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Mother

Madison Potts

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For just a moment
I think I can see
a glimmer of that
old mischief in her
wide grey eyes.

I've driven far enough out of the city that the radio has mainly turned to static. I absently reach to flick it off, never really turning my eyes away from the dirt road unrolling in front of me. Seeing it makes that nagging anxiety burrow its way somewhere near my heart, like a maggot in an apple core. Without the distraction of the radio it feels more prominent than ever.

The house is a lonely hulk of brick as I pull into the long driveway.

With no neighbors around us for miles, the lights shine almost too brightly in the black—it is frightening how quickly night jumps upon us these days—and they feel like blaring beacons of accusation.

I notice, with a bolt of shock and fear, that his car is not parked beneath the looming oak tree, with its bare branches reaching out like skeletal fingers.

The fear sweeps me in like the tide, like I'm going to be swept under until I drown, the waves pulling me under still

even as I walk through the screen door, which is partially ajar, even as I see the shattered remains of the medicine bottle on the tile floor. The shards glitter in the maturing moonlight.

The house is almost silent. The only sound is the water swelling out from the throat of the faucet and falling precisely down into the metal sink below. No arguing, no precious items being smashed against the walls. This scene is so different from the routine that it feels almost surreal.

This time, when I enter the room, she speaks. "Darling," my mother says, her voice dusty with disuse, as delicate as a butterfly's wing. In that moment she feels almost ancient, older than me, perhaps older than any person alive. For just a moment I think I can see a glimmer of that old mischief in her wide grey eyes.

"Yes?" I whisper into the empty air.

"I'm done," she says. "No more."



Mother Madison Potts