



Cicada's Song

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The ground is cool and moist here. I curl my body to fit the narrow space between roots and earth listening to the heartbeat of my tree. She spreads her lacy leaves above my sisters and I. I make my bed of green moss, fairy fungus, and dead leaves wrapping the earth like a wool blanket around my growing limbs.

I am awkward in this state, I know, but I am too sleepy to care. I am content in the dark.

Why wouldn't I be? I have all I need. So, we sit, hum, and wait. We do not touch, bound in oblivion together. We are still, slow listening while life above us throbs on. The rhythm is relentless. It begins almost silently, a rattling whisper. Soft as cat tail blossoms, or downy goose feathers, at first. Sometimes, we are not sure if it is even there at all.

But then, just as we settle, the thin membrane over my eyes begins to feel it. Moving underneath my skin, I wonder—do my sisters feel it too? The thought of something yet unknown to me seeping its way into my little Hogan, invading my cozy space creeps into my dreams. Bright light nightmares make me itch, as I struggle to awaken. I think I call out, but no sound emerges and I readjust my body, stretching out, seeking comfort.

Just then, slowly, I feel the day begin. How do I know, here in the dark? A moist warmth spreads, and the cool breath of willow assure me—it was all but a dream. The sensation a distant memory. I vibrate with relief, finding something new has indeed occurred. Transparent small petals appear at my side. They feel soft, supple. Just at my sides, branching out, I find I can no longer curl around, finding root and leaf. I twist and turn, trying to find my old familiar position. Seeking scents, my comfortable bed, anything familiar at all. I feel lost, and do not know if my sisters are still beside me. No sound, no hum, no touching of our soft antenna messages relay through the earth, upstream through trickling water. Where have they all gone, I wonder? Why would they leave me here all alone?

I can't sleep now, I realize. My skin feels hard, my muscles cramped tight. I try to stretch, pushing up, out, anywhere at all. I wish I knew how to weep, but all I can do is wriggle this way and that, slowly inching my way into the unknown. It seems as if I spend hour after hour, just scratching at the walls. Boredom sets in, like a dog at my feet. I hum, finally too tired to seek comfort. If I strain and listen, I imagine I can hear a familiar choir—surging through my skin in the dark. A beckoning call, like the dry warm

gravel that sometimes seeps past my fingertips. Bit by bit, it slowly trickles over me, like a soft sheet of rain. Constant and ever present, gritty bits stick to my limbs. Bits of fine dust slip under my jaw, forcing me to clench my mouth shut, so as not to swallow debris, rocks and pebbles. I sip small breaths of air, just enough to know somewhere above me a breeze brings some relief. If only I could reach the surface. If I struggle and strain too much, the earth fills my lungs. Tasting metal and dirt, I sigh. Weary of everything, I claim apathy as my only companion.

I thought I was past caring—but as another day begins, I find myself angry. I can't remember feeling this roiling rage that now compels me. I feel irritated, frustrated, and yes, lonely. I also feel something hard against my stomach, I can't tell if it is gravel bits, incased in mud or a rock that has found its way beneath me in the night. Whatever it is, it is smooth and warm. I cling to this new surface, feeling adrift. Floating, falling, I shimmer and sway. My anger gone, replaced by fear. I shift position so I will not fall, I am so accustomed to having the earth cradled around me. Here I am unprotected, vulnerable. I feel a cool breeze whisper past, a faint sound filling the air. I know that sound! I realize as my terror turns to joy. It is the song of my sisters, calling me. They urge me with the chorus, "Open your eyes" they cry. I reach up, extending my arms, hoping to feel their soft embrace once again. There is a crack, a pain, like a scar tearing open, flesh exposed, raw and new. I open my mouth and find as I do, my eyes open, my wings splay out at my sides. I see the endless blue, transparent greens, and for the first time, the brightness of life. I look down to see my brown faded self, mirrored within the earth. No longer consumed by fear, anxiety gives way to the song we sing, the urge to live, and to fly.

*Oh! Awaken the day
Farewell to thee, Night
Chase away Sorrows
Bring in the Light*

