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Buehlman, Christopher. Those Across the River

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Buehlman, Christopher. Those Across the River

Frank Nichols is running. Running from memories of WWI's trench warfare…memories that still wake him up at night sweating and thrashing…running from the fall-out from the two year affair he conducted with married colleague Eudora which ended in her divorce and his unemployment. Luckily, he has someplace to run to; he has inherited a house and property in small Whitbrow, Georgia, from an aunt he never knew. His aunt's letter urged him to sell the property without visiting, but instead, Frank and Eudora decide to start their lives fresh in Whitbrow. Frank is planning to research and write a book about his great grandfather, a slave owner known for particular cruelty. Eudora has taken a job at the local grade school. At first, all is well in Whitbrow. Eudora is settling in nicely with her students and Frank is happy to spend his days talking to the men at the local general store. But when impoverished Whitbrow makes the decision to cease a strange local tradition—every month on the full moon, the town sends sacrificial pigs into the woods across the river—all hell begins to bre loose. Strange things are seen in the woods, and people begin to die. Frank soon finds out that those who live across the river have a far more personal connection to him and his family than he could have imagined.

This is that rarest of books, a novel that is literary first and horror second. The characters, especially Frank, are fully-realized, believable, and interesting. The setting is atmospheric and vividly rendered, with the racial tensions of the time and place completely realized. The horror elements, when they are introduced, are creepy and visceral. Highly recommended.

Buehlman and those across river
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