



# JACLR

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**Marta Mansilla Martín  
"Two Sisters Blue"**

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#### **Two Sisters Blues**

My house was on fire, my house burnt down to the ground Have you seen my sister? Where did my sister go after all? We drown until every story is told and every ghost is found

Fast. We went very fast. We crossed the country, passing by houses, signs and the neon blinking lights that would paint my dreams in screaming colors. Their fault I didn't fall asleep in the car earlier until we reached the South. The speedometer showed my mom trying to be faster than her thoughts since we left Chicago. My dad stayed there. We walk away every time we can't understand each other. In my family that means love. And so my dad stayed in Chicago.

Like a stranger with the same eyes, I was in Mississippi, not far from the Mississippi River. My mom slowed down the car when we arrived in Greenville. Home. Family. History. I jumped out of the car in Eureka Street with a white dress. The sun heated our mood and spirit. My grandma Odetta and his husband old Muddy greeted me with eyes half closed and heads on fire.

With the promise of many adventures to come, I spent most of my days with them. I also wandered around the park with shoes on my hands, watching the trees carefully, trying to find cracks among the leaves to see how the sky gets in. I liked hearing tales too. Old

Muddy was the only friend I had those days with his lazy fingers always dancing around a glass.

"So you like stories? You like Mark Twain?"  
Muddy said Mark Twain used a pen name. His real name wasn't good enough.

"Remember this! If you don't like the life you have, you invent it. That's why we tell stories so good in the South. Always learn a lesson from the stories you hear!"

Elsewhere, my mom and my grandma were fighting. I was listening because I wasn't deaf.

I was watching because I wasn't blind.

One day someone knocked the door. There she was. I received my big sister with open arms while were dancing around the porch. We looked alike but she was more beautiful and delicate, like a humble goddess. She needed to look away when her cloudy gaze was caught. Back then, we used to play and sing blues together. Side by side at night, she touched my freckles in my face, all of them, drawing constellations in the air, saying that we were a whole new universe waiting to be discovered. What a thing to say. Then she kissed me in the forehead by saying:

"With time you will see, my sleepyhead."

I never loved anyone the way I loved her.

She also had the talent to disappear. She went home very late, trying to avoid my mom and their differences all the time. But my mom has always tried to scold me at the earliest opportunity. And my sister protected me with witty remarks. How pretty and intelligent she was! With her iron eyes, she silenced my mom once and for all. Like ghosts in the same house, they were pale and immobile while my skin was washing off.

"Little sister you have to understand that people may love each other but that doesn't mean that they belong together". That broke my heart. I went to Muddy with my swinging curls over my nose and doubts in my mind.

"Child, you can't understand this. Cruelty can't be justified. Cruelty is explained by the means and reasons of adults. Cruelty is in children's minds as it is, just cruelty."

"But my sister says that they can't be together."

"Your sister? Odetta has another granddaughter? I'm a terrible husband, gracious me!"

"Her name is Erika"

"Erika? Your sister is Erika?"

I shook my head with a salty flavor in the lips. I had been crying ever since. Still quiet, I went downcast to the front door until he said to me:

"Alice, tell Erika that is a pleasure to have her back"

Twelve days later, my mom decided to move on and leave my grandma's house. A house full of corners, violet drapes and a black-and-white television. She had received news from my school, saying that I had invented an imaginary friend. We would move on to another house, ready to start again.

"Why Erika? Has Muddy...? "

I stopped talking to her. I was a toy of circumstance of ten years old with beautiful nerves and shy ambitions. I only lived for the love of my sister. As soon as we changed our house, my sister said farewell to me. She couldn't be with my mother. The situation drowned her.

"I can't leave the house as long as Mom, sorry, Grandma, is here". "Please, don't leave me."

"No one can hurt you if you don't want so. You are strong, aren't you?" "I am strong because I love you."

That was the last time I saw her, shining with her presence and her white dress. Since then, every day, far away from Greenville, I had asked about my sister.

"Where is my sister?"

"Look Alice, I don't have time for this, you have to stop being so selfish and naïve, why are you doing this to me?"

Later on, I left the house, looking for her. I went to the bus stop full of pencils and drawings. Thanks to the kindness of strangers, I went to Grandma's place. I was on the bus, with my tiny legs flying in the air, when Erika Street welcomed us with a purple sunset. But to me, the empty streets only had silence and indifference. I knew the dangers of walking alone. And I felt terrified, but because I was heartbroken. I knocked the door, and Muddy, always ready to tell stories, opened it. I abruptly asked about her. Words come out of my mouth with no direction. Only two questions made any sense.

"Have you seen my sister? Where did she go? "

"Look, I don't know where your sis' is, but you have to understand this, I only knew one Erika in this house. A long time ago."

"Years ago? Do you have a story?"

"I can always make up one." He knew well that stories were like candy in my hands.

"Alice, please close the door."

My head was spinning.

Like in the movies, from another angle, out of my body, I saw myself closing the door with one thing in my mind: I wanted to hear her story. I couldn't resist. I fell into the trap.

There were no stories that night.

Odetta, my grandma, was happy when we were imitating old movie stars or those times she took me to the mass, hearing gospel and folktales. Quiet that night, I saw that her cherry mouth was firmly closed. She approached to me, touching me in the shoulders, putting in the right place the suspenders of my dress. I looked at her with wonder. She saw the drawing in my hand, one of Erika and Muddy, with their names in it. Slowly, she put her forehead in my hair and whispered to me:

"Sweetheart, go outside. I'll be there in a minute."

Something happened. But we don't talk about it.

My grandma embraced me and we both walked away. After that, some images came up to my mind. I tried to scream but she covered my mouth until we got the end of the street. She told me the truth under a solitary streetlight with an old photograph from a wedding. There was Muddy and my grandma Odetta and two happy girls with freckles and white dresses too. Exactly like me and Erika. But that girl wasn't me. I felt the horror. I started shaking, feeling hands and ants all over my body. My grandma drowned my fears in her shawl.

"Don't tell your mom. She'll never understand. You hear me?"

No stories.

The truth is never told.

My grandma took my hand and we walked quietly, despite the red flaming fire where we used to live.

I didn't need stories from where I left my colors, my memories and my innocence. I only needed my grandma Odetta, proud and big, by my side. That night we were singing together about the pain of a sister and the pain of a ghost. Next morning, nobody suspected that something was wrong because of Muddy's reputation.

My grandma had a knowing smile and made a gesture of silence when my mom appeared. I kept quiet. The summer was beginning and my childhood days were over.

And so it goes.

I still think of her as my sister.

And I'm still waiting my sister to come home.

My house was on fire, my house burnt down to the ground Only ashes can be there when the spirits are gone for good The living souls keep those memories alive with stories in the South.

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**Bioprofile of the author:** Marta Mansilla Martín, born in 1993, is a Spanish student currently finishing her Bachelor's degree in English Studies by Complutense University Madrid in 2015. She is also a student representative at Committee of the Department of Literature. Planning to go on with her studies and projects, she also studied in Aarhus University (Denmark) in 2013-2014 thanks to the Erasmus program in which she took part. She works now in her TFG, dealing with Contemporary Poetry.

**Contact:** <martaman@ucm.es>