

Confession

by Gary Moshimer

As a boy Edward had stayed in the confessional several times in a row. The priest was drunk and couldn't tell it was the same kid over and over. The tiny door slid open..."Scobbity bobbity...tell me your sins..." Edward confessed what he thought were sins, then said the Hail Marys. He stayed put. The little door closed and opened again. The priest's face was a nodding shadow behind the screen.

"Scobbity bobbity...tell me your sins..." Edward had to come up with more sins, then the next time had to confess to making up the last bunch of sins, and so on, until finally the door of the booth flew open and a nun snatched him out by his collar. She sat him on her knee to explain, jostling her leg ever so slightly beneath his skinny butt.

Twenty years later Edward bounced on the knee of a woman dressed as a nun, while a man dressed as a priest and drunk as a skunk sat on the edge of the hotel bed and looked on. Edward had paid two bills for this arrangement. His wife was just down the hall in their room, thinking he was walking on the beach. He'd told her the story of the confessional, a famous story. She thought it hilarious, had no idea of the dark agony it held for him. He would never ask her to do certain things.

This couple wanted to hear the story, wanted to know how he came to this sad state, but Edward didn't want to tell it right now, didn't want to lighten his twisted desire. He talked them out of it, said it was his money.

They got down to business. The fake nun had the real deal shoes, clunky and black. They pained his ankles when she kicked. She was naked under her habit. Edward reached back and felt her breasts under the fabric. They were too big, but the nipples were like he had imagined on the real sister, hard and long and fat. He had pictured the real priest twisting them ever so slowly in the rectory, in dim light after she had delivered him a dinner. The real sister had been skinny with thick glasses and buck teeth and he'd been always seeking someone that looked like her and was willing to do this kind

of thing. Truth is he only vaguely remembered her face. He mostly remembered her breath on his neck on that day and the slight jiggle of her thin leg on the area between his balls and ass.

He instructed this fake nun how to breathe against his neck. He told her he was sorry that he didn't know when to come out. He was dumb. He was bad. He told her how to make her veil scrape his cheek. He told her to touch him in the bad place. To squeeze hard enough to make him know it was wrong. He told the fake priest to say it.

"Scobbity bobbity...tell me your sins." He said it half-assed, yawning and fiddling with his collar until the cheap piece of white plastic shot away.

This angered Edward. It all had to go a certain way. He squeezed the woman's thin wrist in his lap until she said, "Hey. No rough stuff."

"Teach me a lesson," Edward said, getting off her leg and standing with his back still to her. He undid his pants and dropped them, then his boxers. The priest had a line to say now but had his eyes shut and was flat on his back, snoring.

"Goddamn it." Edward kicked the priest's dangling foot but there was no response.

"Do not use the Lord's name like that," the woman said. She picked up the oar that Edward had brought with him. He'd stolen it off the beach, although it had looked abandoned. It was well worn, the wood dark and smooth like that of the confessional. She gave Edward three hard whacks across his ass. "I know the bad thing you are thinking," she said.

"Yes," Edward said, letting the warm pain expand upward into his chest. But the sight of the limp priest was ruining it. "He has to see this. What the fuck is his problem?" He took the oar from the woman and cracked the priest's knees with it, but all that moved was a stain of vomit down his chin.

"That's my husband," she said. "He's had too much." She yanked off her veil. Her hair was black and in a bun.

The man was starting to twitch, like he was having a seizure. The woman turned him onto his side and wiped his mouth with her

fabric. She glanced at Edward and his drooping erection. "Look, just take your money. Go back to your wife."

Edward's soul was on fire, burning from the inside. He felt capable of violence. "That's not what I want to hear," he said. He could see his distorted face in her lenses. It frightened him.

"Please," she said. "Here, let me make it better." She pulled his pants up and fixed them and patted him in the front. "You're forgiven. You won't burn in hell. Now go."

He wanted to say, "That's not enough," but now the man on the bed was gurgling and not breathing well. Edward grabbed the money from the night-stand and left quickly with his oar.

He stood with his forehead against the door to his suite, breathing heavily. Then he sobbed briefly, to get it out of his system.

He unlocked the door and sat at the table in the kitchenette in the dark. He put the oar on the table and rested his head on it and felt the heat of his face. The oar smelled like seaweed.

After a bit the light came on. His wife had been asleep but now she put on some coffee. She set a deck of cards on the table. She saw the oar and said, "What did you find out there, sailor?"

When he lifted his head she looked into his eyes and said, "Is it the salty air bothering you? It does me."

Edward couldn't speak. To steady his hands he ran them over the smooth wood. Who knows what it had weathered? It could have drifted across the ocean from some distant shore. She pulled a chair next to him and ran her finger over the oar as well.

"Let's think of some story about it," she said. She rubbed her little hands together. "This will be fun."

