

## Caskets from Costco

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

PAULA ... Mid thirties, white working class woman.  
PATTY ... Seventies. White, Paula and Pauls mother.  
DOROTHY... Sixties, a female customer.  
PAUL... White, Mid thirties.  
DANNY.... Black, Mid thirties.

### SETTING

A run down floral shop in a working class New England town.  
The Present.

Lights up on a time worn Flower Shop, somewhere in New England. The pickings are slim, but there are a few arrangements about, and there is a refrigerator about half full with flowers in various states, from fresh, to nearly dead. There is a counter with a display of small cards for flower arrangements. Stacks of unorganized papers sit on the counter. There is also a spinning greeting card display with very old cards, and it is not particularly well stocked. There are religious artifacts decorating the place, in particular a dour statue of St. Theresa looks down on the whole place, judging everyone. The paint peels, the water drips, and it is quite clear this place has seen better days.

Paula enters, she is a working class woman in her mid thirties. She's pretty, but a bit worn and beat down, and is gruff and to the point, like most of the people in this town. Paula goes to the fridge, and looks at the flowers inside.

(The characters with the exception of Paul all speak with a "Connecticut accent", which is similar to a "lighter version" of New York City.)

PAULA  
(yelling off)  
These tulips don't look so good, Ma.

From offstage we hear her mother's voice.

PATTY  
(off)  
What's wrong with them?

PAULA  
They're all wilted.

Patty enters. Patty is in her seventies, but she gets around and is energetic and bossy. She wears some sort of "house coat", not something particularly suitable for being in charge of a flower shop that is actually open for business.

PATTY  
Let me see.

A beat.

PATTY (CONT'D)  
They're not so bad. I think I can bring 'em back.

PAULA  
They don't look too good.

PATTY  
I'll put 'em in a little holy water, that usually perks 'em right up.

PAULA  
I don't think the magic water is bringin' 'em back this time.

PATTY  
We'll see. Hey- will you please clean out the bottom of the cooler? Something spilled. It's all sticky in there.

PAULA

Why, every time something is sticky or slimy I'm the one who has to clean it? Why do I have to do all the dirty work?

PATTY

Also I saw a rat under the greeting card display last night, can you put down some poison?

PAULA

I don't even work here. You should get some help, Ma.

PATTY

I don't wanna have strangers working in here. It's a family business.

PAULA

I meant help as in "mental".

PATTY

And when you're done with that, put some salt down out front. Somebody's gonna slip on that patch of ice and sue us.

PAULA

Who's gonna sue us?

PATTY

Everyone. There's a lot of strangers in the neighborhood these days. I don't even know people's names anymore.

PAULA

It's always been a crappy neighborhood. When I was little it was still crappy.

PATTY

But at least you knew your crappy neighbors.

PAULA

I think running this place by yourself is too much for you Ma. It's not healthy. Dad's out of the picture now, and I got my own stuff going on.

PATTY

What do you have going on?

PAULA

I'm getting a promotion.

PATTY

A promotion?

Yeah.

PAULA

What kinda promotion?

PATTY

I don't know, yet.

PAULA

Is it a good promotion?

PATTY

I don't know yet, Ma. They just said a promotion.

PAULA

At Jiffy Lube? What are you going to be doing?

PATTY

I said, I dunno. Probably runnin' the office.

PAULA

Why do you need to do that? We've got a perfectly good business going on right here, thanks to good 'ole St. Theresa.

PAULA

She goes over and says a little prayer to the St Theresa statue.

PATTY

You really think Theresa's gonna start bringing in the business after all these years? Cause lately I think she's been slackin' off.

PAULA

Of course she brings in business. She's the Patron St. of Florists.

PATTY

There's a Patron St. Of Florists? Why don't I know this?

PAULA

There's a patron saint for just about everything.

PATTY

She looks so pissed.

PAULA

She is.

PAULA

Is that why you've had her up there all these years? Is there a Patron saint of rat extermination?

PATTY

Of course there is a patron saint of rat extermination. It's St. Patrick.

A beat. Paula looks confused.

PATTY (CONT'D)

(explaining)

He drove the rats out of Ireland?

PAULA

You mean the snakes.

PATTY

Snakes? No, I don't think so. I'm pretty sure it was rats. You remember- he drove out the rats and then he drowned all of those protestant children in the ocean because their parents refused to convert.

PAULA

I think you're getting your stories mixed up.

PATTY

I know my Saints, Paula.

PAULA

I think you're confusing St. Patrick with the Pied Piper.

PATTY

(irritated, changing the subject)

Why do you wanna work at Jiffy Lube anyhow? What do they have going on there that's so great?

PAULA

I like it at Jiffy Lube, Ma.

PATTY

What do you like so much about it?

PAULA

You're not there.

PATTY

You know, they put Dominic's auto shop out of business. Everybody stopped goin' there when Jiffy Lube came to town.

PAULA

We don't even fix cars at Jiffy Lube.

PATTY

What do you do with 'em?

PAULA

(after a beat)

We...uh...lube them.

PATTY

I don't like that word.

PAULA

You know, it's not Jiffy Lube's fault. People stopped goin' to Dominic's after he pushed his wife outta that window.

PATTY

Dom didn't kill Nicki. Thats just what the papers said. She fell out that window.

PAULA

She didn't fall out of her bedroom window by accident.

PATTY

Well, either way. He's out of business. And we're one of the last survivors Paula, and I could really use some help around here.

PAULA

There are no customers anymore, Ma. It's dead. Just like these tulips.

PATTY

Don't you worry your crazy little head about it. Paul will come help out.

A beat.

PATTY (CONT'D)

(reiterating)

He said he was comin' back.

PAULA

He's not comin' back. He hasn't come back in three years. Stop saying that.

PATTY

You know, If your brother was here, he would kill the rats for me.

PAULA

Well, he's not here.

PATTY

Please just clean out the fridge and put some poison down. And salt the walk. You know my back is shot. It would really help me out, Paula.

PAULA

I don't wanna work here. You're gonna to have to close this place down if you don't get some extra help.

PATTY

Paula, why are you arguing with me about this? I don't wanna fight with you. I will never understand how you and your brother turned out so different. You're twins for God's sake. What happened to you? I'm not gonna be around to take care of you forever, ya know.

PAULA

You don't take care of me.

PATTY

I cook for you. I pay the bills. I do the laundry.

PAULA

I give you money for that.

PATTY

What are you going to do when I'm gone? Have you thought about that?

PAULA

Only every day.

Patty sorts through a stack of old invoices, and crams them in to various drawers during this dialogue.

PATTY

That reminds me. Did you get that information I asked for?

PAULA

About the thing for Dad?

PATTY

Yes, the thing. What else have I asked you to do?

PAULA

Clean the fridge. Kill the rats. Balance the books. Mop the floor. Order inventory.

She continues.

PAULA (CONT'D)

Put up flyers. Drum up business. Drive the Van. Flirt with the Wedding Halls and the Funeral homes.

PATTY

What did you find out?

PAULA

It's gonna be at least six thousand.

PATTY

Dollars??!

PAULA

At least.

PATTY

Six thousand? Dollars? For a funeral? I thought Pierce Brothers said they'd give us a good deal on this thing? Did you go talk to Danny Pierce?

PAULA

Yes, I talked to him. And he's giving us a good deal. And six thousand dollars is the deal he's giving us.

PATTY

What kind of deal is six thousand dollars!? All the favors I've done for that family over the years. Last minute arrangements. Special orders. That doesn't sound like much of a deal.

PAULA

It's 30% off.

PATTY

That's 30% off? Six thousand dollars is 30% off?!? I had no idea it was so high.

PAULA

It's expensive to die.

PATTY

Six thousand dollars?

PAULA

That's cheap! It was going to be only 20% off, but I got Danny to come down to 30% off.

PATTY

How'd you do that?

PAULA

I said if they did Dad's funeral at a big discount, they could do yours too.

PATTY

You should have had Paul call Danny. Those two were always very close.

PAULA

Uh. Yeah. I guess you could put it that way. Paul's not gonna call Danny. Not ever. And six thousand dollars is the best we're gonna do.

PATTY

That includes a casket? A nice casket?

PAULA

No, it don't include the casket. That's just for the service and burial.

PATTY

Well, how much is a casket?

PAULA

The cheapest I could find is about a thousand bucks.

PATTY

A thousand dollars? For a box? That's so much!

PAULA

It's really not. It's the cheapest I could find.

PATTY

Where?

PAULA

What?

PATTY

Who has this budget busting thousand dollar casket for sale?

PAULA

Costco.

PATTY

Costco has caskets now?

PAULA

Yeah. We get cash back on it too.

PATTY

I don't know. Your father wouldn't like a casket from Costco.

PAULA

So we won't tell him. What has he got against Costco?

PATTY

They've been trying to put us out of business for thirty years Paula. They've been out to get us ever since they first moved in and tried to take over the neighborhood.

PAULA

You think Costco is out to get you?

PATTY

They're out to get all of us, Paula. All of us! Al's butcher closed five years ago. Rita's bakery went belly up two years ago. You know very well you can't get a decent cannoli anymore around here.

PAULA

Rita sold it for a lot of money to that marijuana dispensary. I think she supplies them with pot brownies now, and she's doin' really well.

Patty reacts in disgust.

PATTY

And poor Jim and Judy and their darling little shoe shop.

PAULA

People don't need cobblers anymore, Ma! When your shoes wear out, you just go out and buy a new pair. You don't repair 'em.

PATTY

Yes, you go buy a new pair. At Costco. And they last about a month.

PAULA

I think they last longer than a month.

PATTY

And you know, they sell those cheap-o flower arrangements, that die in a day, and people are falling for it.

They hire illegals for cheap labor, and then they sell cheap flowers, full of chemicals to keep them "fresh", and that's putting us out of business.

She takes an aspergillum (look it up) and dispenses holy water all over the flowers.

PATTY (CONT'D)

(a prayer)

O, Little Therese of the Child Jesus, please pick for me a rose from the heavenly gardens and send it to me as a message of love.

PAULA

Costco, doesn't hire illegals, Ma.

PATTY

Illegals is all anyone will hire these days.

PAULA

That's not true.

PATTY

Lisa Cardenelli told me they won't even hire white people anymore.

PAULA

Lisa Cardenelli is a racist bitch.

PATTY

Is it racist to just want a fair shot at a job? Costco and all those big other stores like it are what's wrong with this entire country.

PAULA

They're a good company, Ma.

PATTY

Phhht. Giant buckets of candy, and suddenly everyone's got diabetes.

PAULA

My friend Dennis works there and he says it's a great job.

PATTY

You don't have any friends.

PAULA

Well, I already bought the casket, so Dad's just gonna have to live with it.

PATTY

You bought it without asking? I would like to have seen it first. Why did you buy it without showing it to me first?

PAULA

It was on sale, and it was the floor model.

PATTY

Can you return it?

PAULA

I dunno. Probably. But I might lose my deposit or have to pay a restocking fee.

PATTY

Okay. Let me think about it...It does sound like a good deal...It better be nice. I don't wanna be embarrassed.

PAULA

It's actually really nice.

PATTY

It just seems like a lot of money for something that's going to be buried in the ground.

Patty pulls out a notepad, ready for information.

PATTY (CONT'D)

So, what is the whole funeral going to cost? Wake, service, burial... Bottom line?

PAULA

I'm thinking around ten grand, minimum.

She throws the notepad at Paula's face.

PAULA (CONT'D)

Hey! Don't shoot the messenger!

PATTY

Ten Grand? To be dead? That seems really high. Ten grand, to be dead. Your father's head would explode if he knew about this.

PAULA

Okay. What about cremation?

PATTY

What about it?

PAULA

It's an option.

PATTY

Not for Catholics it isn't.

PAULA

They changed that. It's okay now.

PATTY

Nobody sent me the memo.

PAULA

It's something to consider.

PATTY

Your father wouldn't like it.

PAULA

Why not?

PATTY

In a little jar for all of eternity?

A beat.

PATTY (CONT'D)

He's claustrophobic. You know that.

PAULA

It's much cheaper.

PATTY

He wouldn't like it.

PAULA

Okay then, I don't know what to tell you, Ma.

PATTY

Call your brother, ask him if he knows someone who can get us a better deal.

PAULA

He's like two thousand miles away. He doesn't know anyone here anymore.

PATTY

If he were here, he'd know what to do.

PAULA

Well, he's not here. I am.

PATTY

I am painfully aware of the current situation.

Door opens. Dorothy Dombrowski  
enters.