

ACT I

SCENE ONE

(Los Angeles. Morning. Large living room in a big, well-to-do one-story house from the '30's.

Stage Left leads towards offstage front door entrance to the house. Stage Right leads towards bedrooms, kitchen, etc. No carpeting or rugs whatsoever. A big French Window.

JUNIOR is waiting nervously in the living room; MARTA, late 50's, enters from the big Hallway that leads to the bedrooms, kitchen, etc. No carpeting or rugs whatsoever. A big French Window.

JUNIOR, '30's, is waiting nervously in the living room; MARTA, late 50's, enters from the bedrooms area.)

JUNIOR

Is he out of bed yet?

MARTA

He's having his first cup of coffee.

JUNIOR

Waiting just makes me more nervous.

MARTA

If you want him in a better mood, don't let him see you before he has three cups of coffee.

JUNIOR

Shall I bring him a fourth cup?

MARTA

And I suggest you comb your hair. You know your father doesn't like to see you without your hair combed.

JUNIOR

It is combed.

MARTA

(beat)

Then wear a hat.

JUNIOR

You know how he is. He'll just say I don't respect him and ask me to take it off.

(CONTINUED)

MARTA

Then comb your hair.

(JUNIOR quickly rearranges his hair with his hand.)

MARTA

Look at this place. It looks like Chechnya.

(Looks at him:)

What the hell did you do to your hair!?

JUNIOR

I don't have a comb, so I combed it with my hand.

MARTA

It looks like you combed it with your foot.

(JUNIOR quickly tries fixing it again.)

MARTA

Leave it alone. It looked better before.

JUNIOR

God. I heard a noise.

MARTA

That was probably Don Julio.

JUNIOR

I know that. Has he already finished his coffee? Is he coming out here NOW??

MARTA

Would you like to reschedule?

JUNIOR

No! No. It's okay. It's just -- I'm okay.

MARTA

Would you like some coffee?

JUNIOR

I never touch it.

MARTA

Because it considerably soothes Don Julio's mood when someone has coffee with him.

JUNIOR

Cream, no sugar.

(CONTINUED)

MARTA

Coming right up.

JUNIOR

Oh God. I hear him. He's coming.

MARTA

Why don't you sit down? Contrary to lore, everyone who's ever come into the house has also left it... Besides, I'm a witness. I saw you enter it.

JUNIOR

You're not helping, Marta.

MARTA

(as she exits)
If anything happens, just scream.

(She exits)

JUNIOR

(to himself:)
Hi, Papi. Uhm... How are you? I haven't seen you in a long time. I -- I hear you're now a big coffee drinker. I -- just wanted to -- Oh God!...

(DON JULIO enters from bedroom area, Stage Right. He's in his wheelchair throughout the play. Two days short of 75, he is a grouch.)

JUNIOR

Good morning, papi. How are you? It's -- Thank you for agreeing to see me. You look good, very good. I -- the reason I'm here -- I'm talking too much, aren't I?

DON JULIO

Where's my coffee?

JUNIOR

Didn't you just have it?

DON JULIO

You call that coffee? I don't call that coffee.
(looking at JUNIOR:)
Jesus!

JUNIOR

What, papi?

DON JULIO

The hell did you do to your hair?

(MARTA enters with coffee, as JUNIOR fixes his hair hurriedly)

(CONTINUED)

MARTA

Ah, he's alive. Your coffee, Junior.

JUNIOR

Thank you.

DON JULIO

Oh. HE has coffee. What am I? Chopped "cuchifritos"?

MARTA

You want more coffee?

DON JULIO

It would be nice. If you could manage to make it like coffee. Hot.

MARTA

It's always like coffee and it's always hot. Don't start with me. I don't have time today for crap.

JUNIOR

(quickly tasting his:)

Mmm! It's good! Nice and warm. Here, papi. You can have it. It's for you.

DON JULIO

(taking it)

Thank you.

(then:)

Where's YOUR coffee?

(MARTA and JUNIOR look at each other.)

DON JULIO

You're just gonna watch me drink coffee?

(to MARTA:)

Why don't you get him some coffee?

(JUNIOR discreetly and desperately nods 'yes' to MARTA.)

MARTA

I'll be right back. With the whole pot, just in case.

(at the door:)

By the way, if anybody needs coffee, just let me know.

(She exits)

DON JULIO

I think I'm firing her tomorrow.

JUNIOR

Maybe you shouldn't, father. She's a good nurse.

DON JULIO

I'll do what I want. This is my house, and if she's gonna be a smart ass, she can go get herself another job.

JUNIOR

You're right, yes.

DON JULIO

So what did you wake me up for?

JUNIOR

I thought -- Didn't we have an appointment?

DON JULIO

I had to wake up for it, didn't I?

JUNIOR

And I thank you for waking up for me, papi.

DON JULIO

I may even go back to bed in a little bit.

JUNIOR

What a great idea.

DON JULIO

But I probably couldn't, because this is my fourth cup of bad coffee.

JUNIOR

(too quickly:)

I have something to tell you, father.

DON JULIO

Oh?

JUNIOR

Sorry. I'm -- I'm just a little...

DON JULIO

I'm listening. You switched from "papi" to "father" again. When you do that, I'm curious.

JUNIOR

Father... I mean: papi...

DON JULIO

I'm still listening.

(CONTINUED)

JUNIOR

I have a very big favor to ask you.

DON JULIO

How much is it this time?

JUNIOR

Dad, you make me feel like I do this regularly.

DON JULIO

No. You don't. But you have. So what is it "this time"? How much is it "this time"? And most important: why?

JUNIOR

It's not a whole lot.

DON JULIO

So it's a lot.

JUNIOR

It's -- I need to borrow ten thousand dollars.

(Dead silence; then DON JULIO drinks more coffee)

DON JULIO

Tell me the amount again? It sounded like you said "ten thousand dollars"?

JUNIOR

I did.

(DON JULIO's cup shakes noticeably)

DON JULIO

I think I've had too much coffee.

JUNIOR

Are you okay?

DON JULIO

Apparently my hearing is.

JUNIOR

I'll pay you back every cent.

DON JULIO

What in the world do you need ten thousand dollars for?

JUNIOR

The diner is not going well. I need to pay back a loan, tie some strings. If I don't sell it, and just close it, I'll take quite a loss. Ten thousand will

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JUNIOR (cont'd)

keep me out of the hole -- leaving me something to start with again.

DON JULIO

On something else?

JUNIOR

It's my only hope.

DON JULIO

You could never keep anything for long. Business or Family.

JUNIOR

It's been hard. This business is so... Plus the alimony... and the kids.

DON JULIO

Ah, the grandkids. One forgets.

JUNIOR

Mateo is now sixteen. Marco turned three last month.

DON JULIO

Good to know. Since you never bring them. Then again, you never bring yourself. Tell me, do they ask their mother for money too?

JUNIOR

Dad, this is very hard for me.

DON JULIO

You can't make toast and you open a diner. You should have learned to cook first. I ate there once and I almost sued you! And now, look!...

(then:)

Not another T-shirt business, I hope?

JUNIOR

No. I was thinking of opening a limo service.

DON JULIO

A WHAT?

JUNIOR

But first, I applied as a limo driver. I actually start next week. I'm a good driver. I figured I'd learn the business from the ground up -- this time -- then save up enough to buy one limo. Get a business going. Then another limo. And so on. I'm leaving the day after tomorrow. I have to, to get there by Friday.

(CONTINUED)

DON JULIO

To get where?

JUNIOR

To Chicago.

DON JULIO

Chicago?! You're going to drive limos in Chicago???

JUNIOR

I have a friend there. He hooked me up.

DON JULIO

Chicago's got two seasons: Winter and August. I can see driving in August. But the rest of the year, what?

JUNIOR

People know how to drive in the snow up there. Dad, it's the best chance I've ever gotten.

(Silence)

DON JULIO

No.

JUNIOR

Papi...

DON JULIO

No. I don't think I want to give you ten thousand and have you go be a limo driver.

JUNIOR

I see. Oh, well... Here I am, father: failing again. I'm trying, but: wham! Another wall! Anyway, thanks for your time. I gotta go. I got an egg to wipe off my face.

DON JULIO

I wasn't finished.

(JUNIOR stops)

I'm going to give you only four thousand -- so you can settle that diner where they serve toast with bones in them. Then you go drive limos. And when you learn and you're good and ready, THEN I may -- MAY -- send you the rest. And then you can open up your new business of limos, which so far you now nothing of.

JUNIOR

I said I'm starting at the bottom, father.

DON JULIO

And hopefully, you won't stay there.

(CONTINUED)

JUNIOR

You really don't think I can do it. You really expect me to fail.

DON JULIO

Well, so far you have. Are you questioning what I do with my money?

JUNIOR

No. I'm not. I thank you. I accept it.

DON JULIO

You really have no choice, do you?

JUNIOR

No.

DON JULIO

I don't like this, Junior. I don't like to see my sons helpless and dependent.

JUNIOR

I don't either, father. In fact, I hate it.
(A look is shared)

DON JULIO

(out of his pocket:)
Here's the check.
(JUNIOR is taken aback)
I wrote it while I started my coffee.

JUNIOR

How did you know?

DON JULIO

Experience.

JUNIOR

(taking it)
Thank you.

DON JULIO

Where you staying at?

JUNIOR

I checked out. I'm starting the drive right away.

DON JULIO

(taken aback)
You mean, you're still going to Chicago with just four thousand dollars?

(CONTINUED)

JUNIOR

I have to.

DON JULIO

(beat)

Okay... Is there anything else?

JUNIOR

Well -- yes. Happy Birthday, father.

DON JULIO

It's not my birthday.

JUNIOR

I know. I mean, tomorrow.

DON JULIO

It's the day after tomorrow.

JUNIOR

Yes. It's too bad I'll be, you know --

DON JULIO

I know. You're leaving. Well, your brother and sister will be coming. THAT should cheer me up...

JUNIOR

Please give them my best. And again: thank you...father.

(JUNIOR exits; a moment later, MARTA enters with breakfast tray and coffee.)

MARTA

Where was Junior going?

DON JULIO

He'll be gone for a while.

MARTA

(setting his breakfast)

So he survived unscathed?

DON JULIO

Very funny.

MARTA

How's your back?

DON JULIO

It's there.

(CONTINUED)

MARTA

Does it hurt?

DON JULIO

That's how I know it's there. The eggs smell good.

MARTA

It's not eggs. It's corn flakes.

DON JULIO

(looks at it)

Then they smell bad.

MARTA

Yesterday you said you wanted corn flakes.

DON JULIO

I did. But not egg-flavored corn flakes. What?-- are you trying to kill me?

MARTA

It wouldn't work. You'd still come back to make hell for everyone.

DON JULIO

Take this away before I replace you.

MARTA

It's the only way I might get a vacation around here.

DON JULIO

(looking at cereal)

Either this milk expired, or the cow died before they milked her.

MARTA

Maybe it's just time to change you.

DON JULIO

Very funny. We should book you in some club... Hey, this is good. These are good. They don't taste like eggs when you taste them.

MARTA

That's because they're not.