

Our House in Summer

I enjoyed spending time on my porch, especially during calm fall days. I would sit on the old swing and listen to leaves rustle in the breeze that came from across the front yard. The trees donned beautiful shades of red, orange, and gold, decorating the landscape. 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. The smell of woodsmoke from the many chimneys in the area would occasionally fill the air. It was a wonderful place to relax and just take in all the beauty around me.

Our house is one of the first down an auburn gravel road dotted with white stones, which fill the soil in that region known as Stone County. From my swing, I had a 180-degree perspective of the forest, pastureland, and a portion of the highway that passes through a ghost town. The rhythmic crunch of tires on gravel, the sound heralding our approach, disrupts the silence that had been so profound it was almost tangible. The somber scene before us- an ancient oak grove on one side of a narrow asphalt lane, with vast golden fields encased by tarnished sagging barbed wire fence stretching out to meet the horizon on the other- is breathtaking in its bleakness. The neighbor's home was to the east, like a sentinel standing watch over their property, which had a brilliant red roof.

The autumn breeze ushers in warmer air from the south, but gradually changes as fall turns to winter. The sound of leaves rustling through the trees becomes overshadowed by grazing cattle across the now-brown pasture. A white picket fence runs along the edge of the field, separating it from the dying grass on the other side of the yard. In the mornings and late evenings, 60 cattle, including a variety of tan, black, and my favorites, the white-painted black ones, would make their way to that region. Most of the cows have swollen bellies since fall, preparing to birth the late season's calves. As I hear them tearing the remaining fescue from the ground and chewing it, I feel as though I'm 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 summer was ending, and it was time to say goodbye to my beloved family. Although their songs were a bittersweet reminder that the season was coming to an end,

their splendor brightened my heart. The sounds were so beautiful and perfect that it felt like time had stopped still.

The leaves on the trees were now a deep red, and the acorns that littered the ground were being diligently gathered by the squirrels. They were busy preparing for winter just like the barn swallows. The smell of woodsmoke was in the air again, but this time it was coming from our chimney. It was time to go inside and enjoy a cup of hot cocoa by the fire. Even though I loved spending time outdoors, there was something special about being cozied up inside when it was cold outside. As I sat there looking out the window, I realized that even though the scenery had changed, it was still beautiful in its own way. Winter may not be as vibrant as fall, but it has its own unique kind of beauty.

On this mild night, my heart is heavy. I recall how much I took for granted when I was younger. I can still yearn for those days spent on the farm, even though many years have passed since then. I sit in my suburban house, looking out at my neighbors' houses through picture windows, and smell the thick evening air that's redolent of earth and solitude. It's a different kind of beauty, but it still takes my breath away. I may not be able to go back to that time and place, but it will always hold a special place in my heart. Right here. I assumed that we should be in the city as if we were missing out on something magnificent in the noise and brightness.

Although I don't live there anymore, that place will always be special to me. It was a time in my life when things were simpler and the world seemed like a more beautiful place. I'll never forget the scenes, smells, and sounds of that wonderful place.