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Darknesses

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The confessional is a place where Catholic girls are brought from an early age, while communion dresses hang out their wrinkles from wire hangers on lintels near four-poster beds, and angels are visible pane by pane in starry choirs.

The Catholic girl wants dearly to be a saint or martyr as she's learned in school, is torn between telling the priest in the dark confessional she is one. But with nothing to justify her being there, receiving the sacraments, purifying, she tells her sins as she's been taught they are.

Dons the communicant's gown and receives the Lover dry on the tongue, the Lover in white wool and red, with a small beard, pictured in her prayer book saying *Come to me*.

Whether she becomes a woman and does it all again, pray, dress, sin, confess, love until death do us in, she is child still, present in embryo in the Upper Room, Confession's approval for Apostles: *Forgive, retain as you see fit*.

The glitter of stars in time after Bethlehem's were under her foot: terrazzo floors iridescent with grief, Vesuvius pouring its black drape overboard. She was there caught in her white dress preserved with her smile set down in sanctuary in soot.