

## The Jewish Bride

By Roseline Glazer

How many of us are ever too married, too divorced, or too newly widowed not to enjoy thinking about what the perfect man would be like? Every woman wants a man with a brain, and if not that, then at least she wants to sit around imagining one and what it would take for him to be perfect, knowing full well that none of us are or ever will be.

I think of the perfect man as brilliant with a sense of humor, and when I think about him, at the moment only one comes to mind, and you guessed it. He happens to be the Pope and his name is Francis. I like to call him Francisco, even though his name at birth was Jorge Mario Bergoglio.

The reason the Pope would actually be perfect for a widow such as myself is because he is kind, authentic, brilliant, a Socialist, speaks Spanish, has a sense of humor, pays his own hotel bill on the morning after becoming the Pope, and is in the process of tearing apart the corruption in the Church. The Pontiff along with me, his Jewish bride, would of course remain celibate and we would keep our relationship hidden and away from the tabloids.

Yes, I would like to marry the Pope, but I am a realist and there's very little chance that he would agree 1) to getting married and 2) to getting married to a Jewish woman, but life does surprise us.

And my being Jewish shouldn't really matter, since Jesus was as well, and since a couple of months ago Francisco said, "There is no Catholic God, there is only God," when someone approached him offering his non-inclusiveness. That actually speaks of the holiest Jewish prayer, the Sheh'ma. "Hear O Israel, The Lord is God, the Lord is One." Francisco and I are on the same page.

In my dream, the Pope looks like the bouncer he was in Buenos Aires in the days before he entered the seminary. I am all of nineteen and living in Mexico City studying at the University when we meet in Chapultepec Park. He is there visiting a friend and we chat a bit.

My Spanish isn't that fluent, but he speaks some English so we talk about this and that and I'm impressed with his sense of justice.

His hair is dark and he has a magnificent smile with impish eyes. He appears tall and muscular and tells me that he works as a bouncer in a Buenos Aires nightclub, and that the work gets tedious at times but pays the bills. He is from the very city where the sultry tango was born and I am smitten.

We meet for coffee the following day before he has to leave and we visit the castle in the park built by the French that was once an imperial palace and is now a museum. I can feel his revolutionary fervor when he talks about the indigenous people of Mexico, and their poverty. Maybe that's just an Argentine thing, but it's there, and it's palpable. He brightens up and seems pleased when we see so many families walking in the park, sitting on the grass and having their picnics. There is laughter all around but our time together comes to an end as the sun draws down. We say goodbye, not even a kiss since he is very proper, even for a bouncer and somehow know we won't ever see each other again.

I wonder if, when he was a bouncer he learned to dance the tango, since most "Portenos" do, and if he still remembers the steps. I would buy a pair of uncomfortable stilettos so we could turn and twist while we moved across the dance floor with elegance and grace. I would want to hear all about what influenced him to become a priest. Did he believe he could change the world for the better and more efficiently from within the walls of the Church? I would also like to know all about his life, his friends and girlfriend with whom he ended the relationship, and what insightful choices led him to the life he sought. I am still amazed that decades ago he physically removed uncouth people from the nightclub where he worked. He didn't yet know the path he would eventually take in the wilderness before him, that place none of us know about until we are there. I would also love to talk with him about Che and whether he was an admirer of his back in the sixties like so many of us.

Not all the Cardinals who voted for the Pope knew whom they were getting. The man is a revolutionary without an AK-47. I wonder if he was always this way. A religious man who

seems to understand the whole point of what faith really means, walking in the steps of Jesus like no pontiff before him that I remember, accepting gays as people who need to be embraced as well as accepted and yes, the homeless, who need to be fed. He was recently quoted as saying, "Who am I to judge?" What next? Perhaps he'll be able to fracture the Vatican bank and unbolt the walls surrounding its unknown wealth, electing to distribute some of it perhaps to the elderly weary and impoverished. He offers hope in a world where hope has become even more elusive.

Francisco would have to travel incognito when visiting me on the Upper West Side, remove his white yarmulke and replace it with a black one, which would fit in very nicely with the neighborhood. We'd go to movies at the Lincoln Plaza Cinema, where he would enjoy seeing foreign films along with the Italian Film Festival at Lincoln Center in June. While we walked along Broadway, people might think they were seeing the Pope, but we'd laugh and say, "Oh, that's what everyone tells us," and keep walking. He'd have to start wearing sunglasses to transform his appearance just a little, maybe even a fake beard to go with the yarmulke, but we would most likely get away with it because it's too incomprehensible for anyone to truly imagine the Pope strolling with a woman on Broadway, stopping at Zabar's to get bagels, and crossing the street to get a decaf latte at Starbucks. Absurd.

Our biggest struggle would be how to get him to a Catholic Church for mass without being recognized. And what about his absence from the Vatican? I would have to go to Rome, get an apartment near the Piazza Navona with a rear stairway, because visiting him in the Vatican would be too difficult, unless I dressed up as nun and wore large hearing aids so no one would bother talking to me. Even then those around him would never allow a strange nun access to the Pope. Somehow, he would get away and at night we would go to the poor sections on the outskirts of Rome and feed the homeless, something I've read he does. We would wear cloaks with large hoods and I would wear a fake moustache to be less noticeable. Afterward, we'd sit outside at an all-night café and have a glass of Montepulciano, talk about our evening, and part to go our separate ways until we meet again.

I have no idea what I would tell my children because they would immediately know who he was. I would simply have to lie and tell them I was traveling and never introduce them. That's what widows do. They travel and have secret lives. Yes, that would work with the grandkids, but the parents would grow suspicious, even if I told them I was visiting different countries.

They all know me well enough to know what sort of homebody I really am in spite of how much I enjoy travel. And what about Dalia, my daughter-in-law from Buenos Aires? She might wonder why the sudden interest in the empanadas I was asking her to bake on a regular basis. And Francisco? He would love the empanadas I would have waiting every time he arrived in New York, telling me they were delicious and exactly like they taste in Buenos Aires. I would lie and tell him I made them myself until some months later when I would confess. Being the Pope he would forgive me.

He would eventually get worn out from all the hiding and travel and difficulty of our lives. We would most likely decide not to continue our relationship on a regular basis and simply meet once a year in a special place and wander around together, each of us in our same old ordinary clothes so no one would recognize him. I wonder where that would be and how much we would miss each other. He would tell me stories about his childhood and I would tell him stories about growing-up across the street from Bronx Park and how I used to play in the green houses inside the botanical gardens, hiding under tables when workers were there, and waiting until they left so I could go about rearranging plants on my own.

We would wander around the city every time he came to New York, especially in the middle of winter. Then we'd go to Arthur Avenue in the Bronx to eat authentic Italian food so he wouldn't get too homesick for Italy.

Later, at the end of the day we'd go to Brooklyn to visit my family and Dalia's empanadas would be waiting so he could once again savor Argentina. By then, my adult children would simply think of him as another one of their mother's inventions, someone she met on one of her journeys who resembles the Pope and whom she took a fancy to. Dalia is the

# Writing Raw

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only one who might get suspicious, because she would know he was from Buenos Aires. His pronunciation would give him away the second he said “la playa” in Spanish, instead of “la playa” the way everyone else pronounces the word for beach.

I would always have to remind him when we walked up the stairs to their Brooklyn apartment on the second floor, not to start blessing anyone.

**Roseline Glazer bio:** I live in NYC and Martha's Vineyard. I am a widow. Yiddish was my first language. I have published a few essays in the FORWARD as well as in the VINEYARD GAZETTE. I also have a chapter in Peter Simon's book ON THE VINEYARD II. I don't like swimming in water over my head, but used to sit on the back of motorcycles going 100 mph when I was 16 and insane. I started writing when I was 50.