

QUERY LETTER

RE: ***The Seabird***

The enigmatic and unsung demise of Pope John Paul I

In 1977, Albino Cardinal Luciani, the affable Patriarch of Venice, was elected Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. Prepared to impose substantive changes, the promising new pope was found dead of an “apparent” heart attack – a scant 33 days later. The cause of death has long been debated in numerous scholarly books, arguing the circumstances regarding Luciani’s demise. Enough with books. It’s time for an engaging, thought-provoking motion picture.

Santino Thomas Bonetti, nicknamed “T-Bone”, is a skinny Italian kid who joins the navy in 1944, skirting his misgivings about entering the seminary. After his ship is sunk by a renegade Japanese submarine, he watches his shipmates die one by one. Upon his rescue, he vows to become the priest his mother longs for him to be. Twenty years hence, he grows weary of his priestly duties. He’s reassigned to become an emissary to Cardinal Albino Luciani – the quirky, affable Patriarch of Venice, who specifically seeks an American. A strong bond is forged. Soon thereafter, Pope Paul VI dies. Surprisingly, Luciani is elected – to much delight and acclaim of some, and possibly the chagrin of others. They suddenly find themselves perched at the pinnacle of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Think “Butch & Sundance at the Vatican”. But instead of two charming rogues, we have two determined priests (and a supportive nun) – poised and determined to instill sweeping reforms that might well have altered church history – until fate intervenes.

Curiously, the Catholic Church forbids performing an autopsy on a pope. The body is considered “sacred”. Moreover, change is always a difficult – and within the Vatican, most unwelcome. Indeed, the Vatican Bank’s clandestine activity was a sub-plot in Coppola’s *Godfather III*. Michael confesses killing Fredo to “Cardinal Lombardo” – who is soon elected, but shortly thereafter, is found dead of [that] convenient heart attack. The powers that be simply swept Luciani under the rug. His successor even took his name: “John Paul”, simply adding, “II” in a swift, seamless effort to transition. *The Seabird* lifts that rug – and takes a peek under it.

My script was sparked by a stunning newspaper image back in 1995. At that time, I could not sell it to my mother, in spite of some good “reads” – most notably, ace screenwriter Ron Bass. Among other reasons, it was noted that (then) Cardinal Roger Mahoney was chummy with the Hollywood elite – and my script might be viewed as “controversial” (uh, that’s bad?) But in 2012, Mahoney was “relieved of his duties” – after which the Archdiocese of Los Angeles paid out some \$660 million to victims of pedophilia. We often ask ourselves; “what would the world be like today if President Kennedy had not been assassinated? Or Martin Luther King? – or Bobby Kennedy?” Albino Luciani (“The Smiling Pope”) was, in my view, right up there among those fallen heroes. *The Seabird* does not intend to implicate or solve a crime – if indeed there even was one. Nor does it cast blame. It is intended to probe and provoke thought – as truly great films often do.

To imagine what dreams may have come, drives my passion in pursuit of telling this story. Like any determined writer who never gives up, who patiently waits for his turn, I respectfully submit this for your consideration. I’d be delighted to send the first 10 pages of the script – or the entirety of this compelling, engaging and timeless story. *The Seabird* is all that – and a bag of chips. Or popcorn, if you will.

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The Seabird is properly registered with Writers Guild East: SP #1318025