THE VATICAN

Created by

Paul Attanasio

Episode One:

"The Pope's Slippers"

REVISED DRAFT
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INT. DAY. PAPAL APARTMENT -- THE VATICAN

A gorgeous pair of SLIPPERS, handcrafted of red satin, featuring on the toe a cross embroidered with gold thread and garnished with rubies, coddled in arthritic hands:

POPE SIXTUS VI, 70s, fussy, passive-aggressive, by turns dogmatic and frivolous, moons over the slippers. He speaks both English and Italian with a strong Bavarian accent. Alongside him, BERND KOCH, 30s, the spectacularly handsome and well-built PAPAL SECRETARY. He, too, speaks with a German accent.

STEFANO QUADRAGGIO, 30s, an unctuous and effusive TAILOR, hovers behind the men.

SIXTUS
Marvelous.

BERND
What workmanship.

SIXTUS
Feel that.

QUADRAGGIO
Satin.

BERND
I'm sweating.

QUADRAGGIO
Hand-loomed.

BERND
So light!

SIXTUS
So few can do this kind of needlework anymore.

QUADRAGGIO
From Piana Clerico. The yarn has a sixty per cent content of twenty-four karat gold.

BERND
Like a ballet flat.

QUADRAGGIO
I want to assure you that no caterpillars were killed in the making of the silk.

Bernd stops. At any moment he might wipe away a tear.

BERND
Thank you, Stefano.

SIXTUS
Something is missing.

Quadraggio smiles.

QUADRAGGIO
I was hoping you'd say that.

The tailor pulls from a garment bag a gorgeous, tea-rose-pink silk CHASUBLE with gold trim...Bernd applauds as Stefano holds the chasuble up against the Pope, pairs it with a white wool pallium, embroidered with crosses...

BERND
To die for.

QUADRAGGIO
You like it?

SIXTUS
Bernd, I can't wear this.

BERND
What that color does for your skin!

SIXTUS
I'm an old man.

BERND
For Advent. For Gaudete Sunday.

SIXTUS
Well, perhaps.

QUADRAGGIO
Perfetto.

SIXTUS
Well, it can't hurt to try it on.

The Pope pulls off his shirt to slip on the chasuble. Not a physique that would make anyone forget Jack LaLanne. The door opens and CARDINAL MARCO MALERBA, 50s, enters. The Vatican's Secretary of State and camerlengo, the dark prince of the Curia, a dour careerist who knows the Church's corporate ladder, its exact tensile strength and every knurled rung.

MALERBA
Am I interrupting, Holy Father?

SIXTUS
What is it, Malerba?

MALERBA
There's a problem.

SIXTUS
There's always a problem.

MALERBA
In New York.

SIXTUS
The Americans.

MALERBA
In Sri Lanka we have a bishop who's not sure he believes in Jesus.
(drily)
There's always one.

Malerba finds the pink chasuble. Rubs the silk between his fingers, his lip curled with disdain.

BERND
(lamely)
For Gaudete Sunday.

SIXTUS
As the schedule should indicate, Malerba, this is my time for --

MALERBA
Prayer.

SIXTUS
-- prayer and --

MALERBA
Holy Father, may I speak to you privately?

The Pope takes Malerba aside...

SIXTUS
With most problems -- any problems -- all problems -- this problem -- I believe it best to allow it to mature for a few months.

MALERBA
Perhaps then it won't be a problem.

SIXTUS
And then see where we are.

MALERBA
Perhaps by Advent it will be a pink problem.

SIXTUS
Is that all?

MALERBA
The Archbishop of New York, responsible for two-and-a-half million Roman Catholic souls, just ordained a woman.

Off the Pope,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. MALERBA'S OFFICE -- THE VATICAN

PRIESTS and ACOLYTES -- the "downstairs" staff of the Vatican -- gather around an ancient tube TV, as the rabbit-ears antenna is adjusted by PIERO, 20s, Malerba's assistant, a meek young priest who lives on the volcanic rim of his boss's explosions...

...Among them are NGUYEN VAN PHONG, 20s, a Vietnamese ACOLYTE, and FATHER DENG BUL YAK, 20s, a seven-foot Sudanese, his knobby wrists protruding from his too-small cassock...

Also among them, MONSIGNIOR ALBERICO IEMMA, 40s, senior to the others, the Vatican's Sam Spade, with Bogie's basset-sad eyes and flinty irony.

ON THE TELEVISION

...A broadcast on CNN, with images of ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL in New York...

CNN ANCHOR
...Big changes up ahead for the Catholic Church. We'll be coming to you live from New York with the details...

On a signal from a lookout, Piero snaps off the TV and the priests scatter...Piero sits at his desk as Malerba sweeps inside...Without a hello, he enters his office. A look between Piero and Iemma. Piero follows his boss inside...

INT. CONTINUOUS. MALERBA'S OFFICE

Agitated, Malerba shuffles through his papers as Piero creeps timidly toward him...

PIERO
Your Eminence, the Monsignior --

MALERBA
What Monsignior?

PIERO
From the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

MALERBA
Miracles?

Iemma brazens his way inside.

IEMMA
At the age of five, the child becomes blind. Bilateral chorioretinitis. Atrophy of the optic nerves. The mother prays to the memory of John Paul. Inexplicably --

MALERBA
Today?

Piero beseeches Iemma with his eyes.

PIERO
We will reschedule, yes?

As they exit, off Iemma, disappointed,

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- ESTABLISHING

A large, pink advertisement on the side of a bus: "FLASHDANCERS GENTLEMEN'S CLUB," with a promise of two-for-one drinks, or ladies' night, or mostly, the promise of the chemical blonde with the marzipan lips...

...As the traffic light changes, the bus moves to reveal ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL, its three-hundred-foot neo-Gothic spires striving amidst the skyscrapers...

A throng of PROTESTORS, noisy and blocking the sidewalk... POLICE struggle to keep things orderly...

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- CONFESSIONAL

CARDINAL THOMAS DUFFY, 40s, handsome and remote, seeks absolution through the Rite of Reconciliation, while, across the screen, FATHER ALBERS, 60s, takes his confession.

DUFFY
...What Einstein said -- Einstein -- generally considered a bright guy -- he said the definition of insanity is to do the same thing over and over and expect a different outcome. So let's imagine Einstein walks into a church -- it's the same as a thousand years ago -- except here's what's changed.
(beat)
It's empty.

ALBERS
You want me to agree with you?

DUFFY
In Ireland Catholics don't go to mass anymore.

ALBERS
What you did was impulsive...

DUFFY
We have the number one product in the world -- you get to live forever -- it's better than pomegranate juice! -- and we can't sell that?

ALBERS
...And self-destructive...

DUFFY
People used to care about Jesus.

ALBERS
Like Harry Hamlin. Whatever happened to him?

DUFFY
Who's Harry Hamlin?

ALBERS
Put away your Blackberry.

Trying to hide it...

DUFFY
What?

ALBERS
I can see it.

DUFFY
One second.

ALBERS
Duffy --

He puts away the Blackberry.

DUFFY
Fine.

ALBERS
We're not Unitarians, Duffy. We're Catholics.

DUFFY
We don't ordain women because we don't ordain women.

ALBERS
That's our tradition.

DUFFY
The tyranny of the dead.

ALBERS
Chesterton called it the "democracy of the dead." We believe as Catholics that the dead are still with us. Tradition is our way of giving them a vote.
(beat)
Besides, Einstein never said that. It's apocryphal.

Duffy takes a beat.

DUFFY
Okay, it was impulsive.

ALBERS
And now what?

A beat.

DUFFY
(half to himself)
I don’t know.

A beat.

ALBERS
Duffy?

Duffy is back to his Blackberry...

DUFFY
We’re a “trending topic” on Twitter.

ALBERS
I got you something.

He hands him a MEDAL on a chain...

DUFFY
What’s this?

ALBERS
Saint Christina. The patron saint of lunatics.

Duffy smiles. Pockets the medal. Bows his head.

DUFFY
O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend you.
(half to himself)
Just not this one.

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. ST. PATRICK’S CATHEDRAL -- RESIDENCE

Duffy holds a PRESS CONFERENCE before a packed house in the media capital of the world, the newly-ordained female priest, LAURA CRUZ, beatific, 30s, standing beside him...REPORTERS and CAMERA CREWS jammed into a room with Masterpiece Theater rugs and furniture and priceless antiques...

DUFFY
...Let me be clear: this was not something I did for political reasons. I have a diocese to run. We don't have enough priests. It's that simple. It doesn't make much sense to write off half of humanity.
(beat)
Jackie Robinson. Rosa Parks. These barriers come down and people think the sky is going to fall. And then the sky doesn't fall.

Suddenly a BRICK smashes the glass of the window...POLICE struggle with the protestors as other POLICE chase the BRICK-THROWER through the Madison Avenue traffic...

PANNING across the Diocesan staff, lined up on the wall, ending on CAROL CROWLEY, 40s, a thin-lipped sister of the boroughs, barely masking her disapproval...

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. DINING ROOM -- VATICAN

CARDINAL CARLO BOZZI, stout, and CARDINAL BETTINO PREZZI, lean, both in their 50s, fixers and hatchetmen, masters of the inside game, lunch in a private dining room. Malerba paces, too agitated to eat. A cigarette smolders in Prezzi's ashtray. Phong, the Vietnamese acolyte, serves Prezzi a gorgeous plate of prosciutto, the melting edge of fat glistening in the light from the tall windows, the figs pink and inviting as a vagina...

MALERBA
...He wants to do nothing. Nothing! Nothing at all.

PREZZI
Who is Duffy?

BOZZI
Who?

PREZZI
I thought you knew everyone.

Bozzi watches, with infinite longing, as Phong fills Prezzi's glass with garnet-colored old Barolo of impeccable provenance...

MALERBA
Why not next ordain an abortionist?

PREZZI
Scandalous.

MALERBA
A contrarian Primate and a Bavarian ape.

PREZZI
Outrageous.

MALERBA
These Americans need to be taught obedience.

PREZZI
(to Bozzi)
We never met this Duffy?

Bozzi thinks a beat. Remembers...

BOZZI
Young. Important family in New York. The father was governor. Very rich. He’s new.

Bozzi reaches for a slice of prosciutto...Prezzi slaps his hand...Phong serves Bozzi his lunch...Bozzi demurs. Hands Phong a plastic box -- a sticker on the lid with the reheating instructions for the microwave -- “NUTRISYSTEM”...

MALERBA
Next Sunday in Yonkers or Staten Island or Poughkeepsie there’ll be Father Mary or Father Bridget or Father Rosemary at the altar of a Roman Catholic Church celebrating a Roman Catholic mass.

PREZZI
With no authority.

MALERBA
Only God can make a priest.

PREZZI
Only God can choose a Pope.

MALERBA
Meaning hold my tongue?

PREZZI
"They also serve who only stand and wait".
(gently)
Wait your turn.

A look between them. Malerba checks his watch.

MALERBA
If there's still a Church.

Malerba exits. Bozzi blesses himself, making the sign of the cross. (Underlined dialogue is in Italian, with subtitles.)

BOZZI
<u>He shouldn't talk like that about the Holy Father</u>.

PREZZI
<u>He only does it with us</u>.

BOZZI
<u>What would you do</u>?

PREZZI
(shrugs)
<u>Nothing</u>.

BOZZI
<u>I like to do nothing</u>.

PREZZI
<u>But to do nothing well</u>?

BOZZI
<u>I agree</u>.

PREZZI
<u>Of course</u>.

BOZZI
<u>Is an art</u>.

Bozzi reaches for Prezzi's crusty roll. Again, Prezzi slaps his hand. Takes a beat.

PREZZI
<u>See what you can find out about this Duffy.</u>

A look between Bozzi and Prezzi. Prezzi returns to his lunch. Off Bozzi, as he shrugs, glances longingly at the prosciutto,

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. HALLWAY -- NEAR DINING ROOM

NATALIE CESCA, 40s, in chef's whites, peeks inside as Phong approaches her. Hands her Bozzi's Nutrisystem box.

PHONG
(in Italian, subtitled)
Do we have a microwave?

CESCA
A microwave?

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. BOZZI'S APARTMENT -- VATICAN CITY

Bozzi disrobes, carefully places his vestments on a hanger in the closet...And finds there an ordinary wool suit...Reaches in the closet for a battered SUITCASE...

...Groaning, in his underwear, he gets on his hands and knees...Gropes underneath the bed...Finds a hole in the boxspring and a muslin sack hidden inside...

...Bozzi gets to his feet...Finds inside the sack bundles of HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS...He arranges the money in the suitcase, neat rows...Off Bozzi,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. ROME -- LEONARDO DA VINCI AIRPORT

CROWDS wait in long security queues...Bozzi waves his DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT and the POLICE whisk him ahead through a separate gate...As Bozzi passes, HOLD ON the battered suitcase, rolling on wheels behind him,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. CONFERENCE ROOM -- THE VATICAN

Iemma inspects an X-RAY, holds it up to the light from the tall windows...Beside him, DR. MARIANA BROTZU, 40s, a poker-faced endocrinologist...

On a long table, accordion files in deep green, the pages gathered tidily with a grosgrain ribbon. A meeting of the CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS, the Vatican's "miracle police", a polyglot group of PRIESTS, DOCTORS and SCIENTISTS.

DR. BROTZU
...This white mass represents a stage three pancreatic tumor, which extends to the surrounding blood vessels and also to the celiac plexus, surrounding the aorta, and hence was inoperable. The woman was sent home to die.
(beat)
A friend gave her a medallion with the image of Pope John Paul. She slept with the medallion on her pillow and prayed.
(beat)
When the woman returned to the hospital for a followup visit, the tumor had disappeared.

Dr. Brotzu hands Iemma a second X-RAY IMAGE...Iemma compares the two films...Amazingly, there is no evidence whatsoever of a tumor in the second image...

IEMMA
Tumors come back.

DR. BROTZU
With this cancer -- at this stage --

IEMMA
Tumors come back, doctor.

DR. BROTZU
It’s been three years.

Iemma punctuates his statement with gestures...

IEMMA
Tumors. Come. Back.

He hands her back the films. At the conference table, Father Deng reads from another file.

FATHER DENG
The woman, an American, had entered a period of financial distress. The bank took her car. Next would be her house. She prayed to the memory of John Paul.
(beat)
In the morning there appeared, unmistakably, the image of the Blessed Mary, in the surface of her toasted cheese sandwich.
(MORE)

FATHER DENG (CONT'D)
She brought the toasted cheese with her to a nearby Indian casino and by the end of the day had won seventy thousand dollars.

Father Deng removes a GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICH from a Ziploc bag...With thoughtful looks, the assembled experts examine the grilled cheese, pass it from one to the next...

Iemma moves to pour himself a coffee...Dr. Brotzu follows...

DR. BROTZU
Monsignior, I realize that to certify this miracle you need some degree of certainty, however --

IEMMA
Do you golf, Doctor?

DR. BROTZU
Why would I golf?

IEMMA
Eh. Why would you golf?
(beat)
With a saint, there is no mulligan. No “do-over”. There is just one chance to get it right.

DR. BROTZU
This cancer usually kills people in months. Three years --

IEMMA
A miracle is not just good luck. It is the sun standing still and the sea divided. A miracle is God reaching down with His finger to touch someone and change the course of history.
(gestures)
With His finger.

A look between them. Off Iemma,

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. VATICAN

Bernd waits beside the Pope’s black Volvo SUV, smoking a cigarette...Checks his watch...A Ford Ka pulls over, a YOUNG MAN stuffed inside with three girls, one with a map...They seem to be students on holiday, looking for directions...

...The Young Man rolls down the window, smiles helplessly and beckons to Bernd...Bernd smiles, moves toward them...

...As Bernd reaches the car, happy to help with directions or advice, the Young Man suddenly jeers at him --

YOUNG MAN
The Pope eats shit!

Bernd turns white. The Young Man howls with laughter as the tiny car screeches away...Off Bernd,

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. LATER. VOLVO SUV -- ROME

The Pope reads his correspondence while Bernd drives.

BERND
...He's rude.

SIXTUS
Please, Bernd.

BERND
Beyond rude. He's insubordinate.

SIXTUS
I'm not concerned about Malerba.

BERND
You're too nice.

SIXTUS
(with invitation)
Cardinal Minetti in Venice is having a birthday.

BERND
Don't change the subject, please.

SIXTUS
Seventy-five. He'll have to retire.

Bernd takes a beat. Decides to pursue it.

BERND
If you said yes to Duffy -- no to Malerba -- it would make your place in history.

SIXTUS
I hope you don't think I'm that vain. History?

BERND
Any man wonders how he'll be remembered.

SIXTUS
That I served God by tending His flock.

BERND
Malerba is not the Pope.

SIXTUS
Neither is Duffy.
(beat)
To ordain a woman -- by whose authority?

BERND
You don't realize how much Malerba controls what comes in and out of the Vatican. And then that's all people know of you. They don't know you like I do.

SIXTUS
And you, Bernd, are too young to realize how little the Pope -- or the President -- or anyone -- controls anything. "Flattering, kissing and kicking people to get them to do what they are supposed to do anyway," as I believe someone once put it. That's all power is.
(beat)
And getting out of the way of history.

BERND
Promise me Malerba will never be Pope.

A look between them. Sixtus doesn't respond. Watches out the window as Rome passes.

SIXTUS
I came to Rome when I was your age.
(beat)
There's no better place in all the world to lose your faith than in Rome, you know?

Off Bernd,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. CHOCOLATE FACTORY -- ROME

The Pope is presented with a gigantic nine-foot-tall CHOCOLATE JESUS.

CHOCOLATE EXECUTIVE
...Prepared in honor of the Feast of Saint Francis and scripturally correct in every detail, the sculpture weighs two hundred and fifty kilograms, is two-and-three-quarters meters tall, and was created entirely of the finest Italian chocolate.

Applause. Off Sixtus, clapping his hands with delight,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. BOZZI AND PREZZI'S OFFICE -- THE VATICAN

A PARTNERS DESK for the two Cardinals, with Bozzi's chair empty, and Prezzi at work at an outdated computer. An air of shabby gentility, like everything in the Vatican -- a threadbare carpet and a priceless Tiepolo on the wall.

Prezzi tries to print his document -- it doesn't work...He moves to the printer, pulls out the paper tray...Finds Bozzi's stash of OREOS...

Then a KNOCK at the door and his SECRETARY enters: MAUD SETTLE, 40s, a devout Englishwoman with thick wool socks.

MAUD
Where's Cardinal Bozzi?

PREZZI
Have you tried the bakery?

MAUD
There's a man here -- he appears to be a simple village priest -- emphasis on simple -- he claims to be Cardinal Bozzi's cousin.
(MORE)

MAUD (CONT'D)
When I worked for the Bishop of London there were so many “cousins” -- wanting to touch the garment, as it were -- I got quite good at getting rid of them -- nicely, of course, but firm -- you can’t very well just say, “Bugger off”.
(off his look)
“Bugger off.” You know, “Vai via.”
“Leave me alone.” “Go home.”

Prezzi fixes her with a look of genuine puzzlement.

PREZZI
Why would a man want to get rid of his cousin?

He checks himself in the mirror -- adjusts his red sash -- wanting to look the part...Off Prezzi,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. HALLWAY -- OUTSIDE PREZZI’S OFFICE

Prezzi emerges, finds a PRIEST,long black cassock and a wide-brimmed hat: FATHER UGO UI, 40s, a true believer. A peasant’s meekness -- and a peasant’s cunning.

PREZZI
Cardinal Bozzi got called out of the country suddenly on urgent Church business. May I help you?

UGO
(yes)
No, no.
(beat)
He’s an important man. I shouldn’t have asked him. What a stupid I am!
(beat)
I’m his cousin from Castiglion Fiorentino -- Ugo Ui -- perhaps he has mentioned me? He was going to show me the Sistine Chapel.

PREZZI
The Sistine Chapel is closed for renovations.

UGO
It’s closed?

Sensing a problem, the VILLAGERS move closer, with their cameras and tote bags. Prezzi realizes that Ugo will lose face with his flock.

PREZZI
It would be my privilege, however, to show you some of the special treasures of the Vatican.

Off Ugo, as he rallies his group,

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. GALLERY -- THE VATICAN

The SWISS GUARDS march the opposite way, in their vivid blue-and-gold striped uniforms, as Prezzi leads Father Ugo and his group into a hall lined with gorgeous FRESCOES by Raphael...

...Prezzi waves hello to doleful-eyed Iemma as he passes...The priest watches this, turns to Prezzi...

UGO
Who is that?

PREZZI
My friend Iemma.

UGO
He looks sad.

PREZZI
He investigates miracles. Most of them aren't.

UGO
That is a sad job.

PREZZI
Then he is the one who must call the monk who devoted ten years to his cause and tell him his cure is not a cure, his mysteries are explicable and his saint is not a saint.

Ugo looks up in awe at the ANGELS on the ceilings...

UGO
Look at these angels! I want to touch them! I want to kiss them!

The priest signals his group and they follow...Off the angels,

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. CATACOMBS -- THE VATICAN

With a lighted candle, Prezzi leads Ugo through the CATACOMBS, ancient tombs beneath the original foundation of St. Peter's Basilica...The passage is quite tight...They emerge into a small shrine or aedicula...

PREZZI
...These are the catacombs. The original foundation of the basilica was built by the Emperor Constantine on top of tombs from the second century...
(with a gesture)
...And this...This is where St. Peter is buried. Our first Pope.

Ugo reaches out to touch the plexiglas wall that shields the relics...

UGO
You can feel Him.
(beat)
You can feel God.

Prezzi smiles. Enjoying this country cousin...

PREZZI
And that is the Sistine Chapel.

...Prezzi points upwards...The priest's gaze follows the gesture...An opening that leads directly to the Sistine Chapel...You can look through it and see Michelangelo's frescoes on the ceiling...

...Then suddenly Ugo slams his fist in his hand, startling Prezzi.

UGO
To me, that is exactly the problem. Everything about the Church is no. No. No. No no. No no no. No.
(beat)
But to me, the Church is yes.
(beat)
Yes to everything beautiful.

Ugo looks up again. Off Prezzi, touched by the simplicity of this campagnolo,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. VATICAN -- PREZZI'S OFFICE

Prezzi enters, looks at his mail. Maud busies herself to hide her hurt feelings.

MAUD
I hope you had a nice stroll.

PREZZI
Was I short with you before?

MAUD
I've devoted my life to the Church. I'm here to serve.

PREZZI
You were right. A simple village priest.

MAUD
Cardinal Malerba came looking for you.

PREZZI
I will have to go for a stroll more often.

MAUD
The Americans ordained a second woman. In Cincinnati.

Prezzi considers a beat.

PREZZI
What do you think, Maud? Do you believe a woman can be a priest?

MAUD
Don't be ridiculous.

PREZZI
Why not? In many parishes already women administer the sacraments.

MAUD
Well, that's why he picked it -- isn't it? -- because it seems harmless. It's not abortion.
(MORE)

MAUD (CONT'D)
It’s not icky like...
(sotto)
...condoms. But he’ll get around to all of that. This Cardinal Duffy is playing a game with you.

Prezzi takes a beat.

PREZZI
Well, I’m afraid he’s winning.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. ST. PETER’S SQUARE -- THE VATICAN

Microphone in his face, biretta on his head, black simar with scarlet buttons and piping and a gold CRUCIFIX around his neck, Malerba does an INTERVIEW for Italian television.

MALERBA
...With most problems -- any problems -- all problems -- this problem -- we believe it best to allow it to mature for a few months.

REPORTER #1
Nothing? You really think it is best to do nothing?

Malerba swallows hard.

MALERBA
Six hundred thirty Catholic archdioceses around the world. Here is one archbishop. One city. One regrettable act of political theater. This is not Martin Luther nailing his ninety-five theses to the church door in Wittemberg. It is not a revolution.
(gestures)
One.

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. MALERBA’S OFFICE -- THE VATICAN

Pleased with his interview, Malerba bounces into the office. Discovers, with irritation, that Piero’s chair is empty.

MALERBA
Piero?

Then he finds Piero, trembling with anxiety, watching the ancient TV with its rabbit-ears antenna...

BRITISH REPORTER (O.C.)
...And then there were two. The archbishop of Cincinnati has ordained a second female priest. Then he went even further, saying that no bishop is ever obligated to follow the Vatican when its orders are irrational and unjust...

PIERO
Where is Cincinnati?

Off Malerba, his brain whirring,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. PAPAL APARTMENTS -- THE VATICAN

The Pope's "GUARDIAN ANGELS," four lay women who, though not nuns, have taken lifetime vows of celibacy, help Bernd and two SWISS GUARDS to carry the five-hundred-pound chocolate Jesus upstairs...Then lay it out on the long marble table in the newly-renovated papal kitchen...

BERND
That's a lot of chocolate. Maybe an orphanage?

A look from the Angels...Then the creak of footsteps on the stairs and they scatter...Bernd turns as Malerba enters.

MALERBA
Monsignior, I was wondering if you'd join me for dinner tonight.

BERND
I usually have dinner with the Holy Father.

MALERBA
I'm quite sure His Holiness won't begrudge you a night off. Nothing fancy -- just some old friends I went to school with. I'll send my car for you. Seven o'clock?

Without waiting for an answer, Malerba exits. Off Bernd,

CUT TO:

INT. EVENING. VATICAN -- CONFERENCE ROOM

A MAID empties the coffee pot, lifts it onto a cart...Iemma takes the leftover cookies, carefully places them in a cardboard box. Ties the twine with a neat bow.

CUT TO:

EXT. EVENING. ROME -- NEAR VATICAN

VIOLETTA, 30s, lies homeless on the sidewalk, a once-beautiful woman, now crippled by AIDS, the only vestige of her vanity the RED SLIP that she wears...

...ROMANS on their way home hurry past her...Only Iemma stops, as he does every day...He kneels beside her...Lifts her to a more comfortable position...Fashions a pillow from a blanket...

...It is the small daily miracle of caring for another person...

A look between them. Iemma caresses her cheek, then blesses himself. He unties the twine from the box. Feeds her a cookie. Violetta smiles. The highlight of her day. Off Iemma,

CUT TO:

INT. EVENING. VATICAN -- PAPAL APARTMENTS

Strong hands fasten the buttons of a black priest’s CASSOCK...Button by button...Purple silk grosgrain buttons and purple piping, and a purple faille fascia (or sash), indicate the rank of Chaplain of his Holiness...Thirty-three buttons in all, symbolic of the years of the life of Jesus...

IN MIRROR -- PAN UP TO

Bernd checks himself, smooths the front of the perfectly-pressed cassock. Off Bernd,

CUT TO:

EXT. EVENING. PALAZZO BORGHESE -- ROME -- ESTABLISHING

A massive Renaissance PALAZZO with a colonnaded facade, in the heart of the Eternal City. It might be an Embassy or a museum, but in fact it remains a private residence. A chauffeured MERCEDES pulls up and Bernd emerges, enters.

CUT TO:

INT. EVENING. PALAZZO BORGHESE -- GALLERY

Bernd gawks at the fresco on the ceiling -- a Renaissance masterpiece -- dumbstruck by the beauty around him...

Bernd turns and sees COUNTESS OLIVIA BORGHESE, 40s, with the confidence of a woman who moves fluidly in different worlds, and an aristocratic bearing bred in her bones.

OLIVIA
Guido Reni. His masterpiece.

BERND
”Apollo in his Chariot, Preceded by Aurora, Bringing Light to the World”.
(beat)
I’d only seen this in books.

OLIVIA
Let me show you the gardens while it’s still light.

CUT TO:

EXT. EVENING. PALAZZO -- GARDENS

In the glow of the setting sun, the Countess tours Bernd through gardens in the English style, with historic statuary and trees and plants hundreds of years old.

OLIVIA
...These were vineyards, in the Roman times. Then during the Empire, when they had more money than they knew what to do with, they made them gardens. To me -- growing up -- it was just my backyard. I thought everyone had a hundred acres of garden in the middle of Rome.
(beat)
(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
But then you have beautiful gardens at the Vatican.

BERND
They make me itch.

OLIVIA
That’s funny.

BERND
And sneeze.
(off her look)
I grew up in the library.

She laughs. Takes his arm.

OLIVIA
So did I.

BERND
Of course, your gardens are beautiful.

OLIVIA
I love your buttons.

BERND
Thirty-three. One for each year of Jesus’ life on earth.

She touches the material of his fascia...

OLIVIA
What a lovely twill.

BERND
Silk faille.

OLIVIA
I want to be buried in this.

BERND
It comes from the same mills in Como that Prada uses.

OLIVIA
Cardinal Malerba speaks very highly of you.

BERND
I doubt that is the case.

OLIVIA
He says you learn quickly.

BERND
He can be very hard on people.

OLIVIA
He means you'll quickly learn there's no point in opposing him.

BERND
I don't oppose the Cardinal -- I support the Holy Father -- there's a difference.

OLIVIA
I kissed Cardinal Malerba right there -- beneath the water clock -- I was twelve years old.
(beat)
I told myself I would never love anyone else.

BERND
That's the way it is when you're that age. You have so many silly ideas about life.

She doesn't answer.

OLIVIA
That really is how the years feel -- isn't it? -- like buttons -- ? You line them up and push them through. By the end they find their row.
(beat)
Such beautiful buttons.

A faraway look in her eyes, unseen by Bernd...The Eternal City unfolding endlessly beyond...

BERND
Thank you for showing me your beautiful gardens.

OLIVIA
I'd like this to be vineyards again. To <u>do</u> something, and not just be pretty. But then in Rome there are a thousand restaurants all serving the same <u>amatriciana</u>. No one in Italy ever wants to change.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. PALAZZO BORGHESE

On the walls, masterpieces by Rubens -- portraits of the APOSTLES -- that have hung in this same place, on these same walls, for four hundred years. That seem to eavesdrop on the conversation of the “black nobility”, businessmen in their 40s and 50s whose family fortunes have been interwoven with the Vatican since the Crusades.

MONTEZEMOLO
...So where are you from, Bernd?

BERND
Tübingen.

MONTEZEMOLO
I mean where are you <u>from</u>?
(beat)
Where are your people from?

BERND
I don’t know that I have “people”.

MONTEZEMOLO
You must have family.

BERND
My mother was a professor.
Divorced. No brothers or sisters.
It was just the two of us.

ROCCAGIOVINE
But is she a Catholic?

BERND
She is skeptical about the Church,
but, you know, her life has been
hard. I tell her God would give her
comfort.

GEMELLI
I understand you are a great
favorite of the Pope’s.

OLIVIA
The Monsignior is the Papal
Secretary.

GEMELLI
Tell us about him.

MONTEZEMOLO
It just seems like he’s very
isolated. Who does he talk to?

BERND
He is a very pious man. A very holy man. He spends much of his day in prayer.

MONTEZEMOLO
Does he think the Americans will start their own Church?

Bernd hesitates.

MALERBA
Come now, Bernd. There's no point to stepping out on the old man if you won't have a knees-up.

ROCCAGIOVINE
We made a mistake, allowing the Papacy to go to a German.

GEMELLI
German and indecisive.

ROCCAGIOVINE
It will be 1534 all over again.

GEMELLI
Americans don't like to be told what to do.

MALERBA
"Hold the pickle, hold the lettuce" is not a theology.

BERND
Perhaps the Holy Father agrees with Cardinal Duffy that the Church needs change.

MONTEZEMOLO
He wants women to be priests?

BERND
I don't feel comfortable speaking for him.

ROCCAGIOVINE
You talk to the Pope every day. He needs some guidance. Before he makes a terrible mistake.

MALERBA
He must call Duffy to Rome. Call Duffy to Rome and excommunicate him. Show some steel.

ROCCAGIOVINE
It's that or, well, he's out.

BERND
As a matter of history, I don't think a Pope has resigned in six centuries.
(off their looks)
I assume you wish the Pope no harm.

GEMELLI
(quoting the Bible)
"Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days..."

BERND
Sadly for you, the Pope is in excellent health. He's in superb hands. He has the same knee doctor as Kobe Bryant. I'm afraid you'll be disappointed on that score.

Bernd cuts his meat and chews. Looks all around.

ROCCAGIOVINE
My family paid for St. Peter's. Our name is on the door. We bought Bernini his marble and Michelangelo his paint brushes. We're not going to lose our Church just because the rock upon which He built it has turned to Bavarian cream.
(beat)
Do you follow?

Flustered, Bernd turns to the Countess...Six centuries of intrigue layered into the shellac of her smile...

OLIVIA
More wine, Monsignior?

Off the Apostles, seeming to watch from the walls,

CUT TO:

INT. LATER. PALAZZO BORGHESE -- DRESSING ROOM

The Countess looks at herself in the mirror as she removes her makeup. Malerba enters. His face beside hers in the mirror. He kisses her cheek. Sits to take off his shoes...

MALERBA
...We put a scare into him, don't you think?

OLIVIA
You can't threaten the Pope, so you threaten his secretary.

MALERBA
Gets the blood racing.

OLIVIA
A threat only works if you mean it.

MALERBA
The Pope has lunch and dinner every day with Bernd and four women who've taken a vow of silence. I've seen it with every Pope I've served, and every Papal Secretary. He relies on him for one thing, and then he relies on him for everything.
(off her look)
It's perfectly clear that Bernd is the one stirring things up. Believe me, tomorrow you'll see things change.

Olivia takes a beat.

OLIVIA
<u>Do</u> you?

MALERBA
What?

OLIVIA
Mean it?

Malerba doesn't answer. When he opens his cassock, the scratchy, ripping sound of a fastener concealed behind the thirty-three buttons...

MALERBA
Isn't this great? Velcro.
(beat)
Are you coming to bed?

As Malerba exits to undress, off Olivia,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. PAPAL APARTMENT -- THE VATICAN

In his nightshirt, in an easy chair, the Pope reads. Sets it down. Thinks a beat. Moves to his closet. Finds there...

THE SLIPPERS

...He fingers the satin and rubies...Tries them on...Wiggles his toes...Dances a few steps...Memories of childhood dance lessons...Then he hears a sound inside...

SIXTUS
Bernd?

...It's not Bernd, but MORITZ BUECHE, 20s, the Pope's SWISS GUARD, in his colorful motley Renaissance uniform...

MORITZ
The Monsignior is out to dinner.

SIXTUS
Yes, I know.

MORITZ
He asked me to -- .

SIXTUS
I'm fine, Moritz. I'm going to bed.

MORITZ
Good night, Holy Father.

Sixtus turns. Stops. Turns back to Moritz.

SIXTUS
How do you think I'll be remembered by history?

MORITZ
That you served God by tending his flock.

SIXTUS
(disappointed)
Yes.

MORITZ
Did I say something wrong?

SIXTUS
Good night, Moritz.

The Swiss Guard turns to leave. Then turns back, winks.

MORITZ
Nice shoes.

The Pope returns to his chair and his book. Pulls off a slipper and contemplates it. Seen behind him, on the side table, a PHOTO of the Pope and Bernd. Off the Pope, thinking,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. BASILICA OF ST. JOHN LATERAN -- ROME

The POPE celebrates the EUCHARIST...

SIXTUS
...When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, O Lord, until you come again...

The Pope prepares the host, pours wine into a silver chalice...Priests and bishops assist him, Bernd among them...

SIXTUS (CONT'D)
...Grant that we who are nourished by the body and the blood of Your Son and filled with His Holy Spirit may become one body, one spirit in Christ...

...Bernd watches, among the parishioners, the nobles from the dinner...The Countess, Montezemolo, Roccagiovine, Gemelli...The Pope lifts the chalice...

SIXTUS (CONT'D)
...Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever...

...As the choir sings the amen, the congregation rises and lines up to receive the Eucharist...The Pope places a wafer on the tongue of each, and each sips from the chalice...

...Roccagiovine kneels, opens his mouth...As the Pope places the host on his tongue, he BITES the Pope's finger...

...The Pope howls in pain...Tries to pull his hand away but Roccagiovine grips his wrist...Bernd watches in horror as the nobleman bites down harder, BLOOD pouring down his chin...

...Then he spits the Pope's finger out on the marble floor...Off Bernd, stricken,

CUT TO:

INT. MORNING. BERND'S APARTMENT -- THE VATICAN

Bernd wakes up with a scream, in a cold sweat, in his small, tidy apartment in the Vatican. Off Bernd, his heart racing,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. VILLAGE BAKERY -- SICILY

A CLERK fills a box with a dozen CANNOLI while Bozzi scans the display case...The sfogliatelle, the pignoli cookies, the cheesecake...The Clerk ties the box with twine, hands it to Bozzi, who hands him some bills, exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. COUNTRY ROAD -- SICILY

A rented Fiat 500 bounces uncertainly over the rocks and ruts of a dirt road, Bozzi behind the wheel, the parched Sicilian landscape and the sparkling blue Mediterranean beyond...

...Arrives at a small stucco house at the end of the road, otherwise inaccessible, a BODYGUARD with a shotgun and a Di Nobili cigar outside the door...

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. GIACALONE HOUSE -- SICILY

CIRO GIACALONE, 50s, an old school Mafia boss, unpacks the pastries with great curiosity and interest. A bookend to Bozzi, leaders for two exclusively male, mostly Italian, deeply hierarchical and secretive orders...A LAPTOP on the kitchen table...CIRO JUNIOR, 20s, adjusts it...

CROWLEY (O.C.)
...Maybe times have changed.

INSERT -- ON LAPTOP SCREEN

Live via Skype, Carol Crowley, the disapproving Duffy staffer from the press conference... Alongside her, JOE DOGS, 40s, a Brooklyn Mafioso, pokes his head into the frame...

JOE DOGS (O.C.)
Carol works for the Archbishop.

CROWLEY (O.C.)
Leave it at that.

...Giacalone plates the cannoli...Slides it across to one of his men...Watching the cannoli pass by, Bozzi might be Doctor Zhivago saying goodbye to Lara...

GIACALONE
She’s talking about the sister?

JOE DOGS (O.C.)
The sister.

CROWLEY (O.C.)
She lives with him. In the residence.
(beat)
How can he make a woman a priest knowing firsthand the evil women are capable of?

In a reverie over the cannoli, Bozzi startles to attention... Giacalone grabs his hand...

GIACALONE
This is the sister.

Bozzi nods sagely. Then furrows his brow.

BOZZI
Duffy has a sister?

CROWLEY (O.C.)
In the residence.

GIACALONE
Maybe times have changed.

CROWLEY (O.C.)
Leave it at that.
(with venom)
She carries on like a whore. A different man every night. She runs after them with a mattress on her back.

JOE DOGS (O.C.)
This is the sister.

CROWLEY (O.C.)
In. The. Residence.

BOZZI
She lives with him?

CROWLEY (O.C.)
This Duffy came from Jabib. Nobody knows him. He gets up at four in the morning to run in Central Park. Who does that?

Giacalone turns to Bozzi.

GIACALONE
(Sicilian dialect)
<u>You want us to look into this sister</u>?

Bozzi fixes Giacalone with a look. Pensive, he reaches in his pocket, takes out his Nutri-System cookie. Rips the plastic, breaks the cookie in half, bites it. Carefully hoards the other half. Off Bozzi, as he chews thoughtfully,

CUT TO:

EXT. LATER. GIACALONE HOUSE

Giacalone walks Bozzi to his Fiat. Bozzi opens the hatchback, finds the MONEY in the briefcase...Giacalone waves him off.

GIACALONE
Do ut des.
(off Bozzi's look)
<u>After all, we are not Americans</u>.

Bozzi blesses him. They kiss and embrace. Off Giacalone, as he watches the Fiat bounce away down the rutted dirt road,

CUT TO:

EXT. MORNING. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- RESIDENCE

A 19th-century townhouse nestled amidst the glass and steel of Madison Avenue. A TAXI pulls up and the door opens. Great legs and torn fishnets. KAYLA DUFFY, 30s, at the end of a long night. Hurrying against the drizzle, she catches a heel in the sidewalk, nearly falls on the front stairs.

KAYLA
Mother fucker!

She looks up. Three NUNS standing there. Off Kayla,

CUT TO:

INT. SAME TIME. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- RESIDENCE

Duffy meets with his staff and MINDY ROSS, late 30s, hard and chic, a high-powered New York political consultant.

ROSS
...We get fifty-nine per cent approval from Catholics overall. Slightly higher from occasional churchgoers, lower from regular churchgoers.

DUFFY
Regular churchgoers -- less than half?

ROSS
That's not what's interesting.

DUFFY
So what's interesting?

ROSS
When we show them video, it changes everything. Especially for women. Female priests are not the message.
(beat)
You're the message.

DUFFY
I'm the message.

ROSS
<u>You</u> are the message.

Duffy thinks a beat.

DUFFY
And most American Catholics under 35 want their own church?

ROSS
They want to split from Rome. They back gay rights. They don't believe in celibacy. That's the future. It's demographics.
(MORE)

ROSS (CONT'D)
Generational politics. The conservatives die off and the liberals inherit the church. Right around the corner is a whole new world.

Duffy thinks a beat. Hears Kayla banging around the kitchen downstairs...

DUFFY
Excuse me one second.

Off Ross, watching him exit,

CUT TO:

INT. SAME TIME. ARCHBISHOP'S RESIDENCE

Reading his Blackberry as he walks, Duffy looks up and finds Kayla in the kitchen, rinsing her panties in the sink.

DUFFY
Where I wash my vegetables. What do you call that?

KAYLA
Probiotics?

He pours himself a cup of coffee.

DUFFY
Coffee?

She drops two ice cubes in a glass and fills it with tequila.

KAYLA
You gonna ask me where I was?

DUFFY
Fishing?

KAYLA
Sure.

DUFFY
What'd you catch?

KAYLA
Brendan.
(beat)
Brandon?

DUFFY
What'd he catch?

KAYLA
He looked like Jesus.

DUFFY
Kayla, c'mon.

KAYLA
Why is Jesus so fucking sexy?

DUFFY
Kayla.

KAYLA
Chiseled, tortured, long-haired, dying and half-naked. Just my type.

DUFFY
Kayla.

KAYLA
Jesus and Russell Brand.

DUFFY
How can you be like this and be a Catholic?

KAYLA
Tommy, I'm like this because I'm Catholic.
(off his look)
I mean, blame the fucking sisters.

A look between them. Duffy can't help himself. He laughs. She pours another drink. As she turns, he plops the Times in front of her. "CINCINNATI ORDAINS SECOND WOMAN PRIEST".

DUFFY
What do you think Dad would say?

KAYLA
Fucking up is not a hobby that you pick up in middle age, Tommy. Like a carbon-fiber racing bike. Or making your own wine.

DUFFY
Experience counts?

KAYLA
Dad thought you'd be Pope. Dad was hard to please.

DUFFY
I might have to leave town for a couple of days.

KAYLA
You want me to water the plants?

DUFFY
Do you think you could take it easy for a little till the attention dies down?

He looks at her. She won't look at him.

KAYLA
You don't tell me what to do. You don't check up on me.

DUFFY
Kayla, you disappeared for three days.

KAYLA
That's the deal. Remember?

Duffy turns her to him. Looks in her eyes...

DUFFY
We're in this together. You know that?

...but Kayla's eyes go dead.

KAYLA
You mind if I take the Sports?

She lifts the Sports section out of the paper. Moves to exit with the Sports Section and her drink.

DUFFY
I got called to Rome.

She stops. Turns to him. A look between them. Off Duffy,

CUT TO:

INT. MORNING. VATICAN -- KITCHEN

Prezzi rummages in the refrigerator for a snack...

PREZZI
...So the tumors went away?

WIDER

Iemma sits at a large, ancient marble table...At the other end of the table, Cesca rolls out a sheet of pasta dough...

IEMMA
Correct.

PREZZI
She prayed to John Paul and her incurable cancer was cured.

IEMMA
Correct.

Prezzi emerges with a loaf of bread and various cheeses, moves to the table with all clutched to his chest...Takes out a pocket knife, opens a bottle of wine...

PREZZI
To me, it sounds like a miracle.

IEMMA
Really.

PREZZI
To me.

IEMMA
Tumors come back.

PREZZI
I understand, there is some fear of embarrassment -- if somehow the tumor were to --

Iemma slams his palm down on the table, rattling the wine glasses but somehow not startling Prezzi...

IEMMA
One, the disease must be serious and impossible -- or at least very difficult -- to cure by human means. Two, the disease must not be in a stage at which it is liable to disappear shortly by itself. Three, either no medical treatment must have been given or it must be certain that the treatment given has no reference to the cure. Four, the cure must be instantaneous. Five, the cure must be complete. Six, the cure must be <u>permanent</u>.

Unflappable, Prezzi butters a piece of bread...

PREZZI
Let me ask you something, Iemma. Do you believe in miracles?

IEMMA
Of course I believe in miracles.
(beat)
But I have never seen one.

Listening to them, Cesca spoons out dollops of ricotta -- the recipiente...Makes a hollow in each...Then in each hollow she nestles an egg yolk, careful not to break it...

PREZZI
(with a sigh)
I say this as your friend, but this job they've given you -- this bureaucracy of miracles -- the world outside has moved on. You have no real power. So you hold onto the little power you have, which is the power to say no.

CESCA
Like the Church itself.

Prezzi takes a beat.

PREZZI
Like the Church itself.

The cook looks at Iemma indulgently. Off Iemma, brooding,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. BASILICA OF ST. JOHN LATERAN -- VESTRY

Bernd helps Sixtus change out of his vestments. Sixtus groans as he sits in his long silk underwear, rubs at his feet...

BERND
...Let me do that for you.

Bernd takes over. Removes the Pope's beautiful bejeweled slippers. Tenderly rubs the Pope's feet...

SIXTUS
The Mass is not getting any shorter.

BERND
We might look at your schedule.

SIXTUS
People expect me to celebrate Mass.

BERND
Not every Sunday.

SIXTUS
Tuesday is my day off.

BERND
Yes, Holy Father.

Sixtus pauses a beat.

SIXTUS
Did you have a nice night out?

BERND
I prefer to have dinner with you.

SIXTUS
I'm sure it's become quite boring.

BERND
I had excitement in my life. You forget that my calling came quite late.
(beat)
I feel safe with you.

A look between them.

SIXTUS
Let's go to the Dolomites, Bernd. How long has it been? We'll get up early -- ski before the crowds come -- then in the evenings, after a nap, I'll write -- you can help me.
(beat)
Why shouldn't I think about how I'll be remembered?

BERND
Are you writing something?

SIXTUS
Not in any organized way. Fragments. Jotting things down. I must say, I came up with some ringing phrases.
(beat)
(MORE)

SIXTUS (CONT'D)
I wish sometimes I'd been a writer -
- often I do -- this life I've
chosen is so full of compromise.

BERND
Is it true Cardinal Duffy has been
called to Rome?

Sixtus looks away. Gets up.

SIXTUS
I have no choice.

BERND
The Pope of Rome is the last
absolute ruler in Europe. Or so
they say.

SIXTUS
I can't oppose Malerba. Probably he
should have been Pope. I prayed --
I begged God not to choose me. But
the Church needed a caretaker -- a
caretaker -- that's how history
will remember me. A caretaker.
Malerba was too young.
(beat)
Now I'm old. I don't have the
energy.

Bernd stands, begins to pace...

BERND
I worry, that's all.

SIXTUS
Anyway, it's the ideas that matter.
That's what I'm writing -- an
encyclical on the role of women in
the Church -- that someday might
serve as the foundation for --

BERND
There is evil in the world -- we
know that, yes? -- truly evil
people. In fine clothes. From good
families.

Bernd blunders into a table, knocks over a lamp...

SIXTUS
Bernd, are you drunk?

BERND
I had trouble sleeping as well.

SIXTUS
You came to Mass drunk?

Bernd paces, agitated...

BERND
This bubble you live in -- no one ever gives you bad news -- this forever Popemobile. I'm the one. I hear it all the time. "The Pope eats shit!" They see the collar and it sets them off. The scandals. The secrecy. On the sidewalk. "The Pope eats shit!" From a passing car, with the Doppler effect. "The Pope eats shiiiiiiiiiit!"

Sixtus takes a beat.

SIXTUS
"The Pope eats shit"?

BERND
Start behaving like you have enemies, because you do. That dinner I went to -- you're right -- it wasn't boring.

SIXTUS
Bernd, what's the matter?
(beat)
Did someone threaten you?

A look between them. Off the Pope,

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY. VATICAN -- ESTABLISHING

In his shirtsleeves, Duffy arrives in a taxi from the airport. Pays the driver and grabs his duffel...

CRANE UP TO REVEAL

The majestic, pillared oval of St. Peter's Square, as Duffy enters the Vatican.

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. CASA SANTA MARTA

The Vatican hotel. A Babel of different languages, reflecting the universal Church. Duffy checks in.

DESK CLERK
...There is a breakfast buffet on the terrace, Your Eminence, till eleven o'clock. As well as complimentary bottled water and 24-hour fitness center.

The Desk Clerk moves to ring the bell. Duffy puts his hand over it. The Desk Clerk hits Duffy's hand and rings the bell.

DUFFY
I can take my own --

DESK CLERK
(to Bellman)
Escort His Eminence to Room 305.

DUFFY
Call me Tom.

BELLMAN
Your Eminence.

DUFFY
Tom.

DESK CLERK
His Eminence is from New York.

DUFFY
Tom.

DESK CLERK
Surely, Your Eminence.

DUFFY
Tom.

BELLMAN
Follow me, Your Eminence.

The Bellman moves for Duffy's bag...A brief struggle over the bag. Then Duffy takes it. A look between the Desk Clerk and the Bellman. With a gesture, the Bellman escorts Duffy out.

ANGLE ON -- A SECOND CLERK

Spying on Duffy...He picks up the phone and dials...

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. CASA SANTA MARTA -- HOTEL ROOM

Duffy enters. Sets down his bag...Plugs in his laptop...Then notices something on his pillow...

INSERT -- AN INVITATION

In beautiful old-style Italian calligraphy, on rich linen stock...Dinner at the palazzo of CONTESSA OLIVIA BORGHESE...Off Duffy,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. DINING ROOM

A hemstitched napkin of the finest Frette linen, as Iemma tucks it in his collar. Phong presents a single RAVIOLO bathed in butter. Produces a fist-sized black TRUFFLE, shaves it on top.

PHONG
(in perfect Italian)
There are not many truffles this year.

IEMMA
The dry weather.

PHONG
But the ones there are...

IEMMA
...are good.

Phong pours the wine. Exits. Iemma waves the truffle aroma into his nose...Looks up...Late in the day, and the room is mostly empty. Duffy reads the paper, eats alone. Duffy glances up -- eye contact...Iemma looks away. Duffy doesn't. Iemma opens his paper. But Duffy doesn't take the hint.

DUFFY
You mind if I join you?

IEMMA
Please do.

DUFFY
I have an hour to kill.

IEMMA
You're the American.

DUFFY
That's me.
(off his look)
What?

Iemma laughs conspiratorially.

IEMMA
I didn't say anything.

DUFFY
You didn't have to.

IEMMA
We have a saying here in the Vatican. "Don't think."

DUFFY
(sardonic)
I would never have guessed.

IEMMA
"And if you must think, don't speak. And if must speak, don't write."

DUFFY
Okay, fine. I get it.

IEMMA
"And if you must write, don't sign your name. And if you must sign your name -- "

DUFFY
You know what? I'd do it again.

Iemma brandishes his fork with the fervor of Abdullah the Butcher.

IEMMA
" -- don't be surprised."

Iemma punctures the raviolo with his fork...The bright orange yolk oozes out, melds with the butter and the truffles...

DUFFY
What do you do here?

IEMMA
Miracles.

DUFFY
Seriously?

IEMMA
I don't know what could be more serious.
(off Duffy's look)
What?

Duffy laughs.

DUFFY
I didn't say anything.

IEMMA
You didn't have to.

DUFFY
Look, I'm from New York.

IEMMA
Yes, I've heard of this provincial capital.

DUFFY
That just seems like a dead-end job.

IEMMA
I know I shouldn't say this, Your Eminence, but when I look at you I see Bambi. Needing to be rescued.

DUFFY
These miracle stories got the Church started. Like any other religion. But there's a reason that since the Scientific Revolution you don't see them anymore.

IEMMA
So you think there's an explanation for everything?

DUFFY
I have two hundred thousand kids in my diocese who go to bed hungry every night. Explain that.

Something about Duffy touches Iemma. He softens.

IEMMA
When do you see the Pope?

DUFFY
In an hour.

IEMMA
Whatever happens, happens. It will pass.
(beat)
And if you want to come to my house for dinner tonight, I'll give you a glass of wine and a good argument.

DUFFY
That's very nice of you, but --

IEMMA
Seven o'clock?

Duffy considers a beat. Smiles. A BUSBOY clears Iemma's plate and Phong serves the scottaditi...Off Duffy,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. MALERBA'S OFFICE -- THE VATICAN

Malerba sits at his desk, Moritz standing opposite.

MALERBA
...He said that?

MORITZ
Yes, Your Eminence.

MALERBA
His place in history?

MORITZ
"What do you think my place in history will be?"

MALERBA
And what did you say?

MORITZ
That he served God by tending his flock.

MALERBA
Oh, God, Moritz, can't you do better than that?
(off his look)
"You're the People's Pope!" "You're the fun Pope!" "You'll make them forget Pope John!" Anything.

MORITZ
I'm sorry, Your Eminence.

Malerba unlocks his drawer. Takes out a hundred-Euro note from a sheaf of cash. Hands it to Moritz.

MALERBA
(with cash)
"Thus passes the glory of the world."

As Moritz exits, Piero enters, leans to whisper to Malerba.

PIERO
The Pope wants to see you.

Off Malerba,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. PAPAL LIBRARY -- THE VATICAN

Inside the papal apartments, a vast room housing the Pope's personal collection of 20,000 books, with two large windows facing onto St. Peter's Square. Dressed again in his formal vestments, the Pope writes at his desk as Malerba enters.

MALERBA
You called for me, Holy Father?

Sixtus gets up and gestures for Malerba to take a seat.

SIXTUS
I wanted to talk to you about Cardinal Duffy.

Sixtus moves to fix a cup of coffee...

MALERBA
Without a strong response from the Vatican, it was quite predictable that a second diocese would follow suit.

SIXTUS
Where is Cincinnati?

MALERBA
On the road to heresy?

SIXTUS
I've come to realize you were right. Something must be done.

MALERBA
It’s a relief to hear you say that.

SIXTUS
He’s been called to Rome.

MALERBA
Finally.

SIXTUS
He’s here now. By tomorrow, Cardinal Duffy will no longer be Archbishop of New York.

MALERBA
Will you excommunicate him?

SIXTUS
I’ll ask him to remain here.

MALERBA
Ingenious.

SIXTUS
In Rome.

MALERBA
Remove him from his power base.

SIXTUS
Where he can be watched.

MALERBA
Seduced.

SIXTUS
Then you approve?

MALERBA
What position will you give him?

SIXTUS
Yours.

A long beat.

MALERBA
You can’t seriously think Duffy can be Secretary of State.

SIXTUS
The Vatican needs new blood...

MALERBA
With half the calories of the old blood.

SIXTUS
...Fresh ideas...

MALERBA
The American Church will leave -- is that “fresh” enough for you? -- this will only encourage them. You’ll pass the collection plate to millions of brown people without a penny among them.
(crosses a line)
For no reason but your own vanity and stupid weakness.

Sixtus reddens and trembles with rage...

SIXTUS
Am I weak?

MALERBA
To have this clueless idealistic American mucking about -- in the bank -- in everything --

SIXTUS
(quoting)
“For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

MALERBA
Is this about Bernd?

SIXTUS
(angry)
Leave Bernd out of this.

MALERBA
Because of something stupid someone said at a dinner party --

SIXTUS
It’s done. Finished.
(beat)
You need to get out among the people -- any people --
(muttering)
-- exotic, indigenous people far, far away.

MALERBA
It is possible, Holy Father, that right now the bruised feelings of the handsome young Monsignior may not be the foremost crisis in the Church.

SIXTUS
Would you oppose me?
(Malerba doesn't answer)
Would you oppose me?

MALERBA
You are the Pope. Most Blessed Father, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman Province, Sovereign of the State of Vatican City, Servant of the Servants of God.
(beat)
Though you should know you're declaring war on your own Church.

SIXTUS
You are allowed your opinion. But I must speak for God.

...The Pope moves toward the large windows that look upon St. Peter's Square...He throws open the French doors leading to the balcony...

...An endless CROWD of people throngs St. Peter's Square, awaiting the Pope's blessing...

...And the Pope blesses them, looking tiny on the balcony, dwarfed by the enormous pillars that flank him, by the giant red, white and gold papal banner flowing beneath him, drowned out by the shouts of the crowd...

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. LATER. MALERBA'S OFFICE -- THE VATICAN

TOP SHOT of the Vatican gardens, through a window, of Prezzi introducing Duffy to the Pope, as Malerba moves into his own POV...The Pope ushers Duffy into the gardens and Bernd closes the gate behind them...As they disappear inside the gardens, off Malerba,

CUT TO:

INT. EVENING. BOZZI AND PREZZI'S OFFICE -- THE VATICAN

Prezzi returns to his office and finds Bozzi there, recently returned from his journeys, hanging up his coat and hat...

PREZZI
...How was your trip?
(Bozzi shrugs)
It's good to get out of Rome, no?
(Bozzi shrugs)
Malerba asked after you.

Bozzi shrugs. Riffles through his mail...

BOZZI
I do these "errands" for you. Not Malerba.

PREZZI
You're not going to believe what happened while you were gone.

BOZZI
I know.

PREZZI
Duffy is here.

BOZZI
I know.

PREZZI
He was called to Rome.

BOZZI
I know.

PREZZI
He's with the Pope right now.

BOZZI
I know.

PREZZI
I wonder what will happen.

BOZZI
I know.

PREZZI
You know?

BOZZI
The Pope is giving him Malerba's job.

PREZZI
No.

BOZZI
Yes.

PREZZI
So you leave town for a week and I stay here and you know this and I don't?

Bozzi takes out a bottle of amaro and a glass. Sets it on the table for Prezzi. The wife in the relationship.

BOZZI
Yes.

PREZZI
How do you do that?

BOZZI
(with rue)
Clean living.

PREZZI
(with a chuckle)
"Clean living."

A look between them. Prezzi pours the amaro.

BOZZI
He has a sister.

Suddenly, beside Prezzi's glass, a COMPUTER DISC lands, tossed there by Bozzi. A look between them. Off Prezzi,

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT. STREET -- NEAR VATICAN

Iemma stops on his way home to visit Violetta. Duffy holds the groceries while Iemma adjusts Violetta to a more comfortable position.

IEMMA
This is my friend Tom. From New York.

VIOLETTA
Is he a priest?

IEMMA
He’s more of a Protestant.

Iemma rummages in the grocery bag. Finds an apple for Violetta. Off Duffy, watching them,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. PALAZZO BORGHESE -- ROME

Elegant Romans mingle over cocktails. A BUTLER approaches the Countess.

OLIVIA
Are we still expecting anyone?

BUTLER
Just the American.

As the Butler exits, Olivia glances outside...A MERCEDES pulls up in front...The door opens and Malerba emerges...

...But no Duffy...

...A look between them...Malerba’s not happy...

INSERT -- A PLACECARD

On linen stock, in an old-fashioned rounded Italian script, “Cardinale Thomas Duffy”, as the Butler removes it...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. PALAZZO BORGHESE -- LIBRARY

Malerba broods in a leather armchair as Montezemolo, Roccagiovine, and Gemelli pace around him, agitated.

MALERBA
...As Secretary of State, Duffy will travel the world. Become a hero to all the <u>osus</u> and <u>campesinos</u> -- so Olivia says, she’s smart about these things -- when the time comes, he’ll have the votes.

MONTEZEMOLO
And where will you go?

MALERBA
The Philippines? Angola?

GEMELLI
He doesn't know what he's doing.

MALERBA
He knows exactly what he's doing.
In one stroke he gets rid of an
enemy and anoints an heir.

GEMELLI
God chooses the Pope.

ROCCAGIOVINE
Yes, God chooses the Pope.
(beat)
But he chooses through us.

Olivia enters. Closes the pocket doors behind her.

MONTEZEMOLO
Do you really think this American
could become Pope?

She turns to them.

OLIVIA
He turned it down.

Looks all around. Roccagiovine smiles with appreciation.

ROCCAGIOVINE
Now <u>that</u> is a dangerous man.
(beat)
The last thing the Church needs is
a man of principle.

All eyes on Malerba...

MALERBA
He chooses through us.

Off their looks,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. PAPAL APARTMENT

In his pajamas, the Pope reads in his easy chair...He yawns, puts his book down. Checks the clock...Then he hears someone moving inside his private library...He moves toward it...

SIXTUS
Bernd?

As he moves, a large RAT scurries past the closet...The Pope recoils and cries out...As he exits the bedroom, reveal several RATS running in the hallway...

FOLLOW -- INTO THE LIBRARY

As the Pope investigates...The floor full of rats, with several SWISS GUARDS, in full dress uniform, the Renaissance motley of gold, blue and red stripes, armor and plumed helmets, smashing at the rats with their HALBERDS...

...Someone offers the Pope his PAPAL CROSS and he takes a wild swing...Suddenly the rats and the Swiss Guards magically disappear...The Pope hears a voice behind him...

VOICE
Günter, dormisne?

The Pope turns to see, perched on a stool, a grey, slightly dull, enormously FAT woman in her 50s...In her pompous self-regard and Olympian misattunement, with her TV-ready suit, she might be a central banker. This is the angel, ABADDON.

SIXTUS
Why did you call me that?

ABADDON
Günter, dormisne?

SIXTUS
Of course I'm sleeping.

ABADDON
Are you sure?

SIXTUS
Who are you?

ABADDON
Don't you know?

SIXTUS
Then where are your wings?

ABADDON
There really is no substitute for good tailoring.

A beat.

SIXTUS
So this is it?

ABADDON
We are not on earth as museum keepers, but to cultivate a flourishing garden and to prepare a glorious future.
(beat)
Pope John said that.

SIXTUS
My mother called me Günter. I haven't heard that name since I became Pope.

ABADDON
Any questions?

SIXTUS
How will I be remembered by history?

ABADDON
You all ask that.

SIXTUS
The "people's Pope"? The "fun Pope"?

Abaddon takes out pad and pen...

ABADDON
(as she writes)
The truth is, in fifty years, or even twenty, you'll be completely forgotten.

SIXTUS
Well, we can't all be Pope John.

ABADDON
I like your slippers.

SIXTUS
What are you writing?

ABADDON
(still writing)
Nothing.

SIXTUS
Yes. They'll remember the slippers.

ABADDON
(with folder)
Here.

Sixtus opens the folder and takes out a letter...

SIXTUS
(reading)
“We interviewed a number of candidates, and we have determined that another candidate is the most qualified for the requirements of our opening.”
(beat)
What is this?

ABADDON
(shrugs)
You know HR.

SIXTUS
I’m not going to heaven?

Abaddon takes off her jacket and her giant WINGS unfurl...She strips naked and moves toward him, her plentiful fat rippling, shuddering...She caresses him...

ABADDON
Well, what did you think death was?

As she climbs on top of him and kisses him,

CUT TO:

INT. SAME TIME. PAPAL APARTMENT -- BEDROOM

Sixtus wakes from his nightmare with a scream, bolt upright, beads of sweat on his brow...His hand shakes as he reaches for a glass of water...

...Then he glances across the room as a large RAT scurries across the floor and toward the papal library...With dawning affright the Pope follows the rat inside...

FOLLOW -- INTO THE LIBRARY

As the Pope investigates...The floor full of rats, the Swiss Guards flailing with their HALBERDS....And that same grey, slightly dull, enormously FAT woman, waiting on her stool...

ABADDON
Günter, dormisne?

Off the Pope, in terror,

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. NIGHT. PALAZZO BORGHESE -- BEDROOM

The middle of the night. Sounds -- the rustle of a curtain, the squeak of a hinge -- awaken Olivia. She moves to find the doors to the terrace open...And Malerba outside...

OLIVIA
It's cold out.

MALERBA
I needed the air.

OLIVIA
You can tell winter's coming.
(beat)
Come inside.

Malerba takes a beat.

MALERBA
All my life I've searched for God -- worshipped God -- loved God -- regardless of risk -- regardless of sacrifice.
(beat)
Why does He turn his back to me?

OLIVIA
Then it's done?

As he turns to her and they exchange a look, off Malerba,

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT. PAPAL APARTMENT -- THE VATICAN

Pope Sixtus VI lies DEAD, his mouth agape and a startled look on his face. At his bedside, candelit, the Papal CAMERLENGO and the Pope's PHYSICIAN perform the timeless rituals that surround the death of a Pope. Malerba, Bozzi, Prezzi, and other CARDINALS bear witness. Nearby, Moritz stands guard.

...The Physician confirms that the Pope has no pulse...The Camerlengo removes a SILVER MALLET engraved with the papal arms from its red leather bag...He taps the Pope's forehead with the mallet.

CAMERLENGO
Günter, dormisne?

The Pope's given name, Günter. "Günter, are you sleeping?" A beat, as they wait to see if the Pope will respond. Then, again, the Camerlengo taps his forehead with the mallet.

CAMERLENGO (CONT'D)
Günter, dormisne?

Again, no response. A final tap with the silver mallet...

CAMERLENGO (CONT'D)
Günter, dormisne?

With the ritual satisfied, the Camerlengo turns to the others.

CAMERLENGO (CONT'D)
Vere, Sixtus Sextus mortus est.

..."Truly, Sixtus the Sixth is dead"...

...The Physician draws blood from the dead man, places each VIAL inside a bejeweled RELIQUIARY...

...The "Pescatorio," or "Ring of the Fisherman", engraved "SIXTVS VI PONT. MAX.", with a bas relief of St. Peter, sits on the Pope's finger...The Camerlengo removes it...

...Then the Camerlengo destroys the ring with a set of metal shears...SMASHES it into pieces...

...As the Physician, the Camerlengo and the Cardinals exit, Moritz, standing guard at the door, watches them...He and Malerba exchange a look, as if sharing a secret...As Malerba passes, off Moritz, blessing himself,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. VATICAN HOTEL

BELLS toll across Rome. Ugo sits quietly and listens to the Vatican radio report the Pope's death...He's not upset, but strangely serene...He believes the Pope has gone to heaven...

RADIO (O.C.)
(in Italian, subtitled)
..."Our most beloved Holy Father has returned to the house of the Father," a senior Vatican official, told pilgrims in St. Peter's Square.

(MORE)

RADIO (O.C.) (CONT'D)
The crowd of sixty thousand stood for a moment in stunned silence, stared at the pavement and wept. Then, following a custom that signifies hope at a time of death, the mourners broke into sustained applause...

A KNOCK at the door, and Ugo moves to answer it. It's Bozzi and Prezzi. Bozzi and Ugo embrace.

UGO
A sad day.

Each blesses himself.

PREZZI
Do you know what happens now, Ugo?
(off his look)
All the Cardinals -- over a hundred -- from all over the world -- they come to Rome.

UGO
Yes.

BOZZI
And they vote.

UGO
Yes.

PREZZI
And the votes are counted. And once someone has two-thirds of the votes, we have a new Pope.

UGO
Yes, I understand.

A look between Bozzi and Prezzi. Bozzi turns to Ugo.

BOZZI
(in Italian, subtitled)
Do you believe Satan exists?

UGO
Yes.

BOZZI
Do you doubt it?

UGO
Come on -- cousin -- you know I'm a true Catholic.

BOZZI
We need someone who is pure in his heart -- pure in his belief -- to help count the votes.
(beat)
Someone who we can trust.

UGO
Yes. I understand.

Another look between Prezzi and Bozzi.

PREZZI
Everything -- the earth, the heavens, all of it -- it all hangs in the balance.

Looks all around. Off Ugo,

CUT TO:

INT. DAY. PAPAL APARTMENT

A SCULPTOR with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth runs a hair dryer over the Pope's plaster DEATH MASK...Satisfied that it has dried sufficiently, he pulls it off and admires the result...

WIDER

Sixtus's CORPSE lies beneath a white sheet...Iemma and Prezzi lay out the clothes for his burial...A simple white SOUTANE and a plain white ALB...A STOLE for the neck...

PREZZI
...They're undertakers. They think he should be embalmed.

IEMMA
He didn't want it.

PREZZI
Pope Pius didn't want to be embalmed.

IEMMA
Simple.

PREZZI
You know, Iemma, I was also his confessor.

IEMMA
That's what he wanted.

PREZZI
Yes, I heard this, "simple".
(beat)
Meanwhile Pope Pius turned black as a grape and blew up like a balloon.
(beat)
And if the weather turns hot...?

Bernd enters. An awkward silence. He looks at the outfit.

BERND
This is what he wanted. Something simple. And a simple pine box.

Bernd exits inside...A look between Prezzi and Iemma. Prezzi resumes assembling the burial garments...A PALLIUM of white lamb's wool and a white ZUCCHETTO...

PREZZI
It's funny, isn't it? That he chose the two of us to be his confessors?
(beat)
Me, who would tell him what he wanted to hear. And you, who would tell him the truth.

Bernd returns, holding the POPE'S SLIPPERS...

BERND
I know he wanted it to be simple. But I'd like him to wear these.

Bernd struggles to put on the slippers, the Pope's feet blue now, and stiff with rigor mortis...He starts to weep. Prezzi squeezes his shoulder to reassure him.

PREZZI
It'll be okay, Bernd. It's God's will.

Bernd turns to Prezzi, his eyes red.

BERND
This was not God's will.

Looks all around. Then a green-bottle FLY alights on Iemma's cheek...Iemma swats at it...

...Then more FLIES alight on Bernd...Prezzi looks at the Pope's corpse...More flies there, and a loud BUZZING...

...Iemma swats at another fly...Opens a window...More flies TORRENT inside...Iemma swats wildly at them, eyes closed... Then forces himself to look...

CLOSE ON -- IEMMA

What he sees stops him -- mouth agape, frozen in terror and awe...Prezzi and Bernd join him at the window...

THEIR POV

...Vast SWARMS of buzzing flies descend upon Rome...People RUN in the streets to escape them...

CLOSE ON -- DUFFY

As he emerges from the Vatican into St. Peter's Square...Sees the flies...But that's not what fills him with wonder...

CLOSE ON -- IEMMA

Looking down from the windows of the papal apartment and seeing the same thing...

ANGLE ON -- VIOLETTA

In her RED SLIP, oblivious to the swarms of flies, freed of her afflictions and her disability, as she WALKS across St. Peter's Square...

CLOSE ON -- IEMMA

As he smiles...

IEMMA
A miracle.

WIDER -- THE VATICAN

As the skies go dark with epic swarms of flies, thick enough to blot out the sun --

SMASH CUT TO
BLACK.

END OF EPISODE ONE