*Begin transcript:*

BENTON: This says Pig, Poultry Barn, so let’s see what’s inside . . .

ALEX: Pigs. Now, you see, I have a very strong connection with pigs . . . because one of my summer jobs….

BENTON: – chicken is right here . . .

ALEX: Oh yes. (*strange noise*) Is that a growling chicken? That is the strangest sounding chicken…

BENTON: One of them is.

ALEX: (*whispers*) I think it is a growling chicken.

BENTON: They’re all sounding something like that – yes.

ALEX: ( *aughs*) It’s like the haunted house version of chickens. How many years have you been visiting Riverdale Farm?

BENTON: Um, about maybe 15 years?

ALEX: Oh yeah?

BENTON: Because I find sometimes, you know, especially I think if you are an immigrant that is used to, um, you know, sunny weather and all that, and you’re used to, sort of, animals, and you know. It’s a nice place to come to sort of relax, in a certain particular sense, to sort of get in touch with a certain aspect of nature.

ALEX: It’s a kind of a beautiful surprise that it is here –

BENTON: Yeah, yeah. It's a nice way to connect, and just sort of, you know, be in touch with nature. What I sometimes used to do, or still do, like, in the summertime when it’s really nice – when the weather is really nice – go walking at say 3 o’clock in morning when no one is around. Because then you tend to hear the real silence of the city – because oftentimes with cars and everything, you know, the real natural sounds get muted – you don't hear it. It's a very interesting time to walk around at that particular point where there is nothing, what I call, real silence –

ALEX: Yeah – because you don’t have “that” in the background –

BENTON: No –

ALEX: – and planes. I just find that the sound of airplanes just kind of spoils everything.

BENTON: Yeah, yeah. This for me is the most magical time of year.

ALEX: Oh, do you love this time of year?

BENTON: I love this time of the year because, like, in the space of two weeks, trees with no leaves just – in a particular sense, trees almost skeleton-like become fully alive and blooming, and all of a sudden everything is fresh and green again and all that. So!

ALEX: You mentioned being an immigrant. Did you come to Canada from somewhere else?

BENTON: I’m Jamaican – I was born in Jamaica, and I’ve been here now 22 years.

ALEX: Ok. So, walking must really be in your blood, too?

BENTON: Yeah – it’s not something – you basically, you know, can decide “oh I just love walking.” When you basically live in the country growing up where your school is maybe like 4 miles away, church is maybe like 4 miles away – so almost every day you’re awake, you are walking.

ALEX: Right. Four miles! Did you have to walk four miles to get to school?

BENTON: Yeah, but that’s why we don’t need gyms, right?

ALEX: Yeah!

BENTON: Your built-in exercise. And then, you are basically carrying food or you’re carrying whatever else, and while you are walking you are singing, it’s a part of what is so natural in a particular sense, for me. So.

ALEX: Do you have a memory of one walk, and maybe something that happened on that walk?

BENTON (*laughs*) Basically right, you are talking about living in villages and all that, where you may not have any buses to go to the big city. So, you would have people sometimes walk 20 miles from one place, like for instance, if you are sick. If you are really sick, you may have to walk from your village to the main road to get to the town – that could be 20 miles. I remember like, for instance, when I was young, and I think my grandmother was taking me to the dentist – and like, we have never really seen a big main road with all these cars passing by basically, so quickly, and I think we were walking on side of the road, and this truck came by, and we were sort of blown into the bushes – (*laughs*) with the wind from the truck, you know, so basically, all of a sudden we were walking, and all of a sudden we find ourselves (*laughs*)… little things like that, you know, little things like that. You know, sometimes, you go back in your memory, and it’s basically things that reconnect you to the aspect of your family, or just, in a sense, the journey from where you are then to now – and the fact that you know, I have been in this country about 22 years – and sometimes how far removed I feel from that history of myself – you know. All the things we carry inside our brain that we sometimes don't even remember, and sometimes it’s interesting what – you know – whether it’s a smell or a sound that triggers some sort of memory inside your head and take you back.

ALEX: Do you think – is your sense of this city and people in this city, do you sort of sense that people are connected to nature here, or do you think it’s really something that you think is lacking? And that maybe you experienced more of it in your past?

BENTON: I think people are connected in a way, but I think people are so much more concerned with their own particular space – that they don't think about how as a society, we are encroaching on land where these animals live. For instance, when a bear comes into a town or something, oftentime, what ends up happening is that bear getting killed, and I am thinking well, if we are the ones encroaching on their space, why can’t we understand we are leaving them with little option as to where to go?

ALEX: Yes.

BENTON: So, in a very interesting way I think that, we choose when we want to be environmentalist, we choose when we want to support animal rights and all that as long as if doesn’t infringe on our own –

ALEX: Kind of like ‘not in my back yard’ kind of idea . . .

BENTON: Exactly.

ALEX: As long as it doesn’t invade our understanding –

BENTON: As long as I am not affected –

ALEX: Right.

BENTON: It's easy for me to be an activist about it, as long as I am not affected by it. So, I think in a particular sense we try to build a certain aspect of community, but I again I think people are very settled in their own way, and they really don't think about the bigger ramifications of it outside of their own personal little space.

ALEX: Yeah.

BENTON: You know, this is a very diverse city. Part of the issue I think that the level of diversity – those stories are not told – you can see your neighbor, and you can think well this person has come to Canada, but we don’t know where they came from or what their back story is. So many people. I think it’s important for us to keep reminding ourselves, where we are coming from, and in a certain particular way, what unites us. We need to just document our lives. Document our aspect of our journey and the fact that we were here.

*End of transcript.*