

# Flutter in Night

*by* kate hill cantrill

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## ***Flutter in Night***

Have you heard this yet? The daughter flew home to care for the mother, whose pump is still tick ticking—though now with aid—which means she leaves the kitchen when the microwave clicks on. She holds her heart, as if to pray—one spotted hand placed on the next as she backs out on slippered feet, head bowed toward this new-world oven. She knows that time has won.

Have you seen her yet? The daughter, too, is aging with the grace of black-faced geese—those velvet-necked birds that foot-flit around the river who refuse to move for anyone. She often jogs by—shuffles her too-big feet and holds her arms bent near her face, a little like a fighter might. The geese just glance, then look away, fearing nothing from this sweet old bird or from the dust she's just kicked up.

These rounded, dense, migrating geese know a thing or two about time passing. They know that on their way to Canada they feel the tug of earth's great magnet grow strong around this Cooper River, and though New Jersey is not quite right, it is a place to pass the time. It is a place to rest until the sun will set one hour sooner than it did the day they landed. At night they'll study the pattern of stars—great necks extended, pointing up toward the blackened sky through which they'll fly until this time next year, and that time the other, and all those nights placed in between.

Has she told you yet? The old mother would like to fly home to New Scotland one final time; she'd like to catch a strong tail wind and float above what doesn't count. She'd land when air is smelling right and let the cold do what it will, as she lay down in a frozen

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field: her body done, her old pump tuckered, her daughter flying on  
her own by mapping stars and galaxies when, by night, she carries  
on.

