

The Day They Kidnapped The Pope

By **Joao Bethencourt**

Play no. 298

Opening show : 08/03/1975

Creative team

Hebrew By: Pinchas Drori

Directed by: Peter Frye

Setting by: Peter Frye

Costumes by: Adina Reich

Lighting: Natan Panturin

Cast

The Pope: Shmuel Rudenski

Sam ,A Taxi Driver: Yehuda Efroni

Gittel, His Wife: Tova Pardo

Irving, Their Son: Alex Kutai

Miriam, , Their Daughter: Dahlai Gur

J. Meyer, The Gabbai: Yaacov Ben-Sira

Cardinal O'Hara: Rolf Brin

Schultz, The Sheriff: Eitan Priver

Sam Leibovitch, a Brooklyn taxi driver, kidnaps the Pope, Emmanuel IV , who is on a visit to the United Nations. Totally unpremeditated , the kidnapping is the act of a real 'meshuggener", which nevertheless has a logic of its own. Sam locks up the Pope in the pantry of his home until he builds up the courage to inform his wife Gittel of his latest expedition in iconoclasm. Sam's children, 20-year old Irving and 16-old Miriam, come home as usual only to be asked to sit down to supper with the Pope.

Meanwhile the news services of the entire world are clattering away in all the media on the subject of the kidnapping , the craziest event in an era of mad happenings.

Act One, Scene 2 Later that evening

The Pope enjoys Gittel's cooking and the animated conversation at the supper table. But he is an old man 77 and has been worn out by the endless panoply of public appearances, parades and speeches arranged by his American host Cardinal O'Hara. The Pope falls asleep at the table and is transferred to the sofa for a nap. While the family is arguing about Sam's unusual idea for a ransom, the doorbell rings, to their total surprise and consternation. It is Sam's cousin, Julius Meyer, who is also the Gabbai of the synagogue. It seems that Gittel, in a moment of panic, phoned and asked Meyer to come and advise her how to extract Sam from the consequences of his act. But now that he is here, she agrees that they must keep secret from the Gabbai the presence of the Pope in their home. Thus ensues a series of wild misunderstandings. At the end of the act, the Gabbai succeeds in identifying the Pope.

Act Two, Scene 1 Friday, late afternoon

Sam's ransom demand is that the entire world serves a twenty-four hour moratorium executions, murders, assassinations, killings – in sum, a day of world peace. The demand is being fiercely debated in the United Nations and in all the parliaments and kitchen cabinets of the world.

The Pope slept until noon and since then has been working with Gittel in the vegetable garden behind the house. He is thoroughly enjoying the relaxation of this unexpected visit to this family of simple people in Brooklyn. Sam is busy preparing a defense of his home. In World War II he was a sapper with the Engineer Corps of General Patton's army. He still prides himself on his skill with explosives. For example – much to the dismay of the neighbors – he plants what he calls "mini-mines" in the garden – to blow up ant-hills!

Act Two, Scene 2 Friday afternoon . Still later

Schultz, the sheriff of the county, has set up an amplifier system and talks to Sam on the loud-speakers. Sam sets up a similar system of his own and talks back to Schultz. It is revealed that Julius Meyer sent a signed "anonymous" letter to the police claiming the 20,000 dollar reward for information leading to the freeing of Pope. Schultz orders his men to advance on the house and Sam sets off his first explosion. Gittel says she is going to put an end to the whole thing and talks to Schultz through the microphone. It seems they are all old friends and Schultz often plays poker with Sam in the Leibovitch house but all of Gittel's coquettishness cannot persuade Schultz to call off his men since it is obviously his duty to release the Pope. Gittel pleads with his Holiness to talk to Schultz and to convince him that he (the Pope), is well and happy in the Leibovitch residence. The Pope tries to do this but is interrupted by the arrival of Cardinal O'Hara, who is obviously accustomed to talking charge. O'Hara persuades Sam to allow him to come to the house under a flag of truce so that he can assure himself that the Pope has not been harmed.

Act Two, Scene 3 Friday 5.30 p.m.

Cardinal O'Hara has been sent back with a message from the Pope saying that His Holiness was perfectly content to stay where he was until the U.N. completed its voting on the proposal to initiate World Peace Day. But O'Hara betrays him and falsely declares that the Pope wishes to be freed at any cost, even at the risk of being killed in the battle and Schultz , somewhat unwillingly, orders his men into action.

While Sam sets off a series of explosions, Gittel is setting the table for the Sabbath meal. The Gabbai is saying the Ma'ariv prayer and Gittel blesses the candles. Schultz steps up the action of the attack and Sam responds with ever more explosions but the situation is saved when the television announces the United Nations decision that hostilities have ceased throughout the world.

Act Two, Scene 4 Saturday afternoon . 5.35 p.m.

World Peace Day is almost over and at 6.00 His Holiness will be released. The television commentators report that there has not been a single killing anywhere in the entire world for almost 24 hours, not even a death in an automobile accident.

But Schultz , on the loud-speaker, reminds Sam that he is coming in to arrest him the minute the Pope is free. Cardinal O'Hara has been arguing with the Pope upstairs saying that Leibovitch must be arrested and made an example of, even though the old man insists that Sam must not in any way be punished.

Before His Holiness leaves the Leibovitch home, everything falls into place as it should in a well-made comedy.