

EUGENIO

A drama in two acts

By
ANTHONY ERNEST GALLO

Anthony E. Gallo
Box 15414
Washington, DC 20003

202 544 6973
agallo2368@aol.com

Copyrighted June 4, 2002

Browns Court Publishing Company

BrownsCourtPub@aol.com

<http://www.geocities.com/aegallores/Eugenio.html>
<http://www.geocities.com/aegallores/BrownsCourtPublishing.html>

Cast

Rabbi Zolli, mid- fifties, Chief Rabbi of Rome and Dean of the Rabbinical College.

Colonel Helmut Schmitt, late twenties, Nazi transportation chief.

Rosina, early forties, Zolli's housekeeper

Monsignor Hilary, late thirties, Maglione's Operative.

Alberto Anso, fifties head of the Roman Jewish community.

Sister Angelina, eighties, Jewish rescue worker.

Cardinal Maglione, sixties, Vatican Secretary of State.

Robber, mid thirties

Radio Announcers

Act 1

SCENE 1, ROME SEPTEMBER, 1943

The study of the Zolli home, with a view of the front. Israele Antonio Zolli, sixties, Chief Rabbi of Rome and Dean of the Rabbinical College of Rome, is busily engrossed in research. Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desire" is playing in the background. Rosina, forties, the family housekeeper and office assistant, is wearing a gold cross and dressed in black mourning, enters with a tray of food. Zolli does not look up, but continues working on his manuscript. Rosina lays the tray down.

ROSINA

Ciao.

He continues working.

ROSINA (cont'd)

Rabbi, Rabbi Zolli, you haven't eaten a thing. Isn't it time for a break. You need food to keep body and soul together.

He continues working.

ROSINA (cont'd)

MANGIA! Your lunch has been ready for two hours.

ZOLLI

Impossible.

ROSINA

It's been ready since twelve. I've warmed it twice.

ZOLLI

Your eggplant parmigiana tastes good even when cold.

ROSINA

Too much reheating makes it lose its taste. Is this some more of your life's works?

ZOLLI

Food and Congregations come and go. But understanding the word of God is eternal. There is nourishment and plenty in the sacred text -- the Torah, the Talmud, the Midrash, -- for me for every ...

ROSINA

Shut up and eat your eggplant.

ZOLLI

Ah Rosina, don't add to the chaos. This manuscript must be sent to the publisher no later than tomorrow. This needs to be typed immediately..

ROSINA

Only if you eat your eggplant now.

ZOLLI

Briber!

ROSINA

Whose music are you listening to?

ZOLLI

I believe it is Bach.

ROSINA

German?

ZOLLI

Yes.

ROSINA

Turn that Nazi music off.

ZOLLI

Do not judge a whole civilization by a few madmen. Besides. Monsignor Hilary is German and you like him.

ROSINA

Don't be picky. And where has he been lately. I hope he's not drinking again.

ZOLLI

Don't think the worst. He's probably busy with his (clears throat) stuff for Maglione. I saw your cousin Maria at the Luzzati wedding. When did you last speak to her?

ROSINA

I don't.

ZOLLI

Simply for saying that your minestrone soup tasted like French onion soup. Ten years is a long time. Resentment is like taking poison and hoping it will kill the other guy.

ROSINA

TWELVE years ago. The only thing that would kill me is the slurp she cooks.

ZOLLI

"Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who trespass against us. Or "make me an instrument of your peace"

ROSINA

"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"

ZOLLI

Have you ever turned the other cheek?

ROSINA

Once. I was five. And never again. I think God was telling me something.

ZOLLI

"It is in pardoning that we are pardoned." On another subject. Have we heard from the Polish underground about my brothers.

ROSINA

No news. (Beat) Your appointment is waiting.

ZOLLI

I don't have...

ROSINA

Alberto Anso.

ZOLLI

Ah. Yes. Maybe he's come again to ask for an easier Torah reading for his son's bar mitzvah

ROSINA

Not this time. He wants to discuss changes

ZOLLI

Of all people!

ROSINA

(giggling)Why do you have anything to do with that old Fascist fart?

ZOLLI

A Fascist no more. They're all gone now. Maybe he wants you to work for him again.

ROSINA

And have me throw another dish of spaghetti in his wife's face? And you also had a call from Sister Angelina.

ZOLLI

I hired you not in spite of your throwing spaghetti but because you threw spaghetti in her face. What did Sister Angelina want?

ROSINA

I don't know. I could tell you some stories I've heard through the years.

ZOLLI

Stop it! No more idle gossip, I have some work to do.

He turns to his food tray, gives her a nod and she exits. A moment later Anso, late fifties, enters.

ANSO

Good Day.

ZOLLI

You want me to change your son's reading? I can't. The Torah and Haftorah portions are fixed. No one can change them.

ANSO

No, no. My son has a question about his reading that I can't answer. We believe that Moses wrote the whole of the Torah. But how could he have written about his own death on the mountain overlooking the Promised Land?

ZOLLI

An ancient question, my friend. I will answer your son. But speaking of death, what about the racial laws your friend, Benito has passed? I have had to send my own daughters to Switzerland to avoid them. How can you continue to support him?

ANSO

Let's get to the transition question.

ZOLLI

The Germans may be here first.

ANSO

I have it on good authority that they will not be.

ZOLLI

From your friend, Benito?

ANSO

Benito Mussolini is not my friend. And, I have no idea what he is doing. However, please keep in mind that because of Benito, there has been no Jewish bloodshed in Italy. Compare that to France, Greece, Belgium, Poland.

ZOLLI

Please!

ROSINA (O.S.)

Can you pick up the telephone? Someone from the Vatican Library.

ANSO

Aha!

ZOLLI

Did they say.....

ROSINA

Your Deurterero..onomi book.

ZOLLI

Deuteronomy in Latin. Devarim in the original Hebrew. (Hands her a copy). Just send it to them.

ANSO

Buddies with the Vatican?

ZOLLI

Is there any thing else I can do for you?

ANSO

The governing council and the congregation have quite a few concerns.

ZOLLI

Such as?

ANSO

Izzy, I love you. But they say you show no interest or empathy for members of the congregation. I have a list of complaints submitted by --.

ZOLLI

Then fire me

ANSO

I brought you here from Trieste. I am your staunchest defender.

ZOLLI

Other charges?

ANSO

Mrs. Grandi says that your sermons sound almost Christian.

ZOLLI

Mrs. Grandi isn't awake long enough to hear them. And rest assured, I will never convert. You've heard her snoring?

ANSO

Why do you insult my sister-in-law and the daughter of Italy's first Jewish prime minister!

ROSINA (O.S.)

Telephone! The Partisans want to meet with you tomorrow at eight?

ZOLLI

(Shouting back) I can. (To Anso) And I suppose they say I do not attend most bar mitzvahs. At least they have young men to celebrate. Any word on my four brothers?

ANSO

We are searching.

ZOLLI

Or Rosina's son?

ANSO

We are searching. Don't give up hope. In the meantime, let's present a united front. Whether it's the Americans, or Germans, or Italian underground, you as Chief Rabbi and we in the Jewish community must act together.

ZOLLI

Even if Hitler invades Rome?

ANSO

Exactly. The Nazis should have no reason to disturb us.

ZOLLI

Nonsense!

ANSO

Sway with the wind.

ZOLLI

Look what it got Benito!

ANSO

(Shaking his head) Izzy, You are a newcomer. You still think like a Pole.

ZOLLI

After twenty years?

ANSO

Twenty years! My family has been here for a thousand years. And in Venice since the thirteenth century. We are Italians. That is why we have survived. We bend with the wind.

ZOLLI

You are willows when we need oaks.

ANSO

They will leave us alone if we cooperate.

ZOLLI

Absolutely not.

ANSO

You can't antagonize these people. They could be dangerous.

Rosina runs into the room.

ROSINA

The Fascists have fallen!! Mussolini has fled.

ZOLLI

At last.

ROSINA

I have two prayers each day. That my son Luigi will be found alive, and that Mussolini will hang by his feet.

ZOLLI

Such violence from a sweet lady.

ROSINA

I have to wash some dishes. (exits)

ANSO

Let us hope for the better.

The phone rings, and Zolli picks it up.

ZOLLI

Zolli...Yes.(His face tightens). Arriverdici. (Puts down receiver) We will have to wait for the better. The Nazis will be entering the city tomorrow.

ROSINA

(reenters quickly) A package marked Anso. Strange. (exits)

Anso seizes it immediately, opens it, and his face tightens.

ZOLLI

Your mail is now being delivered here?

ANSO

Not a time for jokes. Here.(Hands him envelope and box)

ZOLLI

Oh, my God.

ANSO

Shall I leave?

ZOLLI

No, please remain. (Calling out) Rosina!

ROSINA

About Luigi? He's alive?

ZOLLI

(Embracing her) He's dead, (beat) Rosina.

ROSINA

It's a mistake! Did they find his body?

ANSO

Outside of Moscow. The body is being shipped back.

ROSINA

The Russians lie. He's still alive and a prisoner in Russia.

ANSO

(Hands her a package.)His uniform and identification badge.

ROSINA

Means nothing. (She clutches the hand of Zolli who holds it tightly). I will only believe it is he when they find the golden rosary that he took with him the day he took the train. (Gazing at Zolli) The one you gave him for his First Holy Communion. He told me he would never part with that rosary.

ANSO

And here are some other belongings found on him. (He hands the box.).

ROSINA

(Pulls out a golden rosary) My baby is dead! My baby is dead....17. . He was not a soldier. They forced him to fight in that worthless war. My husband and now my son.. So help me God!

SCENE 2 OUTSIDE THE ZOLLI RESIDENCE.

A German officer, Captain Helmut Schmitt, late twenties, approaches the Zolli residence. He rings the bell , and no one responds. Then another German Officer, Major Ludwig Sharp, early forties, walks by.

SHARP

Heil, Hitler.

SCHMITT

Heil, Hitler. (Glancing at his name tag} Buon Giorno. How long have you been here, Major?

SHARP

Several years, Sir.

SCHMITT

At ease. I just arrived. This country will take some getting used to.

SHARP

The public facilities in Berlin are cleaner than the shops of Rome. Clothes hanging from all the porches. But they know how to cook, sing and make love and multiply like flies.

SCHMITT

An incompetent, lazy lot. Hitler said it best: Mussolini hurts us more as our ally than Churchill and Roosevelt.

SCHMITT(cont'd)

Thank God he has been deposed. How much longer will you be here?

SHARP

I return to Berlin this afternoon.

SCHMITT

Well have a good trip. Heil! Hitler!

SHARP

Heil! Hitler! (Exits)

SCHMITT

(To himself)Strange, indeed. Doesn't quite make sense. I will have to check this out.

He knocks on the door this time and Rosina answers.

ROSINA

Yes?

SCHMITT

May I have a word with you?

ROSINA

Why?

SCHMITT

I have come to visit the Rabbi.

ROSINA

Are you Jewish?

SCHMITT

No. Are you?

ROSINA

None of your business.

SCHMITT

I wish to speak to the man of the house.

ROSINA

You are speaking to the man of the house.

SCHMITT

I mean the master of the house.

ROSINA

I am she.

SCHMITT

(Forcing a smile)Spicy. Is the good Rabbi in?

ROSINA

Are you thinking of converting?

SCHMITT

(Starring at her necklace) Hardly!! Your cross? Are you a Christian?

ROSINA

Are you?

SCHMITT

Once.(beat) You wear black. Condolences are in order. Please accept my deepest condolences.

Zolli enters.

ROSINA

You have a visitor. (exits)

SCHMITT

Please excuse the intrusion. Captain Schmitt with the German Commandant's Office. This is only a courtesy call.

ZOLLI

Please come into the library.

SCHMITT

That will not be necessary. Perhaps some other time. You are the Chief Rabbi of Rome?

ZOLLI

Yes.

SCHMITT

And Dean of the Rabbinical College and one of the world's most knowledgeable and prolific old testament scholars?

ZOLLI

Yes. I thought I was only known in the biblical research fraternity.

SCHMITT

Your landmark publication on the Old Testament Prophecies are widely quoted throughout the world. We understand the Pope himself is one of your most ardent supporters. Have you met him?

ZOLLI

Yes. I must complement your Italian. How so?

SCHMITT

I am a trained linguist. And you, Rabbi?

ZOLLI

Oh, you think that I am foreign born?

SCHMITT

From Galicia, in Poland.

ZOLLI

My four brothers in Galicia are unaccounted for.

SCHMITT

The war has caused so many disruptions, but once hostilities cease, so many we thought missing will show up. Do not believe British and American propagandists.

ZOLLI

Can you locate them?

SCHMITT

I must ask a favor of you.

ZOLLI

In return for locating my brothers?

SCHMITT

I shall make a request. But, I am responsible to see that sufficient food and clothing supplies are available for the population and that the Jewish population is well taken care of. We need a complete list of them. You have such a list?

ZOLLI

No, nor do I know if one exists.

SCHMITT

We understand that you do.

ZOLLI

I do not. I can only say that a very huge number of Jews have left Italy since 1938.

SCHMITT

(Laughing) I always thought you were such good record keepers.

ZOLLI

(Smiling) Do not believe such fairy tales.

SCHMITT

I will take your word. My card. Thank you. Please call us for anything.

ZOLLI

My brothers, Sir?

SCHMITT

Of course. And Good Day.

He exits. Rosina enters the room and goes into the closet.

ZOLLI

What is it, Rosina?

ROSINA

Shush! (She throws him the notebook) You forgot the backup list of all Roman Jews.

A knock. Rosina answers. It is Ludwig Sharp. Rosina stares at him combatively, and then joyously hugs him.

ROSINA

What are you doing in that costume! Drinking again?

ZOLLI

Indeed!

SHARP

Major Ludwig Sharp!.

ZOLLI

Former classics professor impersonating a Nazi officer! Why?

HILARY

Part of my um, 'work' for Cardinal Maglione.

ZOLLI

You are taking your life into your hands, Monsignor Hilary!

HILARY(FORMERLY SHARP)

It's more interesting than reading Aeschylus. I think I even fooled Schmitt..

ZOLLI

Don't be sure. A snake is not easy to fool.

HILARY

Your days are numbered, Rabbi.

ZOLLI

Your family?

HILARY

No word. Eighteen months now. Our friends in Germany are still searching to no avail. Neither father, nor mother, nor my two sisters. What of your brothers?

ZOLLI

I believe all hope is gone.

HILARY

I think it is time for a drink.

ZOLLI

Rosina will do the honors. (Hilary and Rosina exit, and Anso enters)

ANSO

Izzy, I understand you showed disrespect to the German Captain. There are many lists. You would not have given him anything that is not readily available.

ZOLLI

How did you learn so quickly? I give no cooperation.

ANSO

Another development? The Nazis have demanded a sum of money from us--a pot of gold.

ZOLLI

Already. Blackmail? I thought we had nothing to be concerned about. How much?

ANSO

Fifty kilograms. .

ZOLLI

A princely sum.

ANSO

They think all Jews have money. Will you cooperate?

ZOLLI

I will make my contribution. Then, I shall call on everyone, including gentiles to do likewise.

ANSO

Including the Pope?

ZOLLI

Everyone. I will begin at home. My late wife's jewels go in first.

ANSO

Thank you. I bid you good day.

Zolli buries his head in his hands.
Rosina enters the room. She removes the gold cross and chain and taps the Rabbi on the shoulder.

ROSINA

So they now want a pot of gold? (Handing him the gold necklace) This is my contribution.

ZOLLI

We can manage without it.

ROSINA

After the Nazis are out, you can get me another one.

ZOLLI

No.

ROSINA

Then I shall have to bring it to Alberto.

ZOLLI

All right. All right. So persistent.

She then takes out the Golden Rosary that was found with her son's body.

ROSINA

And this too.

ZOLLI

Absolutely not.

ROSINA

It was found on the body of a dead young man. It could now save somebody else.

ZOLLI

The matter is closed.

ROSINA

Please hold on to the Rosary until tomorrow. And then tell me whether you need it or not.

ZOLLI

Unnecessary. But if you insist. I want to be alone for a few minutes. (She exits)

He takes the rosary and brings it to his chest.

SCENE 3 CARDINAL MAGLIONE'S OFFICE LATER THAT DAY

Maglione and Hilary look through some papers.

MAGLIONE

Fine work.

HILARY

All in the line of duty.

MAGLIONE

Since the Nazis will not be reopening traffic until tomorrow, I presume Sister Angelina will not be here. I strictly forbade her to come.

HILARY

Ha! You shouldn't try to tell your first grade teacher what to do.

MAGLIONE

I have the good rabbi waiting in another room. Like you, he asked for a meeting. I think we should meet together. There was something I wanted to talk to you and Angelina about first.

Angelina enters.

ANGELINA
I thought I would never arrive.

MAGLIONE
How did you get here!

ANGELINA
I walked.

MAGLIONE
Walked. At 85 !

ANGELINA
Only 81! And I have someone to defend me.

HILARY
Where is he?

ANGELINA
Under my habit.

She pulls out a knife and slams it on
the Cardinal's desk.

ANGELINA (cont'd)
God sometimes needs help.

HILARY
You are endangering your life!

ANGELINA
From someone who has the audacity to impersonate a Nazi
officer!

MAGLIONE
(Taking the knife) You said the visit was urgent.

ANGELINA
I need a few more baptismal certificates..

MAGLIONE
You had 80 issued to you last week. You must have nearly a
hundred now. Surely you have not gone over that number. And
why see me? Monsignor...

ANGELINA
He is impossible.

MAGLIONE

A fine and patient man! How many certificates do you need?

ANGELINA

I don't want to bother you with these details.

MAGLIONE

How many?

ANGELINA

84.

MAGLIONE

You can only accommodate 20 according to safety regulations!

ANGELINA

We are cozy. The hygiene would be much worse at Auschwitz.

MAGLIONE

And how do you manage to get 160 people into a building that can only fit 20?

ANGELINA

Where there is a will there is a way.

MAGLIONE

And how do you feed them?

ANGELINA

Your truck stops regularly. Where do you get the food?

MAGLIONE

Best not to ask. And now about Israele Zolli. There is no finer old testament scholar Rumor has it that he has been uncooperative with the Nazis.

HILARY

He has refused to supply them with the list of all Jewish Romans.

ANGELINA

Space must be made available to him.

MAGLIONE

Why not your place? Surely you can pack in one more.

ANGELINA

(Smiling) Many of our inhabitants say they would rather go to Auschwitz than live with their Chief Rabbi.

MAGLIONE

(Shouting out to his secretary) Please ask the Zolli to come in. (Whispering to Hilary and Angelina) We will come up with a solution. Not a word.

Zolli enters.

ZOLLI

Your Eminence...

MAGLIONE

Let us put aside all protocol. The three of you requested a joint appointment.

HILARY

The potential roundup? Is this a time to end diplomatic neutrality?

MAGLIONE

You mean break the Concordiat? Which says you mind your business and we mind ours.

ZOLLI

Yes.

MAGLIONE

The converse of that is if you mind Hitler's business he will mind ours. And give Hitler an excuse to invade us! You can not harness a madman. We must survive. Our total land area is 109 acres.

ZOLLI

Did we not speak out very loudly when Mussolini passed the Racial Laws?

MAGLIONE

We did, which did no good even with Mussolini even though the Italians largely ignored the laws. And now we are dealing with Hitler. You know there is no comparison.

ANGELINA

But this is in our own back yard..

MAGLIONE

Do you have any idea how many times we have condemned the atrocities in your native Germany.

HILARY

About a hundred.

MAGLIONE

No, only 60. And did it do any good?

ANGELINA

You have a point. We are not the world's sheriff. Scripture says "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesars, and unto God that which is God's." And Hitler IS mad. BUT, do we mind our own business or save people? We must protect the vulnerable.

MAGLIONE

We have already encouraged asylum throughout the church..quietly of course. Who has done more than you?

HILARY

We would have world opinion on our side.

MAGLIONE

Ha! World opinion! Do you really think that Hitler pays any attention to world opinion.?

ZOLLI

The Church is one of the world's most powerful institutions.

MAGLIONE

Not militarily! Have you ever been to the Louvre Museum and noticed all of the Italian Renaissance paintings? How did they get there?

HILARY

A gift?

MAGLIONE

Wrong! It was robbery. Napoleon gave the Holy See a face saving device. Plundering these works of art was given a new name. "Donation." My only point here is that we are dealing with a like criminal again.

ZOLLI

Surely you don't compare the two. Hitler...

MAGLIONE

Very much so. The Church survived one , now we must survive the other. I thought you knew your history. Both wanted to conquer the world, both are ruthless, both took over after a period of political instability, both were tyrants, and both hated the clergy and especially the Church. Are you also aware that Bonapart imprisoned the Holy Father ? The eightieth time in history

HILARY.

You think Hitler would do the same?

MAGLIONE

Yes! There are only two differences between them. The one seemed to love Jews, the other hates them.. Second, Napoleon was only evil. Hitler is both mad and evil. Speaking out against one who is both evil and mad is suicidal. HILARY! And you of all people. I have your intelligence report here that says he has a plan to destroy all the art treasures of Florence before the Americans arrive. And we have been aware of his plan to replace the Holy Father with one of his subordinates for a decade!

ANGELINA

Excommunicate him!

MAGLIONE

HA! Anytime we have tried that in our history, we have failed! Henry the Eighth laughed us off, and beheaded two more wives afterwards. Frederick the Great was excommunicated four times and proudly pasted each document on his wall. Then he jailed the Pope. The list is endless. The problem goes far beyond the papacy.

HILARY

Meaning?

MAGLIONE

You are obviously aware that Hitler, Goebbels, Mengele, and Goring were all baptized. And yet Christianity was to be the religion of love. We will face that another day. Are you are all convinced that we have no alternative but to maintain diplomatic neutrality.

ZOLLI

I believe so.

HILARY

I see no alternative.

MAGLIONE

And you Angelina?

ANGELINA .

You operate from fear. You are afraid.

MAGLIONE

Of course I am.

ANGELINA .

You have no guts!

MAGLIONE

What!.

ANGELINA .

Because you have no guts,.

MAGLIONE

You believe that Hitler's mind can be changed.

ANGELINA .

No, I do not. But you still have no guts.

HILARY

You are being unfair.

ANGELINA .

That's because you also have no guts. May I have my knife back?

MAGLIONE

(Joking)Just don't murder anyone with it. I know you are not a murderess.

ANGELINA

Are you?

MAGLIONE

Of course not. Remember we are people of the cloth.

ANGELINA

And now I want us to offer a prayer for someone.

ZOLLI

For whom?

ANGELINA

Adolph Hitler. I pray for him three times each day. I always pray for people I hate. And it works.

HILARY

I think I'll pass on this one.

ZOLLI

Me too.

MAGLIONE

Perhaps we should be praying that he dies.

ANGELINA

I shall pray for him myself.

MAGLIONE

Be my guest.

ANGELINA

And I shall pray for you too.

MAGLIONE

(Smiling) Shall we try to have him murdered.

ANGELINA

That's a thought. And then I won't have to pray for him anymore.

MAGLIONE

Hilary, Cardinal Ottaviani wants to meet with you. I want to see you for a few moments, Rabbi. And Angelina, please exit by the back.

ANGELINA

I fear no one. I will exit as I entered.

Angelina and Hilary exit. Maglione is seated at his desk, when Zolli enters.

MAGLIONE

You are aware of course, of the potential roundup. What portion of your congregation is still in the city?

ZOLLI

Roughly 20 percent. The poorest. Many have fled. Some are hiding in farmhouses. Others in convents. Hilary tells me over two hundred in the Vatican. And thank you for the tens of thousands of sets of papers you have been able to distribute to the Jewish community both here in Italy and elsewhere, especially Budapest. This seems like new day in the Church's history.

MAGLIONE

More importantly now, we wish to offer you asylum either with Angelina's group or here.

ZOLLI

I must respectfully decline for the time being. I thank you for your offer. But I must implore you again to speak out, your Eminence.

MAGLIONE

(Angrily) I have already spoken on the subject. Are you aware that the we are responsible for over five hundred million Catholics and that a fifth of them are under Hitler's domain. You are aware that Hitler's deputies spoke of "the Jew-God and His Deputy in Rome? What else..

ZOLLI

I apologize if I have offended you..

MAGLIONE

Look. I see your concern. I sympathize but..

ZOLLI

(Gets Up to leave) I am sorry if I have offended you. Thank you I will leave now. If nothing will work, nothing will work. (Walks to door)

MAGLIONE

Come back.

ZOLLI

Yes, your Eminence.

MAGLIONE

Be seated. (Beat) One thing will work. (Stands and paces the floor)

ZOLLI

(Beat)What is that?

MAGLIONE

There are those in Germany who would chop the head off the monster and we can be of help

ZOLLI

ASSASSINATION! But how can the Church participate in murder?

MAGLIONE

The Church allows self-defense, and this would help defend humanity itself.

ZOLLI

I agree but....

MAGLIONE

(interrupting)Then I have your word of honor never to repeat what I am about to tell you. Not even Monsignor Hilary has been told. And the lives of young men are at stake!

ZOLLI

You have my word, your Eminence.

MAGLIONE

His Holiness and I now agree that this madman should have been killed years ago. This morning, we will be receiving a young group of German officers to assist them in their plans to assassinate Hitler.

ZOLLI

You do this for the Jews?

MAGLIONE

The Church first. The chosen people are not the enemy of the Church. Hitler and Stalin are. Jewry's destruction is first on Hitler's agenda. A much bigger fish is the Roman Catholic Church and indeed all of Christianity. Like the Communists, the Nazis must destroy Christianity to survive, It is their intention to replace Christianity with Nazism as the world's major religion.

ZOLLI

Strange that our two religions would be brought together by a murder.

MAGLIONE

I have some guilt. Each morning I pray for both Hitler and Stalin.

ZOLLI

What. So you support them?

MAGLIONE

I pray that both will die immediately. Good Rabbi, will I burn in hell for such malevolence?

ZOLLI

The we will both burn in hell together. Our two religions united at last.

MAGLIONE

In the meantime, to answer your question, we can only offer asylum. You may use the hospitality of our convents and churches.

ZOLLI

Is it also true that you have paid part of the ransom?

MAGLIONE

Not directly. And the less said about that, the better. Now I go to my meeting. And not a word.

ZOLLI

Not a word. That you would trust a Jew this much is indeed a new day. And someday I shall tell you about my vision of Jesus in 1917.

MAGLIONE

Another time. I must get to the meeting.

Zolli exits. Maglione buries his head in his hand when the door opens.

MAGLIONE (cont'd)

Oh yes. I've been expecting him. Please let him in. Let him in.

Schmitt enters.

SCHMITT

Your Eminence.

MAGLIONE

I regret that I was forced to cancel yesterday's meeting. My deepest apologies.

SCHMITT

None needed. Indeed. Just a courtesy call to quell any rumors that you may have heard about the interrogation of Jews.

MAGLIONE

I have no questions. And as you know we are totally neutral on all political matters.

SCHMITT

Why of course. And even by entering these grounds I know that I am violating the Concordat.

MAGLIONE

Let us not stand on ceremony. Surely, you may even want to view the artwork.

SCHMITT

I have viewed these masterpieces every moment of my spare time in Rome. If there is a heaven, surely it is looking at this art. I wish we had the same in Germany. I would feel impelled to leave the military and become a curator.

MAGLIONE

Ah, perhaps, someday, when the hostilities are over. In the meantime, feel free to enjoy what we have here.

SCHMITT

I am also here to assure you that any rumors you have heard about any imminent takeover of the Vatican by our troops is totally unfounded. I am sure that the German ambassador has already given you those assurances.

MAGLIONE

Oh, yes. Not that there was ever any doubt in our mind.

SCHMITT

The American and British propaganda machines have been very effective.

MAGLIONE

We are neutral. Totally neutral. The British and Americans do not influence us.

SCHMITT

Of course.

SCENE 4 ZOLLI'S HOME - SEVERAL DAYS LATER VERY EARLY MORNING.

Angelina steps on the front porch of the Zolli home. Schmitt comes from behind.

SCHMITT

Good afternoon,. Identification?

ANGELINA

I have none.

SCHMITT

Then I will have to arrest you.

ANGELINA

A woman of the cloth?

SCHMITT

Many people with costumes are walking around this city. We must take every precaution. There was a tragic insurrection yesterday. You must come in for questioning, unless you can give proof of identification.

ANGELINA

Let me check? (Pulls card from under her habit) I thought I forgot it.

SCHMITT

(examines ID). Sister Angelina, Sisters of Zion. Eighty nine years old and you are walking nine kilometers on a dangerous hot day? When you have had your visit, I insist on driving you back.

ANGELINA

No! I will walk.

SCHMITT

And if I insist?

ANGELINA

You are a very good young man, and I want to pray for you.

SCHMITT

I don't consider myself Christian..

ANGELINA

That does not matter. I see a kind, gentle face in you.

SCHMITT

No one has ever said that before.

ANGELINA

Now will you pray with me?

SCHMITT

Me! You say the prayer, and I will listen.

ANGELINA

Yes! Repeat after me: God, make me an instrument of your peace.

SCHMITT

(Interrupting) Amen.

ANGELINA

I already see a happier face.

SCHMITT

A quaint prayer. And thank you for your thoughts. And when can I visit you? May I drive you home? You need protection.

ANGELINA

You cannot.

SCHMITT

And if I insist?

ANGELINA

You won't. Because I will pray for you. Three times a day. Without fail.

SCHMITT

Good day, sister.(exits)

Angelina rings and Zolli answers. The study has now been stripped of all artwork and sculpture.

ANGELINA

You must come home with me.

ZOLLI

No, I thank you Sister. (Jokingly) Too many of my congregants are there.

ANGELINA

You think you will be exempt?

ZOLLI

Of course not.

ANGELINA

Mr. Anso stayed with us for a few days, and has now left the country.

ZOLLI

But I can not convert.

ANGELINA

We were founded by two Jewish nuns who intended to seek converts. But now we only want to save humans.

ZOLLI

You obviously like Jews.

ANGELINA

They are like all other Italians for better or for worse.
But I can not abide by the atrocities that..

Hilary enters.

HILARY

It is time. I have reason to believe, based on contacts you do not want to know about, that the final roundup is upon us. We have only one day. It is time. They may pick you up today

ZOLLI

(Smiling) Captain Schmitt says that there is no danger.

HILARY

Well if you believe that then the moon is blue. There is no spaghetti in all of Italy. And Italians love the occupation. Zolli, you leave now with me. You will stay in the Vatican

ZOLLI

But there are still hundreds left..

ANGELINA

You must leave now.

A knock is heard on the front door.
Everyone comes to a standstill.

ZOLLI

Rosina, don't answer!.

HILARY

No. She must answer.

The knocking continues. Rosina opens the door.

ROSINA (O.S.)

Ah, Signore Arduino. Yes, the milk money. I have it set aside for you already. Thank you.

HILARY

If the milkman can cause that much angst, it is time for you to go.

ZOLLI

Can we take my car?

HILARY

We walk exiting by the back. The house is being watched. You will be in disguise. (He takes a monk's robe out of his bag). Until we arrive, you are Monsignor Eugenio. And should we run into anyone, YOU ARE DEAF AND DUMB.

ZOLLI

Is that not the birth name of the Holy Father?

HILARY

I guess it is. And one more thing. No one is to know your whereabouts until the occupation ends. Remember 90 percent of your neighbors and friends are with you, and will reveal nothing. We presume everyone is a part of that other ten percent. No one is to know where we are going, and where you are hiding.

ZOLLI

Not even Rosina?

HILARY

Not even Rosina. Will it help her to know?

ZOLLI

No. I want to say goodbye. What can I bring with me?

HILARY

Nothing. We travel lightly. I will be waiting for you in the back.

Hilary and Angelina exit as Rosina enters.

ZOLLI

Rosina, I am going into hiding. I can not tell you where..

ROSINA

Nor do I need to know. But there is one thing. You gave me my last pay, and I want you to have it.

ZOLLI

Absolutely not.

ROSINA

You can use the money until you reach your destination.

ZOLLI

I said no!

ROSINA

All right. All right. Then at least let me remove the stain from your costume.

ZOLLI

Do it quickly. (Exits.)

Rosina takes her pay envelope and puts it inside one of the pockets of the robe.

ZOLLI

Hurry up!(Reentering)

ROSINA

I cleaned it off as best I could. (Handing him the coat)You're sure you won't take the money? I plead with you.

ZOLLI

I have spoken. Say no more.

ROSINA

I want you to have this rosary you returned to me.

ZOLLI

This is the only remembrance you have of Phillip.

ROSINA

All the more reason why I want you to have it. Please keep it with you. You will always be in my prayers. Please..

ZOLLI

All right, please go into the safe. The gold cross you gave me for the ransom. We met our goal without its use. If you want me to take the Rosary, you must take back the gold cross. If I leave it here, surely the Nazis will take it.(Presses it in her hand).

Hilary renters.

HILARY

Let us hurry. Wear these dark glasses. Take this walking stick.

Hilary and Zolli exit. Rosina goes to the safe and takes out the gold necklace. Immediately she hears very heavy pounding at the door. She goes to the door and sees through the peep hole that the German officers are there.

SCHMITT

Answer! I know you are in there.

He continues knocking heavily.

SCHMITT

Answer at once.

Rosina runs out the back door, and Schmitt breaks through the door.

SCHMITT

Zolli. ...Zolli!

SCENE 5 SPANISH STEPS MOMENTS LATER

Hilary and Zolli are walking.

ZOLLI

You are risking your life for me.

HILARY

Be quiet!

Suddenly a huge man with a mask bursts from the side with a knife, knocks Zolli down and holds Hilary by the collar. He points the knife at Hilary

ROBBER

Give me all your money, or I will slit your throats.

HILARY

Sir, we are two poor monks who have nothing.

ROBBER

Then I will have to kill you. My wife and five children are starving, and my baby is about to die. We are destitute. I swore to God, that if I did not find money this morning, I would kill myself and everyone around.

HILARY

Search us!

ROBBER

Give me what you have.

They begin going through the pocket in their coats, and suddenly Zolli feels an envelope. He pulls out the envelope, and realizes that it is Rosina's pay . He hands it to the robber.

ROBBER

I knew you had it. You clergy are all a bunch of damn liars.

HILARY

Take it and go, but leave us free.

ROBBER

Praise be to God.

Suddenly, Captain Schmitt appears and apprehends the robber.

SCHMITT

(Holding him by the neck) You will pay for this. Where in the hell are the Carabinieri. Do they ever do anything but look at Roman skirts, pinch girls, and strut around in those opera outfits! Total incompetence. Ah good brothers, are you both all right?

HILARY

This poor half-crazed creature robbed us to feed his family. Please let him go.

SCHMITT

Certainly not. He will be interrogated by our staff and then turned over to Italian authorities.

HILARY

I beg of you let him go. An act of mercy, Captain.

SCHMITT

We are certainly forgiving, but justice must be done.

HILARY

I beg of you to let him go.

SCHMITT

If you insist. Go you thief, you're not my problem.

ROBBER

Praise be to God! Praise be to God. (He rushes off)

SCHMITT

Your friend here says nothing.

HILARY

No he has been a mute since birth. And he can barely see.

SCHMITT

(To Zolli) It is such a shame that you can not speak. I know someone whom you very much resemble. (Accusatorially) A rabbi who lives not far from here or (Looks at Hilary) Perhaps an officer who recently returned to Germany Major Sharp, with the rabbi! You thought you could get away with this. Prepare to meet your....

Schmitt suddenly realizes hat a greater force overpowers him and prevents him from arresting the men.

SCHMITT (cont'd)

It is such a shame that you can not speak. I know someone whom you very much resemble. (He gives a loud laughter.) A rabbi who lives not far from here or (Looks at Hilary) perhaps an officer who recently returned to Germany (laughs even louder). Have a good day.

Zolli and Hilary walk up the stairs.

SCHMITT (cont'd)

Oh my God, Oh my God, I let them go. What came over me!. I could be court martiale d.

ZOLLI

(Whispering)Why did he let us go!

HILARY

Sometimes God acts in mysterious ways.

ZOLLI

And we were saved by Rosina's hoodwinking.

HILARY

Strange things happen.

HILARY(cont'd)

SCENE 6 ZOLLI'S CHAMBERS IN THE VATICAN - NIGHT TWO WEEKS
LATER

A wanted poster for Zolli(three million lire) and another one for Hilary(two million lira). Zolli opens a package and examines each of the contents closely including a Bible, a Tefillin, a tallis, a Yarmulke, and a Star of David. Hilary enters.

ZOLLI

Treason! They don't waste time. I will tell my grandchildren about the three million lire reward put on my head. The one on your head is for only 2 million lira. Half Jews are discounted. I shall have these framed.

HILARY

There is something difficult I have to tell you. Our intelligence has sent a report about (beat) about your brothers.

ZOLLI

Tell me!

HILARY

I'm so sorry. All four brothers reported dead. One from bad health, two from exhaustion, and one was murdered, beaten to death. They all saw one another before dying, and Ernest left a letter for you, (hands it to him)

ZOLLI

(Reading the letter) Bernie, Abby, Marty, Ernie..dead.

HILARY

And their families. Twenty six people in all. All dead.
(Extending his support) Rabbi.

ZOLLI

My God, My God? Why have you forsaken us.

Zolli walks to the wall and pulls down a picture of the five Zolli brothers, and, as he looks at it, tears stream down his eyes.

ZOLLI (cont'd)

Berny, Abby, Marty, and Ernie.

HILARY

Sometimes memories are all we can hold. But where there is despair, let there be hope.

ZOLLI

Berny, you stole the sugared apple that Mother prepared for me, and when Mother asked you about it you said that's a mouse must have eaten it. And then...Abby, you always said I was the smart one....Marty, the kindest of the five....and Ernie(Begins sobbing again), my great big brother.

HILARY

But..

ZOLLI

I remember the time I woke up in the middle of the night. Crying that I saw Jesus and that he asked me to join him. And Ernie said that if I were good I would not have any more nightmares...

He breaks down into tears, and then picks up his Bible, holds it for a moment.

(cont'd)

My God, my God, Why so far from my call for help, from my cries of anguish? My God, I called by day, but you did not answer; by night, but I have no relief. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One. You are the glory of Israel. In you our ancestors trusted. They trusted and you rescued them.

He then hurls the Bible across the room.

HILARY

What is this!

ZOLLI

God has forsaken me!

HILARY

Then all of us.

ZOLLI

A just God would not allow a mass murder. There is no God!

He throws the tefillin, Tallis, and Yarmulke, and Star of David across the room one at a time.

ZOLLI

(Throwing) This one for Ernie, this one for Abby, this one for Marty, this one for Bernie.

HILARY

You can not hold God responsible for human atrocities!

ZOLLI

Who else then! He has abandoned us.

HILARY

That's the opposite of what you told me. God can not die.

ZOLLI

You presume he exists.

HILARY

You who have been the mainstay...

ZOLLI

God has forsaken us. I would prefer to be dead.

HILARY

That can not be. Remember the vision you described to me.

ZOLLI

It was a nightmare. Take my word, I will never forgive God. God only can be blamed. God is dead!

HILARY

You will feel differently.

Zolli sees the rosary Rosina gave him and picks it up with his hand.

ZOLLI

And this must go too. This pagan symbol. (He throws it to the ground.)

HILARY

That's what you think of Rosina? (Picks it up and places it in his hand.)

ZOLLI

(Realizing what he has done) God forgive me.

HILARY

I thought he did not exist. And that symbol. Suffering is the history of humanity. That is why Christ died on the cross. His only son.

ZOLLI

The love behind Rosina's thought is appreciated but..I need to be alone.

HILARY

Look at it closely after I leave. I must leave. I will never be far. Call me. And where there is doubt, let there be faith.

Hilary exits. Zolli grabs the rosary and brings it to his chest and looks at it thoughtfully.

Act 2

SCENE 1 A WEEK LATER

Zolli goes to his desk and picks up the rosary.

ZOLLI

From you, Rosina. With love. You perhaps even more than my own brothers. (beat) Perhaps you are dead. My brothers are dead. God is nowhere. But then there is the suffering Christ, dying for all of humanity...Suffering. Suffering. Suffering.

Zolli picks up each of the Jewish pieces he has thrown on the ground, examines each and puts them away. He then looks at the cross again. Suddenly the light shines brightly on him, and breaks into a smile.

ZOLLI (cont'd)

My God! My God! You have not forsaken me.!

HILARY

Changed your mind? Ah, So have you forgiven God?

ZOLLI

I once believed in divine intervention.

HILARY

Am I still hearing this from the Chief Rabbi of Rome?

ZOLLI

No more.

HILARY

Completely lost faith!

ZOLLI

Last week I left God.

HILARY

And today? You have forgiven God?

ZOLLI

Through his son, and his suffering, I see a new path to creation.

HILARY

So you reject the Father, and accept the son. Convolutated thinking, especially for the Dean of Rome's Rabbinical College.

ZOLLI

When I see the Son suffering, as we have, I see a new path to redemption.

HILARY

Fuzzy thinking. Another vision?

ZOLLI

Yes.

HILARY

And did you tell the Son you did not forgive his father.

ZOLLI

That may come in time. I have informed his eminence of my intended conversion. And I want you to be my baptismal sponsor.

HILARY

No!

ZOLLI

What!

HILARY

I need more explanation.

ZOLLI

When you brought the actual news about my brothers, I felt a strange grip come over me, like I experienced a quarter of a century ago.

HILARY

About what.

ZOLLI

My faith.

HILARY

I thought God was dead.

ZOLLI

Quite the opposite. It's stronger than ever. I have been in constant prayer, and searching scripture.

HILARY

But you're always searching scripture. Please don't tell me it's gratitude. That never quite works.

ZOLLI

Gratitude had nothing to do with it.

HILARY

You do realize that the Jewish community, whatever is left of it, will be devastated.

ZOLLI

I do, but I really won't have a home to go I have already heard criticisms about my absence. Some refugees said they wanted nothing more to do with me. Ask Angelina.

HILARY

That may pass.

ZOLLI

Are you trying to talk me out of converting?

HILARY

I am still not convinced that this is a sincere conversion. What led to this?

ZOLLI

I was intensely ill in 1917, to the point of death. And then I saw a great light, and finally Jesus of Nazareth appeared to me. The next day I was miraculously cured.

HILARY

And you waited twenty- five years? Do you expect your brothers to come back from the dead?

ZOLLI

Of course not. But I felt a sense of power and peace when I fell back on God when you announced what we all suspected. The time was not ripe then. It is now.

HILARY

And God won't continue coming to you if you remain a Jew? Has Angelina been speaking to you?

ZOLLI

Not one bit. The change is totally from within. A call from God. The signs were there God came in the love of Rosina, the love of Angelina , Hilary . Then Isaiah, Micah, Amos, Jeremiah, and all the other Prophets.

ZOLLI(cont'd)

A new interpretation. And then the miracle we saw on the Spanish steps, and so on..

HILARY

So you even thank the Nazi. Could have been coincidence.

ZOLLI

It was you who said there are no coincidences.

HILARY

This all sounds like gratitude.

ZOLLI

If I were not chief rabbi of Rome would you object?

HILARY

Perhaps not. But let me confide in you. I have grave doubts. I am not a total atheist, but am going in that direction. I think it is all madness. There are many paths to God, if there is one, and this is just one to them. I want one promise from you. That you will make no decision for at least a year. And if my instincts are right that is how long you will be here. Second, gratitude will have nothing to do with your decision.

ZOLLI

On condition that you will not abandon your faith, for a year.

HILARY

We shall see.

SCENE 2 ZOLLI'S HOME. SIX MONTHS LATER.

Zolli is working at his desk. Anso enters.

ANSO

You survived. None of the other chief rabbis have been heard from. How?

ZOLLI

I remained in Rome. And you!

ANSO

South. The Vatican food fattened you up a little. You must begin your duties as chief Rabbi since the crisis is over.

ZOLLI

Do you want me to?

ANSO

You ask? We are long time friends.

ZOLLI

Some congregants have said they preferred Hitler to me.

ANSO

They were joking, of course. There are always complaints, regardless of who holds the office.

ZOLLI

I must resign.

ANSO

Then the rumors in the newspapers are true. And after the worst atrocity in Jewish -Italian history, the community must now face a conversion by its chief rabbi.

ZOLLI

Is this the gratitude I receive after 30 years? Let me read you some letters? "I hope your whole family dies and is buried with Crosses over your graves."And then the second one."I will urinate on your grave every day."Shall I read you more?

ANSO

I've heard enough. They are just venting their frustrations. You have abandoned your flock. You must not leave us. You are the chief rabbi! Others may follow you out of our people. And we have lost so many already. Not only the six million who died but their children and their children's children. Tens of millions, hundreds of millions.

ZOLLI

No! I do not wish that others follow me. Only that they have faith in the God of Israel. The faith I lost and could find again only in the Suffering One of Israel, Jesus, My Lord. My calling came from God. I was born a Jew. I have always been a Jew. And I shall die a Jew. My home will continue to be kosher.

ANSO

You can keep any type of a home you want, but you are not a Jew. Most people will feel that your conversion is due to gratitude rather than conviction.

ZOLLI

My original contact with Jesus came in 1917 when he appeared to me during an illness.

ANSO

So Signora Grandi was hearing right all those years. And your conversion was not at all influenced by gratitude for the asylum?

ZOLLI

The Vatican and the Church provided asylum to thousands of Jews. Like yourself! A small portion converted. Among them would be some gratitude conversions. Mine was not. Have you questioned any of them?

ANSO

They were different.

ZOLLI

How?

ANSO

You are not any Jew. You are the Chief Rabbi of Rome, and Dean of the Rabbinical College. It's almost like the Pope converting to Judaism. What answer do you give to those who say that you should have gone down with your flock?

ZOLLI

Pointless sacrifice is not my way. We have a saying: You can't worship God if you are dead.

ANSO

Jews of all denominations and those unaffiliated with a congregation differ on almost every issue of practice and belief, but they are united in rejecting the idea that one who believes that Jesus is "the savior of mankind" is a Jew. What you have done is an offensive oxymoron to most Jews.

ZOLLI

Twelve Jews also helped me with my decision.

ANSO

Who?

ZOLLI

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Daniel, Nahum, Hosea, Amos, Zechariah, Zephania, Jonas, and so on. You know who they were, of course?

ANSO

Yes. They were patriarchs.

ZOLLI

They were prophets! You Fascist imbecile!

ANSO

You may wish to add another prophet to your list. Eugenio for Eugenio Pacelli, or Pius 12! You Polish moron! I too received asylum, but under no conditions would I consider ...I can't even say the word. At least wait a year.

ZOLLI

My calling is now.

ANSO

Aren't you joining the same folks who gave us the Galileo show? Do you still believe the world is flat?

ZOLLI

Mockery...

ANSO

So you have been masquerading in that costume all these years. Two out of every three European Jews were murdered. All of the murderers were baptized. And now you join the murderers!

ZOLLI

The murderers came from Germany, not Italy. And let me state for once and for all, and never again!!! I was born a Jew. I will die a Jew. I am an Italian, I will always be a Zionist. But a louder voice has called me to another form of Judaism. I am a Jew, which can not be denied me. And I am now a Christian.

ANSO

Disgrace! Reconsider!

ZOLLI

I have no more to say.

ANSO

It was I who brought you here! It is I who made you Dean of the Rabbinical College. It is I who defended you...Enough! And may your soul rot in hell!

ZOLLI

You brought me here in 1938, when no one else wanted the job. I owe you no favors.

ANSO

Reconsider.

ZOLLI

And if you doubt the sincerity of my conversion, bear in mind that I will be penniless after this conversion. And second, revealing to the world what Eugenio Pacelli did for the refugees would more than compensate the Vatican for my asylum. The debt has been prepaid!

ANSO

The die is cast. Good luck, EUGENIO.(Exits)

Phone rings.

ZOLLI

Hello. The London Times. No I have no comment. Please call me next week..

A knock is heard at the door. Zolli opens and it is Rosina. She has a dish of eggplant parmigiana.

ZOLLI

Rosina!!! Rosina!!! I knew you would be safe, but I have been looking all over for you.

ROSINA

Did you try Abruzzi? Here is your favorite eggplant parmigiana You were the one who was supposed to be dead. ..and then I read you are alive and converted. All over the newspapers. I held up hope for my husband, and he was dead. I held up hope for my son and he was dead. And when it came to you I gave up all hope.

ZOLLI

Will you come back to work?

ROSINA

Of course!

ZOLLI

And since I have no means of support, there will be less to share now.

ROSINA

No problem. Everyone in Rome is looking for a job. I feel fortunate to be working.

ZOLLI

We'll manage. And what do you say about the conversion?

ROSINA

It's (clears throat) nice.

ZOLLI

That's all you have to say?

ROSINA

Well I kept the best kosher kitchen in Rome. Now that has got to change.

ZOLLI

It must become even more kosher.

ROSINA

But you're a Christian now.

ZOLLI

I am a Jew. I am more Jewish than ever. I am a Jew who has taken one additional step.

ROSINA

My husband always said that there are many paths to God. .

ZOLLI

And my new name is Eugenio.

ROSINA

Like Eugenio Pacelli? Pope Pius the Twelfth.

ZOLLI

Like Pacelli. Pope Pius the Twelfth.

ROSINA

I must show you two pictures here. Both my daughters had boys. One is named after my husband and the other after my son.

ZOLLI

I see the resemblance. But tell me, how did you survive?

ROSINA

They came to the next town, not mine. They hauled off 600 men women and children and sent them off to a camp. Not a single one has ever been heard from. Two of the families were related to me. I will spend the rest of my life hating those murderers.

ZOLLI

Hatred. It will consume you.

ROSINA

I can handle it. Trust me.

ZOLLI

I have something to give you Rosina. (Hands her an envelope).
Remember?

ROSINA

(Giggling) When did you and Monsignor Hilary find it?

ZOLLI

That's a long story. Suffice it to say that it saved our
lives.

ROSINA

Your brothers? Did they make it?

ZOLLI

No. We can not change the past, Rosina. It is a new day,
Rosina. (Examining her) No need to wear black

ROSINA

I will wear black until the day I die.

ZOLLI

Are you living for the living or for the dead?

ROSINA

I live for the living. I mourn for the dead. And now I
need to clean this house.

SCENE 3 MAGLIONE'S OFFICE 1945

Zolli and Angelina are seated.

ANGELINA

Are you excited on this very special day.

ZOLLI

Yes. But before I carry through with this, I must first
clarify something with the Cardinal.

ANGELINA

For you on your baptismal day.

She hands him a piece of parchment and
a record.

ZOLLI

The St. Francis Prayer in parchment. One of my favorites.
And a recording of the English hymn "Amazing Grace."

ANGELINA

Three copies were left to me by that nice black American soldier who later died in the hospital. I set aside one copy for you and I gave one to a criminal to save his soul. He has twice tried suicide and is now locked up in a psychiatric ward.

ZOLLI

A shame. Who is he?

ANGELINA

Captain Schmitt.

ZOLLI

What!

ANGELINA

He has been sentenced on the day before your baptism. Ten years. And he believes he committed no crime. He said he did as he was told. He was a follower, not a leader.

ZOLLI

And what did the judge say.

ANGELINA

His crimes were not as bad those of Eichman or Kaplan, but he was well aware of where the transportees were going and therefore contributed to the deportation of 800 Italians who, though innocent, were sent off to their deaths. And now you must visit him.

ZOLLI

What! You must be crazy. So you think he is innocent! Have you visited him?

ANGELINA

Twice. And he was as guilty as all hell. He is a criminal. I testified against him, which neither you nor Hilary had the backbone to do. But now..

ZOLLI

First you help send him to jail. And then you try to save his soul. I now want to put this all behind me.

ANGELINA

You can not. Are you willing to forgive this man?

ZOLLI

I am not.

ANGELINA

"It is in forgiving that we are forgiven." You must forgive not for his sake but for yours. The hatred you will hold within will destroy you. Give up your hatred before it destroys you. Find it in your heart to forgive him

ZOLLI

Forgive him!

ANGELINA

His sins have been many. Yet the baptismal covenant challenges us to seek God in all persons, to open ourselves up to be surprised by God revealed in the most unusual people.

ZOLLI

You've become quite preachy.

ANGELINA

That is irrelevant. Who better knows the story of Jonah than you? One of the world's great biblical scholars.

ZOLLI

Zolli: You compare this murderer to Jonah! He shows no remorse!

ANGELINA

Please, You are about to take a huge step, to go through a ceremony which the world interprets as a big change, but in any religion forgiveness is what counts. And although a murderer yes, he could have sent you to Auschwitz that morning on the Spanish Steps.

ZOLLI

That I owe my life to a mass murderer!

ANGELINA

God acts in mysterious ways. Strange that a Jewish Rabbi should be sponsored for baptism by a drunken atheist, and both were spared by a criminal. You should bring Hilary with you. The visit may rekindle the faith I believe he has lost.

ZOLLI

All right. All right. Sister you have done so much good. To please you, I will go. We will visit Schmitt, but forgiveness is a different matter.

MAGLIONE

(entering) Let's worry about forgiveness later. Where is Monsignor Hilary?

ANGELINA

Late, for the usual reason,. I ..

MAGLIONE

(To Zolli)The Holy Father will be having lunch with you privately after the baptism .

ZOLLI

I thank him but, I can not carry through with this.

MAGLIONE

Why!

ZOLLI

Because they call me "perfidious". They think I am evil.

MAGLIONE

Who said you were?

ZOLLI

It is written throughout church liturgy. "The perfidious Jew."

MAGLIONE

But "perfidious" doesn't mean evil. It means unbelieving.

ZOLLI

The evil meaning is now the accepted one. I am a Jew and I am not perfidious.

MAGLIONE

The Church means no insult. Certainly this can not be changed. These are historical documents.

ZOLLI

It must be changed now.

MAGLIONE

Now?

ZOLLI

Now!

MAGLIONE

Change a thousand year ..

ZOLLI

The insult can be perpetuated no longer.

MAGLIONE

Rabbi!

ZOLLI

Yes!

MAGLIONE

(Catching his breath)The Church acts slowly. But I give you my solemn promise. I will even work on this myself. I assure you. And when you lunch with the Holy Father, you can mention this to him too.

ZOLLI

Very well. May we now proceed?

MAGLIONE

So you are now ready to take the step?

Hilary enters, apparently drunk.

HILARY

I am here. Accept my apologies.

ANGELINA

Late again?

HILARY

Shall we proceed?

SCENE 4 A DAY LATER.

The stark psychiatric ward of an Italian Prison Hospital outside Rome. Schmitt, disheveled and depressed, is in bed smoking a cigarette.

He opens packages, and pulls out a record and a piece of parchment. He turns on the recording of "Amazing Grace". He puffs on the cigarette and then reads the parchment aloud to himself.

SCHMITT

Ha! "Dear, God, make me an instrument of your peace, Where there is hatred, may I sow love, Where injury, pardon... "
Ha, ha, ha.

Hilary and Zolli enter.

SCHMITT (cont'd)

Who allowed you in here?

HILARY

The Warden.

SCHMITT

You're either Lieutenant Sharp, a poor monk on the Spanish steps, or a German infidel.

HILARY

Ah, your senses have not deteriorated. I see your condition is improving.

SCHMITT

And am I seeing correctly. Is this the good Rabbi? Or as I understand, the Catholic Rabbi?

ZOLLI

It is.

SCHMITT

Who sent you here? That ugly Italian nun? Or the Americans..

HILARY

A social visit.

SCHMITT

To give me final absolution or to seek another convert?

HILARY

Neither. Perhaps gratitude. You could have shipped us off at the Spanish steps..

SCHMITT

But I did put a most wanted list on your head. Three million lira as I recall. Congratulations, you made it.

HILARY

(Pulling out a flyer) Two million. Three for Zolli.

SCHMITT

(To Zolli) I see you survived.

ZOLLI

You took 6 million of us. Isn't that enough?

SCHMITT

Of course not. Seven million would be better.

ZOLLI

I will tell Angelina never to mention your name in my company again.

HILARY

Reprehensible!

SCHMITT

At least you did not testify at my trial as did that crazy bitch, and now she's trying to save me.

HILARY

No need to testify. Too many other witnesses.

SCHMITT

When I see you, regardless of what costume or how inebriated, I think of that old adage that the half-Jews think they're even smarter than the Jews. Now what can I do for you?

HILARY

You even knew that fact about me. I didn't think "Amazing Grace" would be your type of music. And the St. Francis prayer?

SCHMITT

The music is good for dancing. And what is on the parchment is for comic reading. What can I do for you?

HILARY

My family. I have exhausted all records...

SCHMITT

They are dead.

ZOLLI

You say that to inject misery!

SCHMITT

I learned it shortly after the impersonation.

HILARY

You jest of course.

SCHMITT

Check the public records of Gurs, France. That is where they died. You unfortunately searched Germany.

HILARY

You lie.

SCHMITT

Check it out. Now please leave, and never return.

ZOLLI

The feeling is mutual. I hope I never have to hear your name again.

Hilary and Zolli exit. Schmitt turns on the recording. He then reads the parchment.

SCHMITT

.. where there is darkness let there be light, where there is despair let there be hope, where there is doubt let there be faith, and where there is sadness let there be joy.

He begins sobbing. Strains of "Amazing Grace" are heard in the background.

SCENE 5 A WEEK LATER ZOLLI'S OFFICE

Angelina and Zolli are drinking espresso.

ANGELINA

The news then is true?

ZOLLI

Not for certain. You don't expect the murderer to tell the truth, do you?. Hilary is checking the records in France.

ANGELINA

Surely, Schmitt is lying.

ZOLLI

Perhaps. But please do not mention that evil man's name to me again.

Suddenly , Hilary enters the room,
attired in civilian clothing. He seems
somewhat beaten, rather disheveled.

ZOLLI
You're out of uniform.

HILARY
Correct.

ZOLLI
You seem ill.

HILARY
Better than I have ever been before.

ZOLLI
But..

HILARY
STOP IT! I SAID I'M FINE. GOD DAMN IT!

ZOLLI
I only.

HILARY
YOU HEARD ME! Schmitt was not lying!

ANGELINA
Oh, Hilary!

ZOLLI
God be with you.

HILARY
God is not with me.

ZOLLI
Why.

HILARY
GOD IS DEAD!

ANGELINA
You are not leaving the order?

HILARY
I burned all my costumes this morning.

ZOLLI

Where there is doubt let there be faith!

HILARY

Sputtering that nonsense. You learn fast. I leave this land of fairy tales forever!

ANGELINA

No, Monsignor Hilary.

HILARY

Don't "Monsignor " me. I am now simply Hilary.

ANGELINA

You have gone mad!

HILARY

I have not gone mad! It is the world that has gone mad!

ZOLLI

You can not hold God responsible for these atrocities! Is this not what you once told me.

HILARY

I was wrong! I am now free of superstition of every kind..

ANGELINA

Your contract with God?

HILARY

A contract needs two parties. Here there is only one party. Me. God does not exist.

ZOLLI

I will pray for you daily.

HILARY

Do not!

ZOLLI

Why!

HILARY

Because GOD IS DEAD!

ANGELINA

You are being irrational. You need rest.

ZOLLI
God is our creator.

HILARY
Not mine.

ZOLLI
God can not die.

HILARY
You presume he exists.

ZOLLI
The devil has gotten into you.

HILARY
No the devil has gotten out of me. That mythical figure is gone too. You and your damned stupid church!

ZOLLI
You have gone totally mad. Why are you behaving like this?

HILARY
The conversation is over. GO TO HELL!

SCENE 6 ZOLLI HOME 1953

Zolli is seated at his desk. The sun is bringing much light into the room. Rosina comes into the room wearing a stunning red dress.

ZOLLI
What! No black after all these years! You look great!

ROSINA
A new day. A Father Eugenio Callistus called for an appointment.

ZOLLI
Callistus?

ROSINA
Says he knows you. His voice is familiar.

A knock is heard. Rosina answers.
Callistus enters.

CALLISTUS

Father Eugenio Callistus.

ROSINA

Dr. Zolli will see you. Pardon me, but you look vaguely familiar.

CALLISTUS

I always look vaguely familiar.

ROSINA

He can see you now. (exits)

CALLISTUS

Dr. Zolli?

ZOLLI

Father Callistus. (Rosina said you knew me, but I do not seem to recall who you are. A Franciscan I see.

CALLISTUS

Yes. Look at my face again and closer, Dr. Zolli.

ZOLLI

Are you he!

CALLISTUS

I am he. Helmut Schmitt. White hair, fifty pounds heavier, and seven years older.

ZOLLI

A different name and a very different uniform.

CALLISTUS

Would you like me to leave?

ZOLLI

I would like to say no. But memories do linger. The last time we met was unpleasant. Angelina told me nothing. Was she aware?

CALLISTUS

Yes. But you said you did not want to hear my name. You know she is dying. That is why I am here. Both she and my prefect said I must come to you for pardon. (Stands up). This is the most difficult journey I have ever made in my life.

ZOLLI

Some have had more difficult ones. Why did you not arrest us that morning?

CALLISTUS

A strange thing happened. I had every intention of performing my duty... I lost control? As much as I wanted to, I could not arrest you. An act of a greater power. Divine will?

ZOLLI

I see.

CALLISTUS

You doubt my sincerity?

ZOLLI

I want to believe. But even if are sincere, can you bring back the dead?

CALLISTUS

That I can not do. But, I am here to seek your forgiveness. And to share with you the path that led me here. If I am to receive redemption, it is the only cloud that will exist over me for the rest of my life. That will exist with or without your forgiveness. (He rises).

ZOLLI

Perhaps in the future. Perhaps you can dedicate your life to those you have murdered!

CALLISTUS

It will be. And now I go from here to Israel.

ZOLLI

Israel!

CALLISTUS

Incognito, of course. I will be working in a hospital for sick children. . Incognito only because I would, justifiably be trampled to death, even in seeking forgiveness. I too know how to survive. I shall go to the wailing Wall and seek God's forgiveness. God has set a different path for me.

ZOLLI

Explain.

CALLISTUS

After I return from Israel, I will be going either to Africa or perhaps Louisiana.

ZOLLI

Those two places? How so?

CALLISTUS

I will be working in leper colonies for the rest of my life. It is the direction to which I have been pointed. I must go now. I must see Sister Angelina before she dies.

ZOLLI

Ah, one question before you go. Your family?

CALLISTUS

My wife and two children were killed when the British and Americans bombed Dresden. I stand alone. Now I must go. Can you be at Sister Angelina's in an hour? She wants to see you before she dies.

ZOLLI

GET OUT OF THIS HOUSE!

CALLISTUS

I have done what I came to do. The decision is now yours.

ZOLLI

Look at that picture on the wall. Four of us slaughtered because of the Nazis.

CALLISTUS

I killed no one.

ZOLLI

You sent 800 innocents to the slaughterhouse.

CALLISTUS

I did not know for certain where they were going.

ZOLLI

You have no remorse. Leave this house.

CALLISTUS

I am here for your sake

ZOLLI

My sake! You murderer.

CALLISTUS

If you do not forgive me, God will not forgive you.

ZOLLI

Leave. And avoid Rosina, she is in here with a large pot of hot chicken soup. If she recalls who you are you may be sorry.

CALLISTUS

Good day. (exits)

Zolli studies the picture of the five brothers, tears streaming down his eyes.

ROSINA (O.S.)

(Screaming loudly) You murderer! You need some nice hot chicken soup. (Throws it on him.)

CALLISTUS (O.S.)

I am now a priest. (Screaming pain) Ah-h-h-h.

ROSINA (O.S.)

And here is this frying pan, you holy murderer.

A clanging sound. Callistus footsteps are heard as he flees the house.

ROSINA

(Entering) What was that butcher doing in this house?

ZOLLI

He came to ask for forgiveness.

ROSINA

And?

ZOLLI

I tried. He wears a new uniform.

ROSINA

It's not a uniform. It's a costume. A uniform announces who you are. A costume conceals who you are. His kind killed my son and husband, your four brothers and millions of others.

ZOLLI

But I have guilt.

ROSINA

For what.

ZOLLI

I survived. Millions of others died. And the other twelve chief rabbis....

ROSINA

You cannot have guilt for surviving.

ZOLLI

I go to my grave before long.

ROSINA

Says who?

ZOLLI

Doctor Sullam. Cancer succeeds where Hitler and his troops failed.

ROSINA

One day at a time.

ZOLLI

We must all go off to meet our creator. And we must forgive as we are forgiven.

ROSINA

Oh I could just

ZOLLI

Rosina! You can not throw a dish of spaghetti in God's face.

ROSINA

God doesn't ask you to apologize for living, and ...

ZOLLI

Rosina, it's God's will!

ROSINA

No!

Phone rings. Rosina picks up

ROSINA (cont'd)

Pronto. ... Yes. He will. (Puts down receiver) Sister Angelina is not well and wants to see you.

ZOLLI

I must go now.

ROSINA

Good soup and good prayers can help much. And Rosina prays everyday for Zolli. I have made chicken soup, the kind Mother Zollam - made in Poland.

ZOLLI

We will eat chicken soup too. Good soup can only do so much. But now I must go to Sister Angelina's.

ROSINA

Let's just eat chicken soup and stay alive.

SCENE 7 SHORTLY AFTERWARDS

Angelina is lying in bed. Hilary is beside her when Zolli enters.

ZOLLI

Is she still alive?

HILARY

Speak softly. We must not disturb her sleep. She specifically asked for you and me, and that man.

ZOLLI

That man is now released from prison and..

HILARY

A full Franciscan priest.

ZOLLI

You knew?

HILARY

He has gone from one dishonorable profession to another.

ZOLLI

He has asked for my forgiveness. What shall I do?

HILARY

You owe no forgiveness. He has no remorse. The vanquished always want forgiveness. What do you want to do?

ZOLLI

I don't know. I feel that I must. My head says yes. My heart says no. He says his superior and Angelina made him come.

HILARY

Do as you want, but I will never forgive the bastards.

ANGELINA

(awakening) But you must. As a first step to God.

HILARY

I thought you were asleep.

ANGELINA

Angelina never sleeps. And did Father Callistus come to see you, Rabbi?

ZOLLI

He did.

ANGELINA

And did you forgive him?

ZOLLI

I tried. But could not. Neither my head nor my heart.

ANGELINA

Forgiving him is for your sake, not his.

ZOLLI

But the slaughter of millions..

ANGELINA

He was only one.

ZOLLI

Does that make it better?

ANGELINA

But there is a difference here. Most of the tens of thousands of other murderers have no remorse. This one does.

ZOLLI

I still..

ANGELINA

And you remember what he could have done to both you and Hilary at the Spanish steps.

ZOLLI

Correct. I will try.

ANGELINA

(Feebly) Rabbi, I want you to have a gift I received from the Israeli government. It's highest honor. I know it will mean something to you. And Hilary, you must promise you will never drink again.

HILARY

Of course. I rarely touch the stuff any more.

ANGELINA

And will you forgive Callistus.

HILARY

I will try.

ANGELINA

That means no. But try. And now I am ready for my last rites.

HILARY

Your friend has not arrived yet.

Callistus, with a gauze bandage on his hand and a scar on his head, enters. Hilary turns his back and Zolli looks the other way.

ZOLLI

(Whispering) Schmitt, you must hurry. She can go at any time.

CALLISTUS

(Administering) Incline Thine ear, O Lord, unto our prayers, wherein we humbly pray Thee to show Thy mercy upon the soul of Thy servant Angelina, whom Thou hast commanded to pass out of this world, that Thou wouldst place her in the region of peace and light, and bid her be a partaker with Thy Saints. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

ANGELINA

I can not meet with the saints.

ZOLLI

You, Sister! Who has done more to help other human beings? You consoled rather than were consoled. You loved rather than being loved. And you gave understanding to those who needed it.

HILARY

And risked her own life to help the needy.

ANGELINA

True. But I shall burn in hell..

CALLISTUS

Why.

ANGELINA

Because I am a murderess. (Looking at him) One murderer always recognizes another.

ZOLLI

You know not what you say.

CALLISTUS

And you who have always had so much hope.

HILARY

And you, Sister, a young widow who suffered the tragic loss of your own children, and then your father's death before your very eyes, and then went on to devote seventy years to aid those in need.

ANGELINA

That is true. But now I must make an admission that I have hidden for 75 years. On that day, in a moment of inexplicable madness and suffering from depression. ...It was I who pushed my father over the mountain unto his death. I AM A MURDERESS.

CALLISTUS

Sister. These are delusions.

ANGELINA

A moment of righteous anger. Righteous anger is the worst kind. Like mine. Like yours. Rabbi. Like All. (Becomes feebler) The day my mother died when I was eight, I was forced to share his bed with him each night for the next five years. And then one day, in prayer, God taught me to say no. So I pushed him away from me, and he stumbled over the cliff. And from that day on, I thought I was a free woman. But..

ZOLLI

But God will forgive!

ANGELINA

I take full responsibility for what I did. Nothing justifies murder. Let us hope God forgives. (Very feebly calling out) Domenico, Saveria. I see you. I see you.

(MORE)

ANGELINA(cont'd)

Come to Mother. ...You turn you back.(calling out)Domenico, Saveria. (She breaths her last and dies).

Hilary immediately leaves the room, leaving Zolli and Callistus together. They look at one another awkwardly. Callistus then turns his back on Zolli to leave.

ZOLLI

Father?

CALLISTUS

Did I hear correctly?

ZOLLI

(Pulls money from his vest) Something for the lepers.

CALLISTUS

I thank you.

ZOLLI

And make your wish at the wailing wall. Now go.

CALLISTUS

God be with you.

ZOLLI

Goodbye.

Callistus exits.

ZOLLI

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal peace. May her soul rest in peace.

EPILOGUE, 1956

The stage is dark. Bach's "Jesu" plays in the background. The music stops. The radio announcer's voice comes on:

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And in Rome, Eugenio Zolli, Chief Rabbi of Rome and Dean of the Rabbinical College from 1938 to 1944, died early this morning at the age of 75. Pope Pius XII issued a statement praising the former Jewish leader. The controversial...

MAGLIONE (O.S.)

Zolli, Zolli, May the Perpetual light of God Shine upon you.

In the background, bayou music is heard on the radio which is interrupted by the radio announcer.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Station WBAYU playing your favorite Cajun music all day long. And now we bring you the latest news. Rabbi Zolli, former Chief Rabbi of Rome died at age 75..

CALLISTUS (O.S.)

I will love you forever. And forgive me God for the evil I have committed.

HILARY (O.S.)

No I can not and will not pray, but will love you always.

ANSO (O.S.)

I could never accept your decision, but may your soul rest in peace, Izzy.

Faure's requiem is played in the background. Maglione and Rosina, dressed in black and a gold cross, enter. She is noticeably older and walks with a cane. The music then changes to Jewish religious music.

MAGLIONE

Grant Eternal light unto him O God. For it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

ROSINA (O.S.)

Now I will wear black again, my rabbi, until the day I die my beloved rabbi.

She breaks into tears. "Amazing Grace" plays in the background.

EUGENIO BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Blet, Pierre, S.J., Pius XII and the Second World War According to the Vatican Archives , NY: Paulist Press, 1999.
2. John Cornwell, Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII, New York, Viking, 1999.
3. Fermi, Laura, MUSSOLINI, The University Of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1962
4. Fisher, Eugene J., Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust , in Carol Rittner and John Roth, editors , "What is Known Today: A Brief Review of the Literature," , Leicester University Press, London, 2002.
5. Fisher, Eugene J., Private Interviews, Washington, DC 2002-2003
6. Levi, Primo , Survival in Auschwitz, Random House, New, New York, 1993
7. Margherita Marchione, Pope Pius XII: Architect For Peace, AD Books, 2000.
8. Michaelis, Meir, Mussolini and the Jews , Clarendon Press, 1978
9. Mussolini, Rachele, Mussolini: an Intimate Biography By His Widow, William Morrow, New York ,1974.
10. Rychlak, Ronald, Hitler, the War and the Pope Our Sunday Visitor Press , Huntington, IN, 2000 .
11. Sanchez, Jose M., Pius XII and the Holocaust, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC, 2001.
12. Smith, Denis Mack , MUSSOLINI: A Biography, , 1982
13. Stille, Alexander. Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish families under Fascism: Summit Books, , New York, NY, 1991..
14. Steinberg, Jonathan, ALL OR NOTHING, The Axis and the Holocaust 1941-43, Routledge, London, 1991
15. Sullam Elizabeth, Private Interviews, Washington, DC, 2002
16. Weisbord, Robert G. and Wallace P. Sillanpoa, The Chief Rabbi, the Pope, and the Holocaust, Transaction Publisher, New Brunswick, NJ, 1982
17. Wiesel, Elie. All Rivers Run To the Sea. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1995.
18. Zolli, Eugenio, Before the Dawn, Harper, Rowe. 1953.
19. Zuccotti, Susan Clark Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001