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## Neither Here Nor There

My porch. I loved sitting on mild, sunny, fall days, propped in the weathered porch swing, listening to the breeze rustle the leaves of the box elder trees that lined across the front yard. The trees wearing brilliant shades of red, orange, and gold decorated the landscape and I'd watch families of squirrels battle one another working tirelessly to gather acorns from the oak trees in our neighbor's pasture across the gravel lane. Our house, the first down an auburn gravel road peppered with white stones that fill the soil in that area, known as Stone County. From my swing was a 180-degree view of forest, pastureland, and a strip of the highway that runs through a desolate town. Ancient oak trees lined the field across the asphalt and vast golden fields encased by tarnished sagging barb wired fence lay somberly on either side of our gravel lane. A neighbor's house sat to the east of us, like a watch guard looking out over their land, crowned with a bright red roof.

The breeze passes through like a visiting friend bringing up warm Southern air, but begins to shift as fall and winter collide carrying the fierce and bitter cold. The sound of the leaves rustling through the trees is a dominate one, until the grazing cattle make their way across the beige pasture sheared of its tall hay. The field spread out behind a three-tiered white picket fence separating it from the dying grass across the front of the yard. Sixty head of cattle, a mix of tan, black, and my favorites, the black ones wearing a strip of white paint across their faces, routinely made their way to that section in the early mornings and later in the evenings. Since its fall, most have swollen bellies getting ready to birth the late season's calves. I would hear the "girls" tear the remaining fescue from the ground chewing it as though I was standing in the pasture with them. The smell of fresh-cut harvested hay lingered in the balmy air. The barn swallows would sing and fly in and out of the trees preparing to flee the nests they built under the eaves of my house early in the spring and head south for the upcoming winter. The sounds radiated as if God stood like a conductor signaling each element to come in on cue, so that their melodic tune resonated in the air in perfect unison.

My heart is heavy this mild evening. Thinking back on how much I took for granted.

Despite the years that have passed since leaving that farm; I can still sit in the suburban house I'd yearned for those days, looking through picture windows at neighbor's houses on top of us, and rows of fenced yards and smell that dense evening air rich of earth and solitude. Here. I thought that we should be in the city, as if we were missing out on something spectacular in the noise and lights.