

Excerpt from "Urban Abo"
Written by Bruce J. Robinson

SCENE TWO

(In front of the curtain, Fred crosses right. The only illumination's a SPOT. Monks cross left. Dominating the private chapel's a huge statue of Christ on the cross.)

MONKS

(singing)

DOMINAE FILII
 UNIGENITE, JESU CHRISTE.
 CUM SANCTO SPIRITU
 IN GLORIA DEI PATRIS AMEN.
 QUONIAM TU SOLIS SANCTUS.
 QUONIAM TU SOLIS SANCTUS.
 TIBI DIXIT, DIXIT, DIXIT.
 OOOOO.

(Offstage, the MONKS repeat the melody until otherwise indicated. By now, Fred's almost totally left.)

(And suddenly, JOSEPH CARDINAL MCCORMICK appears stage left as if out of nowhere. He's handsome, distinguished, in magnificent gowns. Fred's startled. However, he manages to kneel and kiss the ring.)

(Shocked, he jumps back and wipes his mouth.)

MCCORMICK

My son.

FRED

Cardinal McCormick. I've eagerly anticipated our first meeting.

MCCORMICK

As have I. I've heard much about you.

FRED

And I of you.

MCCORMICK

According to

(whipping out a People Magazine)
 this article in PEOPLE, you're a man of fiscal genius... and of ethics above reproach.

FRED

Don't trust everything you read.

MCCORMICK

(still referring to magazine)

You're fully dedicated to your family. And you're awake by 5 every morning - spending the next two hours in quiet meditation, envisioning new ways to do more business.

FRED

My personal habits - in lurid detail. But nothing metaphysical in waking early.

(He pauses, as if bothered by this habit.)

(glossing over)

I'm just a practical man. A business man.

MCCORMICK

We all are in one way or another. My business is maximizing the good. That's why I wanted to talk to you about Mollika.

FRED

Et tu, Monsignor?

MCCORMICK

But...

FRED

Pardon my frankness, Your Holiness; but I can save us both a great deal of time.

MCCORMICK

But...

FRED

The First Commandment of Capitalism: Thou shalt make profit.

MCCORMICK

I'm afraid, my son, that you've mistaken my interest in your work on Mollika. I -

(He extends his hand to stop conversation.)

MONKS' VOICES

(very doo-wapp)

SHOO-BE-DO-DOOP-DOO-WAA.

(Fred's amazed. VOICES stop singing.)

MCCORMICK

I've always been a '50's kinda guy.

FRED

Your Grace...

MCCORMICK

No, I'm Joe...

(a la Groucho)

but I'll be "Grace" for the right price.

(He breaks into laughter - which Fred joins.)

FRED

I never expected...

MCCORMICK

Even Jesus hadda kick-off his sandals sometimes.

(proud)

Hey; that ring bit was beatifically boffo, wasn't it?

FRED

So there was something...odd about that - ?

MCCORMICK

(delightedly interrupting)

Right on.

FRED

I kissed it and a little...

(Fred's unable to describe it.)

MCCORMICK

(providing word)

Tongue. No, my son; it wasn't your imagination. Some people - the ones who aren't hip enough for the room - just go away unenlightened, thinking it a miracle - like Our Lady of Lourdes or the Shroud of Turin or

(punch-line, pointing to Fred)

...a Jewish basketball player.

FRED

(a snare drum)

Bud-UM-bum.

(They're both amused.)

MCCORMICK

They think they've been "Frenched" by Jesus.

(flashing the ring)

A little something I picked up in Hong Kong. Anyhow, I'm not here to rend mysteries from their lives.

(enjoying epiphany)

I'm here to exploit 'em.

FRED

So why'd you...

MCCORMICK

-tell you?

(Fred grunts affirmatively.)

'cause we're both men of the world. We're a lot alike - you and I. We busted hump to get to where we are.

(He whips out a cigarette case - flips it open. Fred shakes "no.")

Right on. Filthy habit...and this guy's been into enough filthy habits to know of what he speaks. You're like me - a man who doesn't operate with any delusions. We're put on this planet to get all the "yucks" and bucks and power (with a capital "P") that the law will allow - and then some.

(strutting and boasting but also qualifying)

Don't get me wrong: got a great gig; righteous eats (go down to one of those Dago joints - the Chianti flows like wine and it's Lobster Fra Diavolo for the house), Frankie Valli sang at my niece's wedding...and look at these vines.

FRED

Very nice.

MCCORMICK

No shit, "Sherlock."

FRED

No wonder they call you the...

MCCORMICK

Say it.

FRED

But...

MCCORMICK

Say it...

BOTH

"The Dapper Snapper!"

(They both laugh.)

FRED

Gotta tell you, I never expected this.

MCCORMICK

I don't usually...

FRED

- open up?

MCCORMICK

Yeah, to people I don't know but I got the word on you from Rabbi Weitzman. (God's Country's just Smalltown, U.S.A.) You gotta know who you're dealing with to ascend to the "red." When the late Pope came to dinner, I served pierogi. When Franny Spellman came for tea,

(amused)

I served "twinkies." Weitzman said you were "aces," and Weitzman's a straight-shooter - even though he does smell of smoked fish.

(They break up. Then, back to point.)

Suss me, Daddy; it's mega-score time! You never know how long you gonna last - even in a relatively steady gig like the ol' church biz. We all gotta cover our "tushies." A new holy regime or some wacky splinter group can ootz-out even the best of us - i.e., these fairies are drivin' me out of my cassock. Dig: I like them nancy boys. Was there ever a time when there wasn't a homo in the duomo? You can hardly bend down in the Catholic church without some randy Archbishop nudging you with his pulsating "miter."

(He inhales on cig - exhales, relishing an old encounter.)

Anyhow, Weitzman tells me you're the hottest businessman in the tall town. A "Hymie" don't invest a "dimiey" unless he thinks he got a "vinner." He says you got a new project that you turned him on to.

FRED

Mollika.

MCCORMICK

Right on.

FRED

I intend to transform the sleepy isle of Mollika into a tourist trap of international bad-taste: a casino, a few hotels, McFood, jai alai, a track, roller derby.

MCCORMICK

(very excited by last offering)

Roller derby! Not counting the dough-re-mi for cars, coke, craps and other necessities - I've got some dinero to invest.

FRED

How much?

(McCormick proudly holds up five fingers.)

Thousand?

(McCormick shakes "no")

Million!?

MCCORMICK

Si, si.

FRED

Whew. That's a stack o' collection plates.

MCCORMICK

(slipping him an envelope)

Make me well, son.

FRED

(refusing to accept it)

Maybe you should wait till you see the specs and the structure of the deal.

MCCORMICK

(forcing it on him)

I know... everything. Even about the six-week proviso.

FRED

How'd you know about -

(McCormick looks heavenward.)

Ahhhh.

MCCORMICK

This six-week thing's strict. And if you don't put...

FRED

I won't fail! I'll score, God-fucking-dammit!!!!

MCCORMICK

(impressed)

That's what We like to hear.

FRED

(accepting check)

Now, I'm sure we can't miss - with

(meaning God)

The Big Boy safely in our corner.

MCCORMICK

I'll talk to Him about you. It was only divine revelation that squeaked me outa Enron.

(extending hand, which Fred grabs)

Gotta split. Drop by the Holy Sea anytime,

(saluting)

"Mate"; and I'll pipe you aboard.

(He grabs the large crucifix around his neck and blows into the bottom of the vertical strip. It's the sound of an official navy pipe.)

FRED

(returning salute)

You "salty dog!" I'll be in contact. I tell you, Padre...when we're near the goal, I'm like Paul Hornung.

Notre Dame '56! MCCORMICK

Joe Bellino. FRED

Annapolis '61. MCCORMICK

FRED
I'm Staubach and Lujack and all four damn "Horsemen," and not even a wall of Butkuses can keep me from the Promised Land.

MCCORMICK
We're impressed, my son. Whoops...
(leaving)
...gotta make tracks. C'mon back around midnight. I'd like to...
(full of innuendo)
...introduce you to Sister Marie.

(Even the normally unshockable Fred is horrified!)

FRED
I'm as...as liberal as the next guy, Your Holiness; but I'd find it impossible to...to...

MCCORMICK
To ball a nun?

(Fred nods "yes.")

(seemingly morally indignant)
Fred. I can't believe that you'd think I'd... That's sick! You can't have coitus with Sister Marie.

FRED
(relieved)
Of course not.

MCCORMICK
(with punch-lines and schtick)
She doesn't fuck...
(a la Groucho)
but I get Brother Andy to hide her dentures and then the fun begins.
(exiting)
What it is.

(McCormick raises hand for a high-five. Fred tries to hit the hand – but McCormick pulls his away and skitters out. Fred's amused.)

(He looks at the check and smiles. He thinks that life is full of surprises. As he sticks the check in his breast pocket:)

BLACKOUT