

LAST CONFESSION.

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By : **dadio**

A NUN AND A PRIEST IN CONFESSIONAL.



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I feel the wooden beads through my fingers said Sister Luke the smoothness runs along the skin the prayers soak into the wood the fingers pressing each bead each prayer passing through lips from heart and mind and then as if God spoke the light through the window comes and I feel the light on my head even though my head is covered and oh look my love has come the priest in the confessional leaned forward his nose close to the wire mesh his ears strained for the hearing his hands pressed together his knees pressed hard one against the other he had heard nigh on the whole community of nuns today this may well be the last but he had to strain hard to hear her yet by the sound of her voice he could not make out her face through the mesh her face seemed hidden in the semi-dark I rise at dawn and the birds and their song welcomes me and the wind through the cloister is like the voice of God even though I know it is the wind and yet I welcome it the voice I mean I open my arms and hands to the wind and stand in the cloister arms outstretched my robes about me my sandaled feet sensing the wind and feel of it on my flesh as if God Himself were breathing on my toes the priest pressed his ear to the mesh the nun's voice was like silk soft and barely touching his ears he could feel her breath through the mesh could sense her excitement travelling along the air he wanted to tell her calm down but he was intent on hearing her voice he reached into his pocket for his rosary and thumbed a few beads he tried to place her tried hard to put features to her he leaned back in the chair his rosary between fingers his eyes searched the image coming through the mesh the brown and white the movement of the hands holding something the voice almost in singsong sound and when I place my fingers in the stoup inside the church door I sense my Saviour's touch as if He were about to bless to aid me in ablutions my fingers damp my hands seemingly red with His blood and yet it is water I know I see it yet it feels like blood red and cherries the priest heard her words they seemed as if softened between lips and if pressed and issued by a hundred tongues he scratched an ear hairy hair grew there he knew sometimes he would trim them off he leaned forward again the nun was still talking her confession almost endless as if she were searching through her inner soul for each and every indiscretion each imperfection he thought she would have stopped by now thought she would run out of sins to confess but no still she went on and on he breathed in air he felt closed in like the walls of the confessional were pressing in on him he squeezed the beads between fingers felt the hard smoothness thought of Plato while at the seminary the philosophy the Greeks and the moderns how the old priest used to talk of the essence of things and what was left after you took away the attributes of the thing and in the refectory the nun said while sitting there listening to the sister read and eating the food on the plate or sipping from the glass of water and how I like that the cool water on my lips and I offer it to my Groom to quench His dried lips here my Lord I say here drink mine the priest felt his backside become numb with the sitting so long the pain in his hip increased his wanted to stand and stretch his limbs but he had to wait to the nun had finished yet her voice droned on sometimes it would rise high then plunge down as if through the very floor itself he had to speak soon he felt he had to break up this monologue of a confession never in all his priestly years had he heard such a confession even in the dark parts of the city even amongst the whores who entered his confessional had they taken as long even though he had to place his hands over his ears at their words and sins he never was there as long and at night after Compline the nun said when I fall into my straw bed and pull the sackcloth over me I sense he is there waiting for me or just sitting there listening to me and sometimes I say come my Lord come close to me save me from the night and dark and sometimes I sense Him enter my bed and I feel the whole earth groan with jealousy for His closeness the priest coughed he patted his chest he had to give up his pipe the cough was heavy his doctor said to give up that smelly pipe Father but still he smoked and drew in the dark shag he coughed and coughed and spat out phlegm in his open hand the nun paused her words stopped her fingers held the beads of the rosary tight her ears strained to hear what the priest had said had he spoken had he asked her questions? she leaned forward her nose inches from the wire mesh she could see the outline of the priest in the semi dark had he spoken in Latin? she had still not done there was to say she felt but the priest said nothing he was silent maybe she had imagined him speaking anyway father I hold my Bridegroom in my arms and tell Him of my love and how I love Him and wish He were all mine but I know He is the Groom of many the old priest's head fell lifeless on the wooden panel of the confessional

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the coughed gone the rosary hung between dead fingers his eyes were open gazing into the dark dribble hung from still lips[^] but Oh how I love Him Father the nun went on my Groom my Lord the wet dribble from the dead priestâs lips dripped and dripped on the dark wood[^] floor and board.

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