

A Little Place I Call Home

by Jesse Gutierrez

In the darkness, the town was calm. Few porch lights cast shadows of the leafless oak trees onto the lightly traveled dirt roads. The moon was full. Little clouds floated before the stars that appeared to be sprinkled in the sky. Fall is so peaceful. It's a well deserved break from the treacherous summer heat. In South Eastonville, not many homes have a good roof on them, let alone an air conditioner. Rundown, South Eastonville is a town of hard working callused hands. They are just blue collar, American, people. They might not drive the new cars or have the fancy house, but a twelve hour work day puts warm food on the table. That is the reward. After a long hard days work, the people of South Eastonville adjust rabbit ears, lay out tomorrow's clothes for the children and prepare for the next day. Out to the farm, back to the garage, or back to the site is a routine that folks have fallen into. Very rarely do you hear a complaint. Back breaking work is the only work. There is no need for suits or ties or high-rise buildings here in South Eastonville. The people there stay out of the city, just as the people of the city stay out of our little town. Unless,

unless it's time for a nice big pumpkin for hallows eve or a healthy pine for Christmas. To the city folk, the people in South Eastonville are a dime a dozen, but our crops are well known and have drawn a regular, seasonal, crowd from all around. Everyone in town is so proud.

Here, everyone knows your name. There is no reason to leave, everything you could possible need is right there. There is Doctor Wigert, who has delivered about half of the towns population. There is Miss Shewberts Deli and Grocery, Bill's Gas N' Go, and the school. The school is sufficient, kindergarten through twelfth- all in one room. Children attend when their chores are caught up and there is enough deer meat in the ice box to last the winter. Not too many people have left that town. There is nowhere to go, really. A few have left to play baseball for a college, but that usually didn't last. Academically, the people from town weren't the brightest apple in the basket, but back home they could build you a fence and clean the stalls before the dinner bell rings. I know of a few that had left when their number was pulled. Young, hard working boys

pulled off the farm, leaving mom and dad with all the work, to go "stop the spread of communism" in a country that no one could point out on a globe. I heard that once you come home from Viet Nam, you're different... maybe even crazy. Wally Dellano lost his older brother just as Maggi Stevens lost her husband and the father of her four month old son. We are all still waiting for Mark Patterson, the police chiefs oldest son, to return. We all heard that he was a hero, getting an award for saving someone's life. The war was talked about a lot. People would all meet in the church after the service on Sundays. Reverend Norton would allow meetings to be carried on in the church, where the towns people could gather and talk about the town and its residents. This was usually followed by a picnic or a Bar-B-Que.

Life in town wasn't all that exciting. Not for me anyhow. I would go to school about every other day- if that. Ever since my father had his heart attack, driving his tractor was about the extent of his activity. It was then up to me and mom to help bring in some money. I had to stack the hay, feed the chickens, and tend to the cows. Mom

got a job in the city cleaning offices over night. Dad never did approve of her job in the city, but he never objected to her income. Money was still tight though. I could only handle about half as many cattle as dad, and only a few of those were worth taking to the auction.

In spite of the peaceful advantages that South Eastonville had over the big city, every once in a while I was a little curious about the possibilities of a different life. What would it be like? Eighty-seven thousand people stuffed into a grid of smog and congestion must like something about it. Oh well, the sense of belonging that South Eastonville delivers is comforting and assuring.

One fall night it seemed there was something in the air. It wasn't a smell, it wasn't a sound... it was a feeling. The cows all huddled tight together in the corner of the pasture. The dogs were barking- back and forth, they too knew that something was present. I knew that it wasn't a storm because dad wasn't complaining of pain in his knees. It was a calling... that night was the night.

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