

Isabella Guglielmetti

Cricket, Cricket

It's loud and I can't sleep. Deep into the night I lie awake listening to the unfamiliar moans of an August night: chirps, clicks, and croaks. I stare into the dark room, visually tracing the outlines of the furniture and my sleeping cousins to prove that there aren't monsters under the bed. I press my eyes closed, wishing that I were not in Connecticut, in my grandfather's house, but home in LA, where I know the sounds of the nights as intimately as the silhouettes of my room in the dark.

I wake the next morning to the sunlight playing on my face, streaming through the curtains and onto my eyes. I look around to find my cousins laying around me, undisturbed by the sun. Tiptoeing around them, I slip down the hall, making my way down the stairs: the cedar steps creaking under my bare feet as I pause to look at the photos on the wall. As I turn the corner, and am greeted by a dog's sloppy kiss, "Morning, kiddo," My grandfather says, looking up from his coffee towards the dog, "Want to come with us?" he says, nodding at the porch, the dog scurrying back at the suggestion. "Okay," I whisper back in a sleepy daze.

The morning was refreshingly cool, devoid of the otherwise omnipresent humidity. We sit simply on the steps in silence, watching as the sun rises over the lake, the world buzzing around us. The sounds that haunted me last night now become comforting, similar to the smell of my grandfather's dark roast. A twig snaps as the dog chases some chipmunks around the property. Here, my grandfather teaches me, a 7 year-old city rat, to love nature.

On one of our walks I watch in curiosity, as he reaches for a grassy sprig, pulling out an onion. He guides my soft hand with his weathered one exposing another bulb. I'm overwhelmed by the garlicky smell of the onion, and the feeling of the dirt under my nails. Later, he teaches me to catch fireflies. I watch them waltz around the jar, crashing into each other and the glass, similar to how I broke the stillness of the cool lake water when I splashed in earlier that day. Those early mornings became our ritual. The sky just barely blue, but the rest of the world so alive: robins chirping, minnows splashing, sun shining. To bear witness to this, to be a part of it at all, I felt like the luckiest girl in the world. My grandfather passed away shortly thereafter, but in just a week he taught me so much, beauty in a jar of fireflies, comfort in crickets, life in dirt, so that nature became a refuge, a place where he and magic are always alive.