

Hands Like White Porcelain

by Tina Barry

The man behind the counter leads the city couple around his shop of mid-century furniture. Thin as a pleat, the wife runs a hand over the smooth surface of a teak dining room table; the man in mismatched plaids, marvels at the chairs' clean lines, their nubby turquoise seats.

A kidney-shaped wooden bowl appeals to the couple. Then a wall clock with fluorescent numbers. Then a pair of elk's antlers. Then nothing.

"Thank you," they say, nearing the door. "Beautiful pieces."

The man sighs. Too many compliments and too few sales. "Check out the garage," he offers, before returning his attention to NPR.

At the garage's entrance, knee high in weeds, stands a plaster Jesus in an electric blue robe.

"Did you see?" "Yes, yes!" The couple stares at the statue, mouths agape.

The hands. Poor Jesus's hands. Gone are the reed-like fingers, the pearly palms raised to Heaven. Instead, hovering like U.F.O.s atop Jesus's soiled cuffs: large white ceramic knobs.

"So. Perfect," says the wife. "Indeed he is," the husband agrees, and trots back to the shop.

Jesus is for sale. But he's heavy. Weighted in cement. He'll have to be dug up, shipped to Brooklyn. That's fine with the couple. They hadn't planned on spending a \$1000 for what is, they laugh, essentially a garden gnome. But what's a \$1000 for Jesus? Not much of a sacrifice. Really. No sacrifice at all.

