

## Interlude

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### Whose Paradise?

*The license plate of the car ahead reads, "Sportsman's Paradise." It's newly pressed. The old plates used to say, "Bayou State." But this one sounds . . . more hopeful. The only bayous I had known were full of mosquitoes and unseen snakes and alligators. "What does it mean?" you ask your dad.*

*"It means that it's a good state for sportsmen," Dad says from the driver's seat.*

*"Sportsman?" you ask. There are not that many sports teams in central Louisiana where you were growing up. There are paved roads, traffic lights, and a mall. There is high school football and baseball. There are LSU games on television. Just beyond town, there are screened porches and camps, bonfires and barbecues, and fish fries and crawfish boils. There are lakes and rivers. There are horses. There are barns. There are cows. But you've never seen anything like a sportsman.*

*"What do you mean, sportsman?" you ask.*

*"Hunters," he says. "Duck hunting, deer hunting, fishing—you know—sportsmen."*

*"Hunting is a sport?"*

*"For some people," he says.*

*Never a definitive answer, which was frustrating.*