

Keeping Time by Crickets

The first sound always comes before I notice—a faint trill in the grass, a pulse too small to name. By the time I remember to listen, it's everywhere: a current stitched through the quiet, the field alive with its own cadence, damp and humming with late heat, the grass rippling like long fur in the breeze—one surface pretending to be another. Maybe it starts before the heat even fades. You once said summer doesn't end until the crickets start, and winter when they stop. My father, keeping time by insect pitch. I didn't believe then. Seasons seemed like weather, light, not sound. Now I know better. Each evening I open the window just enough to let the noise in, and each night I wait for its falter—the way someone keeps a finger on a pulse, hoping it holds. Their rhythm isn't comfort; it's friction making music of survival. When the night grows heavy and humid, the sound builds—dense, invisible. It moves through the room, through me, vibrating the soles of my feet, my sternum, my throat—as if the air were relearning how to live. Sometimes I press my palm to the screen, feel their bodies tremble through the mesh. By the window, one dead cricket—wings open, still tuned to something I can't hear. The dark presses back, an equal resistance. What the body misplaces, the field hums back—proof that what fades doesn't vanish, only changes register. When the chill finally reaches through the screen from the field, the pitch drifts low and slow, the pauses widening. The last threads of sound sink into the noise of the highway, the train. Nothing ends, not really—the field keeps time, the dark keeps score, the air remembers what we forget. I leave the night ajar, just enough to catch the time, the key.