

JESSICA'S CONFESSION

The priest had thought he'd heard it all before...

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SCOTT ZARCINAS

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For My Girls

*“Short stories are tiny windows into other worlds
and other minds and other dreams. They are
journeys you can make to the far side of the
universe and still be back in time for dinner.”*

— Neil Gaiman

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TEARS welled in Jessica Prowling's eyes as she sat in the confessional box. Sniffing, she dabbed them with the white handkerchief she had been clutching in her lap. She glanced at it: a white hanky to surrender with. The priest sat silently opposite, separated only by a thin wooden partition. It was now or never.

"Forgive me Father, for I have sinned."

She heard him take a deep sigh before he answered. "Carry on my child. What is it you wish to confess?" His voice was soft and calm but Jessica detected a trace of irritability.

Unsure as to where to start, she sniffed and wiped her nose. Her heart beat loudly in her ears, magnified by the silence that had descended upon their little Lancashire church.

A lump in her throat prevented Jessica from replying. She swallowed twice before the words emerged. "I, I don't know where to begin," she said. The words now gained rapid momentum. "It's all too much. I can't go on like this, it's driving me insane." She placed her head in her hands and began to cry.

"Now, now," the priest said. "Begin when you are ready to talk."

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