

GRACELAND 2.0

by Sarah Bierstock

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Character Breakdown

Ethnic Diversity encouraged/desired

GRACE, (14-17)

Sick of being home with her smothering mom. She feels trapped physically and under the scrutiny and expectation of her family. Her intelligence is sometimes masked by her sensitivity and can appear reserved- until she starts rapping. She's gifted at spoken word.

GRETA, (14-17)

Super smart, funny, problem solver. She's a loyal friend, the class president with the mostest, ready to help and conquer the world. She's a virtuoso pianist with a secret hand-washing OCD. Loves to sing and has a terrible voice.

JANA, (pronounced *Jan-uh*) (14-17)

Fraternal twin sister to Dana, clever, tom-boyish girl with a fascination with transgenderism and lesbian tendencies. She is actively reshaping her ideas based on gender. A fierce hip-hop dancer.

DANA (14-17)

Fraternal twin sister to Jana. A direct, no nonsense, unpretentious kind of gal. A great visual artist (draws really well).

ACT One, Scene 1

GRACE, 13, sits stage left in her room with her laptop on her desk with her Instagram, Facebook, twitter, zoom, and TikTok displayed. Taylor Swift's song, "Meet me behind the mall" plays. She FaceTimes with her friend, GRETA. GRETA, 13, who sits stage right on her bed with her laptop in her lap, earbuds on the bed next to her, and books surrounding her. Music fades.

GRACE
She didn't.

GRETA
She did, too!

GRACE
She did not!

GRETA
Yes, she did! I'm telling you. My mom is totally losing it.

GRACE
She actually said you can drop out of school?

GRETA
Not only can I drop out of school- but I can go live my dad for a while and he'll homeschool me.

GRACE
She's totally losing it.

GRETA
I told you.

GRACE
So what are you going to do?

GRETA
Nothing.

GRACE
You're not taking her up on it?

GRETA
No way. I've got the top grade in the class, why would I sacrifice that? Plus, we're voting for class president next week.

GRACE
You think you'll win?

GRETA

Of course, I'll win. I'm not going to lose against Roger Rhinaker. He has the charisma of a dying shoe fly.

GRACE/GRETA
they both sing

"Shoe-fly, don't bother me!"

They laugh.

GRACE

So, you think it's because of her job?

GRETA

she pops a potato chips in her mouth

Her boss is sick. And I heard her tell my dad that if she didn't get out of this Godforsaken house soon that she was going to light herself on fire.

(she shrugs)

GRETA (cont'd)

She's stir crazy.

GRACE

Well, at least she leaves you alone. My mom just hovers over me. It's like she's trying to be home-school mom of the century. I can't even breathe without her quizzing me on everything- she's like, "Oh! You're breathing? Do you remember the molecular make up of oxygen? They're going to expect you to know this stuff when you return, Grace. You can't get behind!"

GRETA

Get behind *where*? It's not like there's anywhere to *go* to be behind.

GRACE/GRETA

Be-hind!

(they giggle and sing in unison)

"Meet me behind the mall!"

Zoom rings. Greta answers her classmates, DANA and JANA, call. They're twins.

GRETA
to Grace

It's the twins.

(to the twins)

Hello, hello! I'm linking Grace in here, too.

GRETA sends GRACE the link to join the zoom call.

DANA

Greta, would you puh-lease tell Jana that Christopher Columbus was not actually a transgender girl who went by Christina?

GRETA
affectionately

I— hadn't heard that before.

JANA

Check it out— all the books have this big discrepancy about her coming from Spain-

DANA

Him.

JANA

And whether her alliance was to the Spanish or the British who actually paid for her journey-

DANA

His journey.

JANA

But no one seems to focus on the paramount question, which is... *why* she was seeking a new land!?

DANA

Jana, this is not a thing. Why are you making this a thing?

JANA

It's common knowledge that she was seeking a new life - where she could be accepted as she was.

GRACE
laughing warmly

Alrighty, then!

DANA
to Jana

You're having some major transference issues. Either that or you've seen *Hamilton* way too many times.

JANA

(does Andy Blankenbeuhler's hip hop choreography while she sings loudly from Hamilton)
**HEY YO, I'M JUST LIKE MY COUNTRY
I'M YOUNG, SCRAPPY AND HUNGRY
AND I'M NOT THROWIN' AWAY MY SHOT**

GRETA

If that works for you, Jana, then we are fully on board the *Christina Columbus* Mayflower alongside you.

JANA
to Dana

See? That's what I'm talking about. I was right! It totally is a thing.

(to Grace and Greta)

Yes!

(Buoyant Hip hop physicality)

JANA *(cont'd)*

I love being right!

DANA

Keep it down, Dana, you're gonna wake up mom.

JANA

She's got earplugs.

DANA

Nice. Very sensitive of you.

JANA

She said she likes to know what we're up to.

DANA
to Jana

Oh, my God- she needs to rest.

to Grace & Greta

If you'll excuse us, I'm gonna go push Jana out the window now.

JANA

Buzz kill.

DANA

We'll call you back.

JANA

Thank you, ladies!

DANA

BYE!

They hang up.

GRACE

What was that about?

GRETA

The Christopher Columbus bit or the part about their mom?

GRACE
lightly

Their mom. I thought she was better?

GRETA

She's in remission.

GRACE

So the Cancer's- gone?

GRETA

Yea, but she's positive.

GRACE

What?! No.

I know. GRETA

Is she sick? GRACE

I think so... GRETA

Jana and Dana don't have it, do they?! GRACE
realizing

They still have to get tested. GRETA

Wow. They don't seem sick at all. GRACE

You don't have to be sick to be positive. That's what's so crazy. GRETA

This- sucks. GRACE

Do you think they'll have this fixed by the time we go to college? *beat*

That's years from now— they'd better! GRETA

I know. Sometimes it just seems like we're all going to be stuck in our houses forever. GRACE

Now you sound like your mom. GRETA

Eww. Never. I'm much more easy-going than she is. GRACE

Want to take a walk? We can stay six feet apart? Ten, if you're feeling paranoid. GRETA

I'm not paranoid- I just don't think she'll let me. My mom's not like yours- I haven't exactly been given the cart blanche to go and come as I please. GRACE

Check these out! GRETA

GRETA hops off her bed and reveals skeleton mouth/nose cover masks.

Wow. Did you make those?! GRACE

I did! Cool, right? GRETA

GRACE

They're a little dark.

GRETA

Dark, yes, until— this is the best part.

GRETA turn off the lights in her room. The masks glow in the dark.

GRETA (cont'd)

Waaaah!

GRACE

You really have too much time on your hands.

GRETA

So you wanna meet up, or what?

GRACE

I don't know. The poetry assignment is due Friday. I haven't even started it yet. I'm super behind.

The girls sing again in unison.

GRACE/GRETA

"Meet me behind the wall"

They laugh.

GRETA

Grace, poetry is your *thing*. This should be a breeze for you.

GRACE

I know.

GRETA

So?

GRACE

I don't know-

GRETA

Isn't this like- what you do? You win spoken word competitions and things. Isn't your big Youth Poet Laureate-thing next week?

GRACE

It's in two weeks. But I doubt I'll win. What I do is a more like rap- with rhythm and a beat behind it.

GRETA

Grace, you're the reigning champion. Please.

GRACE

Anyway, what I do has to be spoken out-loud. Not typed up and read off a screen.

GRETA

I bet a lot of the great poets would say the same about their poems.

beat

GRACE

I just feel pressured.

GRETA

To do what?

GRACE

To write-- the perfect thing.

GRETA

Why? It's just one assignment and you're killer at it.

GRACE

Yea, but this one has to be perfect.

GRETA

Why? It's a pretty open-ended assignment.

GRACE

I know! It's just-my mom. She....

(changing gears)

I just- feel like I've just gotta get out of here and there's nowhere to go.

GRACE (DEMO #3)

**I LOVE MY ROOM
DON'T GET ME WRONG
BUT I CANT JUST STAY HERE ALL DAY LONG**

(beat starts)

SCHOOLS BEEN CLOSED FOR MONTHS
MY MOM THINKS IM A DUNCE
RIDING ME CONSTANTLY
"YOU GOTTA GET STRAIGHT A's!"

INSTAGRAM IS COOL
BUT ITS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR SCHOOL
IVE BEEN ZOOMING HERE FOR 90 SOMETHING DAYS
I CANT DO THE THINGS I LIKE
WELL, SHE'LL LET ME RIDE MY BIKE
BUT ITS CLAUSTROPHOBIC
UNDER EVERYBODY'S GAZE

MY MOM MAKES DAILY CHARTS
MATH, SCIENCE, AND THE ARTS
SHE'S OBSESSED!
YOU SHOULD SEE THE PROJECTS SHE CREATES
I BARELY HAVE THE TIME
TO GET MY HOMEWORK DONE ONLINE
SHE'S BREATHING DOWN MY NECK
GOD, JUST LET ME DO MY RHYME

MY DAD MOPES AND POUTS
THROWS TANTRUMS AND SHOUTS
"LEND A HAND, DEAR, I'M TRYING TO WORK!"
HE SMILES AND ACTS ALL NICE
BUT IT'S CLEARLY A DEVICE
TO COVER THAT HE'S ACTING LIKE A JERK

MY BROTHER IS THE WORST
EVERYTHING'S "ME FIRST"
GOD, WHAT AN ANNOYING LITTLE BRAT
EVERYTHING I DO
HE'S FOLLOWING ME, "ME, TOO!"
WHERE IS THE PEACE AND QUIET AT?

ALICE HAD HER WONDERLAND
AND DOROTHY, HER OZ
MILO HAD HIS TOLLBOOTH
TO CONTEND
PETER HAD HIS NEVERLAND
MAX HIS WILD THINGS
IN NARNIA, THOSE CHILDREN BECAME KINGS

I NEED A PLACE THAT'S MINE
SOMEWHERE TO UNWIND
WHERE MY FRIENDS AND I CAN HAVE AN ACTUAL BREAK
SOME LAND THAT'S FAR AWAY
WHERE I CAN CHOOSE TO STAY
NO PRESSURE (THERE) ABOUT ALL THAT IS AT STAKE

I KNOW I NEED TO WRITE IT
BUT I'VE PRETTY MUCH DECIDED
POETRY'S MEANT TO BE READ ALOUD
SPOKEN WORD'S MY JAM
BUT THE WORDS HAVE GOTTA LAND
ON THE EARS OF LIVE PEOPLE IN A CROWD

BESIDES, IT'S NOT THE WAY I ROLL
WORDS ON A PAGE HAVE NO SOUL
ITS GOTTA BE MADE IT UP IN REAL TIME
ITS HARD TO CONCENTRATE
WITH SO MUCH ON OUR PLATE
THAT'S WHY I NEED A LAND THATS MINE.

GRACE

to Greta

My mom said that if I don't get an A on this poetry assignment, that I have no business competing. She'll pull me from the laureate to "concentrate on the *real* studies".

GRETA

She wouldn't.

GRACE

An A, or an A+- to prove that I have exceptional talent, or I am out.

GRETA

That's so messed up. No wonder you feel pressured. Talk about mother induced writer's block.

GRACE

rhetorically

You think?