In a Mud Painted House

Wendy Watson
IN A MUD PAINTED HOUSE

About a mile south of Rt. 19
That stretches lazily from Breaux Bridge to Sunset,
The stilted and kerchief town of Grand Coteau
Huddles against the wildness of the swamp.
On the corner of Church and Solleau Way,
A stone’s throw from Thibideaux’s market,
A pink clapboard house, smeared with soft bayou mud,
Leans into the thick magnolia night
Breathes the spice of file and catfish.
A spiraling, hunchbacked oak stands sentinel,
Witnesses the passage of life in a Cajun village,
Brushes its snarled beards of moss
Against the rusting tin roof.
Out upon the stoop the little ones
Wrap themselves in the liquid night,
Eyes wide as tarbaby’s
While Cammy whispers tales through her dark hair
Of haints and injuns that haunt the bayou,
Snatching wayward children from their mères,
Keeping them for their own.
And inside, Maman Guidry smiles, stirring her rice,
Singing a Cajun song in her low lilting drawl,
While the locusts hum in time.

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