your  
concerns. I'll see you at 1.  
I have to go.

She hangs up the phone and begins to drive out of the parking  
lot.

INT. BEDROOM

The scene is a dark bedroom. A man and a woman are in bed  
asleep. The phone rings, and both people stir. The phone rings  
again, and an arm reaches for the phone. The man begins to sit  
up in bed. He picks up the phone as he turns on the lamp on the  
night stand. The clock on the night stand shows 2:30.

JULIO  
Hello.

The man listens to a voice on the other end of the phone. The woman turns toward him.

WOMAN

Julio, who is it? Is everything okay?

JULIO raises his hand to the woman telling her to let him listen. He begins to rub his eyes with his free hand and begins to get out of bed.

JULIO

How did this happen? Who is on duty tonight?

The man listens for another moment.

JULIO cont.

No. Do not call the police. I will be there in 20 minutes. Do not let anyone else into the funeral home.

JULIO hangs up the phone. He walks to the bathroom and turns on the light.

The woman looks concerned as she sits up in bed and looks at JULIO as he is walking.

WOMAN

Julio, what happened? Is everything okay?

From the bathroom

JULIO (V.O.)

You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

INT. FUNERAL HOME OFFICE.

The scene is set in an office at the funeral home. Julio is sitting behind a desk going through papers. The phone rings, and the man hits the speaker button.

JULIO  
Yes, Clarita. What is it.

CLARITA (V.O.)  
It's Father Pulido from the  
Archdiocese. He says it's  
important.

JULIO pauses for a moment, then speaks.

JULIO  
Put him through.

JULIO picks up the phone.

JULIO  
Father Pulido, how can I help  
you?

JULIO listens as FATHER PULIDO speaks. After a short pause,  
JULIO speaks.

JULIO  
We are all doing well, thank  
you for asking. How is the  
Archbishop?

Another brief pause.

JULIO cont.  
I can only imagine. It must  
be challenging to shepherd  
such a large flock.

Listens again for a brief moment.

JULIO cont.  
Yes, I heard about that. How  
tragic. Why would anyone hurt  
a homeless man in such a

violent manner and in a  
church no less.

JULIO continues to listen

JULIO cont.

Of course, we will do  
whatever we can to help. Who  
will be making the  
arrangements and when do you  
want to view?

Listening.

JULIO cont.

Okay. Please have her come in  
today after 2 p.m. and ask  
for me. Maria and I will  
handle it personally.

Listening.

JULIO cont.

That will be fine.

Brief pause.

JULIO cont.

Father, just one more  
question. Does the archbishop  
want us to handle this pro  
bono?

JULIO shows relief as he leans back in his chair.

JULIO cont.

Of course, we will definitely  
be sensitive to costs and  
handle this poor man with the  
utmost respect. Thank you for  
thinking of us and we look  
forward to working with you.

JULIO hangs up the phone, gets up and walks out of his office.  
He walks into the office next door to his. MARIA is sitting

behind a desk looking at a spreadsheet on her computer. She looks up and says.

MARIA

Can you believe how much we are spending on overtime? This is ridiculous.

JULIO appears to not listen and begins to speak.

JULIO

Father Pulido just called, and the archbishop wants us to handle the homeless man that was murdered at St. Sebastian's last week.

MARI turns from her chair and says.

MARIA

I assume he wants us to handle the case pro bono.

Before JULIO can respond, she continues.

MARIA cont.

We can't afford to keep doing this.

JULIO shakes his head.

JULIO

No Maria. The archdiocese is going to pay for this. It will be a cremation with a viewing, but they want it to be nice. Apparently, the homeless guy helped out at the church and he would sleep in the church at night. With all the bad publicity the church has been getting, the archbishop wants this to be a feel good story.

JULIO pauses and continues.

JULIO cont.

Rosa Aguilar will be coming by after 2 p.m. to make the arrangements. I told Father Pulido that you and I would meet with her and give this case special attention.

As he starts walking out, he finishes.

JULIO cont.

Don't worry. This will be a good case for us. The Catholic Church has always been good to us.

INT APARTMENT IN THE LATE 1970's

The scene is set in a small apartment. The camera scans the rooms. There is a small seating area as you enter the apartment. As the camera turns right, it immediately enters a small kitchen area. The refrigerator is against the wall on the left, and a small dining room table sits in the middle of the room. To the right of the refrigerator is a window overlooking a parking lot. To the right, you see a kitchen range with a stove and a sink. The kitchen cabinets are on the wall above the appliances.

A man is sitting at the kitchen table eating a meal. He is dressed in clerics. ACA is in the kitchen in her bathrobe. She is holding a pan as she cooks some type of food in cooking oil.

Just beyond the kitchen, there is a small family/living room. The television is turned on to a cartoon station. A young boy and a young girl are sitting on the couch watching the cartoons. To the right of the family/living room, you can see a bedroom.

ACA turns away from the stove and approaches the priest. She removes a piece of meat and places it on the plate in front of the man. ACA begins to speak in Spanish.

ACA

Father Davila, Paco tells me  
that you are working too  
hard. You have to take care  
of yourself. God needs you to  
be healthy.

The priest smiles as he watches ACA place the food on his plate.

FR. DAVILA  
Thank you. This looks  
delicious.

He begins to cut the food. As ACA walks back to the stove, he  
takes a bite.

FR. DAVILA  
Señora Perez, this is  
delicious, as always.

He continues to eat. ACA turns to FR. DAVILA and speaks.

ACA  
Father Davila, please call me  
Aca. How many times have I  
told you that.

FR. DAVILA begins to laugh as he shakes his head.

FR. DAVILA  
Thank you for saying that,  
but you are and will always  
be Señora Perez to me.

He pauses.

FR. DAVILA cont.  
I say that with nothing but  
respect, because that is what  
you deserve.

ACA turns and looks at FR. DAVILA. After a brief pause, she  
smiles and says.

ACA



Father, you were brought up well. Your parents must be very proud of you. The church is lucky to have you.

FR. DAVILA looks uncomfortable but does not speak. He looks down at his food and continues to eat.

ACA returns to the stove and continues to cook. After a brief pause, she continues.

ACA cont.

Don't worry Father Davila. I know about all of your issues with the church. Although I am Catholic, I don't always agree with the decisions that men make. The institution is much more than those who make the decisions.

She stops and does the sign of the cross.

ACA cont.

If Jesus Christ were here today, he would be proud to call you an apostle.

FR. DAVILA looks humbled. He puts down the fork and knife and begins to speak.

FR. DAVILA

I will always be a priest no matter what anyone says. Thank you for your belief in me.

ACA smiles at him and turns to where the children are watching television.

ACA

Julio, Maria, your food is ready. Turn off that machine and come to the table.

There is no movement. ACA, with her back to the children, raises her voice

ACA cont.

Come to the table, now.

There is movement, and without a word, the children get up and walk to the table and sit down.

ACA places plates in front of the children and returns to the stove to finish cooking. As she continues to cook, and with her back to the kitchen table, she says.

ACA cont.

Father Davila, would you please say grace.

The camera scans away as the priest begins to speak. He performs the sign of the cross. The children follow as they bow their heads.

After he finished saying grace, ACA continues speaking

ACA cont.

Julio and Maria, are you aware of how lucky you are to be able to spend time with a holy man; one of God's chosen men. Although we are not related, we consider Fr. Davila a member of our family.

FR. DAVILA smiles and nods at ACA as he continue to eat. JULIO looks at the priest with respect and awe. MARIA looks up at the priest, rolls her eyes and continues to eat her food.

INT. FUNERAL HOME LOBBY

The scene is present day. JULIO is walking through the lobby of the funeral home. He approaches the receptionist and begins to speak.

JULIO

Rosa Aguilar, the  
archbishop's assistant, will  
be here in a few minutes.  
Please make sure the area is  
clean, and also make some  
coffee.

As he starts to walk away, he turns back.

JULIO cont.  
Let's serve it in the nice  
china.

RECEPTIONIST  
Señor Julio, we never use the  
fine china. I don't even know  
where it is.

She gets up and walks toward a room at the other side of the  
reception area and turns back.

RECEPTIONIST cont.  
Even if I find it, they are  
going to be dusty and dirty.

JULIO looks agitated.

JULIO  
Don't tell me what you can't  
do. Just find them and clean  
them. I only need a set or  
two. Don't you understand  
that this is the archdiocese?  
Just do what I am asking.

JULIO walks away and down the hall. He enters his office and  
sits behind the desk. He picks up the phone and dials a number.  
He waits for a moment.

JULIO  
Jorge, how are you? It's  
Julio.

Listens for a moment.

JULIO cont.

We are doing well. Listen, I don't have much time. I need your help.

Listens again.

JULIO cont.

No, no. Nothing like that. No problems. It's actually good news. Did you hear about the homeless guy that was killed at St. Sebastian's?

Listens again.

JULIO cont.

Yes. That's the one. Well he worked at the church, sort of as a volunteer, and the archbishop wants us to handle the funeral.

Listening

JULIO cont.

That's exactly why I am calling you. We want to get as much good publicity as possible. I am meeting with the archbishop's assistant in a few minutes, and after they make the arrangements, I want the media to know. This could be really good for us.

Listening.

JULIO cont.

Okay. I will call you when she leaves but I don't expect any issues. Thanks.

He listens briefly and hangs up the phone.

The intercom buzzes, and the receptionist begins to speak.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)  
Miss Aguilar is here. Where  
should I take her?

JULIO  
Please take her into the  
conference room and make sure  
the coffee is set up.

JULIO gets up and walks out of his office. He walks down the  
hall and into MARIA's office.

JULIO  
Maria, Rosa Aguilar is here.  
She is in the conference  
room.

MARIA is staring at her computer. She does not look up and  
continues to work.

She begins to speak.

MARIA  
I'll be there in a minute.

She pauses and continues.

MARIA cont.  
If we sold urns to 30% of the  
families that select  
cremation, we would make an  
extra \$10,000 a year.

JULIO looks annoyed

JULIO  
Maria, please, we can talk  
about this later. I don't  
want to keep her waiting.

MARIA turns toward JULIO and looks up.

MARIA

No, Julio. We won't talk  
about it later. We never do.  
We just keep doing things the  
same way as we always have.  
Then we wonder why we can't  
grow as much as we would  
like.

She turns to her computer and turns it off. She straightens her blouse, stands up and begins to walk around the desk. She continues speaking as she walks past Julio and out of the office carrying a folder.

MARIA cont.

Let's go. We mustn't keep the  
Lord's special helper  
waiting.

JULIO follows MARIA down the hall and into the conference room. Sitting behind a chair in the far corner of the room is a well-dressed woman in her late 50's - early 60s. As they walk into the room, they notice that she is on a cellular phone. She looks up and politely waves as she continues on her call. She makes no attempt to end the call.

MARIA approaches the table and sits directly across from the woman. As she stares at her, JULIO remains at the door looking uncomfortable. He walks to the side of the table where MARIA is sitting and leans over and whispers in her ear.

JULIO

I think we should wait  
outside until she finishes  
her call.

He starts to walk back toward the door. MARIA does not move and continues to stare as she begins to pull some documents out of the folder. The woman appears annoyed but continues the call. For the first time she speaks as she looks at Maria.

ROSA AGUILAR

Yes sir. I understand. I will make sure that the funeral home understands how important this case is to you.

Brief pause as she listens. She speaks again.

ROSA AGUILAR cont.

Of course they will work with us. I will make it clear that these instructions come directly from you.

She pauses, feigns a smile and points at the chair next to MARIA as she looks up at JULIO. Julio moves quickly to the side of the table where Maria is sitting and quickly takes a seat. ROSA ends the call saying...

ROSA AGUILAR

Thank you Archbishop. I will see you later this afternoon or tomorrow morning.

She hangs up the phone and slowly places it on the conference room table in front of her. She straightens herself and turns to face MARIA and JULIO. She is about to speak, but MARIA begins.

MARIA

Señora Aguilar, it is so good to see you again. When you return to the office, please give the Archbishop my regards. It must be so interesting to work for a man in such an important position.

ROSA is caught off guard by the comments. She begins to respond but stops. She stares at MARIA for a second and turns to JULIO.

ROSA AGUILAR

I don't have much time so let's get started.

JULIO leans forward smiling, but before he can speak, MARIA again begins to speak.

MARIA

Of course, we understand how valuable your time is.

MARIA organizes the documents in front of her and begins.

MARIA

The sooner we fill out the paperwork, the quicker you will be on your way.

JULIO looks uncomfortable but tries to appear in control. He smiles at ROSA and turns to MARIA. MARIA begins to speak as she appears ready to begin writing on the top paper.

MARIA

We just need some basic information. What was the decedent's name?

ROSA turns to JULIO and says.

ROSA AGUILAR

Julio, this is ridiculous. Can't you just give me what you need and I will fax it back to you?

Before JULIO can respond, MARIA continues.

MARIA

(chuckling slightly)  
You still use fax machines?  
This isn't just about providing information. There are certain legal issues that we have to address.

ROSA is becoming more agitated, and she begins to speak.

ROSA



What possible legal issues could there be? This man's death was ruled a murder. He was homeless. He has no money or assets. No one has claimed the body and the Catholic Church, having no obligation to do so, is willing to pay the funeral expenses.

ROSA turns to JULIO and avoids MARIA.

ROSA

Considering the hard time I am getting, it doesn't seem that you want our business.

JULIO leans forward and in a nervous manner begins to speak.

JULIO

Señora Aguilar, it is an honor for our funeral home to be able to work with the Archdiocese.

Briefly pausing but then continuing

JULIO cont.

All my sister is trying to say is that Florida Law requires that we get some information from you in order to fill out the necessary paperwork that we have to submit to the state.

JULIO turns to MARIA and says.

JULIO cont.

Maria, let me handle this. We have another family coming in later. Why don't you get ready for that?

MARIA sighs, organizes the papers in front of her and hands them to JULIO. She slowly backs up her chair as she begins to get up.

MARIA

That's fine, but make sure that Miss Aguilar gets the necessary authorization from the next of kin. You know that the county won't release the body to us without that. We also can't cremate the body without that.

ROSA, looking upset, begins to speak.

ROSA

I told you that no one claimed the body. We don't know if he had any family. The Archdiocese is doing this as an act of charity. I am sure the county won't care and they will release the body to us. Who could conceivably complain?

As MARIA continues to walk to the door, she looks at JULIO and says.

MARIA

Julio, please explain to Miss Aguilar that the state doesn't look at it that way.

MARIA slowly turns to ROSA as she opens the door and says.

MARIA cont.

Have a great day, and thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve you at such a difficult time.

MARIA walks out.

INT. RESTAURANT IN 1970s MIAMI.

The scene is set in a restaurant. The time is the 1970s. The décor of the restaurant is western. The tables and chairs are rustic and weathered. The walls are covered with pictures of cowboys, horses and mementos of the Wild West. There are 4 people sitting at a round table, ACA, PACO and YOUNG JULIO and YOUNG MARIA. The restaurant is busy with servers and busboys hurriedly moving from table to table.

YOUNG JULIO is leafing through a comic book. YOUNG MARIA is looking around the restaurant and fidgeting at the table. They are dressed somewhat formally. YOUNG JULIO's short hair is slicked back and combed to the side. YOUNG MARIA has ribbons in her hair and is wearing a red-stripped poplin dress.

The waitress approaches the table. She is wearing a brown spree western shirt and a beige cowgirl lace skirt. She is also wearing a straw cowgirl hat.

WAITRESS

Howdy partners, welcome to  
the Western Wagon. Are you  
ready for some grub?

ACA does not look up from the menu. PACO waves the waitress over. She walks to where PACO is sitting. PACO begins to speak as he points at the menu.

PACO as he raises 2 fingers and points at ACA and himself.

PACO

We like 2 chicken dinners and  
2 beer.

He pauses and points at the children.

PACO cont.

And 2 chicken for kids and  
Coca Cola.

As the waitress writes down the order, she continues.

WAITRESS

Any onion rings or corn on  
the cob to start?

PACO shakes his head as she closes the menu.

PACO

No that's all.

As the waitress gathers up the menus and begins to walk away she says.

WAITRESS

All righty. Your hot rocks  
will be out in a minute.

YOUNG JULIO looks up as she walks away. He looks confused. He looks at YOUNG MARIA.

YOUNG JULIO

What's a hot rock?

YOUNG MARIA giggles and speaks.

YOUNG MARIA

They're biscuits, you dummy.

PACO looks at YOUNG MARIA in a disapproving manner.

PACO

(in Spanish)  
Maria, we don't talk to each  
other that way.

ACA chuckles

ACA

(in Spanish)  
Paco they're children. That's  
the way they talk to each  
other.

JULIO begins to pout.

JULIO

But Aca, you always scold me  
when I make fun of her.  
That's not fair.

ACA, looking very serious, says.

ACA

(in Spanish)  
Julito, first of all don't  
talk back to me, and also, I  
scold you when you are  
disrespectful to your sister.  
Remember you must always  
treat women with respect.

She pauses and continues.

ACA cont.

(in Spanish)  
Enough, this conversation is  
over.

YOUNG MARIA punches YOUNG JULIO in the arm as she gloats. ACA  
sees her and says.

ACA cont.

Mari, I saw that. I said  
enough.

YOUNG MARIA looks down after the reprimand. After a brief lapse,  
ACA continues in Spanish.

ACA cont.

Someday both of you will  
realize how important family  
is. They are always there for  
you no matter what.

She pauses and continues as she looks at the children.

ACA cont.

Do you know how hard your father works? And despite that he always makes time for you. For example, look at tonight. He left the funeral home to pick you up and take you shopping and here for dinner, and after we finish and he drops you off, he will go back to the funeral home to make sure that everything is fine there. You know why he does it?

She again looks at the children.

ACA cont.

Because he loves you and because some day the business will be yours.

YOUNG MARIA rolls her eyes and looks away.

ACA cont.

(sternly)

Maria, do not roll your eyes when I speak to you.

YOUNG MARIA

(looking uncomfortable)

Aca, I don't want to work at the funeral home. Dealing with dead people is gross.

ACA looks at YOUNG MARIA dismissively. She continues.

ACA

What we do is necessary. Do you know how hard it is to help families at the worst time of their lives? And by the way, because of this "gross" business you and your brother are able to go to the best schools and wear nice

clothes and come to  
restaurants like this.

She pauses and continues.

ACA cont.

If it were up to your mother  
you would be at a public  
school and you would look  
like all of those "paletos"  
she hangs around with.

PACO looks up in an annoyed manner.

PACO

Mama, we agreed that we would  
never speak badly of their  
mother. She does the best she  
can.

ACA dismissively waves her hand at PACO.

ACA

That is the difference  
between us and them. For us,  
family is the most important  
thing.

PACO

(interrupting)  
Enough. I do not want to talk  
about this.

Just as PACO finishes the sentence, the WAITRESS appears with  
the drinks and the biscuits. She places the biscuits in the  
middle of the table and dispenses the drinks. As she walks away,  
both of the children reach for the biscuits. Before they can  
take a bite, ACA speaks

ACA

We pray before we eat.

She bows her head in prayer and begins. As she does the sign of the cross. everyone bows.

ACA cont.

In the name of the Father,  
the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
Father, thank you for the  
blessings you have given us,  
especially our family. Please  
keep us safe and healthy, and  
help us not to take for  
granted everything we have.  
Amen.

The second she finishes, Julio and Maria grab a biscuit and begin to eat as if they have not eaten in weeks.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE FUNERAL HOME

A late model SUV pulls up to the front of a building. On the building you can read "Perez Funeral Home" in lighted channel letters. The SUV parks on the street in front of the building, and JULIO jumps out of the car and hurriedly runs into the building. There is very little traffic on the street, and it appears to be late at night.

The scene changes to the interior of the funeral home. Although the hallway lights are on, it is relatively dark inside the building. An older woman is sitting behind the reception desk. At the end of the hall, you see several men lying on couches. They are disheveled and appear to be sleeping.

After looking around, JULIO walks to the reception desk and begins to speak to the receptionist, BLANCA.

JULIO

What happened?

The woman looks concerned and nervous as she begins to speak.

BLANCA

Señor Perez, I am so sorry,  
but I had no way to know what



they were doing. Please don't  
fire me. I need this job.

JULIO raises his hand and interrupts her.

JULIO

Blanca, calm down and just  
tell me what happened. Take  
your time and tell me  
everything.

The woman looks down and nods her head and slowly begins to  
speak.

BLANCA

Everything was going well.  
The archbishop came by around  
9 o'clock and prayed with  
them. Someone must have  
called the television  
stations because they were  
all here.

She pauses and then continues.

BLANCA cont.

So once he finished, he shook  
some hands and then he and  
his people left. A couple of  
reporters spoke to a few of  
the dead man's friends. You  
know he had no family, how  
sad. There must have been a  
hundred of his friends here.  
I thought he must have been a  
special man despite the fact  
that he was homeless. You  
know he worked at the church  
for free?

JULIO impatiently looks at BLANCA.

JULIO

I know all of that. Please  
tell me what happened.

BLANCA regains her composure and continues.

BLANCA

Yes, anyway, after the archbishop left, many of the visitors began to leave. By the time Juan's shift ended at midnight, there were only a few people in the chapel. A few of them are over there on the couches. I thought about asking them to leave but since we are open all night and families sometimes spend all night, I did not see a problem letting them stay. Anyway, as Juan was going around turning out lights and cleaning up, he noticed that the casket selection room door was open.

BLANCA stands up and starts to walk around the reception desk. JULIO looks at her walk around the desk and continue down the hall. JULIO begins to follow her

JULIO

Okay, what is the problem?

BLANCA

You have to see it for yourself.

She walks down the hall past the men sleeping on the couches. She approaches a door, turns to JULIO and waves him over. As JULIO reaches the door, BLANCA opens the door and turns on the light.

JULIO looks into the room and sees men lying in the caskets sleeping. With a look of disbelief he surveys the room as the men begin to move. Voices can be heard. JUAN is sitting in a chair in the room.

MAN'S VOICE

Turn off the light. I am  
trying to sleep.

JULIO stands at the door for a moment. He then turns off the  
light and closes the door. He turns to BLANCA and speaks.

JULIO

Blanca, this is what you are  
going to do. You and Juan  
will stay here until the next  
shift starts at 8 a.m. At 6  
a.m. I want you to send Juan  
to the bakery across the  
street and have him order  
enough croquettes and  
empanadas and coffee for all  
of them. When he returns, you  
will wake them up, feed them,  
and politely ask them to  
leave. If they give you a  
hard time, tell them I have  
instructed you to call the  
police. If they do not leave  
by 7 a.m., you will call me,  
and I will come by and handle  
this. Am I clear?

BLANCA

Yes, sir.

Julio starts to walk away and turns back.

JULIO

And Blanca, lock the doors  
and do not let anyone else  
in.

He continues to the door and exits.