

Tick

by Samuel Pringle

There is a clock ticking beside you. It is an old clock, passed down through your family, solid and wooden and full of history. It could be a metaphor, depending on how pretentious you're feeling, or maybe it's just a clock. You are overthinking this.

You get up off the bed and start pacing, feet moving with the rhythm of the ticking, getting faster and faster as you get more and more anxious. Neither you nor the clock are keeping time anymore.

You leave the room, hoping that pacing somewhere else will calm you down. It won't.

The ticking follows you along the hallway, getting louder and louder as you move away from the clock, which seems counterintuitive. Maybe you've finally cracked under the stress. That would be understandable.

Your pacing takes you outside, and you end up frantically walking along the sidewalk, not pausing to admire the neighbourhood flowers like you usually do. The ticking chases you down the street.

You start running, desperate to outlast the noise chasing you. The clock is in your head now, and you break into a full sprint, past houses you don't even recognise. The thumping of your feet on the concrete is out of sync with the ticking, and you stumble as you try to get them to match. This proves to be impossible. Your chest starts to burn, and it mixes uncomfortably with the sinking feeling in your stomach.

There is a tree up ahead and you collapse, exhausted, under its leaves. The nervous energy is still thumping through your veins but your lungs need some time to catch up, and they take priority. You feel the ticking everywhere as you sink to the ground. There is no other choice at this point.

As you look through the dappled light cast by the tree, you feel like a ghost; you've been sitting here for no time at all and for eternity. Your head feels strange. You barely notice



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that the ticking has gotten quieter. That overbearing noise in your head is slowly being replaced with the soft wind rustling the leaves and the feeling of your heart recovering from an impromptu run.

The stress that had taken over your body starts to subside.

The ticking just sounds like a clock.



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