

**s a n t o   s u b i t o**

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# characters

ROBERTO BENIGNI

CARDINAL RUINI

MARIA BENIGNI

TAXI DRIVER

DARIO FO

NUNCIO

CARDINAL MORSINI

CARDINAL 1

CARDINAL 2

CARDINAL 3

CARDINAL 4

CARDINAL JOHN FROM MIAMI

FRENCH COOK

BISHOP OF SEVILLE

BISHOP 1

BISHOP 2

JOHN PAUL II

## 1.

NUN                   santo subito.  
                          chronicle of  
                          the appearance of the actor Roberto Benigni  
                          before the Vatican beatification commission  
                          of october 2005  
                          in the case of John Paul II.  
                          by krok & petschinka

## 2.

**Vatican. conference room of the beatification commission**  
CHAIRMAN OF THE BEATIFICATION COMMISSION  
CARDINAL RUINI

Mr Benigni, Roberto Benigni,  
thank you for taking the time  
to interrupt the shooting of your new film  
and coming here to the Vatican from Cinecitta!  
of course we will reimburse your taxi fare!

BENIGNI             please, gentlemen, it's not worth mentioning!

RUINI                you wrote us a letter ...  
                          I'd like to read it out to the commission:

you write:  
„Monsignori,  
I don't have the faintest notion  
why you have invited me  
or how I can contribute  
towards promoting or preventing the beatification  
of pope Giovanni Paolo II.  
however much I may honour him.

and whether a miracle is hidden  
in the story I can and will tell you  
– that is for the commission to judge!“

you write :  
„Monsignori,  
you know me.  
you've seen my films!  
„la vita e bella!“ „pinocchio!“ „night on earth.“

I promise you  
I have an hour's time, exactly an hour!  
and I ask you,  
in consideration of the forceful unfolding of my story  
not to interrupt me!“

RUINI                    Mr Benigni!  
                              we're pleased to accept your conditions  
                              and let you have your word.

BENIGNI                Monsignori, thank you, thank you very much!  
                              my story begins on a Monday  
                              Monday, 28.March 2005  
                              at midnight!

**a match is struck**

                              can I smoke in here?  
                              no?!

                              well then, midnight.  
                              I'm lying in bed with my wife.  
                              my arms wrapped widely around her.  
                              because she's incredibly fat.  
                              because she's pregnant!!

                              the birth is two weeks away.  
                              in two weeks that stomach  
                              will burst  
                              and my dear son will take possession  
                              of those wonderful breasts  
                              the mere sight of which takes my breath away.

**3 .**  
**the benigni bedroom**

MRS BENIGNI                    do I have to get down on my knees?

BENIGNI                    I've been away for two weeks.  
                              one film shoot after another.  
                              Hollywood. Hong Kong.

BENIGNI                    it has to be has to be!

MRS BENIGNI                    well then come on, wild man,  
    come take your pleasure in me!

RUINI                    Mr Benigni!!

BENIGNI                    yes?

RUINI                    Monday, midnight...

**a telephone rings**

BENIGNI         yes, I know!  
                       but in that moment,  
                       when she goes ... down  
                       the telephone rings  
                       and I look at the time  
                       and think : who can that be, so late?!

**a telephone rings**

BENIGNI                                 porco madonna! what the fuck!!

RUINI                 Signore!

BENIGNI         I don't know  
                       if you understand why I curse, Monsignore!  
                       I don't know  
                       if you can imagine  
                       what I felt.

RUINI                 quite, Mr Benigni!!

BENIGNI         it's  
                       as if during an important church ritual -  
                       let's say High Mass on Easter Sunday -  
                       suddenly a mobile phone rings  
                       in the Pope's pocket,  
                       and it pulls you right out of your prayer,  
                       out of your reverence!

RUINI                 a somewhat shaky comparison!!

BENIGNI         a somewhat shaky comparison for sure.  
                       and I apologise for this  
                       clumsy comparison!

                      you know, Monsignore,  
                       during his prayers the Pope is  
                       not so caught up in the intensity of his desires.  
                       he can quickly -  
                       after a little chat with his cook -  
                       concentrate again on the GUY up there.  
                       and all the others too.  
                       however, when it comes to sexual excitement!!  
                       such an interruption is catastrophic!!  
                       sometimes you can wait for hours  
                       before the GUY down there ...

RUINI                 please go on!

**a telephone rings**



MRS BENIGNI to do what?

BENIGNI I reach for her again  
the little interruption  
was not such a catastrophe.

**telephone rings**

MRS BENIGNI let me talk to him.  
I'll explain :  
you've been away for a long time  
and just now you'd love to have  
a few minutes to ...

**telephone picked up**

MRS BENIGNI yes  
no no it's not too late.  
it's ... oh.  
yes.

BENIGNI come on.

MRS BENIGNI yes. of course!

BENIGNI come to bed!

MRS BENIGNI psst! psst!

BENIGNI come!

MRS BENIGNI yes, Monsignore.  
yes, of course. thank you.

BENIGNI come back to bed!!

MRS BENIGNI we're honoured!

**telephone hung up**

MRS BENIGNI Roberto! get dressed right away!

BENIGNI you come here to me in bed!

MRS BENIGNI you get dressed and fly straight to Rome.

BENIGNI aha, she's in on it, I think

BENIGNI how long must I stay in Rome?

MRS BENIGNI I don't know.

BENIGNI                               but in two weeks it's the big event.  
the birth!  
I wouldn't miss that for anything.

BENIGNI           you know, Monsignore,  
I went to all the pre-natal classes!  
read books on it.  
learned how to breathe.  
where you should place your hands.  
how you pull the baby out of the belly.  
how one bites, cuts the umbilical cord.  
how one lays the baby on the breast.

RUINI                 go on, Mr Benigni!

MRS BENIGNI                 you'll be back before two weeks.  
and famous!

BENIGNI                         I've already got an OSCAR! darling!!

MRS BENIGNI                 put on your black suit!

BENIGNI                         the wedding suit

MRS BENIGNI                 yes. please.  
do it for me.  
I'll pack your bag.  
there's a limousine waiting downstairs!

BENIGNI             aha, I think :  
my dear friend Dario Fo has paid out a lot of money  
for a dumb little joke.  
  
she's also in on it.  
in this way I'm going to discover something.  
some kind of surprise.  
good.  
I get it.

BENIGNI                         ciao darling!

BENIGNI             I'm off.

#### **4 . taxi**

LADY TAXI DRIVER                 good evening, here's your ticket!

BENIGNI                         where are we going?





## 7. in a limousine

BENIGNI            they bring me to the Vatican  
in a black limousine.  
it's three in the morning.  
I'm tired and hungry.

BENIGNI                            can we stop quickly at Mcdonalds?!

CARDINAL 1                    are you hungry, Signore Benigni?!

BENIGNI                            very.

CARDINAL 2                    we'll be home in two minutes.  
someone will prepare  
you a snack!

BENIGNI                    oh good, I think.  
I see a monk's fasting-meal before my eyes.  
a bowl of rice.  
or a thin communion wafer.  
with a ketchup crucifix  
carved on it by a thin goose quill.

## 8. in the Vatican

BENIGNI                    Vatican.  
big reception.  
Swiss guards.  
and thirteen cardinals.  
now? at this hour?

CARDINAL 3                    good morning, Mr Benigni!

BENIGNI                    in a minute they'll sing me a song!

CARDINAL 4                    buon giorno!

BENIGNI                    no song.

CARDINAL 4                    good morning!

CARDINAL 3                    we're responsible for the preparation of your performance!

BENIGNI                    performance?

CARDINAL 4                    hasn't anyone told you why you're here?

BENIGNI                    no.

CARDINAL 4                    this is grotesque!

CARDINAL 3                    who was responsible?!

CARDINAL 1                    Morsini!

BENIGNI                        yes, he spoke with my wife!

CARDINAL 2                    and she didn't tell you anything?!

BENIGNI                        no.

CARDINAL 3                    well then, down to the cellar!

BENIGNI                        to the cellar?!  
inspection of the performance location or what?

CARDINAL 4                    no, no!

BENIGNI                        ah, basement theatre in the Vatican?

CARDINAL 1                    in the cellar – there is a treasure chamber!

## 9.

### cellar. a large room full of precious objects

BENIGNI                        they take me to the library.  
thousands of old volumes.  
gold embossed. leather. incredible smell.  
then : stop.  
here it is.

the librarian puts on gloves.  
takes a book out of its case.  
places it on the table.

### book opened

BENIGNI                        „vida y hechos  
del ingenioso hidalgo don quixote de la mancha“  
by miguel de cervantes saavedra.

BENIGNI                        I sniff at the book.  
it's 400 years old.

BENIGNI                        this is what it's all about?!

CARDINAL 1                    yes!

BENIGNI                        what? what exactly?

CARDINAL 2                   you're to play Don Quixote  
here in the Vatican!

BENIGNI                        who me?

CARDINAL 3                   yes, before the Pope's deathbed.

CARDINAL 4                   in the Sistine Chapel!

BENIGNI                        at that moment, for the first time, I realise  
that this journey to the Vatican is perhaps not a joke.

                                      why me?  
                                      why me of all people.  
                                      and who will direct Don Quixote?  
                                      in German?  
                                      in Spanish?  
                                      or Polish. Don Quikocky?  
                                      and why do they want Don Quixote  
                                      performed before the Pope's deathbed?

BENIGNI                        „In a village in La Mancha  
lately lived a gentleman named Don Quixote -  
a great madrugador  
a very early riser  
and a friend of the hunt.

                                      you must know, then  
                                      that the above-named gentleman  
                                      gave himself up  
                                      to reading books of chivalry  
                                      with such ardour and avidity  
                                      that his brain dried up -  
                                      and the poor gentleman lost his wits!“

                                      who will play Sancho Panza?!

BENIGNI                        no answer.  
the cardinals stand by the shelves.  
take out books.

CARDINAL 1                    look!

BENIGNI                        page through them.

CARDINAL 1                    look what I found!!  
Gargantua!!  
listen to this!

CARDINAL 2                    here's the Decameron!

CARDINAL 3                    look! Darwin: The Origin of the Species!

CARDINAL 4                    Marx: el capital!

CARDINAL JOHN                Dante!

BENIGNI                    there are world treasures here.  
all books on the index  
are taken off the shelves excitedly.  
opened up.  
the best passages read out loud.

                                  I'm taken by the same passion.

BENIGNI                    „Don Quixote's wits being quite gone  
he hit upon the strangest notion  
that ever madman in this world hit upon,  
that is:  
he fancied it was right and requisite  
as well for the support of his own honour  
as for the service of his country,  
that he should make a knight-errant of himself,  
and exposing himself to peril and danger  
                                  from which he was to reap eternal renown and fame!“

CARDINAL 1                    bravo!

CARDINAL 2                    „more Benigni! more!!“

ALLE                            „more!“ „please!“ „bitte!“ „por favor!“

MORSINI                    more more por favor!

CARDINAL 1                    Morsini!!

BENIGNI                    while I kept reading,  
the twelve cardinals danced around the table.

ALL 4 CARDINALS            more more por favor!!

BENIGNI                    fanning out across the room.

ALL 4 CARDINALS            more more por favor!!

BENIGNI                    taking crowns out of the glass cases.  
Sitting Bull's headdress.

ALL 4 CARDINALS            more more por favor!!

RUINI Mr Benigni!!

BENIGNI Columbus' egg.  
Che Guevara's cap.

ALL 4 CARDINALS more more por favor!!

BENIGNI they open a coffer.  
the Turin shroud.

ALL 4 CARDINALS more more por favor!!

BENIGNI Maradonna's football shoes.  
Charley Chaplin's mustache.

RUINI Mr Benigni!!

BENIGNI Charles Bronson's harmonica.  
Marilyn Monroe's ukelele.

**RUINI rings a little bell to make himself heard.**

RUINI please, Mr Benigni,  
you only have one hour!

## **10 .** **a chapel. mass.**

BENIGNI then early mass.  
stand sit kneel.  
sing standing sit kneel up again  
sign of the cross over and over.

then they all move forward.  
the priest hands out the host.

at last, I think, at last, a piece of bread!  
breakfast at last!!  
however small it is.

I head for this tiny breakfast.  
but the Cardinal from Miami tugs at my jacket.  
„no Mister Benigni! no!“

but I want to get this teeny weeny breakfast.

it takes forever to get to the priest,  
I open my mouth ...  
my stomach's growling!

BENIGNI            the cardinals begin crossing themselves.  
                         I'm pushed aside.

                         after Mass I ask :  
                         „ladies and ... sorry, reverend gentlemen,  
                         why am I prohibited from eating this little breakfast??“

CARDINAL JOHN            we know you.  
                         we all saw the movies!

CARDINAL 1                the melon, Signore,

CARDINAL 2                remember?!

CARDINAL 3                and the sheep!!

CARDINAL 4                and the cousin!!

BENIGNI                    but that was only a movie!!

CARDINAL 1                of course it was a movie!

CARDINAL 2                but such things also happen in reality!!

BENIGNI                    even here in the Vatican?!!

CARDINAL JOHN            yes, despite the fact we purify ourselves daily!!

BENIGNI                    purification?

CARDINAL 1                Signore Benigni!!

                         you left the church.  
                         you argued and fought with us!

CARDINAL 2                mocked us!  
                         battled against us!

CARDINAL 3                forced us to bring you to trial.

CARDINAL 4                but we've forgiven you.

CARDINAL 1                reached out our hand to you.

CARDINAL 2                and chosen you  
                         to fulfill the Pope's wish  
                         to see DON QUIXOTE once more  
                         to his and our satisfaction  
                         and happiness.

CARDINAL 3                   but  
but without basic purification  
you cannot go before the Pope!

BENIGNI                   no, no, no!  
no question of it.  
I know you.  
you PURIFIED the Indians.  
the Africans. the Vikings.

RUINI                   Mr Benigni!! you go too far!

BENIGNI                   if that's your condition, gentlemen,  
then: thanks for the nice entertainment.  
mille grazie, Monsignor!  
close the book. say good bye!

**mobile phone rings**

CARDINAL JOHN           listen. please!

BENIGNI                Cardinal John from Miami  
hands me his mobile phone.

BENIGNI                what's this?!

CARDINAL JOHN        your wife!

BENIGNI                my wife?

**telephone conversation**

BENIGNI                Maria?

MRS BENIGNI           Roberto?!

BENIGNI                yes.

MRS BENIGNI           don't leave!!

BENIGNI                but they want to Catholicize me.  
make me sick.  
decapitate me!!

MRS BENIGNI           don't leave, Roberto. go to confession!

BENIGNI                me? go to confession?!

MRS BENIGNI           it doesn't hurt! believe me.

BENIGNI                but I don't believe in that nonsense!



RUINI                    Mr Benigni, that's enough!  
                              time and again you ridicule the church.

MRS BENIGNI            exactly.  
                              even you can confess!  
                              if that's their condition  
                              for playing Don Quixote before the Pope!

BENIGNI                 not a chance.

MRS BENIGNI            do it for me!

BENIGNI                 no.

MRS BENIGNI            listen, they chose you!

BENIGNI                 no, it's all just ... a bad joke!

MRS BENIGNI            no Roberto, it's no joke.  
                              they chose you.  
                              they told me  
                              Morsini from Milan told me  
                              they've been casting for a year,  
                              considering hundreds of people.  
                              and then they said : Benigni!

                              he'll play Don Quixote.  
                              before the Pope's deathbed!  
                              in the Sistine Chapel!

BENIGNI                 okay.

MRS BENIGNI            you'll do it?!

BENIGNI                 you want me to?

MRS BENIGNI            me?  
                              yes, yes!  
                              I want you to play the role!

BENIGNI                 okay.  
                              how are you?  
                              is he moving?

MRS BENIGNI            who?

BENIGNI                 my son your son.

MRS BENIGNI            yeah, yeah!

BENIGNI                 but you'll wait till this is over before you give birth?!

MRS BENIGNI                    yes, Signore Benigni! of course!

BENIGNI                         well then, ciao.

MRS BENIGNI                    ciao!

CARDINAL JOHN                 yeah!

BENIGNI                         okay. where's the holy water?  
where's the confessional?!  
bring it here!!

ALL 4 CARDINALS                yeah!

**11.**  
**a sparse study.**

BENIGNI                    an hour later I'm sitting -  
no, no, not in a confessional  
nor at breakfast!!

BENIGNI                         please, Monsignori!  
just a snack !!

BENIGNI                    instead they bring me  
to a large sparsely furnished study.

                                      at a very long table sit  
two four six eight ten  
twenty forty sixty eighty a hundred  
two hundred four hundred six hundred  
600 bishops.  
all leaning over laptops.

CARDINAL 1                    quiet!!

BENIGNI                    I'm allocated a small table, also with a laptop  
and a CD-Rom : DON QUIXOTE Spanish-Italian.  
a Swiss guard takes his place behind me.

CARDINAL 2                    silencio!!

BENIGNI                    while I work on abridging  
the 600 pages of Don Quixote,  
the 600 bishops are working on an abridged version  
of the 600.000 pages of Catholic doctrine.

                                      basic theme:  
with which ritual does one purify a lost sinful obscene son,  
who has left the church  
and now wants to return to her bosom?!

**a gold ring tapped against a carafe of water**

BENIGNI            wants to??

BISHOP OF SEVILLE        disculpen mis queridos hermanos!

BENIGNI            suddenly one of the bishops gets up.  
                         a small wiry old Spaniard.  
                         clears his throat.  
                         taps on his carafe of water.

CARDINAL 2                silencio!!

BISHOP OF SEVILLE        disculpen mis queridos hermanos!

BISHOP 1                porca madonna Emilio!  
                                 que causa volio!

BENIGNI            the old Spaniard says he remembers  
                         he once saw  
                         a manuscript  
                         which the Spanish church used  
                         to convert the Indians.

BISHOP 2                oh! really?

BENIGNI            and to make Christians out of them!

BISHOP 2                quante pagine, Emilio?

BISHOP OF SEVILLE        tres! tres paginas!

BISHOP 1                how thick?

CARDINAL JOHN            three pages?! only?!  
                         Cortes, are you sure?!  
                         where is it?!

BISHOP 1                downstairs in the museum?!

BISHOP OF SEVILLE        si!

CARDINAL JOHN            when? when did you see it?!

BISHOP OF SEVILLE        long time ago!

BENIGNI            everywhere the laptops are snapped shut.  
                         600 laptops.  
                         klak.klak.klak.klak.klak.

BENIGNI            Bishop Emilio Cortes is sent down into the cellar.  
  
                          after two hours he comes back  
                          with a simple wooden casket.

CARDINAL JOHN            Cortes! wonderful!!

BENIGNI            Emilio Cortes, Bishop of Seville,  
                          opens the casket  
                          and removes three blood-spattered pieces of parchment.  
                          plus an eagle's feather serving as a bookmark.

CARDINAL JOHN            great.

BISHOP 1                magnifique.

CARDINAL JOHN            wonderful.

CARDINAL 3                christianicacion y espaniolisacion.  
  
                          first: purification -  
                          Indians are not human beings.  
                          they must be purified.  
  
                          by fire.  
                          by water.  
                          by 40 days labour in the silver mines.  
                          which means :

BENIGNI            hunger & whipping

CARDINAL 1                in the present case  
                          it means :  
                          today and tomorrow: purification.

CARDINAL 2                Wednesday baptism and holy texts.

CARDINAL 4                Thursday costume and communion.

CARDINAL 2                on Friday holy ghost and dress rehearsal.

CARDINAL 1                and on Saturday his performance!!

CARDINAL 3                if he lasts until Saturday.

MORSINI                we'll all pray for that!!  
                          gentlemen, please  
                          number 642 from the Latin hymn book!

**CARDINALS and bishops sing**

BENIGNI            while the gentlemen go deeper into their prayer,  
 - of which I understand nothing  
 except a menacing undertone! -  
 I can see the great purification before my eyes.  
 a Vatican cleaning brigade rushes me.  
 grabs me.  
 drags me down into the cellar.  
 shoves me into a white-tiled shower.  
 in a silver mine.  
 in an endless desert.  
 full of the skeletons of camels and pilgrims.  
 they shave my hair off.  
 they rip off my clothes.  
 they stick a huge funnel in my mouth.  
 entry from the top.  
 entry from the bottom.  
 my intestines are filled to bursting.  
 my brain rung dry.  
 my heart disinfected.

RUINI                wonderful, Mr Benigni!  
 excellent, this childish vision of purification!

BENIGNI            „sin!!“  
 roar the soldiers of purification  
 „sin! confess your sins!“

it isn't as if my sins are so great.  
 but they are numerous.  
 I never commit any major sins.  
 but lots of little ones.  
 endless small ones.  
 and I hardly know where to begin.  
 but they're losing patience.  
 they shove me against a wall.  
 force me onto my knees  
 set German shepherds on me.  
 make a pyramid out of me.  
 put a dog's collar on me.

a woman in uniform  
 points meaningfully at my naked shame  
 screaming :  
 „well, that's how you want it  
 you want it  
 you terrorist  
 suicide-bomber  
 you rotten piece of shit  
 I sentence you to  
 40 days fasting in one day!!“

BENIGNI           so I gather all my courage and shout :  
„that goes counter to the Geneva Convention!!“

the cardinals go quiet.  
look at me.  
and return to their praying.

BENIGNI                     please, gentlemen!  
let me go!  
or at least  
let me speak to my lawyer!

BENIGNI           Cardinal John from Miami  
puts his hand on my shoulder ...

CARDINAL JOHN           but we were only praying!

BENIGNI           ... plants a kiss on my brow.

CARDINAL JOHN           just as one would do after such cleansing.

CARDINAL 1               perhaps not every day,

CARDINAL 2               but in a more heartfelt manner!

BENIGNI           yes I say.  
perhaps in a more heartfelt manner.

MORSINI                   unfortunately, Signore Benigni,  
there's no time  
for the road to enlightenment,  
the road to spirituality!  
briefly outlined on these three old pages!  
we'll have to go the worldly path!

CARDINAL 3               40 days of fasting, self-examination, self-transformation  
is not possible in your case.  
we must go the worldly path!  
venga Benigni!

MORSINI                   the worldly path! the worldly path!!  
the worldly path! the worldly path!!

## **12 .** **music**

BENIGNI           the 600 bishops are thrilled.  
a chorus can be heard.  
a huge exodus.  
where are they taking me?

BENIGNI I think :  
 hey Roberto, keep an eye on the path!  
 sooner or later you may have to escape from,  
 wherever it is they're taking you.

CHORUS the worldly path! the worldly path!!

BENIGNI maybe you'll have to get away  
 from this worldly path.  
 get off the twisted path.  
 take off down a side street.  
 disappear.

but I'm already lost after the third crossroads.  
 I'm drugged by the singing of the bishops in front of me,  
 the thundering of the cardinals behind me.

### 13. outside the CARDINALS' canteen

BENIGNI and then it suddenly stops.  
 we're standing in front of a wall.  
 with a simple small wooden door.

the holy dignitaries create a half-circle.  
 into which I am pushed.

it's a torture chamber.  
 it's a dungeon.  
 it's hell.

I try to look for a peephole.  
 but the cardinals and bishops  
 create a barrier of bodies and colours.

in front of me the wooden door.  
 behind me this bronze wall.  
 six or seven metres high.

#### knocking.

BENIGNI a very fat  
 very friendly gentleman comes out.

The COOK Monsieur Benigni,  
 I welcome you warmly  
 to the cardinals' canteen!

BENIGNI            now for the first time I see his white apron.  
                          now for the first time I see his white chef's cap  
                          and the hand  
                          stretched out towards me.

                         and I seize this hand.  
                          and it pulls me into the torture chamber.

**14 .**  
**the CARDINALS' canteen / paradise**

BENIGNI            behind me there's a general grumbling,  
                          because the bishops are not allowed  
                          to enter this hell.  
                          Cortes demands they make an exception today.

BISHOP OF SEVILLE        we want to guide him along the worldly path!!

BENIGNI            I don't remember  
                          if they were permitted  
                          to enter into the cardinals' canteen  
                          because I was enchanted by the smells,  
                          enraptured by the odours.

THE COOK                        Monsieur Benigni !!

BENIGNI            I am handed a menu.  
                          with 40 courses on it.  
                          the worldly path!!

BENIGNI                            incredible!

**15 .**  
**small room / a bed**

BENIGNI            after the first 20 courses  
                          I'm allowed to relax briefly  
                          in my sparse little room  
                          great.

                         I lie down  
                          and ...  
                          slumber.  
                          so restful  
                          like  
                          I don't know like what.  
                          incomparable ....



- BENIGNI           in the middle of the night I wake up briefly  
and think of my wife.  
think about her breasts.  
think of her belly, her arse ...
- RUINI               no details please.
- BENIGNI           why?  
are you free of such lovely thoughts, Mr Cardinal ?
- or are you so possessed by forced asceticism,  
that you can't stand it,  
because you'll be immediately and shockingly overcome by euphoria?!
- RUINI               Signore Benigni,  
You're not trying to teach me  
about the temptations of St. Anthony?!
- BENIGNI           excuse my boldness, Monsignore.
- RUINI               continue!
- BENIGNI           on the first night:  
bed stains.  
on the second night ...  
there are still stains,  
but only from slobber,  
dripping from my mouth.
- the brain goes on dreaming apparently ... of the next course..
- RUINI               what day is it?
- BENIGNI           Tuesday.
- RUINI               write that down: Tuesday, 29. March 2005

## **16 .** **in the CARDINALS' canteen**

- BENIGNI           the whole of Tuesday is devoted to purification.  
already beginning before early mass.
- THE COOK                            une espresso e une cornetto con crema
- BENIGNI           and what cornetti!!  
the famous cornetti from the Piazza Navona  
are like stones compared to these  
and the cream!!



BENIGNI           and Benigni,  
                          that is, me,  
                          the taxi driver,  
                          begins with a wonderful story  
                          about a pumpkin and a sheep.  
                          and the bishop's heart jumps for joy.  
                          and jumps and from all that jumping  
                          it suddenly ... stops.

                          Cardinal John from Miami  
                          waves me over.  
                          he wants to whisper something in my ear.

CARDINAL JOHN           we thought you could help his Holiness  
                                  to find peace and ...  
                                  I never told you that!

RUINI                he said that?

BENIGNI            I swear it.

RUINI                strike that from the record!!

BENIGNI                           and who will direct? someone from here?

MORSINI                   no, you have to do it yourself.  
                                  You've worked with many directors!

BENIGNI                   I've worked?  
                                  I can't remember.

CARDINAL JOHN           how would Francis Ford Coppola direct Don Quixote?

CARDINAL 1 2 3 4                   Spielberg Tarantino Fellini Pasolini  
CARDINAL 1 2 3 4                   Jim Jarmush Godard Almodovar Tarkovski

MORSINI                   Lars von Trier?

## **17.** **a flight through the Vatican**

BENIGNI            while the gentlemen continue enumerating  
                          the names of great directors  
                          I suddenly feel myself sprouting wings.  
                          and feathers.  
                          and a desire in me  
                          to fly.

BENIGNI            my arms begin to flap their wings.  
                           and I rise up out of the midst of the cineastes.  
                           and glide through the corridors.

                          with a bird's-eye view I observe  
                           the museums, the bath-houses.

                          I fly through the Sistine Chapel.  
                           sit in the tree of knowledge.  
                           sit on the shoulder of the Saviour at the Last Judgment.  
                           let myself be transported  
                           by a storm blowing out of paradise.  
                           then pull in my wings  
                           and let myself fall  
                           amongst the damned.

## 18.

### a small room / a tv

BENIGNI            when I open my eyes,  
                           I'm lying in bed in my tiny, sparse room  
                           and the Holy Father is blessing me.

                          and it has the same effect as my mother's lullaby.

                          I close my eyes.  
                           listen to his words.  
                           his murmuring.

                          but something's not quite right.  
                           his words are completely clear  
                           without the trembling  
                           which his illness casts like a spell on his tongue.

                          I open my eyes.  
                           and I see that  
                           the Pope is not really in my room.

                          rather, there's a huge tv, with a huge screen.  
                           and a remote control.  
                           with an incredible choice.  
                           100 programmes.

POPE &  
 TV-SPEAKER

„the Pope is not afraid of the workers!“

BENIGNI            I take the remote in my hand.  
zap here and there.  
the Pope saying High Mass in Bucarest.  
the Pope saying High Mass in Budapest.  
the Pope saying High Mass in St.Pölten.  
the Pope saying High Mass in Prague.  
Cracow Buenos Aires Rio Manilla.

I see myself standing near the Pope.  
in silver armour.  
it's hot, and a thousand Indians are kneeling before us.

the Pope blesses me.  
and with drawn sword  
I plunge into the naked bodies.  
stabbing and decapitating.  
then wake up bathed in sweat.

beside my bed are sitting two nuns.

they're wearing white habits.  
high-buttoned wide sackcloth,  
where the body is no longer to be seen.

I'm so enlightened after the worldly path  
that I take the bodies seriously.  
and they're terrific.  
I praise them.  
I become erect.  
I grab the younger of the two –  
how old can she be ... under ...

RUINI                thank you. continue.

BENIGNI            why shouldn't I tell you this?  
I'm enlightened.  
I'm purified.  
I'm completely cleansed.  
I'm free of all bad, dirty thoughts  
and if I reach under a nun's habit in this condition  
then it's to feel that young, splendid body!

RUINI                please Mr Benigni!

BENIGNI            the two nuns hold up a white baptismal robe.  
toss it over to me.  
and under the baptismal robe  
my morning erection shows itself,  
purified of all worldly thoughts.

both of them – very professional - spay baldrian on it...  
and bring me to the chapel, in the baptistery.

RUINI            which day was it?

BENIGNI        Wednesday.

RUINI            write that down: Wednesday, 30. March 2005

## 19.

**a large sparse study. a computer switched on.**

BENIGNI        after an endless ceremony at the baptismal font  
which I can't understand, I'm baptised ...  
the cardinals apparently adore  
all these splendid ceremonies  
... I'm led to my study.

I open the laptop. I open the CD-Rom.

BENIGNI                    „Fly not,  
cowards and vile beings,  
for a single knight  
attacks you!

a slight breeze sprang up  
and the great sails began to move.

seeing which Don Quixote  
commended himself with all his heart  
to his lady Dulcinea,  
imploing her to support him  
in such a time of peril.

with lance in rest  
and covered by his buckler  
he charged at Rocinante's  
fullest gallop  
and fell upon the first windmill,  
but as he drove his lance-point into the sail  
the wind whirled it round with such force  
that it shivered the lance to pieces,  
sweeping with it horse and rider  
who went rolling over on the plain  
in a sorry condition.!”

BENIGNI        I think about  
how I can present this battle scene to the Holy Father.

who are his personal windmills which he takes for giants?  
and against whom will he ride until he gets his nose bloodied?

**20.****St. Peter's / holy music**

BENIGNI            thousands of people attend a prayer service  
in St. Peter's  
to say farewell to Giovanni Paolo II.  
St. Peter's Square is full of believers -  
it's obvious I won't be able  
to play Don Quixote.

I have to be Sancho Panza,  
sitting by the knight's deathbed  
recounting his adventure.

CARDINAL JOHN        that's impossible

MORSINI                your costume is ready

BENIGNI                it doesn't matter.  
I'll come in street clothes.  
I don't need anything.  
I'll conjure everything up out of nothing.

RUINI                  which day??

BENIGNI                which day

RUINI                  yes? I'm afraid we've lost our overview.

BENIGNI                sorry, I was a bit disoriented.

RUINI                  do you need a break?

BENIGNI                no, no, there's a question running through my head.  
may I ask it?

RUINI                  with pleasure, Mr Benigni?

BENIGNI                there was a report in RES PUBBLICA  
after your appeal  
for anyone having information about miracles  
concerning John Paul II.

RUINI                  yes. which report?

BENIGNI                from the Polish woman  
who claimed  
to have become pregnant at the sight of his coffin  
during the death mass.

was this woman given the chance  
to tell her story here?

RUINI            Mr Benigni, you must understand  
that we won't speak about this.

BENIGNI        how can we imagine this scene?

RUINI            please go on with your own story.

## 21.

### a one-room flat in Poland

BENIGNI        we're in a small one-room flat in Poland.  
and Polskie TV  
is carrying the funeral live.

and all of Rome is vibrating  
from the interceptor jets in the air  
as well as the helicopters  
armed with rockets.

RUINI            Mr Benigni ...

BENIGNI        and in St. Peter's Square  
an incredibly honouring public.  
mortal enemies crossing paths in Rome.  
only the imprisoned Iraqi dictator is missing -  
his presence apparently prohibited by the Geneva Convention  
or else  
they didn't want to be accused of torture by bringing him here.

RUINI            Mr Benigni, we don't want to rush you,  
but your time ...

BENIGNI        and the terrific farewell performance  
leads to tears in the small one-room flat  
in Cracow.  
and obviously  
hearts are softer than usual at this moment  
and the Polish busdriver or miner  
does something he hasn't done for long :  
wipes a tear from his wife's cheek.  
she kisses him  
happily

and the enormous reconciling and uniting power  
of the dead pope  
miraculously manifests itself again.

and then comes the pornographic phase ...

RUINI            Mr Benigni!



- BENIGNI           excuse me,  
                          but according to Polish testimony  
                          it wasn't a spiritual act  
                          which made her pregnant,  
                          it was her husband!  
                          a completely normal sex act!
- let's imagine the scene ...
- RUINI                Mr Benigni, that's not really necessary ...
- BENIGNI            but if it's a potential miracle.
- RUINI                that doesn't matter.
- BENIGNI            then comes the moving farewell sermon  
                          of the then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger  
                          now pope  
                          and the Polish couple start to undress.
- „put the Vodka away!“ she says ...
- RUINI                Mr Benigni ...
- BENIGNI            the man says it? you think so?  
                          but that would be extremely unlikely!
- so the Polish busdriver or miner  
                          puts the bottle away  
                          and wets his finger ...
- RUINI                Mr Benigni, the session is closed!!

## 22 . Sistine Chapel

- BENIGNI            „This is the day,  
                          o my Sancho,  
                          on which will be seen  
                          the boon my fortune is reserving for me.
- this, I say  
                          is the day  
                          on which as much as on any other,  
                          shall be displayed the might of my arm,,  
                          and on which I shall do deeds,  
                          that shall remain written in the book of fame  
                          for all ages to come.“
- RUINI                Saturday.  
                          Saturday 2. April 2005

BENIGNI

yes. Saturday.  
very early in the morning.  
the performance.

Sistine Chapel.  
the Pope's deathbed  
directly under Michelangelo's Last Judgment.

the cardinals.  
each in his loveliest uniform.

the pope is already lying in place.  
they bring me in.  
the cardinals take their seats.

POPE

I greet the man of La Mancha  
the Knight of the Sad Countenance  
Don Quixote

BENIGNI

and then the pope  
greet the man of La Mancha  
in 70 different languages.

a ritual  
which has its boring moments  
and drags on over two hours.

then Giovanni Paolo is so exhausted  
that he sinks onto his pillow  
and no longer moves.

no one dares to breathe.  
each lost in contemplation.

I see tears in the eyes of some.  
others wear ecstatic smiles.

they're thinking apparently of that paradise  
at whose door  
the Pope's soul is knocking  
and asking permission to enter.

after ten, fifteen minutes absolute silence -  
the only thing to be heard is the beating of the wings of the angel  
in Michelangelo's Last Judgment -  
the papal doctor  
tiptoes over  
to the bed  
and takes the dead hand, checking its pulse.

nothing.

BENIGNI            he bends over the Pope and listens to his heart.

nothing.

he takes out a small mirror.  
holds it under the Pope's holy nose.

no breath.  
nothing.

then he turns to the cardinals  
and shows them  
with a meaningful gesture :

over. the end. finito. thanks. that's it!!

huge applause.  
standing ovations.  
and the pope sits up  
and says :

POPE                      it's not easy:  
                              Sad Countenance

BENIGNI            the cardinals sit down.  
a few of them outraged by the joke  
that he  
- surely not for the first time -  
has played on them.

others are thrilled.  
they were looking forward to my performance.  
and thought  
they'd never have the pleasure.  
well.  
Mr Benigni, you're on!

BENIGNI                      Your Holiness.  
                              first of all I'd like to apologise  
                              for the fact  
                              that I don't look like the figure  
                              one knows from books  
                              films and musicals.

BENIGNI            the Pope smiles gently.

POPE                      (incomprehensible murmuring)

BENIGNI           and says –  
 „but yes, yes  
 with your tousled hair and gaunt countenance  
 and that nose held high in every wind,  
 as if the smell of battle were near... !“  
 I look just like he imagined the character.

he understands my desire to play without a costume.  
 without this jerkin.  
 and without this ridiculous shaving-bowl as a helmet.

in the old days in school in Cracow  
 he suffered a lot from this shaving-bowl.

the whole school  
 broke into laughter at his entrance.

and he swore  
 that the next helmet  
 he put on his head  
 would be a tiara!

POPE                                   tia.

BENIGNI           then they won't laugh any more!

POPE                                   tiara.

BENIGNI           no, Your Holiness.  
 I'm not the knight.  
 you are the knight.

I'm your servant and guide.  
 small fat stupid Sancho Panza.  
 the joker with the knapsack and the onion.  
 the one who rides on a donkey.  
 while his master sits on lovely Rocinante.

BENIGNI           the Pope shuts his eyes.  
 smiles.  
 then he winks at me and I begin.

BENIGNI           Your Holiness,  
 the Knight of the Sad Countenance  
 was always  
 the embodiment of the lack of a sense of reality for me.  
 at the same time  
 he was the one who was prepared  
 to fight for humanistic ideals,  
 full of bold determination.  
 without weighing  
 whether the goal was achievable or not.

BENIGNI

but it seems  
that in the end, Don Quixote's  
warrior life left behind only destroyed illusions

and a gnawing doubt  
that the ideals of love,  
of freedom and justice  
didn't acquire their desired value.

**whispering among the cardinals**

BENIGNI

listen to him,  
your true fat friend,  
my worthy knight!!

to you call out the injustice you want to eradicate,  
the hardships you want to abolish,  
the abuses you want to change,  
and the debts you must repay.

"scarce  
had the rubicund Apollo  
spread o'er the face of the broad spacious earth  
the golden threads of his bright hair,  
scarce had the little birds of painted plumage  
attuned their notes to hail with dulcet  
and mellifluous harmony the coming of the rosy Dawn  
when you,  
the renowned knight Don Quixote of La Mancha,  
quitting the lazy down,  
mounted his celebrated steed Rocinante  
and began  
to traverse the ancient and famous fields of Poland.

saying :  
happy the age!  
happy the time,  
in which shall be made known my deeds of fame,  
worthy  
to be moulded in brass, carved in marble  
limned in pictures, for a memorial for ever!"

noble knight, I would now like  
to recount your noble deeds once more before your eyes.

I'd like once again  
to wander through  
all your Stations of the Cross:  
ridiculous self-deception,  
evil misfortunes,  
painful experience  
and liberating battles.

BENIGNI I like to stop and examine certain images.  
for example  
the lovely image in Santiago de Chile!

you, my noble master,  
all in white,  
on the balcony of the presidential palace,  
and standing next to you  
Pinochet,  
also in a brilliant white uniform.

you conquered the horrible dictator  
with a handshake.

I want to go on  
to the next lovely image  
which shows us  
how you tore down and  
trampled on the Iron Curtain  
through the sole power of your prayers  
backed up by a couple of million dollars!

BENIGNI so I recount his life to him.  
in the brightest colours.  
perform for him  
how he kissed the earth at the airport in Kuala Lumpur.  
how he  
prostrated himself  
at the airports of Dubai, St.Pölten and Santa Cruz  
how he combatted pedophilia  
with an iron fist.

how he cleaned up corruption by certain  
of his collaborators in the Vatican bank.

I go on for five or six hours.  
the cardinals are getting fidgety ...  
start to make phone calls.

MORSINI no, it's not over yet  
it's been going on for hours!

CARDINAL 1 an eternity!!

BENIGNI two of them start eating a snack.  
others drink from flasks.  
festive laughter.

CARDINAL 2 give me a drink of water, please!

CARDINAL 3 I've needed to go to the toilet for two hours already.

BENIGNI            then the Pope waves me over to his bed  
                          and whispers in my ear:  
                          he wants to hear the story of Dulcinea.  
  
                          the love story.  
  
                          he's had enough of adventure.  
                          time for love!

POPE                                Dulcinea!

BENIGNI            with blazing eyes  
                          we smile at each other.

POPE                                Dulcinea.

BENIGNI            this part of Don Quixote,  
                          the love story with the incomparable  
                          Dulcinea from El Toboso,  
                          the pompous scenery for the oath,  
                          is also my favourite love story.

                          for it makes me think of my Maria.  
                          and I sing like a nightingale.

                          „her name is Dulcinea.  
                          her country El Toboso.  
                          a village of La Mancha.  
                          she is my queen and lady.  
                          her beauty is superhuman.  
                          since all the impossible  
                          and fanciful attributes of beauty,  
                          which the poets apply to their ladies are verified in her.

                          her hairs are gold.  
                          her forehead Elysian fields.  
                          her eyebrows rainbows.  
                          her eyes suns.  
                          her cheeks roses.  
                          her lips coral.  
                          her teeth pearls.  
                          her neck alabaster.  
                          her bosom marble.  
                          her hands ivory.  
                          her fairness snow.

                          and what  
                          modesty conceals from sight,  
                          I think and imagine,  
                          as rational reflection can only extol,  
                          not compare!“





BENIGNI           perhaps I have to help the Pope,  
                           who just can't seem to die,  
                           to leave this life.

                          perhaps I have to help pull this child  
                           he's turning into  
                           out of his present life,  
                           or help him, to press it out of it.

                          and I take the Pope  
                           in my arms,  
                           just as I learned in the course for pregnant fathers  
                           and I begin breathing.

                          I breathe and breathe.  
                           and I wipe the sweat from his brow.

                          and suddenly  
                           while I'm praising Dulcinea's breasts  
                           and reminding him of them once more,  
                           of her lovely face,  
                           of her wonderful self,  
                           telling him  
                           he'll be able to visit her  
                           in a few days,  
                           when he's finished down here  
                           with this work, with this adventure,  
                           because she's waiting for him on the horizon!

BENIGNI                           can you see the light, Holiness?  
   in heaven?

BENIGNI           and I begin to press.

BENIGNI                           yes ... yes... yes ...

BENIGNI           and finally he lets go.  
                           and the child is born.

                          it lies there between the Pope's legs.  
                           I take it  
                           and lay it on his belly.  
                           and he smiles at me.

                          not me.  
                           I know.  
                           he's not smiling for me.  
                           he's smiling for Dulcinea.

                          and then he says: yes!

BENIGNI           and closes his eyes.  
                    and I know  
                    I have to cut the umbilical cord.

                    and I take out my pocket knife  
                    and feel a heat, a fire  
                    rising up out of his body ...  
                    for a short time it floats over us and...

                    I press him against me.  
                    I know  
                    that it's done.  
                    it's over.  
                    he's let go.

                    for a second he floats over us again.  
                    a dark glittering second,  
                    which is a sip  
                    from the melancholy of absolute memory.

                    I look at him  
                    and I am blinded by a light.

                    and in this light I recognise  
                    the Black Madonna of Czestochow  
                    high up in Heaven.

                    she holds the child in her arms  
                    and smiles at me.

                    a path opens at her feet.  
                    a path of light and roses.

                    and it leads down to the clinic in Florence.  
                    there she kisses the child  
                    and lays it at my wife's breast.

                    the Pope's body lies lightly in my arms.  
                    very light.

                    I lay him back on his pillow.  
                    and nod to the cardinals.

BENIGNI                           „ that is the body of the Knight of La Mancha,  
  who was unrivalled in wit.  
  unequalled in courtesy.  
  unapproached in gentle bearing.  
  a phoenix in friendship.  
  generous without limit.  
  grave without arrogance.  
  gay without vulgarity.  
  in short,

first in all that constitutes goodness!"

BENIGNI           the cardinals are ecstatic.  
                          it takes a long time  
                          for them to wake from this state of rapture.  
                          that's when they realise :  
                          it's ... done.

BENIGNI                               yes, that was it.  
  and now I'd like to go back to my wife in the clinic!

BENIGNI           they take their leave of me.  
                          I can go back to Florence.

CARDINAL 1                       yes, go, go, Benigni

CARDINAL 2                       go to your Maria, Roberto!!

CARDINAL 3                       Roberto e Maria!

CARDINAL 4                       like in the Bible!!

## **25 .** **the clinic in Florence**

BENIGNI           in Florence I go at once to the clinic.  
                          to see my child.  
                          they don't let me go to my Dulcinea.  
                          I have to sit in the corridor.  
                          and wait for morning visiting hours.  
  
                          suddenly I feel a tickling on my chest.  
                          I wake up.  
  
                          they've put my son in my arms.  
                          he's hungry.

BENIGNI                               don't they feed you correctly?  
  well, all that's going to change now!

BENIGNI           I open my shirt. lay the child on my breast.  
                          it sucks and sucks.  
                          but no milk comes out.  
                          I'm disappointed.

MRS BENIGNI                       Roberto!

BENIGNI           Dulcinea appears.  
                          and gives me her lovely breast.  
                          I drink.  
                          the milk is so sweet?.

MRS BENIGNI                      yes. yes yes.

BENIGNI                      it's sweeter than anything  
I ate in the cardinals' canteen.

the milk streams down my throat directly to my breast.

the child sucks ecstaticly.

hours later, as I raise my head  
for the first time,  
I see on the wall just near the door of the delivery room  
a photocopy of Picasso's drawing:  
Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

the midwife comes  
and hands me a pill  
in which a tiny windmill is carved ...

I swallow it.

and fall into a sweet ... sleep.

RUINI                      Mr Benigni !!

BENIGNI                      „you must know, then,  
that the above-named gentleman  
gave himself up to  
reading books of chivalry  
with such ardour and avidity...

RUINI                      Mr Benigni!!

BENIGNI                      ... that he spent his nights  
from sunset to sunrise  
and his days from dawn to dark,  
poring over them.  
and what with little sleep  
and much reading,  
his brains got so dry...

MORSINI                      more more por favor...

BENIGNI                      that he lost his wits!“

RUINI                      Mr Benigni, thank you !!

BENIGNI                      yes?

RUINI                      I thank you in the name of the commission!

MORSINI more more por favor

RUINI You've told us  
a wonderful story  
and it reaches it's highpoint and conclusion  
with its miracle birth.

MORSINI more more por favor

RUINI with this testimony -  
if I've understood you correctly –  
you're trying to say  
that John Paul II  
was re-born as your child !

which is really a miracle in our western world!

with this testimony  
we'll be able to go public  
so that the process of beatification  
of the late beloved Pope John Paul II  
can come to a happy conclusion.

Mr Benigni,  
I thank you!

NUN **santo subito**  
radio drama by eberhard petschinka

music: WOLFGANG MITTERER

dramaturg: heide böwe

with  
norbert schwientek, ernst jakobi, barbara falter, felix von manteuffel,  
gerd baltus, walter nikolaus, wolf dietrich rammler, jerry gerber,  
wolfgang sörgel, peter kröger, wolfgang grosse, axel tielmann,  
corinna waldbauer, olgierd sobolewski  
and  
ANDRE JUNG as roberto benigni.

editing : christian grund  
sound : holger kliemchen and WOLFGANG MITTERER  
director's assistant : corinna waldbauer

directed by : P E T S C H I N K A

production : Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk with ORF 2007