
The Pope's Brother

(*Il Fratello del Papa*)

a radio play by Steve Walker

CHARACTERS

SIDNEY COLLYWESTON.....the Pope's brother
GREGORY COLLYWESTON.....the Pope
TOMASSO TARTUFARI.....a high flying priest
CLAUDIA TARTUFARI.....his sister
CARDINAL NGOUPANDE.....to whom Sidney confesses
PYJAMAS.....a betting man
PUNTER
SWISS GUARD
MEDDLESOME PRIEST
WILMA SPANGERHUFF (*an American tourist*)
SANDRO
WOMAN IN THE CORSO
MAN IN THE CORSO
JUNTA GENERAL SABATO
GOD
SISTER BRIDGET

Somewhere in Italy.

Acoustic of a cathedral.

Choir practising in background.

Sudden rush of clip-clopping footsteps.

SIDNEY: (*breathless, worried*). You are Cardinal Ngoupande, are you not? THE Cardinal Ngoupande.

CARDINAL NGOUPANDE: (*a deep, African voice*). I think so.

SIDNEY: I must talk to you.

CARDINAL NGOUPANDE: I am very busy just now. Perhaps another time.

SIDNEY: (*increasingly agitated*) You don't understand. It's urgent, important. He's after me.

CARDINAL NGOUPANDE: Who?

SIDNEY: Him! Him! You know!

CARDINAL NGOUPANDE: (*humouring a looney*). Ah, him! (*Calling.*) Sister, take this gentleman outside

NGOUPANDE: and give him a plate of spaghetti.

SIDNEY: Look! Look! This beard I'm wearing. (*Whispers.*) It's false.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** I would never have guessed.

SIDNEY: I'm Sidney Collyweston. See! THE Sidney Collyweston.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** Do I know you?

SIDNEY: We've not quite met, no. I'm the Pope's brother.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** (*with sudden diplomatic largesse*). Quite all right, Sister. I'll deal with this matter, thank you. (*To SIDNEY*) Come, I know a more private place.

They walk: their steps on cathedral stone.

SIDNEY: (*breathlessly, trying to keep up*). My brother said, he said once that if there was a crisis, I should seek you out. Cardinal Ngoupande, he said, has a heart as big as the rest of him. (*More breathless.*) He said... he said... he said you were the most incorruptible man in the world.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** (*a deep rolling laugh*).

SIDNEY: It's true though, isn't it?

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** Here we are.

Plinking of a curtain being opened.

SIDNEY: In there? A confessing box? Not me, old darling.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** Do please hurry, man. That beard of yours isn't fooling anyone, you know.

SIDNEY: All right, all right.

*Plinking of a curtain being closed.
Woody clunks as SIDNEY seats himself.*

Acoustic of the confessional.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** Yes.

SIDNEY: What?

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** You have some things to tell me.

SIDNEY: Right ... errrrm. Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It is errrrrrm ... forty-seven years since my last confession. Sorry. (*In sudden agitated despair.*) Look – I've done terrible things, of course ... I've been a scoundrel all my life. But I'm not here about that. I'm here about what happened here. In Rome. I must fill you in. (*Increasingly agitated and loud.*) It's all Pyjamas' fault. They call him Pyjamas because he always wears pyjamas: he lives behind the betting shop where he works, you see, and never bothers to change. If he hadn't told me,

about my brother, I would never have known. It's not that long ago I found out that the Duke of Edinburgh isn't a Scotsman. I mean, people were complaining about Margaret Thatcher for years and I thought she was a singer. I only read the racing pages, you see.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:
SIDNEY:**

Calm down now, there's a good fellow. And not so loud.

(whispers). Do you think he's out there, listening? *(Pause.)* I'll start at the betting shop, shall I? Or should I start with the chocolate? Or the murder - that was the worst? *(Becoming louder again, more confident.)* No, the betting shop, I think, give you a fuller picture that way or you'll not follow any of it. *(Fade up betting shop, race commentary, him of punters.)* ... I was waiting for the 2.30 from Utoxeter when I popped a button. I'd put on a stone or two, you see: it just flew off, like a ... what do they call those things? - a crosby! So I was looking for it on the floor when Pyjamas comes in and sticks a rolled newspaper up my bottom.

In the betting shop.

SIDNEY:

(as the newspaper has been stuck up his bottom). Oooooooooo! Pyjamas, you idiot! Help me find my button, will you?

PYJAMAS:

Here you are, Guv'nor!

SIDNEY:

Since when have I been 'Governor' to you?

PYJAMAS:

You lucky fat sod!

SIDNEY:

Huh?

PYJAMAS:

You got a result, best you ever had.

SIDNEY:

The race hasn't started yet.

PYJAMAS:

You don't look nothing like him.

SIDNEY:

Who?

PYJAMAS:

Who d'you think: Rubstic? Aldaniti? Shergar?

SIDNEY:

(irritated). What?

PYJAMAS:

Your broffha. You's twins, isn't yers?

SIDNEY:

(with nostalgic awe). My brother.

PYJAMAS:

First English Pope in 468 years. Him! Your broffha. They made him Pope.

SIDNEY:

Getaway!

PYJAMAS:

Straight up! There's ees mugshot.

Rustle of newspaper as SIDNEY snatches it.

SIDNEY: Where's this, then?

PYJAMAS: Know yer own broffha, don't yerh?

SIDNEY: Haven't set eyes on him in over thirty years. What, THAT ... nothing like him - nothing like me, anyway. Good God, it is him! It really is. Gregory Collyweston. (*Can't believe the good luck.*) I knew he'd joined up, but Pope. That's good going, isn't it?

PYJAMAS: Leader of the world's 900 million Catholics, comprising 18.4 per cent of the world's population.

SIDNEY: No! Ha! Ha! Ha! (*Suddenly awestruck.*) Wait on, if he's Pope, what does that make me?

PYJAMAS: A jammy sod.

SIDNEY: What a stroke! I'll be an archbishop or something, do you think? If he's Holy I can't be far from it myself. We're almost the same man, for God's sake!

PYJAMAS: How come he's the Pope, then, and you're THAT?

SIDNEY: What?

PYJAMAS: That.

SIDNEY: Look here ... I'm not such a nag. I'm a proper thoroughbred, you know – was, anyway, in my younger days.

PYJAMAS: No more worries now though. Yer can write yerh own cheque, Colly, mate. Yer've got something on him, haven't yer? Must have, from way back, yerh own broffha – must have.

SIDNEY: Well, yes, I don't know. But I'll bet he'll be pleased to see me if I turn up. Pope wouldn't be beastly to his own flesh-and-blood, despite my wasted life. Might even let me borrow a palace or something, full of nuns to do my bidding.

A huge dirty guffaw from them both.

SIDNEY: (*with airy delight, on his way*). Jam on both sides for me from now on, old darling!

PYJAMAS: (*calling after*). Here! Don't you want to see if your gee-gee's won?

SIDNEY: (*calls back*). Couldn't care less!

PYJAMAS: (*yells, a touch of earnestness*). Colly! Send me some silk pyjamas, will yer, Colly, eh? A yella pair!

SIDNEY: (*hurrying back*). Errmmm ... Rome ... that's in Italy, isn't it?

PYJAMAS: (*can't believe he's asking*). Yeah.

SIDNEY: (*on his way again*). Just checking.

PYJAMAS: *(after a private dirty laugh)*. Here, see that geezer who just went out?

PUNTER: *(angrily)*. No.

PYJAMAS: Pope's brother. Straight up.

PUNTER: *(in scornful disbelief)* Errrrrrrrrrrrrrgh!

Acoustic of confessional.

SIDNEY: *(suddenly close, in confessional)*. I admit it – hadn't the foggiest where Italy was. But I can't know everything, can I? Never been abroad before, you see. Never been anywhere if a horse wasn't involved – though I did consider emigrating after what they did to Lester Piggott. Had a passport, though – you know, just in case. Especially after that doping business.

Tinkle of Italian music in background.

SIDNEY: Italy! Ah! Took the train, of course. Wouldn't get me up in a Hairyplane, no fear! Ate a man's sandwich when he slipped out of the compartment for a widdle. Gave me a strange dream, that sandwich ... I was being eaten by failed racehorses: they'd all escaped from the knackers yard and blamed me for their misfortunes: I'd bet on their noses you see, old darling, so they had to lose, just had to. Did you know they eat horse here? Of course you do. I expect that's what it was in the sandwich. I'm telling you all this because I'm sure Greg would want me to tell you everything ... I'm an idiot, you see, I don't know what's important.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** *(calmly)*. Keep going with it, please. You have arrived in Rome.

SIDNEY: Yes. Yes. Ah! I'm in Rome, then, I've arrived. *(Bring up sounds of Rome.)* I'm in the Vatican, looking up at Saint Peter's with my guidebook in my hand. So I somehow find my way to an official-looking bit but get myself collared by one of those funny-looking Swiss Guard chappies. Huge! Stood right in my way.

Exterior acoustic.

Distant sound of traffic, of tourist guide yakking to his flock.

SIDNEY: Excuse me, I'd like to see the Pope, please.

SWISS GUARD: Mi scusi, signore?

SIDNEY: Tell him it's Sidney. He'll understand. Give him one helluva shock, mind!

SWISS GUARD: Mi dispiace ma non capisco.

SIDNEY: Go on, man. Don't just stand there. Get on with it. Look: Me – Sidney Collyweston. Yes? Pope: your Pope – he Gregory Collyweston. Mio Brothero. Comprenday?

SWISS GUARD: You go away please.

SIDNEY: (*raising his voice*). I just want to see the Pope. It's not much to ask.

PRIEST: (*approaching, thick Italian accent*). Perhaps I can be of some assistance.

SIDNEY: Hum? Ah, thankyou. I'm trying to explain to the General here: I'm Sidney Collyweston, the Pope's brother, you see.

PRIEST: Ah!

SIDNEY: I just heard he got the job on Wednesday and I came straight over. Frightfully hot, isn't it?

PRIEST: (*to SWISS GUARD*). Questo signore e' americano. Lui sta cercando suo fratello che cucina in un ristorante in Piazza Morgana ma si e' dimenticato il nome del ristorante.

SWISS GUARD: Si, la' c'e' un eccellente ristorante. Il Baccala' e' superbo. Non ho mai provato gli spaghetti.

SIDNEY: (*losing confidence*). He'll be awfully pleased to see me. He'll make it worth your while.

PRIEST: I tell you where to go, please. I give directions, okay?

Acoustic of confessional.

SIDNEY: (*in confessional*). Fobbed me off, didn't he! I ended up in a cake shop in the Via Veneto. Lovely cakes, mind you. (*In sudden despair.*) I hope you're following this. Should I tell you about the murder now and get it out of the way?

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:
SIDNEY:** Why don't you tell me how you met up with His Holiness.

(*enthusing again*). Ah! Yes! I can tell you that! They have these huge great audiences every now and then in the morning. To see the Pope. Thousands there, just like Derby Day. Every kind of nun, cripples, you name it. That's when I saw him. I was way at the back and he was coming to the front, blessing people with his fingers.

(*In audience hall, yelling.*) Greg! Greg! Gregory! It's me!

(*In confessional.*) They started dragging me off. Half a dozen bishops strangling me with my binoculars. But I gave them the slip, crawled about under everybody's legs like a jockey thrown off at Beecher's Brook. I popped up near the front.

(*In audience hall.*) Greg! I say, Greg!

(*In confessional, complains.*) They were hitting me with their Bibles. An evil-smelling Johnny in sunglasses had me in an armlock.

(*In audience hall.*) Oooh! Arrh! Look at my face, man! I haven't changed that much. (*Desperate.*) Gregggggggggggggg!!!!!! (*Partly muffled.*) 'I'm the King of the Castle and you're the dirty ... mmmm ... mmmm ... mmmmmmmmm'

(In confessional.) They were bustling him away. Dozens of dark-suited bodies were between us. All I could see of him was one of his eyes, don't know which one. Then someone gave me a godalmighty wallop and at the same moment Greg's eye wrinkled up in pain, just as if they'd hit him and not me. He knew who I was then: I saw the moment. One word from him and they gave me my arms back, dusted me off and marched me into a smallish gold room full of crucifixions and men in silly hats ...

Interior acoustic.

- GREG:** (highly emotional). Sidney! Sidney! Heaven be praised!!!
- SIDNEY:** Hullo, big brother!
- GREG:** *(laughing)*. Only by five minutes!
- SIDNEY:** Looks like fifty years if you want the truth. What have you been doing to yourself, boy!
- GREG:** *(happily)*. Nothing much.
- SIDNEY:** I mean to say, Greg, old darling, I spend my life wallowing in every indulgence, up to my knees in damp racecourses every day and I couldn't be lovelier! You've been at best behaviour for forty years and you look like our Granny! Devil looks after his own, what? Ooops, sorry.
- GREG:** *(chuckling)*. You're just the same. *(In pride and delight announces to the throng.)* This is my brother Sidney.
- ROOMFUL OF CLERICS:** Pleased to meet you.
- SIDNEY:** How'd you do.
- GREG:** *(suddenly earnest, intimate)*. Last night, Sidney, I prayed harder than I have ever prayed before. I prayed for guidance and the Blessed Lord has sent YOU, Sidney.
- SIDNEY:** *(his first attempt to be truthful)*. No. No. He doesn't know me, honestly.
- GREG:** You are wrong, Sidney.
- SIDNEY:** You should know! Ha! Ha! *(A sudden idea.)* Listen! Ha! Orange cake!
- GREG:** Orange cake?
- SIDNEY:** Yes, yes. In the taxi this morning. It stopped at some traffic lights and everything suddenly reeked of orange cake. I asked the driver where it was coming from but they only speak Latin around here. Don't you remember?
- GREG:** What?
- SIDNEY:** Our Mam's orange cake.

GREG: No.

SIDNEY: Yes you do. With the hundreds and thousands on the top.

GREG: Yes! Yes! I remember! (*Weeping.*) O, sweet Jesus! Sweet Jesus, thank you!!

SIDNEY: (*with GREG snuffling behind him*). I nearly cried myself, I can tell you. Very devout our Mam, wasn't she? I expect that's where you get it from. And cruel, let's be fair, she was quite horridly cruel, but only to me and the family pets.

GREG: Shall we stand for a few moments in silent prayer?

SIDNEY: Er ... all right.

A long prayerful silence, long enough to make people think their radios have broken. Then SIDNEY, clearing his throat, then others in background. GREG murmurs an Amen. A hum of response.

GREG: You will stay, won't you, Sidney?

SIDNEY: Hm?

GREG: Here with me?

SIDNEY: (*playing hard-to-get very badly*). Well, I don't know. I have business interests at home, you see, needing constant attention.

GREG: (*crestfallen*). Oh.

SIDNEY: The turf, you know. I must keep up or I'll lose all idea of form. Where a horse is concerned you have to know everything, something's not enough.

GREG: I'm sure, yes. Oh, you know so much about the World, Sidney! I can see it in your eyes. (*To CARDINALS.*) You can, can't you, see it in his eyes?

A murmur of assent.

SIDNEY: (*confused*). I'm not mug, if that's what you mean.

GREG: (*with deep humility*). Please, Sidney, stay, and help me combat my unworthiness.

SIDNEY: Well, if you put it like that ...

GREG and SIDNEY laugh joyously, SIDNEY losing all restraint.

GREG: (*calling*). Tommaso!

TARTUFARI: (*a soft, sinister voice*). Holy Father.

GREG: Sidney, this is Father Tartufari, one of the brightest young men in our Curia. He will look after you.

SIDNEY: How's tricks?

TARTUFARI: I am much better, thank you.

GREG: (*quietly to SIDNEY*) Father Tartufari is recovering from an operation ...

SIDNEY: Ooo!

GREG: ... brain surgery. We rejoice that he has been spared. You won't wear him out, will you, Sidney?

SIDNEY: No. No. (*Transparently caddish.*) Oh, Greg. One thing. You don't have a bit of spare cash, do you? A few zillion of that Lira stuff will suffice, just for pocket money. I came away in such a rush and the banks were closed.

GREG: Of course. Of course. Tartufari will look after you. Just ask him. He'll give you anything you need.

SIDNEY: Anything?

GREG: (*in joyful remembrance*). How much pocket money did we get?

SIDNEY: Ooooooh, a threepenny bit a week ... to share.

GREG: Yes! Yes!

SIDNEY: I had a moustache before it went up to sixpence.

They laugh together. Fade the laughter.

Fade up SIDNEY and TARTUFARI entering room.

TARTUFARI: This way, this way, please, here we are.

Door closes.

SIDNEY: (*hugely impressed*). I say, this is rather plush! All mine, is it?

TARTUFARI: Yes, sir.

SIDNEY: Call me Colly, please. All the chaps do. (*Walking around the room.*) This furniture's rather super. Frightfully modern.

TARTUFARI: Made by our finest Italian designers. Do you like it? If it is not to your taste ...

SIDNEY: Oh, erm ... yes, it's the bee's knees, champion stuff. This a chair, is it?

TARTUFARI: (*pleased*). I have supervised the selection during my convalescence. I am doing only light work.

SIDNEY: Who's the Sinatra fan?

TARTUFARI: (*bashfully*). The Holy Father and myself. It is something we share from the old

days.

SIDNEY:

Ah.

TARTUFARI:

You?

SIDNEY:

What?

TARTUFARI:

Frank Sinatra.

SIDNEY:

Take him or leave him.

TARTUFARI:

I have installed the hi-fi myself. Shall I play a record for us?

SIDNEY:

Go on, then.

Sinatra sings 'Night and Day', loudly for a moment, then turned down.

SIDNEY:

A tumour, was it?

TARTUFARI:

Sorry?

SIDNEY:

Your operation.

TARTUFARI:

Two tumours, I regret to say. A purple-hot poker on each side of my head.

SIDNEY:

Hard cheese. (*Boasts happily.*) I've never been ill, not even for a day, ever – what do you think of that?

TARTUFARI:

Most fortunate.

SIDNEY:

Still, your hair's growing back nicely.

TARTUFARI:

Thankyou, yes.

SIDNEY:

(*with a guffaw.*) Wish mine would! Errrrm, is that the Leaning Tower of Pisa I can see?

TARTUFARI:

It is in Pisa.

SIDNEY:

Hum?

TARTUFARI:

Pisa is far away, another city.

SIDNEY:

That's not it then?

TARTUFARI:

No.

SIDNEY:

All those rooftops. Makes you wonder what's going on underneath, what? Wonderful to be able to see in. Greg and I had a castle when we were kiddies – toy one, you understand! – and you could lift the roof off and see our soldiers standing about inside. Of course God can, can't he?

TARTUFARI:

I'm sorry?

SIDNEY: Can see through rooftops.

TARTUFARI: You have faith, Colly?

SIDNEY: Don't follow?

TARTUFARI: You believe in God?

SIDNEY: Silly question! I'm the Pope's brother, aren't I? Course I do. (*An afterthought.*)
When I think about it.

TARTUFARI: (*walking away*). There is an even better view from the bedroom. There is a balcony.

He opens the bedroom doors. Chimes tinkle lightly in the breeze. Sinatra sings more distantly.

SIDNEY: (*following*). Corrrrr ... a four-poster!!!! (*Jumps on to it – it squeaks as he bounces on it, laughing.*) Ha! Ha! Ha! Never slept in one of these before.

TARTUFARI: Twelve Popes have died in that bed.

SIDNEY: (*stops bouncing, worried*). Errrrr! No ghosts, I hope?

TARTUFARI: (*the slightest touch of amusement*). I don't think so. But then I have not slept there.

SIDNEY: Oh, don't, don't.

TARTUFARI: If you need me for any reason I am just down the corridor. The gold door next to the Botticelli.

SIDNEY: Botticelli. Got it! That's a painting, isn't it? Just checking.

TARTUFARI: (*taking his leave*). You must be very tired.

SIDNEY: Wait, please. One thing. About Greg. The Holy thingummy. He's all right, is he? He said he'd been ill.

TARTUFARI: He is well, thankyou. Being Pope is proving a great strain upon his constitution, of course.

SIDNEY: Yes, yes, I'm sure. I wouldn't do it! I'll see him later, shall I?

TARTUFARI: Tomorrow. At breakfast. (*On his way.*) I don't eat. Sister Bridget will show you the way.

Door closes behind him.

SIDNEY: (*calling after him*). Thanks, awfully!

Pause.
Telephone being dialled.

Sinatra in background.

SIDNEY: (*hollering down phone*). Hello! Hello! Maxie! That you? Yes, yes, I'm in Rome, you know, staying with my brother. Erm, could you read out the card for Newmarket this afternoon? (*Distant hum of his bookmaker reading the card.*) Arh! Oooo! Yes. I'll have a monkey on that please. Yes. Yes. On account. That's all right, isn't it? – of course. What? Oh, that's Frank Sinatra. He has the room next to mine, you know. In the bath, yes. (*Hollers into room.*) Keep the noise down, Frank! (*Laughs hugely.*)

Fade up sounds of many people breakfasting in a large room.

SIDNEY: (*approaching*). Good morning, one and all!!!

GREG: Good morning, Sidney. Sleep well?

SIDNEY: Like a dead horse, thankyou. (*Pulling out his chair and sitting down.*) I say, you don't do bad, do you. What a spread! Breakfast at home, I have two stale twiglets and a licorice allsort. (*Whispers.*) Don't they ever leave you alone, these decrepit Bishops?

GREG: It seems not.

SIDNEY: (*to Bishops*). Morning. Morning. (*Brightly, to GREG*) Hey, look, I'm the only one here who isn't a Bishop! You couldn't, could you?

GREG: Pardon?

SIDNEY: Make me a Bishop!

GREG: (*laughs*). Don't want to be like the Borgias, do we?

SIDNEY: Hmm? Oh. Ha! Ha! I should say not! Hmm?

GREG: I have thought of you every day, Sidney, all those years. I've often wanted to see you. But my life has been such a struggle with faith, and illness, and the great responsibilities the Lord has seen fit to bestow upon me. I did not wish to burden you.

SIDNEY: (*tucking in, mouth full*). Oh, you should have, old darling!

GREG: (*starkly*). Sidney, I have just told you a lie. It's unforgivable. I must tell you the truth. I hope this doesn't hurt you in any way, Sidney, but I must speak what is in my heart.

SIDNEY: (*gulps his food, preparing for the worst*). Don't say it, Greg, please. I know, I'm a terrible lump ... I must be dripping with sins ...

GREG: You have been the great joy of my life.

SIDNEY: (*amazed at being let off*). Have I?

GREG: We are joined at the soul, you and I. You must have guessed it.

SIDNEY: (*eating again*). Don't go all soppy on me.

GREG: (*his sentences trailing off slightly in an Anglican manner*). When I was in the monastery, quite a young man, it was a constant wonder to my superiors that I was so informed about the world and its ways, although I never stepped outside our walls except perhaps to banish a cat I'd found in our vegetable garden. I understood things that it was impossible for me to understand. Mere intuition couldn't account for it, No, it was your doing, Sidney. Everything you have felt in your wonderful busy life: the joy, pains and sorrows, I have felt also. Somethng in me has lived your every moment. It has been the making of me, the greatest enrichment of my life, a gift beyond measure. (*Pause.*) But you, Sidney?

SIDNEY: (*mouth full*). Humm?

GREG: Have you really felt nothing of my struggle?

SIDNEY: (*bluff, but with a sudden sad truthfulness*). I'm an oaf, dear, I thought you knew.

GREG: You don't know yourself well enough, little brother. You are a most unique fellow.

SIDNEY: (*unbelieving*). I am? (*Believing.*) Of course I am.

GREG: With a gift for happiness that the whole world has need of.

SIDNEY: Look, do you think you've been working too hard?

GREG: When you had your accident, I was so worried. I was unconscious myself, of course, but, strangest thing, I was praying for you ... in my sleep.

SIDNEY: I've never had an accident.

GREG: Three years ago. September. You had a fall.

SIDNEY: Fall? Fall? Oh, you mean that night I was blind drunk and got run over by a milk cart. Not a scratch. Miracle, mind you, they all said.

GREG: (*with import*). I was in hospital till Christmas. I have had a certain numbness in my back ever since.

SIDNEY: Lost me, sorry.

GREG: That time at Ampleforth, the term before you were expelled. You were beaten up, remember?

SIDNEY: (*joyously*). When I put glue in that swot's desk!

GREG and SIDNEY: (*together*). But it was the wrong desk!!!!

GREG: It was that giant's desk. He dragged you into an empty classroom. Gave you

what for.

SIDNEY: (*boasts airily*). His best punches just bounced off me. I whacked him into submission with a stray cricket-stump.

GREG: They found me flat out in the locker-room, same afternoon.

SIDNEY: Sorry, doesn't ring a bell.

GREG: (*irritated with SIDNEY's slowness*). Oh, Sidney! How could you not know!! We are like the Corsican Brothers, you and I. The twins in the Douglas Fairbanks picture. One's asleep in Corsica and the other is wounded in a duel in Paris. The sleeping one wakes up, screaming, feeling his brother's hurt. We are like that, at least I am with you. When you were struck by that milk cart, I received the injuries.

SIDNEY: Never!

GREG: Every time you catch a cold, I catch a cold.

SIDNEY: I've never had a cold.

GREG: Then I catch them for you.

SIDNEY: Straight up? Jolly decent of you. (*It sinks in.*) I'd have been more careful, if I'd known. Wrapped up in the cold and wotnot.

GREG: That's what I'm trying to say. It's the real reason I've kept out of contact with you. It would have ruined your life, if you'd known. It wouldn't have been your own life anymore. Do you understand, Sidney?

SIDNEY: (*laughs*). You really mean, if I poke myself with my fork like this, you can feel it?

GREG: Ow! Yes.

SIDNEY: Ha! Ha! Isn't life a wonder?

GREG: (*with the intonation of Chamberlain declaring war*). I felt I had to tell you now. God has brought you here to help me, Sidney. All our long entwined lives he has been preparing us. Now our time of testing has arrived. (*Pause.*) Sidney.

SIDNEY: I'm with you. Really. Yes.

GREG: Whatever goodness there is in me has flowed into you, Sidney, and made you the man you are. I'm sure of it! And your vitality, your Lebensfunke, has sparked in me and caused my bruised soul to rise. There must be no secrets between us. Our lives are one, Sidney.

SIDNEY: (*slow-wittedly awestruck*). Yes...yes...we must be one, musn't we, come to think of it. I mean, at my end I've had some rum moments in the past, almost did some truly dreadful things ... (*Suddenly bluff and cheery again.*) ... but something always held me back. I'll bet it was you, transmitting your big conscience into my little one, bobbing around in there like ... a warm duck in a

cold bath.

GREG: *(utterly lost, as if he's never heard of ducks, warm or otherwise).* A warm duck, Sidney?

SIDNEY: Don't you have ducks here then? England's full of them these days.

GREG: Ah, Tommaso!

TARTUFARI: Good morning, Holy Father.

GREG: What have you got planned for my brother today?

TARTUFARI: A tour of the Eternal City, if he wishes.

SIDNEY: Spiffo!

Suddenly: zippy Italian music

Fade music, fade up frantic Rome traffic. Acoustic of the car which TARTUFARI is driving.

TARTUFARI: This morning we will see the Forum, the Colosseum, the Arch of Constantine. Then we have lunch in the Piazza Navona: very nice restaurant, I ate there with great pleasure before I was ill. Then we visit churches, many, many churches: Santa Maria Maggiore, Santa Maria del Popolo, San Giovanni in Laterano, San Pietro in Vincoli...and we finish with a nice long walk around the Vatican Museum. I drive you around first, okay?

SIDNEY: I'm all yours.

TARTUFARI: On our right we have the Mausoleum of the Emperor Augustus.

SIDNEY: *(profoundly uninterested).* Oh, yes.

Lots of horns peeping in traffic jams.

TARTUFARI: *(under his breath).* Andiamo! Andiamo!

Their car starts off again.

TARTUFARI: This is the Piazza del Popolo. You see here we have the old gates of the city. In bygone times it is here that the pilgrims entered Rome from the North.

SIDNEY: All roads lead to Rome, eh?

TARTUFARI: That's right. We have here Santa Maria del Popolo and Santa Maria in Monte. Very beautiful. We shall see inside them another day.

Mad screech of brakes, angry peeping. TARTUFARI winds down window, letting more noise in.

TARTUFARI: (*fast and furious*). Ehi! Oh burino! Ma che fai non ci vedi! Che ti credi di fare! Ehi! Ehi! Tu cerchi d'ammazzarmi! D'ammazzare il mio amico!!! Tu lo sai chi e'!!! Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!! Va all'inferno! Va all'inferno o ti ci mando io stesso! Idiota! Idiota! (*To SIDNEY*) You see that! (*To his fellow motorist.*) Errrrrrrrrgh, you!

They drive off with a screech and a lurch and a yelp from SIDNEY, TARTUFARI muttering under his breath.

SIDNEY: (*after another yelp*). Bit of Irish in you, what?

TARTUFARI: (*snaps*). What you say?

SIDNEY: (*calls over the noise of traffic*). I say, there's a demon in you when you're roused.

TARTUFARI: (*couldn't be more contrite*). Please. I apologise. Forgive me. I am supposed to stay calm. My operation, you understand, I am not quite the same. (*Quickly returning to his travelogue voice.*) Here we are driving down the Corso. It is the main shopping street of Rome.

SIDNEY: Oooh!!! Do you think we could stop for a minute. A present for a friend at home: a pair of yellow pyjamas, silk. Should be no trouble?

TARTUFARI: No trouble.

SIDNEY: (*in his best caddish voice*). And a few oddments for myself. Nothing too expensive. You've a nice little wad on you, I suppose?

A snatch of Roman music.

Fade music, fade up sounds of restaurant.

SIDNEY: (*with deep gastronomic satisfaction*). Arrrrrrrrrrrrrrh! (*Sound of knife and fork being laid down on plate, a mildish burp.*)

TARTUFARI: You enjoy?

SIDNEY: Exquisite, thankyou. You don't think I might have some more, do you? Just a ladleful. Or two.

TARTUFARI: (*summoning waiter*). Mi scusi, per favore. Il mio amico ne vorrebbe ancora.

SIDNEY: Why don't you have something yourself? Go on! Just a nibble can't hurt! A bread roll! One of those green things! I feel dreadfully guilty.

TARTUFARI: No. Thankyou.

WAITER: (*serving SIDNEY*). Signore. If you please.

SIDNEY: Ask him to give my compliments to the chef, will you? Best feed I've had in years. (*To WAITER, extra loud as if to an idiot.*) I say, best feed I've had in years.

WAITER: Thankyou, signore.

SIDNEY: (*laughs*). Nice fella that. Reminds me of a bookmaker I knew in Taunton. (*Suddenly serious.*) Look, Tommy. Could you do something for me?

TARTUFARI: Who is this Tommy?

SIDNEY: You, dear. Can't keep calling you Father, can I? People would talk. (*Struggling with embarrassment.*) Look, you couldn't dig me up a few books about God and things, hmm?

TARTUFARI: God ... and things?

SIDNEY: Um-hum.

TARTUFARI: Perhaps ... a Bible?

SIDNEY: Erm, yes, thankyou, a Bible, yes, a help, but it's not quite what I'm getting at. You see, I feel such a fool. I've nothing to talk to Greg about. He must think I'm a real plank. In England, you see, they have these irritating TV programmes, where they reunite brothers, sisters, aunts and things, people who haven't seen each other for a hundred years. One's an acrobat, the other's a shepherd. But what happens when the show's over and they're sitting alone, they've nothing to talk about but a few half-remembered days from their weeniehood, nothing in common, especially if one of them is Pope. I need something to gen me up on God, the angelic host, what it's all supposed to be about and why. You get my drift?

TARTUFARI: Yes, of course. You want some theological books.

SIDNEY: That's the ticket!!! Nothing too brainy, mind you: 'Theothingummy for Beginners', that sort of thing.

TARTUFARI: Yes, yes. This evening I shall bring you what you need. A little book of my own also, on this subject.

SIDNEY: You write books too!!!

TARTUFARI: (*bashful*). It has been published in America. A very bad book. But it may be of some assistance.

WAITER: Signore?

SIDNEY: Ah, pudding!

*Acoustic of the Sistine Chapel.
Loud hum of tourists, clicking of cameras.*

AMERICAN WOMAN: (*in background*). Wilbur! Come and look here, Wilbur!

SIDNEY: (*close*). Is this where Mussolini's buried, then?

TARTUFARI: *(with only the slightest irritation, whispers)*. This is the Sistine Chapel.

SIDNEY: Ah.

TARTUFARI: *(whispers)*. Built by Pope Sixtus IV at the end of the fifteenth century. It is 40 metres long, 21 metres wide, 13 metres high.

SIDNEY: Jolly impressive.

TARTUFARI: We have before us here: 'The Last Judgement' of Michelangelo.

SIDNEY: *(uninterested)*. I see. Yes.

TARTUFARI: On the left we have the righteous rising up into Heaven, meanwhile on the right there are the damned souls descending into Hell. *(Suddenly personal.)* I never tire of gazing at it. Each figure, see, has gone to Hell in his own way. Look, please, him there, he must have done terrible things.

SIDNEY: Doesn't look very happy, does he?

TARTUFARI: *(meaningfully)*. No. Not happy.

SIDNEY: No tailors in Heaven, then? Or Hell?

TARTUFARI: Tailors?

SIDNEY: None of them are weaing any clothes. Just jockstraps.

TARTUFARI: *(genuinely amused, perhaps over-amused)*. Yes. Yes. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! *(Giggles loudly to himself.)*

SIDNEY: *(with TARTUFARI still giggling, a touch worried)*. I'll not go to Hell, will I? Not now. Before, yes. But now that I'm the Pope's Brother: must be worth a few points, eh?

TARTUFARI: *(happily)*. I hope I shall see you in Heaven. I shall show you around, just as I have shown you Rome today.

They both laugh.
Pause.

SIDNEY: *(in confessional, thoughtful, blankly)*. We had a lovely time. Saw everything – except the Mona Lisa, missed that one. Bit spooky, old Tommy, of course, at the best of times. Every ten minutes or so his head would twitch back on his neck and it would look like his eyes were going to twang out on their strings. Wouldn't eat! Never went to the toilet, either. I was always going. But I'll get on with anyone, me. I rather liked him. Got back late after another feed, had a bit of supper with Greg. He told me what Pope had built what bit of Rome, then he remembered some old photos he had, tiny black-and-white things of Mam and Dad and us as kiddies and people we'd both forgotten. We both ended up just sitting back in our big gold chairs, looking at each other, tears in our eyes. Silly old buffers, what? Still wasn't tired. Sat up in my four-poster thumbing through some vile theology

books Tommy had lent me. Tiny type and millions of pages. Sent me straight off.

I distinctly remember I was having a dream about being at the seaside. I was with some of those people from the photographs, only in the dream I knew who they were. We were holding hands and jumping when the waves came. Then a voice called to me ...

GOD: *(close, a slow, soft voice coming from both sides at once, in good, precise English).* Sidney.

SIDNEY: *(in confessional, ominously).* I knew it wasn't a dream, because I came out of my dream to attend to it. I was in the four-poster. In the dark.

Pause.

GOD: Is it you, Sidney?

SIDNEY: *(groggy).* Me? Me? Yes, this is me. Who are you?

GOD: This is Jesus, Sidney.

SIDNEY: *(in a voice made small by awe).* Jesus? You mean ... God?!

GOD: If you prefer.

SIDNEY: *(a frightened moan).*

GOD: You are not drunken, Sidney. This really is God talking to you.

SIDNEY: Honest?

GOD: *(laughs kindly).* Honest.

SIDNEY: Ooooh, er! You've made me wet the bed.

GOD: I am sorry if I frightened you, Sidney.

SIDNEY: No, it's quite all right. My fault, I'm sure.

GOD: I have been watching you, Sidney.

SIDNEY: *(guiltily).* Oh? Just since I came here ... or always?

GOD: Always, Sidney.

SIDNEY: *(guilt-ridden).* Oh, dear.

GOD: You are one of my special people, Sidney.

SIDNEY: Me? Surely not.

GOD: This is why I have made your brother the Pope.

SIDNEY: *(a weak worried moan).*

GOD: Someday a new Bible shall be written, with a Chapter in it all about you, Sidney. I have important plans for you. You won't disappoint me, will you, Sidney?

SIDNEY: No, sir.

GOD: But first I must be sure of you, Sidney. There are some simple tests I wish you to do for me.

SIDNEY: Anything, anything at all.

GOD: (*a touch of Jehovah*). Until I inform you to cease you shall eat of nothing but chocolate.

SIDNEY: Chocolate?

GOD: Chocolate, Sidney.

SIDNEY: Errrr ... milk or plain?

GOD: Both, either, Sidney. I don't mind.

SIDNEY: All right, sir. You can rely on me.

GOD: One more thing, Sidney. This is our secret. No one, not even your brother, must know that I have spoken to you. Do you promise me this?

SIDNEY: It's going to be rather awkward ...

GOD: (*strictly*). Sidney!

SIDNEY: I ... I ... I promise.

GOD: (*fading away*). Goodnight, Sidney.

SIDNEY: (*calling after*) Goodnight, Lord. (*Excited, to himself.*) I say! I say! Who'd have thought?

Acoustic of confessional.

SIDNEY: (*in confessional*). It didn't seem too difficult at first. I went along to this luxurious sweetie shop, just outside the Vatican – best customer they ever had, me, over the next few weeks – and everything looked jolly tempting. I've always liked chocolate. Ask anyone: I'll eat anything. My first mistake was buying those big boxes. I didn't realise until I was back in my room, puzzling out what-was-inside-what-chocolate from one of those little paper guides with impossible drawings on it: only chocolate, he'd said, and these had marzipan, fudge, strawberry centres. So I passed out the boxes to nuns I found in the corridors – very grateful they were too – and stuck to bars from then on. Thirty, forty a day to start with.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** (*highly vexed*). I have never heard such lies in a confessional!!!!

SIDNEY: (*protests*). Eh?

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:
SIDNEY:** Breathe through the grille, please!
(*breathes*). Harrrrrrrrrrrrrh. Harrrrrrrrrrrrrh.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:
SIDNEY:** I thought so! You have been drinking!
(*small, hurt*). Only for courage.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:
SIDNEY:** It is the liquor making up this prepsoterous story!!!
No! No! Honest! On my Auntie Betty's grave!

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** All my life I have prayed to God to show himself, to remove me from this jungle of confusion, this treacle-pot of unbearable uncertainty. I have had no sign!!! Nothing!!! (*Darkly.*) I do not believe you.

SIDNEY: Look, of course you don't believe me. Who would? But if I explain it all you'll come around, I know you will. Let me explain. Can I, please? Please?

Pause.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:
SIDNEY:** (*sighs*). Continue.
Thankyou so much. (*Confused for a moment; has lost his place in the story.*) Errrr ... Ah! So, I did as I was told: I ate nothing but chocolate. But it's not the same in Italy as it is at home. It's always claggy from the heat. Dreadful stuff! I had to eat it, though, didn't I? I'd promised HIM. And those spreads in the Vatican! Those breakfasts! Ooooooh – the hams, the strange delicious meaty cuttings, the queer tangy vegetables. Looking at them lying innocently in their silver dishes made me more and more unbearably hungry. All I could do was keep sneaking away from the table to scoff a few bars.

*Acoustic of dining room.
Hum of diners, clinks of eating.*

GREG: Sidney?

SIDNEY: Humph?

GREG: Are you STILL not hungry?

SIDNEY: (*brightly*). No, thankyou.

GREG: Dearie me! You've become as bad as Father Tartufari. (*Nervously.*) Perhaps Italian food does not agree with you?

SIDNEY: No, no. It's wonderful stuff. Not peckish, that's all.

GREG: I only say so because I've been feeling somewhat queasy myself just lately.

SIDNEY: Sorry to hear it, brother-of-mine. I'll go for a long walk this afternoon – that should make you feel better.

GREG: (*touched*). Thankyou,

SIDNEY: (*A sudden realisation.*) Sidney?

SIDNEY: Yes, Greg.

GREG: You haven't been eating chocolate, have you?

SIDNEY: Errrrrrrrr – no.

GREG: What's that around your mouth, then? And on your shirt?

SIDNEY: Ah! ... You've caught me!

GREG: (*deeply worried*). Sidney?

SIDNEY: (*struggling*). Yes, you see, old darling, I looked at myself in the mirror last week and what did I see – a hippopotamus! I'm on a diet, a chocolate-only diet. It's the latest thing in England.

GREG: No!

SIDNEY: I've lost two stones already. Here ... (*Sound of silver paper tearing and snap of chocolate, his mouth full.*) Go on, try some! Food of the Gods!

GREG: (*weakly*). Thankyou. No.

SIDNEY: Go on.

GREG: I suddenly feel rather unwell.

SIDNEY: Oooo!

*Acoustic of SIDNEY's bedroom.
From the silence a sound like a needle playing at the beginning of a record.*

GOD: Sidney.

SIDNEY: (*startled awake, yells*). Arrrrrrrhhh!

GOD: Sidney. It's Jesus, Sidney.

SIDNEY: (*yawns*). Orrrrrrrr ... Yes, hullo. I've been praying for you for days. I expect you were busy. This chocolate lark, it's just not on any more, you know. I'm a hundrdweight fatter than I was and it's made Greg ill.

GOD: You have passed the test, Sidney.

SIDNEY: It's over, then?

GOD: It is over. I am very pleased with you, Sidney.

SIDNEY: Thankyou, Lord. A favour, pretty-please?

GOD: Depends what it is, Sidney.

SIDNEY: I've always wanted to know what you look like. You couldn't appear for me, could you?

GOD: (*strictly*). No, Sidney.

SIDNEY: You couldn't perhaps say who you look like? George Sanders? Scobie Breasley? One of the Beatles?

GOD: (*very strictly indeed*). Sidney!!!

SIDNEY: (*scared*). Sorry. Sorry.

GOD: I have another test for you, Sidney.

SIDNEY: Oh, no.

GOD: You will walk the length of the street known as the Corso. Do you know it?

SIDNEY: Yes. Yes. (*Sighs with relief*.) That's not a hard one.

GOD: You are to do it naked, Sidney.

SIDNEY: Eh? But it's over a mile that street and it's always jam-packed!

GOD: (*a touch of Jehovah*). You heard me, Sidney.

SIDNEY: But ... but ... I couldn't wear swimming-trunks perhaps? I'm horrible when I'm stripped.

GOD: No, Sidney.

SIDNEY: But it's ridiculous! Why would you ask me to do such a stupid thing?

GOD: I move in a mysterious way, my wonders to perform, Sidney.

SIDNEY: (*contrite*). Sorry, I was forgetting.

GOD: You know what you must do, Sidney?

SIDNEY: (*miserably*). Yes.

GOD: (*fading away*). Oh, Sidney ...

SIDNEY: Humph?

GOD: Our secret, remember?

SIDNEY: (*sighs*). You're the boss.

*Exterior acoustic.
Sound of heavy rain on pavement.
Unzipping, bundling up of clothes.*

SIDNEY: I hope you're watching this, God. Cos I'm not doing it again whatever you do to me. Anyway, you'll be pleased to observe that I've outsmarted you. It's 3 o'clock in the morning and there's a rainstorm – not a soul about. I should make it to the other end, no trouble.

Spank of SIDNEY's feet on the pavement. He hums snatches of 'Singing in the Rain' and occasionally chuckles with triumph as he hurries from doorway to doorway.

He sneezes hugely, wetly.

A car drives past. It peeps a tune.

SIDNEY: *(breathlessly, with sniffles).* They didn't see me, did they? *(The car peeps again in the distance.)* No, I'm sure they didn't. *(Anger breaking out.)* Why must all these shops leave their lights blazing? *(Sneezes, then moans tearfully.)* I'm not even half way yet.

WOMAN: *(screams in horror).* Arrrrrrrrrrrrhhhh!!!

SIDNEY: *(in a dither).* Don't worry, Madam. I'm not a pervert.

Sound of her feet running away. She screams again and blows a police-whistle.

SIDNEY: *(calls after, breezily).* I'm doing it for a bet, honest!

Sound of heavy feet approaching. Whistle still blowing.

MAN: *(in background).* Che cosa c'e?

WOMAN: *(in background).* Un uomo nudo!!!! Un enorme uomo nudo!!! Laggiu!!!

SIDNEY's feet spanking the pavement as he sprints away, wheezing heavily.

MAN: *(coming close, shouting).* Ehi, tu! Ehi! Ehi! Ippopotamo! *(A wolf-whistle, laughs hugely.)* Ippopotamo!

Fade laughter. Fade up interior acoustic..

SIDNEY: Greg, old darling. They said I could stay for a few minutes.

GREG: *(weakly).* Oh, Sidney, it's you. With the light behind you, you look just like Cardinal Ngoupande. If ever for any reason you need someone to rely on, go and see Cardinal Ngoupande. *(Sneezes.)*

SIDNEY: Bless you.

GREG: He's the most incorruptible man I know. He shall be the next Pope.

SIDNEY: Make him wait, eh?

GREG: (*sneezes, blows his nose*). Come here, sit on the bed. I don't bite.

SIDNEY: What have you been doing to yourself, laddie?

GREG: Oh, oh, I don't know. I've caught a chill. (*Sniffs.*)

SIDNEY: (*guilty*). I wonder how.

GREG: You all right?

SIDNEY: Yes. Yes.

GREG: I'd just got over that queasiness, and now this! Got to be careful, you see. There's a South American tour coming up. My first as Pontiff. Got to give them a good show. (*A huge wet sneeze.*) Well then, what shall we talk about?

SIDNEY: (*with transparent clueless pretentiousness*). Errrrrm .. how about the ontological argument.

GREG: (*an excited, amazed sniff*). The ontological argument, Sidney?

SIDNEY: (*pompously*). Yes. Yes. A special interest of mine.

GREG: (*delighted and impressed*). I had no idea.

SIDNEY: Oh, I'm something of a theologian, in my own little way.

GREG: (*bubbling over in Latin*). 'Aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit.'

SIDNEY: Uh?

GREG: Anselm. The Proslogion. Chapter two.

SIDNEY: Oh, that. Yes.

GREG: (*bursting with excitement*). Do you find it a convincing proof? This is very interesting.

SIDNEY: A convincing proof? Well ... to my mind – I was reading Farrar-Hockley on this subject just the other night – and I'd have to say, in all honesty ... yes ... or rather: no.

GREG: Why's that, then?

SIDNEY: (*desperate, drops his pomposity to reveal a more honest struggle*). Because ... I don't understand a word of it. (*Confused.*) If nothing can exist that is greater than the greatest thing that can possibly exist and God is the greatest thing that CAN possibly exist, then ... errrrrrrm ... yes, well – (*Bluffs with a laugh.*)

you're onto a winner, aren't you? (*Lost in confusion.*) I suppose.

GREG: So you are convinced?

SIDNEY: Hm? Ha! I should coco! (*Confused again.*) What? Well, He's there, anyway, isn't He, whatever they say?

GREG: You have a simple faith, Sidney.

SIDNEY: (*worried*). Is that good or bad?

GREG: (*tearfully*). It brings me great joy to see it, to feel it, little brother. (*Sneezes.*)
Pause.

SIDNEY: Greg?

GREG: Yes, Sidney.

SIDNEY: God does test us, doesn't He?

GREG: Yes. All the time.

SIDNEY: And if God asked me to do something, let's just say I thought He was asking me to do something for Him ... I would have to do it, wouldn't I?

GREG: Yes.

SIDNEY: Even if I thought it was silly ... or wrong?

GREG: He knows best.

SIDNEY: (*unsure*). I imagine so.

Plink-ploork of bathroom.

*SIDNEY splashing in the bath, singing and humming 'Jerusalem'.
A tap drips slowly during the following scene.*

GOD: (*suddenly, more hollow than previously, with a faint echo*). Sidney!

SIDNEY: (*calls*). Do you mind, I'm in the bath! Oh, it's you! I've had three hot baths today, trying to get rid of Greg's chill for him. He catches my colds, you know. Of course you do. (*Bravely.*) It's all your fault. I very nearly ended up in prison because of you!!!

GOD: Are you criticising me, Sidney?

SIDNEY: No, no. Didn't mean to come across impertinent. Sorry.

GOD: I forgive you, Sidney.

SIDNEY: Errrr, Lord ...

GOD: Yes, Sidney.

SIDNEY: I suppose you know your voice is coming out of the toilet.

GOD: Yes, Sidney.

SIDNEY: (*mumbles*). None of my business.

GOD: I have a further test for you, Sidney.

SIDNEY: Not another one!

GOD: Yes, Sidney.

SIDNEY: (*expecting the worst*). Go on, then – hit me.

GOD: You must have knowledge of the next woman you meet.

SIDNEY: Knowledge?

GOD: Do you understand me, Sidney?

SIDNEY: (*tragic, terrified*). Yes, I think so. But I'm nearly sixty and I've never been much of a ladies' man. No one had seen me stripped in twenty years till the other night.

GOD: Will you obey me, Sidney?

SIDNEY: (*muttering, helpless*). Yes, yes, if that's what you want, I'll try, I suppose. What if she won't?

GOD: She will be willing, Sidney.

SIDNEY: Coooo!

GOD: Goodbye, Sidney. (*Fading away.*) Our secret, remember.

SIDNEY: (*in sudden panic, splashes as he stands up in the bath*). Wait! Wait! The next woman I see! That'll be Sister Bridget bringing me my morning cuppa! Not Sister Bridget! She's 300 years old! Her moustache is bushier than mineeeeeeeee! (*Huge splash as he falls back into the bath. A yelp.*)

*The tinkle of chimes at SIDNEY's window.
A knock.
No answer.
A more vigorous knock.*

TARTUFARI: Colly! Are you locked in, Colly?

SIDNEY: (*a rasping whisper, on the other side of the door*). I'm hiding.

TARTUFARI: (*we have never heard him so cheerful*). Who from?

SIDNEY: Sister Bridget. She's not there, is she?

TARTUFARI: No.

SIDNEY: Sure?

TARTUFARI: I can't see her. Shall I fetch her for you?

SIDNEY: No! Tommy! No! No!

Click of door being unlocked, door eased open with a creak.

SIDNEY: (*on our side of the door*). I've been hiding in here all night, just in case. I mustn't see Sister Bridget. I mustn't, you understand!!!

TARTUFARI: (*jolly*). You and your games, Colly! Please, you must meet my sister. She has arrived from America today.

SIDNEY: Your sister? She's a woman, is she? Grown up and everything?

TARTUFARI: She is 23.

SIDNEY: But not a nun?

TARTUFARI: (*finds this most amusing*). Noooooooooo!

SIDNEY: (*his voice quivering*). And very beautiful, am I right??

TARTUFARI: You hurry, get dressed, huh? and you shall see. We have coffee waiting for you in my room, okay?

SIDNEY: (*horrified*). She's there now, is she?

TARTUFARI: (*on his way*). She is waiting to meet you!

Dead quiet in the corridor, just SIDNEY's creaking footsteps.

SIDNEY: (*whispers to himself*). Next to the Botticelli, he said. Trouble is, I don't know a Botticelli from an egg sandwich. (*Sudden high anxiety.*) Ogh-O! Sister Bridget!!!

*His creaking footsteps: fast.
Door opened and slammed in a hurry.
SIDNEY breathing heavily.*

SIDNEY: Oh! Hello.

CLAUDIA: (*a trace of American in her good English*). Hello.

SIDNEY: Errrrr... Hello.

CLAUDIA: (*amused*). Hello.

SIDNEY: Errrrrr ... Good Morning.

CLAUDIA: Is something wrong?

SIDNEY: No. No. Just Sister Bridget. She was coming down the corridor. But I escaped.

CLAUDIA: Claudia Tartufari. Pleased to meet you.

SIDNEY: Charmed. (*Overexcited.*) Charmed!

CLAUDIA: I am sure we shall be great friends.

SIDNEY: I'm sure ... yes. (*A worried laugh.*)

CLAUDIA: Excuse me, but are you Mr. Collyweston?

SIDNEY: Colly, please.

CLAUDIA: Tommaso said you were the Holy Father's TWIN brother.

SIDNEY: Yes, we are. I am.

CLAUDIA: (*with the largesse of an experienced teaser*). But I was expecting an old man.

SIDNEY: Er ... aren't I?

CLAUDIA: You are teasing me, Mr. Collyweston.

SIDNEY: Er... Colly.

CLAUDIA: I have coffee and biscuits, okay? Sit down, please.

SIDNEY: Thankyou, yes ... Where's errrrrr ...

CLAUDIA: Tommaso was called away.

SIDNEY: (*nervously, almost losing his voice*). Away?

CLAUDIA: A phone call. Just now. He sends his apologies. An important discovery in Spoleto. Some manuscripts.

SIDNEY: Oh?

CLAUDIA: (*she pours coffee*). Proving one of his theories, he says.

SIDNEY: (*accepting coffee*). Thankyou. (*In panic.*) He hasn't gone, has he?

CLAUDIA: To Spoleto. Yes. He'll be back in the morning.

SIDNEY: (*despondently*). In the morning? Oh, dear.

CLAUDIA: I am to look after you.

SIDNEY: (*more despondently*). Oh, dear.

CLAUDIA: (*furious, puts down her coffee with an angry clatter*). Of course, if my company is so objectionable!!!

SIDNEY: No! No! You're lovely! Really! And very willing, I'm sure ... or rather (*an embarrassed laugh*) you're nothing like a nun, are you?

CLAUDIA: (*giggles*). What CAN you mean by that, Mr. Collyweston?

SIDNEY: (*loosening up a bit*). Actually, you are the first person who isn't a Pope or an Abbess or something that I've spoken to since I came here last month.

CLAUDIA: They are very stuffy, aren't they?

SIDNEY: (*a sudden exuberance*). They don't know how to enjoy themselves!

CLAUDIA: But we do! Don't we?!

SIDNEY: (*terrified*). What? Humph?

CLAUDIA: Know how to enjoy ourselves. Okay? Okay!!!

SIDNEY: (*terrified, trying to be brave*). Yes. Yes! Ha! Ha! (*A miserable private groan.*)

*Exterior acoustic. Borghese Gardens.
They walk.*

SIDNEY: (*calmly, sincerely*). I can't remember when I've enjoyed a day so much. Thankyou, Claudia.

CLAUDIA: Are you teasing me again, Colly?

SIDNEY: No, no, I mean it. I feel young again. And I've a feeling that the best is yet to come. (*Bravely asking.*) Do you think so?

CLAUDIA: Sure. Why not? (*Laughs.*)

They continue walking in silence.

SIDNEY: (*a big sniff of air*). It is very beautiful here.

CLAUDIA: The Borghese Gardens is my favourite place in all the World ...

SIDNEY: Did you come and play here as a child?

CLAUDIA: (*curtly*). No! (*Suddenly serene again.*) Especially at this time of day, just as the sun is going down. Soon it will be dark. Do you love the night, Colly?

SIDNEY: You know, you are awfully like your brother. Same eyes, nose, everything.

What you said just then: it could almost have been him! Now, Greg and I ...

CLAUDIA: *(breaking away, stomping off ahead)*. We are not at all alike!!!!

SIDNEY: *(chasing)*. Oh, but you are ...

CLAUDIA: *(stopping still, in a wild fury)*. We are not alike! We are not!

SIDNEY: All right. So you're not! Who cares?

They set off walking again, in silence.

CLAUDIA: *(a new, contemplative mood)*. Tommaso, he is very changed since his operation. He is not the same man at all.

SIDNEY: *(cautiously)*. He seems much better, though, even in the short time I've known him.

CLAUDIA: *(after a sob)*. It is cruel!

SIDNEY: Cruel?

CLAUDIA: Colly. My brother cannot live much longer. Those tumours. They took some out, but his head is still full of them.

SIDNEY: Oh. No one said. He knows himself, does he?

CLAUDIA: Uh-huh.

SIDNEY: I'm very sorry, dear.

CLAUDIA: *(tearfully)*. Soon he will not be here for me to love.

SIDNEY: You never know. I'll speak to God about him – pray, I mean.

CLAUDIA: *(sobbing)*. I have so much love to give. I am bursting with love! *(Sniffing, getting control of herself.)* Colly?

They stop walking.

SIDNEY: Um?

CLAUDIA: Kiss me.

SIDNEY: I ... um?

CLAUDIA: Please!

SIDNEY: *(desperate for escape)*. Don't you have any boyfriends your own age?

CLAUDIA: No.

SIDNEY: I'm terribly ugly, dear, you ... *(His mouth is blocked by her kiss.)*

A long kiss. Little grunts from SIDNEY.

When the kiss ends, breath bursts out of him as if he's been underwater for a week.

CLAUDIA: *(covering his face with kisses).* Colly, Colly, Colly, I am so glad that you are here. You will never leave me, will you? Promise.

SIDNEY: Err ... promise.

CLAUDIA: *(joyful).* Does your heart beat faster?

SIDNEY: *(delighted).* Yes. Oh, yes.

CLAUDIA: How much faster?

SIDNEY: As if I'd won the Derby. The horse, not the jockey.

They both laugh. Suddenly, a roller-skater zooms past, rattling heavily on the stone path.

SIDNEY: Yoooughhhh! What was that?

CLAUDIA: It's just someone on his rolling-skates. I know what we can do!!!

SIDNEY: *(worried).* What? What?

CLAUDIA: *(runs away, calling as she goes).* I'll be right back! *(Calls in distance to skaters.)* Aspetta, per favore! Vorrei prendere in prestito i tuoi pattini a rotelle.

SIDNEY: *(mutters to himself, while CLAUDIA is asking about the skates).* Oh, she's gorgeous! She's just too, too gorgeous. Oh, thankyou, Lord, thankyou for this one!

CLAUDIA: *(running back, laughing).* Here we are, Colly! *(Spinning the wheels of a skate.)* Those men over there have kindly allowed us to borrow their skates.

SIDNEY: But I've never ... what are you doing? *(Sound of skates being strapped on.)* Really, Claudia, sweetie, this isn't a good idea.

CLAUDIA: What big feet you have, Colly! *(Laughs with devilish wickedness.)* There! Just hold onto the lamp-post while I put mine on.

Sound of roller-skates uneasily keeping their balance.

SIDNEY: *(losing his balance).* Ooooooohh!

CLAUDIA: *(loving it).* All ready!

SIDNEY: I'm not moving. I'm staying right here!

CLAUDIA: Give me your hands, Colly. You want to be my hero, don't you?

SIDNEY: You'll not let go of me?

They skate slowly: she perfectly, he dangerously.

CLAUDIA:

Okay?

SIDNEY:

(triumphant). Ha! Ha! Wonderful! It's like flying! Ha! Ha! *(Suddenly worried, further away.)* I said don't let go. *(Further away, his skates get faster.)* Claudia! *(Faster still, further and further away.)* Claudiaaaaa!

CLAUDIA:

(closer to us, in hysterics as SIDNEY sails away, applauding.)

SIDNEY:

(in distance). Helpppppppppppppppppp!

*A huge crashing clatter.
A cry from SIDNEY.*

SIDNEY's bedroom. Sinatra sings 'Heaven, I'm in Heaven!' in the background.

SIDNEY:

(close). Good job that ice-cream cart was in the way. I'd have gone right down those steps.

CLAUDIA:

(kissing him, close). My hero.

SIDNEY:

Do you know, 400 Popes have died in this bed.

CLAUDIA:

And what else, I wonder? *(Giggles.)*

SIDNEY:

Little minx! *(They kiss, SIDNEY comes up breathless.)* Ooooooo! Didn't do badly, did I?

CLAUDIA:

Wanna try again?

SIDNEY:

Don't think I could, dear. *(She changes his opinion.)* Cor! Oooooo!

CLAUDIA:

Colly?

SIDNEY:

(concentrating on his kissing). Um?

CLAUDIA:

Do you know why people hate the Jews?

SIDNEY:

(can't believe he's heard right). Um?

CLAUDIA:

Because God is a Jew.

SIDNEY:

(absently, while nuzzling). God's English. I happen to know.

CLAUDIA:

We are right to hate the Jews because we all of us hate God our Heavenly Father. Everyone hates their father, earthly, Heavenly ... It's all in Freud if you look ...

SIDNEY:

I say, this is hardly the time ... OH, I see! I can talk about the ontological argument if you like, if that's what gets you going?

CLAUDIA: *(laughs wildly).*

SIDNEY: *(suddenly anxious). Shhhhhhhhhhhhh! Shhhhhhhhhhhhh! (Holds her mouth. She giggles gagged. He whispers.)* There's someone in the living room.

CLAUDIA continues to giggle gagged. SIDNEY listens. Just Sinatra. Then the needle is lifted off the record.

GREG: *(after a moment, from the living room).* Sidney.

SIDNEY: *(whispers).* Oh, God! It's my brother! Please be quiet, girl!

She giggles more, kicks the blankets.

SIDNEY: Shhhhh!

Door opens.

GREG: *(approaching, innocently).* Sidney! There you are! We missed you at dinner tonight. You're in bed very early. Are you feeling well? You must be! I've never felt better in my whole life! It's having you here, I'm sure. Some palpitations earlier ... but now I feel all alive and tingly! *(One of CLAUDIA's giggles escapes. GREG is perturbed, unbelieving.)* Sidney?!

SIDNEY: Look, old darling, why don't you go and pour yourself a lemonade. I'll just get dressed. *(A rasping whisper to the giggling, kicking CLAUDIA)* Shhhh, girl! Lie still!

CLAUDIA: *(all her giggles escape, she pummels the bed with her kicks).* Wheeeeeeeeeee! Whooooooooooooo!

GREG: *(in profoundest disappointment).* Oh, Sidney. This is an evil thing you have done. Who is the girl?

SIDNEY: *(introduces as if at a fête).* Claudia – cover yourself up, will you! – this is my brother Gregory ... the sixteenth.

GREG: Seventeenth.

SIDNEY: Greg, this is Claudia ... *(With reddest shame.)* ... Father Tartufari's sister.

GREG: *(the wind knocked out of him).* Ohhhhhhh! *(In tears.)* I can see I have been mistaken about you, Sidney ... *(On his way.)* ... about everything. *(Slams door.)*

SIDNEY: *(chasing after, opens door).* Greg! Greg! *(In despair.)* Oh, Greg! *(Calls after angrily.)* I never vowed to be celibate, did I? If you'd had the decency to make me a Bishop, it might've been different! *(Stomping back.)* Damn! Damn-damn-damn!

CLAUDIA: *(in background, still laughing).* Meeeeeeeeeeow! Meeeeeeeeeeow!

SIDNEY: *(furious).* For God's sake **SHUT UP!**

Fade up SIDNEY snoring.

SIDNEY: *(in his sleep, between snores).* Claudia! Claudia!

GOD: Sidney. Sidney.

SIDNEY: *(his snores phutter out like a dying motor-boat).* Ufhg?

GOD: Sidney.

SIDNEY: I shouldn't talk to you at all.

GOD: Come, come, Sidney.

SIDNEY: Fiddling with a chap's feelings! They've sent her back to America.

GOD: I am sorry, Sidney.

SIDNEY: I'll bet! A proper old fool I've made of myself... with your Holy help. Greg's gone all Catholic on me – wouldn't speak to me for three days, now he's nicer than ever but with that hurt look in his eyes. And he's ill! My broken heart is making him ill. And Sister Bridget is behaving very oddly! I'm sure she's putting stuff in my morning coffee, that stuff they gave us in the army, to stop us thinking of women. And Tommy ... poor Tommy. – Look, about Father Tartufari. May I ask a favour ... I mean, I've done plenty for you, old darling. You couldn't magic away his tumours, could you? His head's full of them, I'm told.

GOD: Very well, Sidney. They are gone.

SIDNEY: What! Just like that! Gone!

GOD: Gone, Sidney.

SIDNEY: I say, you are a marvel!

GOD: I am what I am, Sidney.

SIDNEY: *(in delight).* Ha! Haaaaaaa!

GOD: There is a final test, Sidney. One more test.

SIDNEY: All right. Fire away. I'm game!

GOD: If you are successful in this, Sidney, then everything shall be yours, all that I have planned for you in my Great Design.

SIDNEY: Go on. Go on.

GOD: I wish you to kill Father Tartufari.

SIDNEY: Ugh?

GOD: You heard me, Sidney.

SIDNEY: (*hopeful*). No, I heard it wrong.

GOD: I said that I wish you to kill Father Tartufari.

SIDNEY: But how can you ask me such a thing!!! I mean, you saved his life just a moment ago and now ... it's too horrible. No. I won't do it!

GOD: The whole world shall be yours, Sidney, if you will do this for me. You will never die. Constant joy shall be yours.

SIDNEY: No. No.

GOD: Everything a man could want, Sidney. A great house on the Berkshire Downs, stables full of the fleetest horses ...

SIDNEY: Claudia?

GOD: Claudia, Sidney. (*Pause.*) Well, Sidney?

SIDNEY: (*anxious, frightened*). I don't know.

GOD: (*losing his usual calm*). My plans for everyone depend on this, Sidney. A world without pain! Without illness! A world without malice or trickery! (*Rasps.*) It will be certain eternal happiness for everyone in the world if you will only kill Tartufari. (*Pause.*) Sidney?

SIDNEY: (*weakly*). All right, then. You know best.

GOD: (*fading away*). Thankyou, thank you, Sidney. Goodnight, Sidney.

Sudden acoustic of a restaurant. Buzz of diners. SIDNEY and TARTUFARI celebrating: loud drunken laughter.

SIDNEY: Sandro! Another bottle, laddie! (*Close.*) You sure he's never been a bookmaker in Taunton?

WAITER: I have never.

Pop of cork, wine being poured.

TARTUFARI: (*woozy*). I can't drink any more, Colly. Please, okay.

SIDNEY: But we must celebrate, Tommy lad. (*Conspiratorially.*) Sandro! Come here! Tell Sandro, go on.

TARTUFARI: (*shyly, to WAITER*). I was ill, now I am well. (*Hugely, to whole restaurant.*) I was dying, now I am cured!!! I was lost, but now I am found!!!

Scattered applause from diners.

SIDNEY: *(by himself, sings).* 'For he's a jolly good fellow ... la...la...lala... la...laar...la.'

TARTUFARI: *(taking a bow).* Thankyou. Thankyou. Thankyou one and all.

TARTUFARI flops back in his seat, rattling everything. He laughs with delight, then hiccups.

SIDNEY: To miracles!

Clink of glasses.

TARTUFARI: *(awestruck).* It really is a miracle, Colly. The doctors, they X-ray me twice. They cannot believe what they see. One was disappointed – an atheist, I think.

SIDNEY: Serves him right!

TARTUFARI: *(with deep affection).* You know, somehow, my fat English friend, I think I am owing it all to you.

SIDNEY: Tosh! ... Have another green thing! I've had twelve already! Unless it was the same one twelve times.

Quick fade on hilarious laughter.

*The late-night streets of Rome.
The approach of staggering footsteps.*

SIDNEY: *(in distance, approaching, sings).* 'Just one Cornetto ... save it for meeeeeeee ... delicious ice-cream ... from Italeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee.'

TARTUFARI: *(running towards us and away again. To the Heavens).* God he is in his Heaven – everything is right with the world!!!! *(Laughs, falls over, close.)* Oooooops! *(Laughs.)*

SIDNEY: Steady on, old lad. *(A drunken giggle, a raspberry, more laughter, sudden alcoholic seriousness.)* Your sister – lovely woman.

TARTUFARI: Beautiful!

SIDNEY: *(weepy).* I miss her so much.

TARTUFARI: *(staggering away).* I go get her for you.

SIDNEY: *(staggering after).* No, no, lad. She's in America. At University. She went back. Remember.

TARTUFARI: *(in massive disappointment).* Ooooooooooooooooooooooh! *(A sudden idea.)* We go! Now! To America! You carry me, okay?

SIDNEY: Climb onboard!

Grunts of effort as SIDNEY gives TARTUFARI a piggy-back.

TARTUFARI: I shall be handsome again. My hair will grow long and black. I will be fat, just like you – monstrously fat I shall be! Okay?

SIDNEY: Okay!

Immediately as SIDNEY says 'Okay', he trips; sound of whump on to pavement and into bushes.

TARTUFARI: *(comes up laughing, suddenly anxious).* Colly! Colly!

Pause.
Moan of SIDNEY.
Rustle of bushes as TARTUFARI goes to find him.

TARTUFARI: Hello, old darling! What are you doing down there?

SIDNEY: *(close, distraught).* You're my friend, aren't you, Tommy? I wouldn't hurt you – you know that. You'll understand. Eh, sweetie?

Corridor in Vatican.
SIDNEY and TARTUFARI giggling.

SIDNEY: Shhhhhhhhhh! We'll wake up Sister Bridget!

TARTUFARI: *(yells).* Sister Bridget!!! Yooooooooo-hoooooooooooo!

SIDNEY: Shhhhhhhhhh!

They fumblingly open a door.

TARTUFARI: *(desperately anxious).* Colly! One of my feet has come off.

SIDNEY: That's a shoe. There's no foot in it.

TARTUFARI: Must have been all those X-rays. That doctor, he hated me, I could tell.

SIDNEY: Up we come, little fella. Uncle Colly will carry you to beddy-byes.

Giggles from TARTUFARI as he is lifted.
Things knocked off the furniture.
Whump of TARTUFARI being flung on to bed, moan of bedsprings.

SIDNEY: *(in confessional, close, cold, slow).* I don't know how I did it. Except to say that I thought it might be like in the Bible, where whasisname is told to kill his kiddie and he's about to do for him when God suddenly says don't bother. My heart was banging in my ears, sobering me up, bang after bang. I put the pillow over his face ...and sat on it. I didn't think he'd move at all, he was so sloshed.

TARTUFARI *resisting, screaming under the pillow.*

SIDNEY: (*in bedroom, weeping*). Don't worry, dearest old darling. It'll all be over soon. They'll be waiting for you – the Popes and Saint Francis and all that crowd. They'll explain. You'll not hate old Colly, not then, not then.

TARTUFARI's *screams are weaker and weaker, they stop.*

SIDNEY: (*in confessional*). When I took the pillow off him it was the most hateful expression I'd ever seen on a man's face – far worse than Dickie Pymlott's when he lost all his dosh on the Oaks and waddled off to the bog with a razor-blade. I couldn't look. I found myself staring at the record-rack beside his lovely hi-fi and thinking ... he'll never hear Frank Sinatra again, poor dear. Then I dashed back to my own room to be sick.

Sound of aeroplane on runway. Engines starting.

SIDNEY: (*approaching down aisle*). Buon giorno. Buona sera. Buon giorno. Buona sera. (*Nervously.*) Hiya, Greg! Still invited, am I?

GREG: (*vexed*). Sidney! Where have you been?

SIDNEY: (*plomps in his seat, worried*). Look, Greg – I've never actually, as such, been up in one of these things before. I'm awfully scared.

GREG: So that's what it is! I spent all night hanging over my sink. I thought you'd been on a binge, Sidney, but it seems I have misjudged you.

SIDNEY: Sorry?

GREG: No, it's not your fault. I can see you are frightened. You have been very brave coming here today. Come now, strap yourself in.

SIDNEY: (*struggling with seatbelt*). It doesn't reach.

GREG: (*whispers*). My heart too – they would have made me cancel the trip if I'd told them – it was beating in my ears all night.

Engine noise intensifies.

SIDNEY: (*in panic*). It moved!

GREG: Calm yourself, Sidney! You'll soon get used to it. In South America we'll be doing heaps of flying.

SIDNEY: Heaps?!

GREG: (*shuffling papers*). Will you read one of my speeches for me and tell me what you think? We're not going to be sick again, are we?

SIDNEY: No. I've been silly. Nothing can happen to me. He promised.

GREG: A barley-sugar, Sidney, for the take-off. Your ears.

SIDNEY: What?

GREG: Who promised?

SIDNEY: (*sweet in mouth*). He'll not mind if I tell you. Not now.

GREG: Who's this, Sidney?

SIDNEY: (*through sweet*). God, Jesus. Him. He's been speaking to me.

GREG: (*hopeful*). Sidney?

SIDNEY: He has plans for me, important plans: a chapter in the Bible, all to myself. I've been undergoing a series of tests, you understand. That's why I had that nookie with ... (*Voice lowered in shame.*) ... Father Tartufari's sister. HE told me to.

GREG: (*between suspicion and anger*). HE told you to.

SIDNEY: God did. As a test.

GREG: (*angry*). I see.

SIDNEY: Other things, too. That chocolate business and ...

GREG: Your sense of humour defeats me, Sidney. I had hoped that Father Tartufari's company might have brought some gravity to your behaviour. (*Calling over the seat.*) Where is Father Tartufari? Oh, look, there he is. He's missed the plane.

SIDNEY: Um? No, that's not him.

GREG: Yes it is.

SIDNEY: No.

GREG: Look. That's Sister Bridget with him. Wave, Sidney, wave.

SIDNEY: (*in absolute utter horror*). Ugh! Ugh! (*On his feet, scrambling.*) We must stop the plane!!!!

GREG: It's too late, Sidney. Sit down.

SIDNEY: We must! We must!

GREG: The Father will get another plane.

SIDNEY: (*mad*). You don't understand! Let me off this thing! Help!!!!!!!

Whoosh of aeroplane taking off, leading straight into 'La Cucaracha'.

Fade music into multitudes hailing the Pope.

JUNTA GENERAL SABATO: (voice raised over noise of cheering). Is wonderful, no?
SIDNEY: (voice raised). Sorry?

JUNTA GENERAL SABATO: Our Pope. He makes the people so happy. Look at all the big smiles. I am most happy of all. Today, everyone he is here: the revolutionaries they come down from the mountains, my men they catch them.

SIDNEY: Which General are you? Are you the one who hangs people upside-down over hot coals? Or are you the one who buries them in a bag full of mongeese?

JUNTA GENERAL SABATO: No, that's not me! Hot coals is this General here.
SIDNEY: Er ... how-do-you-do.

JUNTA GENERAL SABATO: Mongeese: that's him standing next to the Pope.
SIDNEY: They look such gentle souls.

JUNTA GENERAL SABATO: Ha! Ha! I joke you! Big joke, huh? We have nothing bad like that here. Everyone happy here, all the time. Hey, where you Bishop of?
SIDNEY: Aintree.

JUNTA GENERAL SABATO: Where that?
SIDNEY: It's on the moon. (*In dithering panic.*) Excuse me, I've just seen someone I know.
Huge cheers from multitude while SIDNEY pushes his way through the throng.

SIDNEY: (*calling*). Tommy! Tommy, it's me!

TARTUFARI: (*close*). Hello, Colly.

SIDNEY: (*voice raised over the noise, blankly*). Tommy, old lad. All right, are you?

TARTUFARI: Marvellous, isn't it? I've never seen so many people. Not even in Saint Peter's Square.

SIDNEY: (*trying to be his old self*). It's like coming home with a National winner.

TARTUFARI: I can't hear you!
A huge cheer.

TARTUFARI: That was quite a celebration we had!

SIDNEY: I don't remember a thing! Sorry!

TARTUFARI: Me neither. We weren't too naughty, I hope?

SIDNEY: Don't fret yourself – I rubbed the moustaches off the Botticelli.

TARTUFARI: (*doesn't hear, then suddenly gets the joke*). Sorry? Oh! Ha! Ha!

Pause.

SIDNEY: What did Claudia say?

TARTUFARI: Who?

SIDNEY: Claudia.

TARTUFARI: Sorry?

SIDNEY: Your sister, you nit, when you told her the good news ... about you being better.

TARTUFARI: Oh! She was pleased.

SIDNEY: She loves you very much. You are very lucky.

A gigantic cheer.

Fade cheering under SIDNEY's speech:

SIDNEY: (*in confessional*). He gave me a conceited little wink. Something about that wink shocked me – I don't know if Claudia had winked like that, or maybe it suggested that they were more than just brother and sister, that he'd done to her what I did with her. I hated him for that wink ... and hated him because he had the impertinence to be alive when I'd gone to all the pain and trouble of killing him. But he wasn't going to get away with it! I decided there and then, under that statue of Simon Bolivar, that I'd finish my job on him the next chance I got.

Interior acoustic.

Drifting in from outside: sounds of festivities. Music, shouting and firecrackers.

SIDNEY: We were staying in the Presidential Palace, full of pictures of the dreadful man ... and everywhere those vicious little soldiers, armed to the teeth. Tartufari and myself had rooms on the same floor. With a soldier on guard every few yards, sitting in a chair. Greg was feeling off, so he wouldn't let me eat any of the feast in case I made him ill, you see. And I can't abide speeches, especially in Spanish. So I went upstairs with a bottle and a coconut to watch the festivities from my balcony. Now, all the titchy soldiers, in all the titchy chairs, were fast asleep.

Snoring of soldiers in background.

SIDNEY: I went up to the one who was snoring the loudest, unbuttoned his holster, took the gun out and went up to Tartufari's door. I put my bottle and my coconut down and went in.

Acoustic of TARTUFARI's room. Pause. SIDNEY is awestruck.

SIDNEY: There was a breeze. The white curtains filled the room like a sail. Tartufari was suffering from the jet-lag – he'd been there since 5, was all scrunched up, with the pillow over his head to keep out the noise of the festivities. I was quite cold. My heart was hardly beating at all.

Pause. Raise sound of festivities.

SIDNEY: I waited for some particularly loud firecrackers to pop. Then I shot him.

Loud firecrackers with six louder gunshots.

SIDNEY: I put the gun back in its place and spent half an hour in my room trying to open the coconut. I was rather pleased with myself: I'd been James Bondish ... and I'd done God's will. Then the telephone rang. It was Cardinal Wozzywinski saying that Greg was feeling poorly and wanted to speak to me. So I went down. I stole a soldier's hat on the way – I thought it might amuse Greg. Our Dad had beaten hell out of him when he wouldn't join the army, you know. I knocked on the door and they were a long time in answering it. I was about to naff off when it opened. It was Tartufari.

TARTUFARI: Colly, at last! The Holy Father has had a heart attack. A mild one. He is okay now.

SIDNEY screams.

SIDNEY: *(over the end of the scream)* I bolted the gate, old darling! I ran like five Red Rums sewn together. Don't know where I got the energy from! I was halfway down a massive stairway when I ran into El Presidente and all his Generals coming up. Skittled the lot. So then I hightailed it back to my room, sucked my bottle for a bit and took things out on the coconut. But of course there was Tartufari's room – I'd forgotten about that. And it was HIS room, I knew, definitely HIS room. I went back in.

*Acoustic of TARTUFARI's room.
Small sounds of festivities from outside.*

SIDNEY: The breeze had died down. It was very hot. I turned on the bedside light and all the lights in the room came on. My old mate Pyjamas was in the bed, full of holes, bloodified, wearing the yellow silk pyjamas I'd bought him in Rome.

SIDNEY: *(in room).* Pyjamas?

PYJAMAS: *(weakly).* Thanks for the jarmas, Colly. Handsome.

SIDNEY: But ... but ... how'd you get here you silly thing. This is South America, you know?

PYJAMAS: *(more weakly)* I'll be late for the dogs. *(Expires with a sigh.)*

SIDNEY: *(lost, frantic).* Pyjamas! Pyjamas! No! This makes no sense at all! Pyjamas! Pyjamas!

Fade with SIDNEY shouting.

SIDNEY: (*in confessional, sadly*). The shock went straight through me into Greg. It made his mild heart attack into a massive one. They had to call off the rest of the tour, as you know. We came home. They wouldn't let me see him. I was in a daze. I found some chocky bars in a drawer: scoffed the lot. Then I fell asleep. It was dark when I woke up.

GOD: Sidney. Sidney.

SIDNEY: (*in confessional*). But I didn't answer that time. I'd been having thoughts. I got up and walked into the living room. Little green lights suddenly went up and down on the hi-fi.

GOD: (*hollow-sounding, from bedroom in background*). Sidney. Sidney?

SIDNEY: I walked down the corridor, past the Botticelli, and like a mad horse, I kicked open the door. Tartufari was sitting in front of his hi-fi, headphones over his fluffy hair, microphone in his hand.

TARTUFARI: (*GOD's voice, with us and echoing through the hi-fi*). Good evening, Sidney. Any requests? (*Sings.*) 'I did it my way ... '

SIDNEY: YOU!!! (*Slaps microphone out of TARTUFARI's hands. It plonks and fizzes. In an unbelieving, confused fury.*) You mean there's no God? Never has been!

TARTUFARI: (*his own voice mixed with GOD's*). No, Sidney.

SIDNEY: You little bastard! You filthy, slimy cheat. It was you all the time.

TARTUFARI: That's right, Sidney. (*Laughs.*)

SIDNEY: The chocolate, the streak, the sex with Claudia, killing you. It was all to get at Greg through me.

TARTUFARI: The penny, it has dropped.

SIDNEY: I worked it out in South America, actually. But I couldn't get myself to admit I'd been such a fool ... and it didn't quite add up. Still doesn't. About Pyjamas... how did you? ...

TARTUFARI: I thought you said you had worked it all out, Sidney.

SIDNEY: (*furious*). How can you hate Greg so much? He's the finest man who ever breathed! What can he have done to make you hate him so much?!!

TARTUFARI: (*extra calm*). I want to be Pope, Sidney.

SIDNEY: You've as much chance of being elected Pope as I have!

TARTUFARI: That's where you're wrong, Sidney.

SIDNEY: You're not even a Cardinal.

TARTUFARI: (*chuckles*).

SIDNEY: You're mad. It was those brain tumours you had, they made you do it. No, I'm forgetting, you've still got them, haven't you? (*In triumph.*) Good! Good! Hah! (*In sudden panic.*) Oh ...look, there's not the remotest chance that Claudia was in on this. She wasn't, was she?

TARTUFARI: Who's Claudia?

SIDNEY: Your sister, damn you!!!

TARTUFARI: But I have no sister, Sidney.

SIDNEY: Uh?

CLAUDIA: (*a wicked, teasing voice.*) I am so glad that you are here, Colly. Promise me that you will never leave me.

SIDNEY: (*in confessional.*) You won't believe this, but he changed ... right in front of my eyes, into Claudia ... stark naked, flowers in her hair, so beautiful, blowing kisses, I wanted to hold her ... before it dawned. I never ever did see them together, in one place. I should have guessed something was dodgy.

CLAUDIA: Pity about that ice-cream cart, old darling. Or you would have gone bumpity-bumpity- bumpity, all the way down those steps!

SIDNEY: (*in confessional.*) Then he was Pyjamas, drenched in blood, dancing with... what are those things ... castanets ...

PYJAMAS: (*dancing, maracas on the go.*) Hiya, Colly, mate! Wanna sure thing? I'll tell you a sure thing! Next Pope! Come here and I'll whisper ... (*Laughs.*)

SIDNEY: You're not Pyjamas, you devil! Pyjamas is dead! Or is he? I don't know. Is he?

TARTUFARI: (*a high cackling laughter.*)

SIDNEY: (*low, determined, fierce.*) I'll kill you properly this time.

A Manichean struggle.
SIDNEY has TARTUFARI by the throat. TARTUFARI rasps and hisses, occasionally guffaws horribly, The hi-fi is set going. Sinatra sings 'Fly Me to the Moon', echoing down the corridors, but it is shoved and the needle bounces on to another song. It is shoved again, bounces to the end where it rests and crackles.

SIDNEY: (*in confessional, TARTUFARI's mania in background, rising all the time, with SIDNEY shouting over it.*) I had him by the neck, was pulling his new hair out in great greasy lumps. But suddenly he wasn't there. He was hanging off a picture on the other side of the room. I'm not sure, but he may even have been in the picture, running through the classical ruins like a diabolical Charlie Chaplin. Then he burst out and was all over the room, running over everything, through everything, squeaking and yelling, like a bat, like a clockwork bat. (*Bring up TARTUFARI's mania.*) Around and around. I was dizzy. My mouth was full of chocolate. He was on all sides at once. I swiped and swiped, hit him and hit him, knockout punches they were, but the room was full of him, dozens of him, and Claudia, striking disgusting poses, and then horses, eveywhere

horses, coming around bends and jumping over me, boxing my ears with their hooves. And Tartufari was riding them all with a huge mad face and purple-hot horns all over his head. He scooped me up, I was drenched in chocolate, and flung me over the horse, like a body that a Sheriff brings into town, and the horse rose up and dived through the window.

Huge crash of glass.

Mad neigh of horse.

SIDNEY: *(on horse, yells, going far away fast).* Sister Bridgettttt!!!!

Silence ...

SIDNEY: *(in confessional, calmly now).* Next thing, I was falling. High in the sky with all of Rome below me. I could see Tartufari, on his horse, on the top of Saint Peter's, laughing his head off, waving like an old friend. I landed on the Palatine Hill, just behind the Colosseum, in a big pool of runny chocolate. Not a scratch on me, just chocolate. *(Pause.)* Since then I've been wandering about...and looking for you. *(Suddenly overcome.)* It's been Hell, really it has. Cars keep veering off at me. I keep finding scorpions in my pockets. That's a horrible thing now, isn't it? He's determined to get me. Absolutely determined, he is. But you'll help me, won't you, Cardinal Ngoupande. You'll tell me what to do. Exorcise Tartufari. Can we do that?

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** You are a very foolish man, Sidney.

SIDNEY: I know. I know.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** A question?

SIDNEY: Anything.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** Is there some common denominator to his disguises. I mean, would you recognize him?

SIDNEY: *(boasts largely).* Oh, yes. Now I'm wise to it. He's tried dozens of disguises these past few days. No, he'll not fool me again.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:** *(a slow satisfied sinister chuckle)*

Choir singing in background.

SIDNEY: *(exhausted, tearful).* That ontological-theological argument thing. I can't stop myself thinking about it. I mean, if God's so great how can He allow Tartufari to do this to me? I've been good, lately, a saint. I did everything I was told...I shouldn't have, should I, that's the heart of it, not when there's only evil in the world. Of course, Cardinal Ngoupande, you'll say that if there's Paradise to come ... a little toothache now, who can complain? But I'm a little plastic duck in a boiling ocen and it's never going to be any different, is it? And when I persuade myself that I haven't actually been talking to God Himself these past weeks, I feel so empty that I call out to Him in such a big prayer ... but ... well ... of course.
Is there somewhere I can rest? I feel suddenly light. As if I'm not myself anymore. I feel awful. My nose is stuffed up. I've never had a cold before! Ooh,

and my joints.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:
SIDNEY:**

I know what it is, Sidney.

New strain going around, is there?

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:
SIDNEY:**

Your brother has just died, Sidney.

Died?

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:
SIDNEY:**

Moments ago. It will be announced soon.

His heart, I suppose.

**CARDINAL
NGOUPANDE:**

Actually, the result of a fall some days previously, from a great height, although it seems he never left his apartments. All his bones broken, every last one, and dying slowly ... until moments ago.

SIDNEY:

(with hope and dread). Hold on ... moments ago? You said moments ago. How can you know he died moments ago? You've been in here with me.

TARTUFARI:

(close). Here, there, everywhere, Sidney.

SIDNEY:

(while bolting from confessional). Oh, God!

TARTUFARI laughs, hugely, filling the cathedral. His laugh becomes CARDINAL NGOUPANDE's laugh. Then CLAUDIA's laugh. Then all at once.

Fade down laughter, fade up SIDNEY's footsteps in the crypt of the cathedral. He is breathless. TARTUFARI's laughter is heard faintly in distance. SIDNEY stops, wheezing, getting his breath back. Suddenly, a faint angelic hum.

GREG:

(a brighter, younger GREG). Sid! Sid!

SIDNEY:

(hushed). Greg? That really you? No tricks.

GREG:

It's me, Sid!

SIDNEY:

I can't see you. Where are you?

GREG:

Gone, Sid.

SIDNEY:

Gone?

GREG:

Gone. Do you remember the tree-house we had, little brother?

SIDNEY:

Look – he's after me. What can I do?

GREG:

That's where I am, the tree-house. All our comics are still here. Come on up, Sidney!

SIDNEY:

No! No! I don't want to be dead.

GREG: I can see for miles. Dad and Mam are in the garden. Auntie Betty is at the kitchen window. She's baking, Sid – we can have some later.

SIDNEY: (*in overblown righteous fury*). You sent me to Cardinal Ngoupande, you great nit!!! But he's Tartufari! Everybody might be Tartufari for all I know!!! You know what he did to us, don't you? You know what's happened here!?!

GREG: It doesn't matter, Sidney. (*Fondly.*) Hurry along, lad. Hurry along.

*A lake, somewhere in Northern Italy.
Gulls shrieking near and far.
Sound of oars in water: three slow strokes.*

SIDNEY: (*tired from rowing*). This nunnery of yours, Sister Bridget. They'll take me in, will they? ... They will! Even though I'm not a woman? They'll not snip anything off? ... Good! And we'll be safe? Really safe?

Three more pulls of the oars.

SIDNEY: (*Wistfully.*) Will I ever see another outsider romp home, d'yer think? Hm? Hm? You must have been to at least one of the Irish courses when you were a girl. Eh? Eh? (*Fed up.*) I say, this would have been a lot easier if you hadn't taken that vow of silence.

SISTER BRIDGET: (*very Irish, snaps*). Shut your blather and put your back into it!

*Rowing slightly quicker, grunts from SIDNEY.
Cries of gulls, near and far.
A bell tolls in the distance.
Huge cry of a gull, close.*

The bell tolls.

Amen.