An Observant Man

by Gita M. Smith

He is homesick, but not for a place. Rather, it is for certain things, like the silver of old cedar shingles, the tang of wood smoke and the belling of hounds on their return from the fields.

He is lonesome, it's true, but he has been more lonesome at other times.
Were he to measure it and be honest, he is less lonesome now than when his heartless Chella was alive, although he'd never say that to the kids.

He walks down the broad avenue to the market, neither seeing nor hearing the thudding traffic because it is irrelevant.

How much more attuned he was when surrounded by forest, consigning meaning to each tiny sound: the scrape of one branch against its neighbor; the footfall of a doe or scratch of armadillo; the *ba-a-ak* of turkey hens at flydown time, silhouetted against a sunrise.

He fills his grocery basket with his bachelor items — soup cans, frozen pot pies, a quart of milk. He takes a little pleasure, before he leaves, at the sight of a small boy on tiptoe, staring into the cartoon face on a cereal box.

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