

Undertakers – Synopsis

Undertakers is a situation-comedy set in a family-run undertaker business. Each thirty-minute plus episode follows the lives of the Bashams and their employees who struggle to deal with the farcical elements of death. Coffin mix-ups, faulty cremation furnaces and feuding grieving families compliment the goings-on inside **Ashes to Bashams Undertakers** to create a hilarious new slant on dark humour.

Characters

The main protagonists are **Billy Basham** and his employee **Ricky Nelson**. Billy has inherited the business from his late father. He is 60, short, with little remaining hair and goggle-like glasses and is permanently stressed. His wheelchair-bound wife **Mrs Basham** 59 (her first name a mystery) is the main culprit behind Billy's anxiety. An unholy monster, she casts her wicked tongue, ever-ready fists and even her prosthetic leg against anyone foolish enough to cross her path. Their eldest daughter **Winnie Basham** 23 has her mother's charm. Employed to keep the books, the kleptomaniac constantly proves she has no conscience, not even regarding her family. The Bashams' youngest child is 17-year-old **Jimmy Basham**. With an IQ to match his age he gets in the way more often than not.

Ricky Nelson 36 is Billy's longest serving employee. He is the glue that holds the motley crew together. He is husband to **Lily Nelson** 34, a ditzy housewife with dreams of becoming a published author. They have three children: **Claire** 16, who hates that her father works with dead people; **Chris** 13, very smart and bores easily; **Paul** 3, the baby. Ricky tries to juggle his work and family life which often cross over at the most inconvenient times.

Mike Laverty is 28, handsome, single and always on the pull. He lives with his grandfather **Bobby Laverty** 73, the original 'dirty old man' whose constant conquests between the bed sheets even embarrass his liberal grandson. Mike assists Ricky and Billy to collect bodies, conduct funerals etc. but is also training to be a 'restorative artist', readying the deceased for viewing.

Amanda Mulhurn is an 18-year-old college student working as a temp in *Ashes to Bashams*. She is a constant target for Mike's advances but has a boyfriend called **Sean**.

Soon to be retired **Carlo French** 66 is the main restorative artist. He has recently shunned the black suited world of undertaking to become a hippie and enjoys the odd joint. He is trying to teach Mike some of his specialised skills before he goes.

Constables Fred Woods 41 and **Robert Drake** 38 are the regular duo who greet the undertakers when they remove a body. They have a dry and morbid sense of humour which knows no bounds. **Father Sean Lowry** 61 is the dedicated priest at local St Mary's Church. An older man who has seen it all, even he is shocked at the high-jinks at Bashams'.

Reverend Jim McMaster 53 often conducts funeral services in *Ashes to Bashams* funeral parlour. He has stress induced issues leading to uncontrolled outbursts at the most inappropriate times. **'Weirdo' Kevin** is also a frequent visitor to funerals but with a fetish for coffins his motives are quite different to that of the clergy.

Running Gags

There are several running gags within the show. Billy's catchphrase when things (always) go wrong is 'Oh balls!' Mrs Basham's trademark tantrums usually end up in berating and violence although her lack of mobility can cause her comeuppance. Winnie's thieving constantly goes unnoticed, not that she cares. Mike's efforts at seducing Amanda are forever thwarted. His constant cry of 'Get her bucked!' is a family motto. Billy tries to introduce new ways to market *Bashams* and drum up more business which fail in spectacular fashion.

Audience

The show is aimed at 25-50 age bracket, post watershed. The diverse cast of characters ensures both sexes are catered for. Although there is comic violence there should never be any blood or gore. Neither is the humour too dark and sensitive subjects such as the death of a child will never be used.

Sustainability

In the genre of the classic comedy style of *One Foot in the Grave*, *Undertakers* is scripted of carefully built-up gags which culminate in a final comedic conclusion. Story arcs build over each episode to explore the characters further ensuring they do not remain stationary caricatures. Like all good sitcoms empathy is essential for sustainability and *Undertakers* ensures the audience gets to know the Bashams *et al* on multiple levels.