

THE WRONG WAKE

Crime comedy-drama · Contemporary · Allentown, PA — Atlantic City — Phoenix

LENGTH	BUDGET BAND	SCALE	LEAD	TO NE
116 pages	\$6–12M	Contained · no VFX	Male, 71	Funny, then not

A broke, widowed retired chemistry teacher who survives on funeral-buffet leftovers walks into the wrong wake, is mistaken for a Sicilian crime family's long-awaited cousin, and — cornered into playing consigliere — becomes the only man in the house who can keep the heir alive.

STORY

Wally Krause, 71, keeps a notebook of obituary clippings and works a circuit of strangers' funerals where the sandwiches are free and nobody asks who he is. Then a coffee stain turns 41 into 71, and he drives ninety minutes east to the wrong address.

The Salvati wake. Mythic buffet, armed mourners. The new widow needs six weeks — long enough for her son to pass the bar and take the family legitimate — and what she needs to survive them is a cousin from the old country nobody can check.

Wally takes the job for the food, then finds that thirty-eight years of making teenagers reason with each other is the most dangerous skill in the house. It works until his own method gets a man killed.

WHY IT WORKS

- A one-breath hook, and a title that plays as comedy and as threat at the same time.
- The lead's weapon is language. He ends the film by making two armed men reason with each other, and then talks both of them down.
- Grief handled as administration: one plate, one fork, one chair pulled out.

THE ROLES

WALLY KRAUSE · 71
Comedy, grief, dignity, and a monologue that closes a room. Keaton, Lithgow, Cranston, Tucci.

GINA SALVATI · late 50s
A widow already past grief and on to arithmetic. Tomei, Falco, Clarkson.

TOMMY MARCELLO · 50s
Underboss. The most dangerous man in any room he is polite in. Cannavale, Imperioli.

CARMINE VENTRESCA · 60s
Forty years delivering other men's decisions in a voice like weather.

COMPARABLES

A Man Called Otto (2022)
\$113M worldwide on a \$50M budget.

Thelma (2024)
\$13.1M worldwide on under \$3M.

Nonnas (2025)
15.3M Netflix views in three days.

Moviegoers 50+ drive roughly 31–33% of domestic box office and \$10B+ in annual spend (AARP).

Completed original spec · draft 9/18/2026 · 116 pages · standard spec layout in 12-point Courier. A blind title-page version is prepared for Nicholl, Austin and PAGE. Available for read on request.