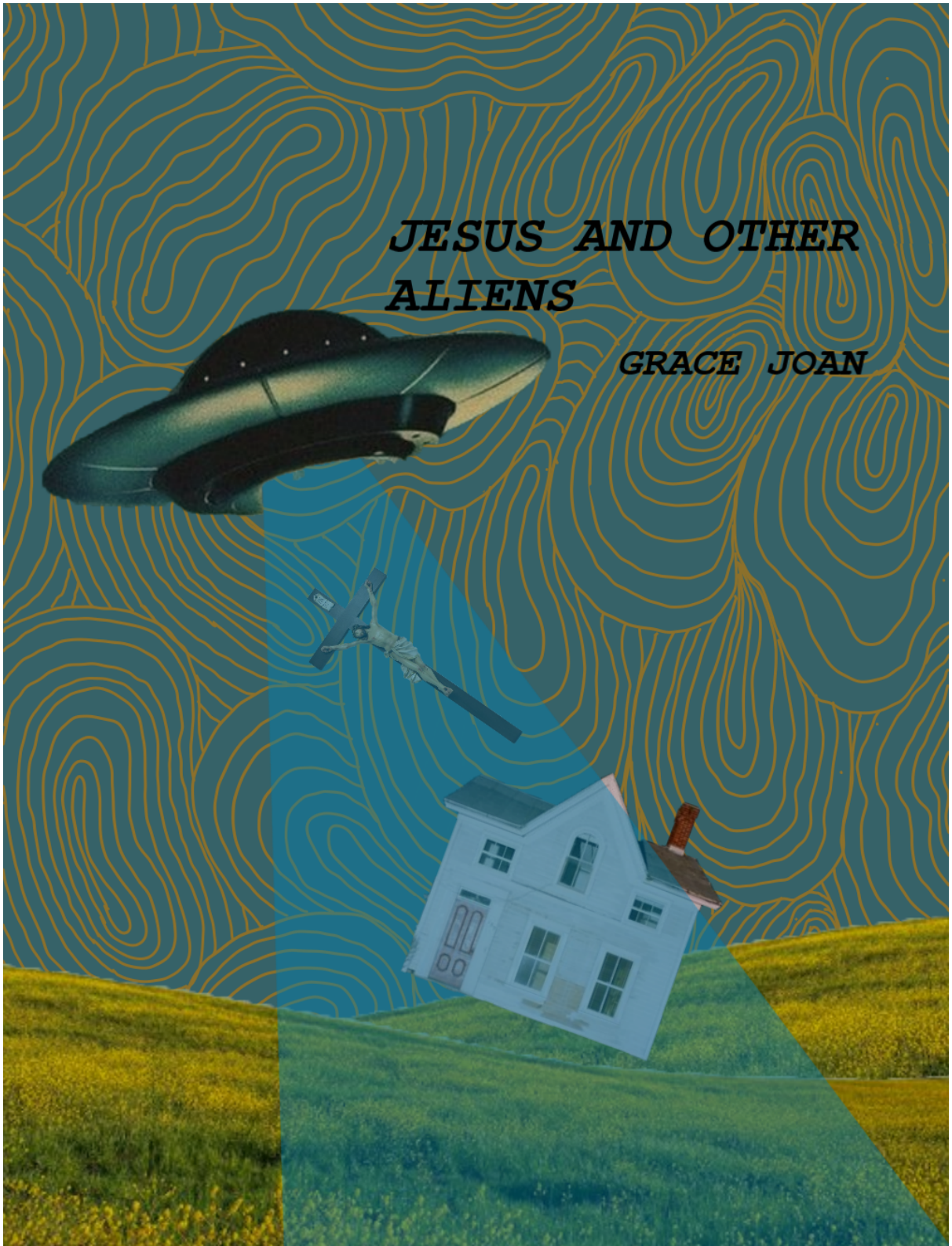


JESUS AND OTHER ALIENS

GRACE JOAN



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POETRY BY GRACE JOAN

January 1

I'm going 80 in an 100,
the prison on this road has
a sign that reads "Merry Christmas".
It's the new year—
I don't feel so bad about it.
I'm kinda holding my breath
shaking my knee excited for something
that hasn't even happened yet.
I'm finding that life isn't really tragic
it's sorta ironic
like Christmas morning in solitary.
I can go as fast
as I want
but I don't.

Ballad of a Preteen Girl

she's waking up early to catch the bus
she makes sure to straighten her hair but can never reach the
back where the curls fling up like barbed wire
she skips breakfast and
drinks coffee with lots of sugar
her playlist is perfect
played through pink dollar store headphones on a cracked
iphone 5

she's convinced kathleen hannah is mother mary
and kurt cobain died for her sins
that rocky horror picture show was god's gift to humanity
and gerard way was the only man she could ever love

she hates the boys that makes fun of how she spits when she
talks

she's wishing she was a vampire
so she could eat them
so she would never have to come to school again because the
sun would turn her to dust
she hates gym class and solving for x and the pretty girls who
are nice to her
she thought not getting picked for basketball was a cruel joke
from a blockbuster comedy
yet the pointed finger finds her last every time
she feels like a million angry wasp trapped in a soft baby fat
coated cell
she wants to kick in teeth
she can't throw a punch
she stomps her army boots as loud she can to her locker

she's not that old yet
she wishes she was older so her life would start

so that the feeling that something bad will happen would go
away

it eats at her like how the braces tear up her gums

she's hungry and she wants to be a real girl

she's convinced no one has ever felt like this before

Seasonal Affective Disorder

The snow spreads across the highway in a fog— still too warm to stick.

My mom drives safe and scans for prey in the ditches,
their eyes illuminate like marbles on hot concrete.

Hard to imagine a clear sidewalk now.

I'm asleep and young in the backseat.

The song is Blue Rodeo or was it something more West coast.

The factories never shut down.

My dad is working nights to keep up the smog— the blinking red lights that block out the stars.

My grandmother leans on me up the icy steps.

Inside the house is yellow— lamps and televisions.

Pierre hangs beside the crucifix and sepia pictures in the basement.

I ask about something but you forgot—

pushing together your lips looking to the roof to remember.

On the driveway is the great white blanket— much bigger than anything you had knitted.

I imagine myself cold underneath.

Slot machines offer warmth.

Along with lighters and can tabs.

Family suppers, joints ,and unmade beds.

The song is Joni Mitchell or was it something younger.

I stumble home most nights now and I can't quite get my key in.

When I stop to focus the whole backyard is light and still— so am I.

The moon takes the place of the sun.

The oak cast shadows reaching out— climbing up the shed where my flower pots sleep abandoned.

This morning, I forgot to lock the door.
I was watching a lone goose fly.
It was calling out.
The flock was far ahead— out of sight.
The quiet is far worse this time of year,
makes every noise unbearable.
The cold is harsh,
makes it hard to tell if anyone is listening anymore.

Abducted

A blue light carried me out of my window last night.

Finally, was all I could think.

It was aliens not God, don't be predictable.

He was a nice guy.

Picked up my data on the 5G waves,

thought my 12 hours of screen time was impressive.

He wasn't green or grey, don't be dense.

He looked like a young Billy Crystal or a pre-Scientology Cruise.

Maybe current scientology Cruise.

I tried not to be rude or ask too many questions.

I was a guest after all.

He set up a candlelit dinner in the middle of the ship.

The cocktail smelt like gasoline and tasted like psilocybin.

The pasta was just Alphagetti with fresh oregano on top.

He told me my Old Navy pajama set was flattering.

He then asked how old I was during the Bush administration,
just to scope out any awkward power dynamics.

Though I'm sure there was at least 6 million light years
between us.

This is all to say I'm on my way to Jupiter to become their
queen.

I'm happy I'll miss the economic depression and the class war.

I'll miss my mom and my heated blanket.

I've never been so far from home.

Jesus is just alright with me

I wonder what it would be like to get a drink with Jesus. I think he would hold the door and of course let you take the booth. He would watch your beer when you went to the bathroom and order you another without you having to ask. I think he would be good for a laugh and a hug. He would be fine waiting for you to smoke before the cab comes. I've known Jesus since I was a kid. From Sunday school colouring pages and the plastic nativity scene on the coffee table every Christmas. Then he was skinny and bloody over every doorway in my grandmother's house.

Everyone pretends to know Jesus. That's kind of the backbone of this billion dollar religion. From the Vatican they pretend to know what it must have been like to be born to a fleeing teenage mother in a city you don't belong in- where there's no room for you. Grow to kiss the faces and hands of those who hurt you. Clothe the needy, feed the hungry and love the wicked. To have them line the streets with soft palms and then kill you on the harsh wood that has the familiarity of the man who raised you. A political prisoner dead in his mother's arms surrounded by thieves.

All that to believe he would be comfortable in a mega church, a courtroom or the counter protest of a pride parade. I, like everyone else, pretend to know Jesus. Even as a lapsed catholic with no faith in the institution, I know Jesus would find more comfort in a bar. More comfort in a hospital chapel, a library, a night club, a halfway house and at my grandma's table for Sunday dinner. He's already in those places without any indulgences paid. He's waiting for me right now to stub out my smoke so he can get me home safe.

Worm Food Under Man-Made Borders

You dug a hole in my backyard—
the dirt was under your nails.
They looked just like mine.
You said it's not the same.
It's not the same across the ocean or the street.
The ground is made up of different decay.
Still, the holes fill up like landfills—
women and children first.

Decomposition doesn't care about
market value or identity politics.
Amongst crumpled buildings and missing shoes—
the Earth stays still.

Holes, craters, clearings, smog and spills—
are like pimples on young skin.
Another break out in Her million years of adolescence.
Like the root She dies last.

When you dug a hole in my backyard—
I remembered I was the one who put up the fence,
but the dirt is Her's from core to crust.
Now it's under our nails.

We pick at it with our teeth—
scrub it under faucets.

It takes so long to erase you forget why you dug the hole.

I forget why I put up the fence