

Alaric von Satyrane

The Tale of Martin Namibia

“Kick it you fookin’ wanker,” bellowed a young voice from the stands.

The team was stunned. They looked up into the stands to see the source.

“Martin, shush,” said Martin’s mother sitting next to him.

A bell rang on the pitch. “Back to play,” called a voice.

The home team was close to making a goal. The forward fumbled.

“Pumpkin toes,” shouted Martin. The team glanced up again but resumed play again although with sheepish expressions.

The score was close. The home team needed one goal to win, but they were knocking the ball around aimlessly. The away team took the ball and ran down the field. The spectators went suddenly quiet then laughed and shouted. Martin Namibia, a ten-year old boy, had run onto the field and taken the ball from the away team. He single-handedly outmaneuvered the opposing team members, drove up to the other end of the field, and powered it into the net through the desperately flailing arms of the opposing goalie.

The crowd exploded in cheers. The players of the home team lifted him up onto their shoulders and paraded him around the field.

Before the start of the next game the manager of the home team came out onto the field to address the spectators and television audience. It was rumored even the pope was watching. "I'm here to announce that we have offered a contract to young Martin Namibia, the youngest player ever to play professional football."

The crowd roared. The team shouted their approval and sang a round of "He's a Jolly Good Fellow." Martin's father, a beer in hand, sat beaming from the stands.

After several games, all of which Martin had won single-handedly, Martin was in the locker room in Rome. He was dancing on a bench wearing only a tight speedo. "Watch me flex me bum cheeks," he said to anyone who might be listening. His father was sitting on a chair by the wall several beer cans on the floor next to him. The team manager walked in followed by a somber man in a tight suit. The manager sat down ceremoniously on the bench.

"Martin," the manager started slowly. "I don't know quite how to tell you this but..."

"Get on wid it," growled Martin. The man in the tight suit opened his briefcase.

"Well, you see, Martin, the other players feel, with you winning every game by yourself, that they have nothing do."

"Aint' I winnin' good?" said Martin.

"Well of course you are, Martin, "and we owe it all to you that we are the champions. But football is not just about winning, it's about making money, and revenues have fallen."

"So winnin' ain't good enough for ya," said Martin, taking a swig from his father's beer can.

The manager glanced at the man in the suit. "I'm afraid we are going to have to let you go." The man in the suit handed the manager a piece of paper. "If you'll just sign..."

He was interrupted by a priest in a black cassock. "Excusa me, are you the meester Martin?" said the priest.

"Fookin' right I am." said Martin.

The priest held out an enormous envelope to Martin. Inside was a large sheet of paper on which was a letter in hand-written calligraphy.

"Hallo, what's it say?" said Martin to the manager.

"It says you are invited to an audience with his excellency the pope." said the manager. "That's an invitation to visit."

The priest bowed low and left the room. The man in the suit made a confused worried expression.

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Martin and his parents entered a huge, ornate, Baroque hall in the Vatican. The pope and his entourage entered from the other end of the hall. They walked quickly, the pope in the lead. The pope opened his arms as he neared the boy, haltingly speaking in English. Martin interrupted him and began a long monologue in perfect Latin gesturing to the old-master paintings on the walls and ceiling. The pope's entourage fluttered with astonishment. Regaining his composure, the pope responded in Latin. His entourage leaned forward to hear Martin's response, bursting out laughing, putting their hands to their mouths and making embarrassed grins.

The pope and his party bowed and retired.

As Martin and his parents were about to board the plane back to England, a papal car sped onto the tarmac and screeched to a halt by the stairway. The same priest who delivered the letter scrambled out with another huge creme-colored envelope.

"Your presence is again requested by His Excellency", said the priest.

Martin was brought out onto the balcony of St. Peter's where the pope stood before a hushed, expectant crowd. After giving the sign of benediction to the crowd, the pope began in English.

"I and the Vatican Council wish to inform the faithful and the world that I have chosen in the interests of the Church to resign and designate Martin Namibia as my successor, Pope Martin I." The crowd murmured with uncertainty.

Papal robes were brought out and placed on Martin. The pope passed his crozier to Martin and placed the mitre on his head. The former pope then receded from the balcony. Martin came forward to the microphone.

Martin, in a thick cockney accent said, "As my first official act as pope I declare peedophilia to be legal. I personally like nuttin' bettah than to have my willy sooked off by some fat, old, bald poofter and gettin' a few quid out of it in the bargain."

The crowd fell into uneasy silence separating into small groups. Others streamed out. By nightfall angry crowds were demonstrating all over Rome. Overnight, diocese after diocese descended into turmoil, some threatening to break away. Orthodox priests, smirking behind their long, hoary beards, stationed themselves outside Catholic churches passing out leaflets and blessing the faithful as they came out enticing them to join the Orthodox Church, as the only true one, "as this incident proves". The Vatican issued an announcement that Pope Martin would address the congregation the following day.

The next morning the square filled up mainly with middle-aged men shouting angrily. As time passed they grew more unruly. Columns were defaced. After two hours a cardinal came out onto the balcony standing quietly until the crowd quieted down. He spoke first in Latin and then in halting English.

"We speak now to inform the world that Pope Martin I has disappeared and we must now initiate the procedure for selecting the next pontiff."

Isolated cheers went up from the crowd.

A worldwide search was conducted for Martin, funded mainly by the Daily Mail in England and the National Enquirer in the USA.

"Oy 'aven't got a clue," said his mother to reporters. His father appeared in news photos holding beer cans he was given by beer companies to advertise but said nothing.

Years later a yak was found wandering the Gobi desert in Mongolia wearing elaborate gold brocade robes. A team of papal vestment experts was dispatched. The robes of the popes are each specifically made for each pope and include embroidery with both overt and secret symbols identifying the wearer, as the reader no doubt knows well. After a thorough examination it was determined that the yak was indeed wearing the robes of former Pope Martin I. But Martin was nowhere to be found. The Vatican team continues to this day chasing yaks in the Gobi.

On special assignment for the BBC, this is Damian Redrump in the Gobi desert.

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