

It's Panetti

By Oded Gross

CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

MICHAEL (FATHER MIKE): 35-50s, Male - A Catholic priest

TONY: 35-50s, Male - A police officer

STOOP: 23-35, Female - A rookie police officer, mildly autistic with blondish hair

LAURA (SISTER LAURA): 35-50s, Female - A nun and Michael's sister

SETTING

The living room in Father Mike's modest apartment, furnished simply with a couch, a few side tables, a lamp or two, and a TV facing upstage.

SYNOPSIS

Father Mike, a seemingly incorruptible Catholic Priest, has a secret, and the last people he wants an unexpected visit from are his old friend Tony, a Cleveland police officer, and Tony's new partner Stoop. When the officers arrive, the desperate priest must keep his cool and get rid of the cops before they catch on to what he's really up to. Also, the Cleveland Indians have a chance to win the World Series.

AT RISE:

A MODEST APARTMENT

The living room is empty, but the television, whose screen faces upstage is on. On the other side of the room, a lamp lies on the floor, knocked over from its perch on a nearby table.

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)

Indian fans were in for a thrill last night. Down by two in the 9th, two men on base, Mario Panetti fires one deep into left field winning their 2nd game in the series. Cleveland is still in this.

A doorbell rings.

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)

The Braves, you may recall, took an early lead in this series winning the first three games. But Panetti, who was injured games 1 through 3, unable to play, is back and better than ever.

The doorbell rings again. MICHAEL, a Catholic Priest, wearing the appropriate vestments, emerges into the living room from offstage. He is looking a curious mix of guilt, fright and uncertainty.

SPORTSCASTER (O.S.)

It's been over 65 years since the Indians took home the title of World Series Champions, most folks thought it would take nothing short of a miracle to get them here again, but Mario Panetti just may be the miracle they've been praying for.

Michael grabs the remote and mutes the TV. He makes his way to the door, looks through the peephole, then, after a moment's consideration, opens it.

TONY, a no nonsense, gruff police officer enters urgently, followed by his new rookie partner, STOOP, a blonde-haired, mildly autistic woman.

TONY

Father Mike, thank God!

MICHAEL

Tony. Is everything all right?

TONY

No, not really. We got a bit of an emergency.

MICHAEL

What can I do?

TONY

You can let me use your bathroom.

MICHAEL

...I don't understand.

TONY

I need to use your bathroom. I got some stomach issues.

MICHAEL

Oh. You're not here on duty?

TONY

I'm going to disregard the obvious pun and simply say that while no crime has been committed yet, there may very well be a crime scene in your bathroom when I'm done. Please. I'd rather not use the public rest rooms in this neighborhood.

MICHAEL

Of course. Why don't you use the one in my sister's room, mine has some unfortunate plumbing issues.

TONY

The one in your sister's room may have some unfortunate plumbing issues when I'm done.

He quickly heads off to the bathroom in Michael's sister's room, leaving his partner behind. There is a momentary awkward pause.

MICHAEL

Hello. I'm Father Mike, an old friend of Tony's.

STOOP

I'm Stoop. His new partner.

MICHAEL

What kind of name is Stoop?

STOOP

It's a nickname. Tony gave it to me.

MICHAEL

Is it short for something?

STOOP

Stupid, I think.

MICHAEL

How... endearing.

STOOP

Tony thinks I'm stupid. Too dumb to be a police officer.

MICHAEL

He's probably just hazing you. I'm sure you're plenty smart.

STOOP

What do you do for a living, Father Mike?

MICHAEL

I'm... a priest.

Stoop nods, then looks around. After a beat:

STOOP

As I understand it, priests are required to fast on Good Friday.

MICHAEL

That's true.

STOOP

...And Good Friday was about 6 months ago, was it not?

MICHAEL

It was.

STOOP

...So you've probably been to the supermarket since then?

MICHAEL

I have.

STOOP

...I didn't have lunch today.

MICHAEL

Can I get you something to eat?

STOOP

Well... I really shouldn't. It is Yom Kippur.

(Then)

Perhaps something small.

MICHAEL

Let me see what I have.

Michael heads offstage to the kitchen.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

So, you're Jewish?

STOOP

A little bit, yeah.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

But you're not fasting?

STOOP

I usually just fast between meals. I have a little breakfast. Then I fast. For a little bit. Till lunch. But I didn't have lunch today. We went to some Italian joint...

Michael returns. He is holding an apple.

MICHAEL

You don't like Italian?

STOOP

No, I love Italian, but the faucet in their bathroom wasn't working.

MICHAEL

What does that mean?

STOOP

I think it means they're not washing their hands.

MICHAEL

I have an apple. Will that do?

STOOP

I was just going to say, "do you have an apple?"

MICHAEL
(Playfully)

Do you believe in coincidences?

Stoop notices the fallen lamp on the floor.

STOOP

I was just about to ask you the same question.

Stoop crosses to the lamp that is on the floor and picks it up, returning it to the table. Michael watches her, his smile slowly fading.

MICHAEL

I don't usually buy apples, so I suppose it is a coincidence.

STOOP

And yet don't Catholics believe in divine providence?

She takes the apple from Michael and takes a bite.

MICHAEL

We do.

Stoop habitually inspects the room.

STOOP

Tony says you won a bunch of money on a game show or something. You were on TV?

MICHAEL

It hasn't aired yet.

STOOP

What kind of game show?

MICHAEL

Trivia.

STOOP

I'm good with Trivia. Was it shot in front of a live audience?

MICHAEL

It was.

STOOP

I'm not good in front of a lot of people.
(Then)

What kinds of questions?

MICHAEL

Oh let's see.

(He tries to recall, then)

Well, I won with this one: "Which 19th century literary character was a real honorary Fellow of The Royal Society of Chemistry?"

STOOP

Yeah. I wouldn't be able to answer that in front of a lot of people.

Tony re-enters.

TONY

I'm done.

MICHAEL

All better?

TONY

Not entirely. I might have to come back here later, if that's OK.

MICHAEL

I got you some Immodium.

He pulls from his pocket some medicine and holds it out for Tony.

TONY

You're the best.

He reaches for it, but Michael pulls it away playfully.

MICHAEL

Will I see you at church on Sunday?

TONY

You're going to ransom my Immodium?

MICHAEL

If I have to. The ends justify the means, right?

STOOP

Actually, that's wrong. Catholics don't believe that.

Michael turns to Stoop.

MICHAEL

I was just playing.

Tony grabs the Immodium.

TONY

Ignore her. She's an idiot.

MICHAEL

(To Stoop)

You seem to know a lot about my religion.

STOOP

Oh, there's some things that still confuse me. For example, I know this one Christian. His name is Christian... There's no one in my religion named Jewish... Though I have a friend her name is Julie, which sounds like an adverb for doing something in the Jewish way.

TONY

I told you, she's an idiot.

STOOP

I read the Torah very Jewly.

Tony crosses to the muted TV.

TONY

Did you see the game last night?

MICHAEL

I did.

TONY

And?

MICHAEL

I think we're back in the series.

TONY

We're still down by one.

MICHAEL

Panetti's back.

TONY

They lost three.

MICHAEL

Without Panetti. He was injured. He's not injured anymore.

TONY

This is the Tribe we're talking about. They haven't won a series since...

MICHAEL

1908.

TONY

There's no way they're gonna win the next two. One man can't make the difference.

MICHAEL

One man has made the difference. He is a Gold Glove catcher. A triple crown winner. He's unstoppable against righties. If he is playing, Cleveland will win.

TONY

You believe that?

MICHAEL

Absolutely I believe that.

TONY

Maybe you want to put your money where your mouth is.

MICHAEL

You know gambling is a sin.

TONY

I don't think it is.

MICHAEL

Trust me.

TONY

You always think you're so holier than thou.

MICHAEL

I am holier than thou.

STOOP

Actually, the bible doesn't specifically condemn gambling.

TONY

See.

STOOP

Though it does encourage people to stay away from attempts to get rich quick.

MICHAEL

See.

STOOP

Like a game show.

Michael tries to ignore this comment.

TONY

A small bet! You just won a hundred and something thousand dollars.

MICHAEL

A hundred and fifteen.

TONY

A hundred and fifteen thousand dollars. I think you have money to spare.

MICHAEL

They haven't paid me yet. The show hasn't even aired.

TONY

But when they pay you, you can pay me the money you'll owe me from this bet.

MICHAEL

What kind of fan are you that you're willing to bet against the Indians?

TONY

I'm a big fan.

MICHAEL

No, I'm a big fan! I'm not going to bet against them. I'm not going to put that negative energy out there. There's nothing I want more than for them to win the World Series.

TONY

So you're sitting on all this money, but you're not going to make me a small wager? What are you going to do with it? Buy more clerical collars? A new chalice? A portable mass kit?

STOOP

Are you going to pay off this foreclosure notice?

They turn to Stoop who is reading a notice on Michael's side table.

STOOP

Sorry. Occupational hazard.

TONY

(To Stoop)

What are you doing? You don't read his mail. He's a priest, not a Muslim.

Tony grabs the letter.

TONY

What's the matter with you? You have no respect for another person's privacy?

(Then to Michael, reading his mail)

The bank's foreclosing on the orphanage?

MICHAEL

We've had some financial difficulties lately. And yes, I plan to use my winnings to get us out of debt.

TONY

You're giving all that money to the orphanage?

MICHAEL

I am. That orphanage is everything to me. There's nothing I want more than to help them.

Beat.

STOOP

I thought there's nothing you want more than for the Indians to win the World Series.

TONY

Stoop, let's go.

(To Michael)

Sorry to bother you, Father.

MICHAEL

No bother.

TONY

I feel guilty that I'm always trying to corrupt you.

MICHAEL

I'm not incorruptible. I just don't like gambling away my money.

TONY

I hear ya. Good luck with this.

He hands him his letter.

TONY

Tell your sister, I say hi. Sorry I missed her.

Tony exits.

MICHAEL

Nice to meet you, Stoop. For what it's worth, I don't think you're stupid, and I can't imagine why Tony does.

STOOP

Perhaps my fair hair.

MICHAEL

Sure the blonde thing. Well, you can't judge a book by it's cover.

STOOP

(Pointedly)

I never do.

(Then)

Did you know in Old English "fair haired" literally translates to the name Sherlock?

As in Sherlock Holmes, the 19th century literary character who was a real honorary Fellow of The Royal Society of Chemistry.

(She smiles)

Good day.

Stoop exits. A moment later. LAURA, Michael's sister, and also a nun, enters in a panic.

LAURA

Michael! Thank God you're home.

MICHAEL

Laura, what's the matter?

LAURA

Did we get any messages?

MICHAEL

Why?

LAURA

I ran into the producer today. From the game show. He said he tried to call you.

MICHAEL

Laura, what's the problem?

LAURA

The bank's gonna foreclose on the orphanage. We have to help them!

MICHAEL

We're going to help them.

LAURA

The producer said you only get paid once the show airs.

MICHAEL

I know.

LAURA

If the show doesn't air for whatever reason- if it gets pre-empted, the producer says you don't get paid. It's in the contract.

MICHAEL

Laura, the show is not going to get pre-empted.

LAURA

It is scheduled to air October 7th.

MICHAEL

I know.

LAURA

Game 7 of the World Series is scheduled for October 7th! If the Indians win the next game there will be a game 7, your show won't air, you won't get paid...

MICHAEL

Laura-

LAURA

...We can't help the orphanage. I mean, I want the Indians to win, I do. Normally. But they got to lose. They got to lose! I never thought I'd ever say that, but they got to lose.

MICHAEL

Laura, don't worry about it. It's going to be OK.

LAURA

I think I'm gonna be sick. I'm gonna be sick!

Laura races into her bathroom. A moment later, she re-emerges holding her nose.

LAURA

Good God, was someone using my bathroom!

She beelines to Michael's "broken" bathroom.

MICHAEL

Don't!

But it's too late. Suddenly she screams, racing out.

LAURA

Michael, there's a man in the bathroom. He's tied up. He's got a hood over his head. Who is that man?

MICHAEL

It's Panetti.

Curtain.