

Eerie Wake: Woman Presumed Dead Knocks Inside Coffin

This was no horror movie. In fact, what happened in Quito, Ecuador, this past week turned out to be a fairytale for one grief-stricken family.

Gathered for the wake of Bella Montoya on June 9, friends and family suddenly heard a noise coming from the closed coffin of the woman who presumably had died at the age of 76. Her son, Gilberto Barbera, said the wake had begun only hours after doctors had declared Montoya dead, but were astonished when they heard strange sounds.

"There were about 20 of us there. After about five hours of the wake, the coffin started to make sounds," Barbera told the Associated Press. "My mom was wrapped in sheets and hitting the coffin, and when we approached we could see that she was breathing heavily. It gave us all a fright."

Barbera stressed that his mother's condition remains dire after the family returned her to the hospital where she previously did not respond to resuscitation efforts.

Barbera told the AP that doctors "theorized the cardiorespiratory arrest caused his mother to suffer from catalepsy, a trance-like state in which the body goes rigid and has decreased sensitivity to pain. In that state, several functions such as breathing slow down."

"My mother is on oxygen. Her heart is stable," Barbera said. "The doctor squeezed her hand and she reacted. They tell me this is a good sign because it means she is reacting little by little."

"Now, I only ask that my mother's health improves. I want her alive and by my side."

On Monday, Montoya was under intubation, and doctors weren't giving relatives much hope about her prognosis, Barbera told the AP.

But she is still alive, and considering what could have happened had they buried her before she came out of her "trance."

The Ecuadorian health ministry did not release any information about the doctor who prematurely declared Montoya dead, but the incident has prompted a government investigation into the hospital, the AP reported.

Investigators will pay particular attention to the hospital's process for issuing death certificates. {eo}

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