

INTERLUDE: CONFESSION OF IMITATION

[On the center of the stage, there is a small house, and MARKIE is playing outside of it with her dolls. The light is yellow and warm, imitating a sunrise, the beginning of a new fate for a new doll family. In this scene, MARKIE speaks sweetly to them. There are two mirrors on either side of the stage, framing the house. There is also a podium toward the front stage left.]

MARKIE.

None of you can go anywhere. None of you can do anything, nothing at all.

[She lifts one doll up and shows it to the audience. She has a faraway look like her audience is higher and more knowledgeable about the lives of her and her dolls.]

It isn't that I don't want you to. You understand, right? It must be this way. God, me, you all, and your unknown fates. It's all here. I feel it.

[She puts the doll in her hands down, and then she begins to toss the family up in the air, throwing them all about as if possessed. When she speaks again, her voice is monotonous, all sweetness gone.]

There's a storm. I can't help it. I'm sorry.

[A man comes onto the stage. He is wearing an off-white robe beneath a luminous, liquid, dark gold soutane. It has intricate depictions of Jesus on it. He is holding a feather pen and a book. He stops at the podium, MARKIE in the background searching for what is left of her dolls. Some are in pieces and others intact. Some have disappeared altogether. The man looks around but does not see MARKIE, though she darts around in his line of vision. He puts his book and feather pen onto the podium and looks up to where the warm light filters onto the stage. MARKIE can be heard giggling, and she, too, doesn't notice the man. It should be obvious that they do not walk at the same time, the man being from a distant, richer age. He lifts his hands into the air to cup the light in his hands. He looks at how his hands are empty but acts delighted, pretending he has found something in them.]

SAINT AUGUSTINE.

I want to imitate the stage as God did his image in humans. I want to play every part in a Biblical tragedy; be the lights, each son of Abraham, and their wives in the background. I'd play you, too, God. And is that vein, then? But surely no; for I have this innate desire to please you, and I could surely act you best. I don't mean that, God. You act yourself best. Some say that we cannot know that you are the best version of yourself, or the only. But I exist and owe that fact to you. My heart is restless until it rests in you. But when I call to you, where do I call to since I am in you?

[He picks an audience member and stares them directly in the eye.]

I have something to confess to you.

[He picks another audience member and stares into their eyes now.]

And you, I have always wanted to confess much to.

[He gestures to the entire audience in a familiar manner.]

To all of you, I fear my confessions may never end.

[He hunches over to write something down, and his speech slows down.]

“Since, then, you fill the heaven and earth, do they contain you? Or, do you fill and overflow them, because they cannot contain you? And where do you pour out what remains of you after heaven and earth are full?”¹

[He stops writing and looks back up, talking faster now that he is no longer writing as he speaks. When he talks, he is no longer talking to the audience. He is talking to something higher.]

And if I contain you and you me, is there a part of you that floods out of me or I you? Where do you overflow to be held when you are too much for what you’ve made, too big for your own creations? Is there an imitated image enough to hold your total essence? It must hurt to overflow, like swimming drunkenly over the edge of the Earth. And where does man have, God, to empty themselves when our essences are too much for our bodies? Into others? I’ve tried that, and sinned. Into you, then? If everyone poured into you, would you overflow more? Do you have to love everything that is inside of you or only tolerate it? Would your essence dilute or grow in energy, forcing you to create more to contain yourself? Would you make humans again, on some distant planet, more souls that add the weight of their troubles to your mass? Will there ever be a place for you to rest, an end state that doesn’t make your essence surge? I’d hold you all if I could, God. I often wonder what it would feel like to hold you inside of my soul so entirely. And in this imagining, I know how you resurrected your son. The tides of your essence swelled out of everything you’ve ever created, every point of energy relocating inside of him. Briefly immortal, you commanded him to live again. Then you rushed back out of him as he stood and walked among the living. Did retreating out of your son to let him act the fate you always planned make you feel lonely?

[He looks up to the light again and smiles, feather pen hovering in his hand. About to write something else, he speaks one last time. MARKIE can be seen reuniting her broken dolls in the background.]

“Still, dust and ashes as I am, allow me to speak before your mercy. Allow me to speak for, behold, it is to your mercy that I speak and not to a man who scorns me. Yet even perhaps you might scorn me; but when you turn and attend to me, you will have mercy upon me. For what do

I wish to say, lord my god, but that I know not whence I came hither into this life-in-death. Or should I call it death-in-life? I do not know.”ⁱⁱ

MARKIE.

They’re dead, died in the storm. I’m sorry that I don’t have better news. No, I’m sorry. I already told you.

[Suddenly angry.]

I can’t make that happen. People don’t just come back to life!

[She stops playing and begins to laugh uncontrollably. Between hysterical laughs, she speaks.]

The death of dolls is a funny thing. One moment, I’m holding them. The next, I’m not. You see, it’s funny because they don’t have any say in it.

[The scene fades to black, only one candle illuminating SAINT AUGUSTINE’s face. As the stage is reset for scene two, his face still looms there, focused on what he is writing. Then, after one last giggle track of MARKIE plays, the candle goes out.]

ⁱ *The Confessions of Saint Augustine* Book 1.3.3

ⁱⁱ *The Confessions of Saint Augustine* Book 1.6.7