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The Little Dipper of the Flint Hills

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THE LITTLE DIPPER OF THE FLINT HILLS

The kitchen staff of Strong City’s Ad Astra Food and Drink amicably lounge at tables during a power outage.

They have all heard of the artesian well nearby but cannot give precise directions to it. Someone suggests that it’s near Wonsevu, a tiny hamlet in southeast Kansas’s Chase County nestled in the heart of the Flint Hills. Today’s host and driver, Symphony in the Flint Hills Executive Director Christy Davis, confirms as much on a sectional map. But after driving about twenty minutes looking for the spring, Davis realizes the sectional map is not in the truck.

Arriving in Wonsevu, there’s no artesian well in sight. But Davis is determined to find it. She pulls the pickup into a long driveway, leaves it running, and hops out to knock on the door of a lovely house. A windmill softly chirps beside a clear pond. After a few minutes, Davis bounds back out of the house with a set of handwritten directions.

The directions are spot on. After a short drive, Davis steps out of the truck and across the muddy road to an enameled ladle hanging from a barbed wire fence. Next to the fence, a pipe spits out cold and clear water. She dips the ladle into the spring and drinks – it’s cold, and it leaves a bit of a mineral film over the teeth.

The well sits in the right-of-way of the county road, so it’s not subject to valuable property rights like so many other wells and springs in the region. Furthermore, agricultural practices in the



Strata 2
Laura Berman

Flint Hills ensure that aquifer water such as this is kept chemical-free. As Davis explains, “The Flint Hills is a place of time-honored practices and clean living. It’s a place where native grasslands keep water free of pesticides – where you can still drink water straight from a spring in a cup you share with your neighbor.”

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Danny Caine is the author of *Uncle Harold’s Maxwell House Haggadah*, Etchings Press, 2017, and owns the Raven Book Store in Lawrence, Kansas.