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## Marble Heart

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# Marble Heart

## **Abstract**

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"When I was seventeen, I basically decided to have a heart to heart with God. It was funny the way it happened too; my mom was having one of her religious streaks and off handedly decided to drag me with her to the confessional booth for our annual shedding of the sins."



*Maria Loudis*

### **\*\*\* Marble Heart**

When I was seventeen, I basically decided to have a heart to heart with God. It was funny the way it happened too; my mom was having one of her religious streaks and off handedly decided to drag me with her to the confessional booth for our annual shedding of the sins.

The church was irregularly dark that evening and there was a small line of parishioners lining up outside of our churches not so confessional – confessional booth. I remember standing outside the confessional in the mostly grey haired line of six people, waiting for everyone to be finished sloughing off their inner sinful lining, when I realized that I was in fact the youngest person there. How could my sins even compare with these people? They had years on me while I was a mere high school lass still waiting to be kissed.

Oddly enough it was right about that time that the guy in front of me had finished talking about his sins, and I realized that I didn't even know what sins I had to confess. So I lied. I cracked under pressure and lied about sinning; I told him I swore at my mother – that probably had happened, but I couldn't think of an instance – and that I had impure thoughts about the non-existent stable boy.

I think it might be bad that it was also about this point that I didn't actually feel bad about my false sins, but it was mostly because my priest happened to be Father Wagner, only the meanest priest on the planet.

There he was all high and mighty with that smug look on his face holding the key to my pseudo-forgiveness, giving me penance for the sins I didn't even commit. It was enough to make me sick.

While he was telling me that we are all sinners and the Lord is all forgiving I couldn't help but notice the room/confessional. It had a cozy light and yellow paint that surrounded a chair and curtain that separated him from me during my moments of quasi-de-sinning. I remember thinking that I was either going to hell, or this entire scenario didn't really count because I could see the priest's feet under that shoddy separation between us.

So I got up and left with a bad taste in my mouth as I walked to the actual worship area to say my tiny penance for false sins. The high ceilings were a bit creepy, being covered in a veil of darkness, with the only comfort being the one person in the corner who was still saying their prayers to the eerie yet soothing sounds of the trickling fountain. Languidly I sat in the first seat I found not knowing what the proper etiquette was in this

empty, not mass like environment. I said my four Hail Mary's and two our fathers and an act of contrition in hopes my soul would be cleansed, but something wasn't right about this, or maybe and more accurately, something wasn't right about everything.

There I sat in the darkness waiting for my mother, but knowing how she is in these kinds of scenarios; she could air her sins for hours the poor dear. I found myself getting grumpy and upset, knowing how most of my friends and acquaintances were atheist or other at this stage in life, I was starting to question it, this whole religion thing that is. How could God give his healing powers to this guy whose shoes were showing through a curtain and had a permanent smug snarl on his face, or better yet, to an institution whose meanings are reinforced and lost through up, down, kneel and pray? It felt forced, phony and cheap. I decided then, that if I'm going to talk to God, I'm not going to do it through this guy; I'm not even going to do it through Jesus. I'm going to skip the middleman and talk directly to this Power that is for me.

"God, whatever you are, whoever you are, and if you're there I need to know. Are you there? If you are I don't need you to do anything but give me a sign. I just need to know I'm not alone, I need to know that you actually care...that this whole thing isn't a lie. I'll take anything, just let me know." And that's it. That's all I said in my wait. I don't know what I was expecting after that, but I felt tense and looked around, maybe waiting for Jesus to appear next to me and pat me on the back before he asked "what's shakin'?" and passed me some wine. But that's not what I found. I just looked down and gleaming in the light was this tiny cat's eye marble. Just chilling on the ground. Maybe some kid lost it, but I didn't remember seeing it before, so I took it and wearily accepted it as a potential answer, but most likely a coincidence dressed up as a response.

My mom showed up then and sat next to me for her prayers before we went home. Of course we were the last people there. Oddly enough I normally would have cared but today I didn't mind. After all I felt like this was the most useful time I had ever spent in church, even if it was just me being crazy, but something told me that I wasn't.

I kept the marble with me in my backpack for a while, feeling like a ghost hunter looking for supernatural activity in walls, but two weeks later while I was walking home from school, I realized was either proven crazy or blessed.

I looked down while I was getting off the bus, and there it was in the grass; A shiny green thing, staring at me through the spotted greenery, begging to be picked up. Lo and behold it was yet another marble. Now it didn't seem so much like a coincidence, but it was still there, no answer as to how or where it came from. Finding two marbles could still be a coincidence right? Well two weeks later I was walking to my friend's house and bent down to tie my shoe - a marble. A few weeks after that I was in school brushing my hair in the bathroom before class, I walk outside and staring at me from the dingy ground was a shiny red mancala bead, which is a form of marble. It was strange because it happened again in the park, a yellow marble and again when I got my roommate assignment for school where I was rooming with a Miss L. Marble, and again in front of my boyfriend's house when I went there for the first time.

At this point I was glowing with special fuzzy feelings, like I'm the only person who has ever had a special relationship with God, or whatever force it is that listens to us, but that can't possibly be when there are so many people in the world. I'm not special, maybe just over analytical making mountains out of molehills or special God connections out of marbles. Maybe it's all coincidence, but I'm convinced that whatever it is that's out there is listening to us, I'm pretty sure it cares too otherwise I couldn't feel so excited about finding a child's game piece.

It was enough to convince me that I'm not alone, so maybe having faith is more powerful than we think. All it boils down to is being open to that response when we pray for answers. Ever since then, I feel like I get answers to my prayers so why shouldn't anyone else? I found my marble; I dare you to find yours.

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Mike Costik "writing" one of his icons  
(Photo taken by Fr. Zygmunt Felinski)