

THE ORGANIST

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SEATTLE - NIGHT

City lights. Winter rain. A ship's FOGHORN.

EXT. CONTAINER PORT - CONTINUOUS

Under the arc lights, a gantry crane stacks containers on the deck of a hulking vessel.

EXT. HARBOR DISTRICT, TRANSIENT HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Dingy yellow light from the windows.

INT. HOTEL, SINGLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A man in a raincoat - we never see him clearly - sits at a table. Hunched over a sheet of the hotel's stationery, he painstakingly prints the words: 'Dear Father,'

The pen, awkward-looking in the man's left hand, slowly covers the page with unfluent printed writing.

OVERLAPPING SHOTS:

(A) A circled classified ad: 'Experienced crew, all grades wanted. Immediate sign on. Mr Rodriguez - 555 4261'

(B) The following phrases from the letter:

... not written for so long...  
... ship's crew is hard work but...  
... Mr Rodriguez says...  
... get to see the world...  
... Japan and Korea...  
... maybe Los Angeles or even Hawaii...  
... know you have been praying for me...  
... sorry I have not...  
... tell Mr LeClerc 'Hi'...  
... God bless you both for everything you did for me...

Instead of signing the letter, the man takes another piece of paper from an inside pocket. On the paper a specimen signature, 'Bobby Mercier', has been copied over and over again.

The man turns both pieces of paper upside down. He switches the pen to his right hand and copies Bobby Mercier's signature at the bottom of the letter.

LATER

The man, now stripped down to his skivvies, opens his cheap suitcase. He takes out a wooden crucifix and stands it on the bed, propping it upright against the wall. He kneels before it, composes himself, prays:

MAN

(sotto; intense)

Our Father, which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom  
come...

ON THE TABLE, a stamped, sealed envelope addressed to Father Toulain, St Mary's Mission, Guelph, Canada.

MAN (CONT'D)

... Thy will be done on earth, as  
it is in heaven. Give us this day  
our daily bread...

THE RAINCOAT, thrown over the back of the chair, has an airline ticket sticking out of one of the pockets.

MAN (CONT'D)

... And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass  
against us...

IN THE TRASHCAN, the paper covered with copies of Bobby Mercier's signature has been scrunched up and thrown away.

MAN (CONT'D)

... And lead us not into  
temptation, but deliver us from  
evil: For thine is the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory, for ever  
and ever. Amen.

The man's 'Amen' is an anguished gasp, almost a sob. He bows his head, wrings his hands, stays down on his knees.

INT. SAME ROOM - MORNING

From an adjoining room, a continual hacking smoker's cough.

The man's arm reaches out from beneath the bedclothes and his hand fumbles blindly for his quietly ticking travel alarm clock. He locates it, grabs it, brings it back beneath the covers to check the time.

EXT. HARBOR DISTRICT, STREET - DAY

The man mails the letter.

INT/EXT. BUS STATION - DAY

An airporter bus starts to pull away. The man runs after it. The driver stops, lets him on.

The bus pulls out into the traffic.

Overhead, an airplane just out of Tacoma International Airport turns, climbs, disappears into the clouds.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

Two minutes into a scrappy, testosterone-charged under-18 bushleague basketball game: St Mary's 'Steam' trail Seaway 'Metal' by three points.

A 'Metal' player carves out some space, shoots... scores. St Mary's works the ball back up the court.

MICHAEL, a St Mary's boy, has the ball. Short but fast, he dodges around JC, the Metal's captain. But before he can get clear, JC catches him with a lightning rabbit punch to the kidneys.

Michael crashes forward into some other players. A stray elbow catches him in the eye. He goes down. The ball goes free. The thin crowd - almost all 16 to 19 year old boys - erupts. The REF finally blows his whistle.

Michael climbs to his feet. Unassisted, clutching his injured eye, he walks unsteadily off the court.

FATHER TOULAIN - 55, smallish, wiry, cropped white hair and clerical collar - hastens up from his seat and helps Michael back to the bench.

On court, another St Mary's boy, ANDREW, pounds the ball against the floor in frustration. The ref calls for the ball, gets it. Pressure builds for the game to restart.

Toulain picks the most obvious boy on the bench - LUC DEVERAUX, 17, good looking, well-knit - and sends him in. Play resumes.

Keeping an apprehensive eye on the game, Toulain rejoins his companion: XAVIER LECLERC, mid 30s, virile, athletic, but already with hints of fleshiness, heaviness.

LECLERC

Is Michael all right, Father?

TOULAIN

Oh, he'll do. He'll have a nice black eye to show off to the other lads in the morning.

He pats LeClerc's knee, leans forward, intent on the game.

TOULAIN (CONT'D)

Look at the new boy, now. Luc Deveraux. Came to us last week. He's a fine-looking boy.

On court, Luc, limber, moving well, focuses on the task in hand. He shoots. Three points.

St Mary's hustle back into position as the Metal work the ball up the court - but Luc makes a flashy interception. The crowd gets vocal. Luc takes the ball forward, passes - and the Steam score again.

TOULAIN (CONT'D)

(shouts)

Come on the Steam!

(claps; excited,  
to LeClerc)

We'll beat them yet! First time  
in twelve years!

On court under the St Mary's hoop, JC jostles Luc. Luc jostles back. Another player sends the ball over their heads and scores. At that exact moment, JC brings his heel down hard on Luc's instep.

The ref looks the other way.

LECLERC

Rough game.

TOULAIN

Boys. You know. Probably not as bad as it looked.