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MISSION

LA BARBA

400 →

CASTRO

Synopsis

The story centers around La Barba, a thriving business located in the heart of the Mission District in San Francisco – the business being an escort service...with a twist.

Owned and operated by a flamboyant drag queen by the name of 'La Bamba Mama', La Barba (Spanish for 'The Beard') specializes in more than just hiring a companion for a night out on the town. It provides gay Latino men with a Latina 'girlfriend' who will escort them to family gatherings such as graduations, weddings and religious events.

The story opens with Luisa (22) traveling from her small, family farm in Bakersfield to the big city of San Francisco in hopes of starting a new life by attending broadcasting school. To make ends meet, her friend suggests that she become an escort for La Barba. At first she is reticent but the lure of a good salary and convenient hours persuades her to give it a try.

Gabriel (Gabe) is a somewhat shy, 29 year old gay Latino man who has been in the closet for over 15 years. His long term partner, Andy, is frustrated with the fact that Gabe refuses to come out to his Latino family. Gabe's parents, Millie and Alberto, are staunch Catholics steeped in the Latino culture of men being men. On top of that, Gabe, being the only son, is their last hope for an heir to the family name.

Even though La Bamba Mama demands that 'her girls' do all they can to keep their clients in the closet by instilling fear and doubt, a genuine friendship grows between Luisa and Gabriel when she sees his struggle and pain trying to cope with living in both worlds. To complicate matters, after attending several family functions, she finds herself falling in love with Gabe's cousin, Ricky, literally the black sheep of the family due to his African-American heritage.

Eventually, after experiencing the complexities of her own surreptitious love affair, Luisa decides she must help Gabe be who he is and face his family with the truth.

Directors Statement

I have always been fascinated by the proximity of the Mission and the Castro. On one hand there is (or used to be before gentrification) the Mission - with its Hispanic, family-oriented, religious demographics as opposed to its next door neighbor, the Castro, in many ways, the exact opposite. Yet in some aspects they are very similar in that they are male oriented but for different reasons.

I then began pondering the plight of those caught in the middle of these two historically distinct San Francisco neighborhoods - the gay Latino male - who must straddle both worlds - wanting to be his own person yet yearning for his culture. Hence I came up with a fictitious business - *La Barba*.