

AUNT CHLOE

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Momma's Back

We snuck out during the night. Aunt Rose is damn-near deaf when she's asleep, and so it was easy for my sister and me to make our way towards the

Bayou, the place where she never let us go. I let Diana sit in the front seat and we made our way out to the water, cicadas shrilling as my tires groaned against

the sinking soil.

Diana was close to crying, huffing and puffing until it seemed like all the air in the car was being funneled in through her nostrils and out through her

mouth. I usually didn't let her tag along during my bouts of disobedience; she was eleven, still a kid, and the prospect of being in trouble terrified her. But she

knew just as well as I did about what was said to happen in the Durante Cemeteries, which is why she came along, her red kinks tucked tight underneath the

bonnet that clung to her forehead.

It had been a year since Louise Lockporte had died. She was supposed to be our momma, but she dumped us with old Rose instead. I don't remember

much about her, don't really care to. But this was Halloween, and everybody knows that the moonlight and the mischief were enough to bring the dead to life.

And even though we never really knew Louise, something needy and hurt inside of us was eager to see if it was true. Diana was the baby, so she was allowed to

be scared. But I pretended not to be, keeping my vision steady on the road.

We got there fast because I refused to drive slow. I parked in the lot, threw my coat in the backseat and waited for Diana to get out. We stood in the

hostility of the night's heat for a few minutes before she spoke.

"Do you think we'll see her?" she asked me.

“Maybe.”

“Will you be mad if we see her?” Diana swatted a bug from her face.

“Don’t make sense to be mad at a dead person.”

“But she’d be alive.”

“Not really,” I said. “And not for long.”

The bugs were swarming fast above us, which made it hard for me to pay attention to her tiny voice and her questions. The light from my phone was starting to die, my battery along with it, and my heart was starting to flop in my chest.

It was late, and the sky looked bruised with bursts of blue and black. I took one of my sister’s hands in mine and squeezed it. We walked and we waited.

The moon was above and everything looked silver. But nothing happened, and after a time, I was willing to accept the fact that Louise was a screw-up, that

she was bad at showing up when we needed her and that death hadn’t changed a thing about that. So we went back to the car. The terror I felt earlier had died,

and it was replaced with frustration. I could tell Diana felt the same, and we got in the car without talking.

“You cold?” I asked her. I knew she wasn’t, but I wanted to offer her some kind of comfort. She didn’t answer, but I reached back for my jacket anyway.

Diana gasped. I didn’t turn around. I don’t know why I didn’t. Figured she just saw something strange, and so I kept searching for my jacket, which I

suddenly couldn’t find. I only turned around when Diana grabbed my shoulder. I was about to curse, because I didn’t know where the damn thing could be, but

I shut my mouth. Because my sister’s eyes were wide, two black holes in her face that were locked with someone else’s, and when I followed her gaze, straight

ahead, I saw a woman. Her features were hazy, like she was made of a cloud, but I knew that she was the woman who gave birth to us. And I started the car.

And Diana screamed again, because my foot was suffocating the pedal and we were going fast, faster, until the tires were groaning, and the woman wasn’t

moving, but we were, and so when we finally collided we slid right through her, down the street, and began the trip back home.

Grace Morse is currently an undergraduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is a lover of poetry and romance, and her works are often inspired by the terrific and tumultuous

experiences of her life. She writes in English and Spanish and is working on translating her works in both languages.