Confessionals 0

Standard Expectopatronum

The god inside him, while dead, demands tribute.

Normally, Witherby just does whatever he desires to do. The thing inside him does not covet him, seeks not to change his body in ways that no man was ever meant to live as.

However, it demands to be fed.

To please such a thing requires a set of elaborate rituals, long-forgotten by anyone but him. One of these is the ritualistic exorcizing of bad deeds, like back at the corporation. Those who partake in it are to list out their misdeeds, no matter how trivial, and he is only to listen, and then to forgive them.

So he set up the confessional: a janky little box with two sides for each person, separated only by a grid window to make it hard to see. Those who wish to repent would sit inside, name their deeds, then leave-- and, in true fashion, he was to not speak a single word.

Inside of it, he waited.

Confessionals 1

Standard Salmonsushi

It's a knee-jerk reaction when he recognizes the voice of the first person. She is the first, as she always is-- except in their codenames, he supposes. There's a creak at the door, stumbling into the confessional with a low whisper in her voice, mumbling to herself the whole time.

The first few minutes are torture for both of them. He sits upright, smoke coalescing in his lungs, and she asks questions he's not supposed to answer. Is she doing this right? is she just supposed to... say whatever? A sin is something bad, so perhaps she should start with that.

The words are a mumble as she traces her mind for something to say. She yelled at someone the other day when she didn't have to. Yesterday, when a friend and her planned to watch a movie, she lied that she was sick so she could stalk her crush. The reason why there are no pens around is because she's been stealing them, and no one's asked yet, but she's sure they've noticed. She's sorry that...

Something in her breaks. Everything else comes out in word-vomit. She is sorry that she drinks, that she smokes, that she lets her whims drag her by the heels to whatever hedonistic urge is on her mind that day. She's sorry for all those she's killed, all of them innocent strangers who didn't deserve to die, all because she can't control herself. She's sorry she ruined the one good thing she had going for her, all because she couldn't just trust them, because she made them carry her weight. She's sorry she's even apologizing-- she begs at him, and he does not answer. She's sorry, she's sorry, she's sorry.

The silence gives them both plenty of time to think about it. She's hardly the deepest sinner, but she is the most consistent. One thing is for sure: as soon as she exits that booth, she will return to normal, as if she never confessed at all.

He tries not to hold it against her. He forgives her, and she leaves without another word.

Confessionals 2

The End is Never the End

The second person shuts the door behind her with sudden force, scurrying onto the seat that she's clearly not tall enough for.

At first she doesn't confess. Perhaps she didn't read the sign, he wonders-- then takes in another drag from his cigarette before his mind has a chance to conjure up another opinion.

Three minutes pass-- that, or an eternity-- before she begins her list of transgressions. She doesn't mean to eat people, even if they're mean. She doesn't mean it when she invades other people's privacy, or to be so vindictive with scaring other people-- the world is just so terrifying to her, she doesn't know what else to do. She didn't mean to hurt a friend of hers that one time, and a part of her wonders if she could even have done anything about it.

The word 'sorry' doesn't come out of her once, but he can taste the remorse behind each one of her claims. Perhaps it would break her to do so, a word too forbidden to even acknowledge.

He forgives her, and she utters the tiniest 'thank you' before she's off, letting out the beginnings of a sob.

Confessionals 3

You can get better

He has no idea who walks into the booth next.

It's not his place to judge, either. This confessional is in a public space; anyone would wander in, and he is to simply take it, as he has many times before. From looking at the vague silhouette in the window, all he can tell is that this person's tall, barely fitting into the booth, nearly crouched inside of it.

He killed them, he says. Shot them down like animals, those underneath him too weak to survive such an arbitrary display of violence. He'd betrayed the rest of his team not once but twice, leaving them to rot because something else caught his attention. So many had come to love him, to be willing to lay down his life for him...

And for what? Just so he could disappear from their lives forever, left only with the problems he'd saddled on them? He knows he'll do it to his best friend eventually, hates that he can even call them that, after all he's done to place some distance. The worst thing that he's ever done is set someone in turmoil up for tragedy, and no matter how many times this repeats itself, he'll always be setting up someone else.

He can't even forgive him, let alone process it, as the man flees out the door mid sentence, as if remembering something.

Confessionals 4

Know Restraint

The next person may as well have forgotten this was a confessional.

He saunters in, kicking his feet onto the wooden wall, calling his vessel all sorts of names. What kind of creepy shit was Witherby doing, putting a stupid booth in the middle of nowhere and making a scene? Stupid Witherby. Stupid, creeper Witherby, digging into people's secrets. What is he going to do with all of that information, huh? Is he gonna get off on it? The fact that he even thinks that anyone would ever share their secrets with someone as unlikable as him was tremendously fucking--

The words catch in his mouth, breaking out into a cough; thick smoke trickles out from his side of the booth and into the stranger's, causing him to shake in place, slamming his head into the booth wall over and over. He's choking, it seems.

The door slams open, hurried steps bolting into the depths of the mall. He coughs out smoke the entire while.

Confessionals 5

No Restraint

Another person comes in, nearly scraping the confessional roof as she sits down.

No words are exchanged. She lets out a long, weary sigh; the breath in her lungs comes out in a controlled exhale, not too fast, and not too slow.

She sits there for a while longer, and then she stands up. He forgives her, and she leaves.