

Miguel Takes Charge

Draft #2 - As conceptualized and written by Nan Ficca and Doug Wilder

Side one! Luis - Carlos

Scene 1: Current Day Worksite

[Exterior. Shovel hits mulch pile - images of outdoor physical labor being done. Miguel's face, sweaty with effort. He wipes his brow and looks up. The sun is shining brightly onto him and other workers, all working hard in the bright sun. Cut to Carlos sitting on the ground in some shade with a water bottle. Another worker - Luis many years Carlos' senior approaches him]

START
LUIS

(cheerfully, clapping Carlos on the back)
Hot enough for you Carlos?

CARLOS

You know how I love the summer Luis! I also love a break in the shade with some cold water! You know what they say - we have to stay...

LUIS (interrupting him)

No! Don't you say it!

CARLOS

Hydrated! (he says as he jumps up to Luis.)

LUIS

Dios Mio! (He groans at the fancy word) We are Latino -we don't need the shade! (making a gesture of strength) Stop being a sissy and (pretend fighting with him) come on help me finish this trimming. It's almost end of day!

CARLOS

Ha! You - calling me a sissy! (Still playing with Luis) We'll see who the sissy is at our next Soccer game - when I steal the ball from you - just like I always do Luis! (Makes a soccer foot move.)

[They work on the last yard project together.]

LUIS

Ah! You are good Carlito - but I will never give up! Now let's finish this tree and get home for some family time! My Maria is making her world famous Pupusas for dinner - join us!

MIGUEL

(Rallying the troops)

Okay crew! Looks like we are ready to wrap up the day. Another very happy client!

[Client gives thumbs up. Workers begin cleaning up. Carlos goes to Miguel.]

Carlos - you're coming for Friday family dinner, yes? Sofia and mamma are preparing a whole taco spread!

CARLOS (playfully)

Well – what kind of tacos Miguel? I've just been invited by Luis for Papusa!

MIGUEL

Well, well – you are the most popular guy in town! Tough choice Hermano, Maria's pupusa's are out of this world. Of course, when Mamma finds out you chose Maria's pupusas over her carne asada.... (slitting throat gesture) I'm just saying. (They all laugh)

CARLOS

Many thanks Luis – can I take a rain check? Maria's pupusas are (makes a chef's kiss gesture)! Give her my best.

MIGUEL

Perhaps Luis – you can convince Maria to bring her Pupusas to the company picnic, eh?!

Thanks everyone for your terrific work as always!

[All part ways to head home. Sun transition. They drive to Miguel's house. Sun in their eyes through the windows. Now through the windows of the house. They enter through the front door. Family awaits.]

END

Scene 2: Home – Getting Ready for Dinner

[Interior. A cozy, multi-generational home. The kitchen is alive with activity. MIGUEL and CARLOS enter, greeted by their mother, CARMEN, who is finishing up preparing the meal. Miguel's kids Tomas and Mia rush them talking excitedly about what they have done today – vying for dad's attention. Carlos scoops Mia up.]

MIGUEL

Thank the lord! It's Friday family feast night!

MIA

Daddy!!!!!!!!!!!! (running up to him) Today I learned a new routine in dance class! I'll show you! (she begins...)

TOMAS

Hey Papa – did you find out about the tickets to the soccer match – can we go? Can we?

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SIDE TWO: Mia – Tomas

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START

CARMEN

(teasingly, to Tomas and Mia)

Tomas, Mia - finish setting the table – let your father have some space to breathe. (she fans Miguel – hands him a bottle of water/ does on her son as always.)

CARLOS

(Has grabbed Tomas and is play boxing with him.)

Mia – show me that new routine -let's see it! Let's watch her, eh Tomas? Show us what you got!

CARMEN

(entering with platters of food)

Perfect timing – taco bar is ready with my special Carne Assada and all the fixings. Everyone wash your hands and we'll dig in!

MIGUEL

You guys go ahead and start; I need to return a call to a prospective new client. It'll only take a few minutes. Oh, and Sofia – I promised Carlos a refreshing Tamarindo!

CARLOS

Yes! (fist pump)

SOFIA

Well then, it's a party! Carlos – help yourself – it's in the fridge in the garage bring a few will you? Alright everyone let's eat. (shooing people toward the taco bar.)

[Miguel goes into the other room as Sofia and all exit to dining room. Miguel listens to a voicemail. Sofia returns to Miguel – he puts the phone in his pocket.]

MIGUEL

All set – Let's go build a taco my love! (he takes her arms and begins "dancing" with her – she's not really giving in to it like usual.)

SOFIA

Tell me Miguel.

MIGUEL

Tell you... that I love you? My love it's Friday let's relax and enjoy family dinner night!

SOFIA

Yes *my* love Miguel – we will have a wonderful family dinner (stopping him dancing her) right after you tell me what the voicemail from the doctor said. Doctor Mendoza said your biopsy report would be in today. Tell me.

MIGUEL

I never could hide anything from you. (Sofia makes a face that says you are right about that!) Thank

END

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SIDE THREE - CARMEN

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SIDE FOUR: Doctor Mendoza

Scene 4: Doctor's Visit for Results and Treatment Plan

[Interior. A modern doctor's office. The doctor, a middle-aged doctor with a calming demeanor, enters a consult room with a file that they are reading. MIGUEL and SOFIA sit - he has a tense posture while SOFIA clasps his hand.]

DOCTOR

Good morning Miguel (they shake hands)

MIGUEL

Good morning doctor, this is my wife Sofia.

DOCTOR (Shaking her hand)

Nice to meet you Mrs. Hernandez. How wonderful that you can be here as well.

SOFIA

Thank you Doctor – please call me Sofia.

DOCTOR

Sofia (She says as she sits to meet with them.)

Miguel – I have your biopsy results here and the diagnosis is confirmed, you have skin cancer.

[SOFIA reacts, she takes Miguel's hand in hers for reassurance for herself and for support. MIGUEL exhales deeply, holding back emotion.]

I know it is very difficult to hear this news. But to be more specific your cancer is a non - melanoma basal cell carcinoma – and the good news is we have caught it early and this is very treatable.

SOFIA

He's been so careful recently.

DOCTOR

It's very good that you recently started wearing sunscreen, but the truth is, these types of cancers often show up 5, 10, even 20 years after sun damage – skin damage happens over time. I'm glad you're being proactive now. And I'm so glad that you noticed how your mole was changing and that you took your doctor's advice to get it checked out. That first step is the hardest – it's scary. It's always best to catch cancers very early – it can make all the difference in treatment, how long it will take and even the cost of treatment.

SOFIA

I hate to say it – but with men it's even more difficult. They feel like they have to act like everything is fine. Doctor Miguel noticed his mole changing color - how else do you know if you might have skin cancer?

DOCTOR

Great question Sofia. We call it the ABCs of moles: A is for Asymmetry – if one side of the mole is a different shape, B is for Border irregularity like the edges are ragged or notched or blurred, C is for Color. A mole that changes color like Miguel's or has multiple colors of brown and black and even including red or blue in some cases. D if for Diameter -in general if a mole is 6 millimeters or more you should just have it checked out – that's about the size of a pencil eraser. And E is for Evolving – a mole that is changing in size, shape or color. Or a mole that begins to itch or bleed.

And it's not just moles but also sores that just don't seem to heal, pimples that keep re-appearing in the same place. Hispanic people are especially susceptible to a form of skin cancer that appears as tiny things like blisters on the bottoms of feet and palms of hands. Places that don't typically get much sun exposure.

My recommendation is to have anything like these issues checked as soon as possible – again it can mean a simpler and more cost effective treatment. I also recommend everyone get an annual screening of your full body to spot everything we can.

SOFIA

Thank you doctor it so surprising that a sore or a pimple coming back could be cancer. (She and Miguel look at each other in a now we know this look.) So, what are our next steps doctor?

MIGUEL

I run my own business doctor – will I still be able to work?

DOCTOR

Removing your mole and all of the cancer is an outpatient procedure with a local anesthesia to numb the area to remove the mole. We can get you an appointment for next week – and you can be back to work the next day. You just need to keep the area clean and covered – it can take 3-6 weeks to heal fully.

END

SOFIA

Thank you Doctor Mendoza. We'll keep doing everything right. (She and Miguel agree)

MIGUEL

Thank you Doctor I feel like I'm in great hands and ready to take this on! (Very confident – no longer worried – the Miguel we always knew!)

Scene 5: Miguel Daydreams/ Flashback

[Interior car SUN Transition – Miguel and Sofia on their way home. Miguel daydreams of his son in his place in the Doctor's office, getting the same diagnosis. He pulls over.]

SOFIA

Miguel, what are you doing? Are you okay?

SIDE FIVE! Sofia - Miguel

Scene 5: Miguel Daydreams/ Flashback

[Interior car SUN Transition – Miguel and Sofia on their way home. Miguel daydreams of his son in his place in the Doctor's office, getting the same diagnosis. He pulls over.]

SOFIA

Miguel, what are you doing? Are you okay?

MIGUEL

Sofia I was just picturing Tomas in a doctor's office in twenty years getting the same diagnosis as mine.

SOFIA

No Miguel Tomas is young, he can be more proactive now and he will be fine.

MIGUEL

The doctor said sun damage in small bits can cause cancer over many years. I have been stubborn Sofia and have taught Tomas and my employees the same falsehoods I learned as a boy. I've kept on believing the myths I learned and ignored everything you hear now in the media. (starting to break down) I've let my family down – you – our children.

SOFIA (Comforting him.)

You're a good man Miguel – you have taken great care of us. But you are right we need to make changes – what are you thinking we can do?

MIGUEL

We have to and protect ourselves and our family. And Hernandez Family Landscaping needs to do everything we can to protect our employees.

SOFIA

Yes My love! We can do this.

MIGUEL

And will you help me Sofia – I will need your help to learn all we can and start new protections. Let's get more information from Doctor Mendoza.

SOFIA

Absolutely - we will all work together my Miguel.

END

SIDE SIX - Jorge

God for you my angel. The doctor says the biopsy is positive. I need to make an appointment to see what happens next. (they hold each other.)

[The camera focuses on the children playing at the table, TOMAS trying to sneak a piece of food off MIA's plate while CARMEN laughs. A warm, lighthearted dinner unfolds with everyone talking, laughing, and eating together.]

MIGUEL

Another fine dinner, thank you Mamma, thank you Sofia! (Everyone agrees/ says thank you)

START **SOFIA**

Tomas you and Mia please take the dishes to the kitchen and start washing up. (They do) Thank you my sweeties. We'll have some dessert when you've finished. (once the kids are gone) Family - Miguel has something important to share. (She squeezes his hand - Miguel is startled)

MIGUEL

(stuttering a bit at first) Ah, um - I went to the doctor to see about a mole that on my arm that was changing color. I just got the biopsy results, and they say I have skin cancer (Parents and other family members react - What? How?)

CARLOS

What do you mean changing? Did the mole hurt?

MIGUEL

No it didn't hurt - it was just changing shape and color. (calming everyone down) But don't worry at all - I know everything will be fine - God watches over this family. I have a follow-up appointment where I will get all the information on what happens next. It will be fine; I can take care of this, and it won't affect the family business. I'm in control - don't worry.

SOFIA

And I will be with Miguel for this appointment to make sure we have all the information. (Miguel reacts - no need -no need.)

MIGUEL

No need Sofia - I will go on my own - It will all be fine. (Everyone talks:

SOFIA

I want to go honey

CARMEN

Yes she will go Miguel.

CARLOS

Does this doctor even speak Spanish?

JORGE

Miguel.

(The room falls silent for a beat. Then, JORGE, MIGUEL's father, speaks with a calm, assured voice.)
The Hernandez Family will get through this together. Sofia will go with you to your appointment. She is your partner in this life - she will make sure to ask all the questions men don't think are important. Carlos and I are here to help with the business so you can get the care you need. We are family and the original Hernandez and his sons will get through this together.

END

SIDE SEVEN: Diego - Ana

Alright, team, thank you for being here - grab a bite and a coffee if you want and settle in. We are going to be making some changes to our protocols here at Hernandez Landscaping so I need everyone's full attention.

[Everyone settles in for the meeting.]

Unfortunately as outdoor workers we have a higher risk of getting skin cancer because we are exposed to sun's UV radiation every day. But the good news is that skin cancer is one of the most preventable cancers if we do certain things to protect ourselves.

SOFIA

Everyone has done a good job of wearing hats, sunglasses and long sleeves and pants – but we need to make sure the shirts and pants your wearing are protecting you from the sun. If the material is too thin (She holds a thin t-shirt up to the light for them to see.) if you can see thru so can the sun! There are even companies that have clothes with sunscreen in them – it's called UPF or Ultraviolet Protection Factor.

MIGUEL

But you still also need to put on sunscreen. And it needs to be at least SPF- 30 – SPF 50 is even better. SPF stands for Sun Protection Factor. We now have sunscreen dispensers in every truck and at the office. Sunscreen needs to be applied at least 15-20 minutes before you are in the sun to give it time to protect you. And everyone is required to reapply sunscreen at least every two hours. You can reapply anytime you need it.

[The assembled workers begin rumbling in protest: "oh come on" "this is for sissies" etc.]

DIEGO - WORKER ONE (male)

Miguel we don't have time for this, And - they say sunscreen makes you overheat, we'll all get sick from this, you'll lose productivity.

MIGUEL

I was told that too when I was young and starting in this business Diego but it's not true. It's just an old legend that keeps getting passed down. That ends here today at Hernandez Landscaping. And we will wear sunscreen year-round. The sun's UV rays can cause cancer even on cold and overcast days. We must be consistent.

ANA - WORKER TWO (female)

I'm so sorry to bring it up Mr. Hernandez – but It will be hard to re-apply sunscreen my hands and my face get so dirty I don't think it will work.

[SOFIA steps up, she has wipes and sunscreen stick]

SOFIA

(Kindly) You are so right about that Ana – thank you for bringing it up. We also have hand wipes in every truck so you can clean your hands or even your face so you can reapply your sunscreen. (To Ana) Here you keep these.

SIDE EIGHT! Sofia

Scene 7: Company Office – Staff Meeting

[Interior. The office. Miguel is standing in front of a whiteboard with a group of workers, including Carlos, Jorge, and a few others. The office is a simple space with a few desks and paperwork scattered around. Miguel and Sofia present findings from the doctor.]

start
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(Kindly) You are so right about that Ana – thank you for bringing it up. We also have hand wipes in every truck so you can clean your hands or even your face so you can reapply your sunscreen. (To Ana) Here you keep these.

[Ana shows her gratitude.]

SOFIA

I also found these sunscreen sticks and sprays also which can help with application throughout the day. The sticks are easy to apply like deodorant. Perfect for our big strong men who don't like lotion! Heads up Carlito! (she tosses one to Carlos who catches it and nods in approval lifting it up to show everyone to see) And we even have waterproof sunscreen for those who might sweat more so it won't get in your eyes, But you still have to re-apply the waterproof as well.

[Sofia and Miguel exchange looks of happiness this is going well!]

LUIS – WORKER THREE (a bit – 10 years? Older than Miguel so mid-late forties)

All due respect Miguel, but I've been in this business for many years and this all just seems like overkill. I've never used these lotions or sticks and I'm fine without them. Can't we be left to decide for ourselves?

END

MIGUEL

Luis you absolutely have my respect. Everyone here does, and my eternal gratitude for your hard work. But I want to give you more than that. I have something to tell you.

[He and Sofia exchange glances of agreement – he must share this.]

I have been diagnosed with skin cancer.

[The assembled react – worried - gasps – blessings etc. Miguel makes gestures to quiet them down.]

Thank you – I'm fine now. I had a mole that was changing color and my doctor said I should have it looked at. I did and it was cancer. Since I caught it early, they were able to remove the mole in a short procedure, I went home the same day and my future will be good. As long as I do all the things I we have been talking about here today.

Luis – I heard all the same false lore as you. And as I got older and kept hearing more about how much we need protection from the sun – I told myself I was a strong, brown-skinned Latino man who didn't need lotions! I even have God's protection – what more could I need!? Now I know that not looking out for myself could mean that I won't be here to take care of my family.

I am relatively young for a skin cancer diagnosis. My doctor explained that skin cancer can appear 5, 10 even 20 years later it adds up. We need daily, year-round protection, and I want to do all I can to make sure none of you ever have to get the diagnosis I did. Or – God forbid – some worse type of skin

Side Nine! Arturo - Teresa

cancer.

[Sofia joins Miguel and they "professional hug" show solidarity]

SOFIA

And we all need support in this. So, I have an overview here of all the precautions we are implementing and a copy to give to your partner or closest relative – so they can help you add these protections to your daily routine. We all need to be in this together. (To LUIS) I'm sure Maria will want to help you!

LUIS

Well you sure know my Maria! Thank you, Sofia,

[Rising going to Miguela and Sofia]

Thank you Miguel. God bless you both and thank you for protecting all of us.

MIGUEL

And everyone please include checking your own skin and moles regularly, so if there is something it can be caught early like mine and be treated.

[Luis goes to shake hands with Miguel and Miguel pulls him in for a hug. Sofia is passing around the flyer and everyone]

TOMAS

And hey everyone (gesturing and modeling the hat) Mom has ordered this new hat that will give you protection from the sun on your necks and ears too! Very light weight and even kind of sporty!
(workers join in checking out the hat)

Scene 8: Final Scene - Company Picnic

[Exterior. . Sun Transition - an afternoon - The cook-out. Friends and employees arrive with this and that. Kids are getting ready to play soccer. Jorge Mans the grill – Migual and Sofia prepare to receive guests]

JORGE

I'm proud of you, Miguel. You're doing what's right for your family, for your workers. Hernandez Landscaping is in great hands and ready to be even more successful by taking care of its own.

START MIGUEL

Thanks dad – I get my strength from all you taught me. (He and Sofia hug.)

[Sees Arturo & Teresa arrive – welcomes them]

Welcome Arturo – welcome Teresa it's so wonderful to have you here!

(Clapping Arturo on the back) How are you doing my friend?

[Teresa and Sofia hug - Teresa has brought a dish to share and gives it to Sofia over..]

ARTURO

I'm well Miguel thanks to you! If you hadn't shared about your skin cancer and all you learned from it, I would never have thought anything about the scaly patch I was having on my ear. I got it checked out and it's different from yours – it's a squamous cell carcinoma. But we also caught early and the doctor says my future looks good.

MIGUEL

With continued protection of course!

TERESA

You know those hard hats protect from injury – but not from the sun! Thank you Sofia for helping us find the visor and neck shade to attach to the hard hat. And all the information about sunscreens too you're just a fountain of knowledge!

ARTURO

And I shared what I'm going through with my co-workers and getting them on board too. Miguel - my boss asked me to see if you would be willing to meet with him to talk about the precautions you have put in place at your business and the costs so he can make a proposal to the owners of Rossi Construction.

MIGUEL

Wonderful! It would be my pleasure Arturo – let's make that happen this week. (They shake hands to seal the deal.)

[Focus goes to Carlos enters with Tomas and Mia and a gaggle of other kids with soccer equipment. And more guests are now arriving.]

CARLOS

Ok kiddos let's work up an appetite! We'll start by picking teams -who are my captains?

CARMEN (Enters with a basket of SPF products.)

Carlito – let's start by making sure everyone is protected!