

Hush Little Baby

Bats loop through the thick gray air that fills my insides with heavy, squeezing warmth. The night is a lofty photographer's effort to capture a twirl with everything wiggling obscure through the air droplets. See the bats, he says, a beer can hand to the twilight sky. Watch em dive like that, they're eatin up the skeeters. Dusty Oreos lined longer than I'm allowed set in a denim dessert plate, resting in the crease of his legs—always jeans, never shorts, never relief from heat. Two bites each, they disappear behind reaching whiskers settled in a design never changing; curling, dancing mustache dripping over a lip hidden from my fluid eyes. Poor mosquitoes, I say, no, poor us without more bats, he says with the aluminum to his mouth. I send humid, sweet apple juice zipping up my straw, swirling crumbs from tender, new molars, and plummeting down my throat. Stop that, to the slurp echoing from the bottom of my blue plastic cup, bouncing off the darkness listen. My eyes scratch through the speck of sky his ear watches, what is it? and he hisses me still to silence. Just sit and listen. I forget. Adjust the water-weighted skirt of my dress—a prize of polka-dots pink as a fresh paper cut, wider beyond a strawberry stain, awarded when I no longer tasted chocolate and vanilla on the skin of my right thumb. His boot heel, attached to sharp smelling leather, painted with a picture I can only feel, grates the cement at our feet. I shift my bare soles to a new spot, a warm spot, heat tossed there by a raging sun to wait for my earth worn skin to soak it up and send it about. I listen then, through the bottoms of my feet, waiting for him to finish what it is adults must do every so often in silence.

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