



# A Strange Catechism

*Justen Ahren*

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## **A Strange Catechism** Justen Ahren

Every day she comes and stands, turning slowly, counterclockwise, in the parking lot. She holds in her arms a bundle of infant's clothes. She is praying, calling for her departed child to return to the nest of her body. In *A Strange Catechism*, Justen Ahren relates the story of a mother and her surviving son, as they journey through grief, loss and separation to a deeper understanding of how life is constructed out of what our 'fingers keep making in the air/ until dawn'- those fleeting things we long for, made real by our longing and our praying for them. "The poems in Justen Ahren's *Strange Catechism* are songs whose music exists to make beauty out of profound sadness. They are rhythmic, empathic, and polyphonic but behind each one is a voice who says hello to darkness and then sings to it-all the while wondering about 'golondrinas' and 'the hydrangeas' blue clouds' all the while wondering if 'the world without [him]/may be the real one" -Jennifer Tseng "This collection contains the voice of a poet whose work aches with beauty. The poems are characterized by the paradox of austerity as abundance and religious mystery as lucidity. In Justen Ahren's search for grace we find poetry of excellence" -Jennifer Clement

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