

the beginning of

I MARRIED A POPE (THE PILOT EPISODE)
(from **FOREIGN AFFAIRS**)

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

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Time: The middle 1990's.

Place: The Pope's private office, a set for a TV show.

Characters: THE POPE, the first American to head the Catholic Church
COOKIE, a cute and perky dancer/showgirl
CARDINAL JULIO, the Pope's pragmatic assistant
MOM, the Pope's elderly, conservative mother
AUDIENCE WARM-UP PERSON

On the stage is a set for the Pope's private office, filled with the usual papal office furniture. As the play begins, we hear from behind the audience:

AUDIENCE WARM-UP GUY (o.s.)

Where are my kisses?!... I need my kisses!

For a moment, nothing. Then the irrepressible AUDIENCE WARM-UP GUY (or GAL) bounces into the theater and addresses the audience.

AUDIENCE WARM-UP GUY (cont'd)

All riiiiighttt! You know, I've worked a lot of TV show tapings, and you are by far the best audience since the last taping. In fact, the producers told me they were so pleased with the way you laughed during the first half of our pilot, that we're going to let you watch the second half... So who'd like a kiss?... If you'd like a kiss, raise your hand!... C'mon, let's see those hands!

The audience warm-up guy reaches into his pocket, takes out some chocolate kisses, and tosses them at audience members.

AUDIENCE WARM-UP GUY (cont'd)

There you go... And one for you back there...
Oh, and in answer to the question that lovely
lady asked before we started— by the way,
are you free later? – we don't know the air date
yet. Of course, we hope we'll make it on the
fall schedule, but it all depends on whether
the network picks us up as a series.

Around now, or whenever they're ready, the actors playing THE POPE and
COOKIE enter on stage, but still as actors. Perhaps they're touching up their
make-up or reviewing the script (perhaps with a STAGE MANAGER).

AUDIENCE WARM-UP GUY (cont'd)

Oh, I'm getting a sign we're ready to resume
taping. Now remember, the more you laugh,
the more the network will think our show's funny.
So now sit back and enjoy the second half of
the pilot episode of what we hope will be the
big hit of the 1994 TV season, I MARRIED A POPE.

The house lights fade as the stage lights go up on:

THE POPE, dressed in his usual work clothes, is in shock from the news
he's heard from COOKIE, who is dressed in dance leotards.

POPE

I did *what?!!!*

COOKIE

You put a ring on my finger, and you said "I Do".

POPE

I put a ring on your finger?!!

COOKIE

What's the big deal? You've got lots of 'em.

POPE

I know, but –

COOKIE

You did mean everything you said
to me last night, didn't you?

POPE

What did I say?

COOKIE

You said beautiful things.

POPE

I kept asking Monsignor Baffico*, "What's in the punch?" and he said, "Ohhhh, nothing." That's the last time I trust a Jesuit.

(*pronounced "Ba-FEE-koh", or my nephew will hurt you.)

COOKIE

I was very touched when you told me that you've dedicated yor soul to Christ, but your body's up for grabs.

POPE

Look, I'm sorry. I didn't know what I was doing last night. I've never been to a bachelor party before.

COOKIE

I suppose you didn't know what you were doing when you signed this, either.

Cookie hands the Pope a marriage license.

POPE

Oh my G—

COOKIE

One of the bishops said he always carries a spare marriage license to marry off pregnant teenagers.

POPE

Then they all knew?

COOKIE

Only that one bishop. And he promised never to tell.

POPE

Which bishop?

COOKIE

I forget.

POPE

You forget?!!

COOKIE

It was my wedding night; I had a lot on my mind! Wait till I call my folks. They never thought I'd marry up.

POPE

No, no, no. Listen, um, er –
(looks at license:)
Your name is “Cookie”?

COOKIE

I was born Mary Rose, but I changed it
for professional reasons. Mary Rose
doesn’t sound right for a showgirl.

POPE

You’re a showgirl?!

COOKIE

You didn’t complain last night when I popped
out of the cake. It was the first time I ever
got tossed a rosary from the audience.

POPE

Cookie, please. You must understand. I’m
the Vicar of Christ; the Successor of St. Peter.

COOKIE

And a whiz on the dance floor. You
could teach a few steps to Madonna –
the current one, not the original.

POPE

We... we danced?!

COOKIE

Don’t worry; I tasted that punch.
I’m sure *nobody* remembers last night.

POPE

Cookie, you must understand.
You and I can’t marry.

COOKIE

It’s the age difference, isn’t it?

POPE

No!

COOKIE

I don’t care if there’s snow on the roof,
as long as there’s fire in the furnace.

POPE

There’s no fire in my furnace!

COOKIE

Did you have German measles?

POPE

That's not what I meant. I'm a perfectly healthy, functional male.

COOKIE

That's a relief. I want a *big* family.

POPE

I'm the Pope! And the Pope can't marry.

Cookie grabs the marriage license.

COOKIE

Then how do you explain this?

POPE

To err is human, to forgive divine.
I'm a little of both.

COOKIE

(starting to get sad)

Last night, you called me your swella bella.

POPE

Cookie, I gave a sacred vow to Christ.

COOKIE

I see. Well, then... I'll guess I'll go.

POPE

I'm sorry.

COOKIE

Yeah, well, you're not the first man to promise me heaven. I just thought *you'd* be different.

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