

By the Light of Earthbound Stars

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There is a growing warmth to the air as she stirs, crawling from her hiding place. She delicately flutters her wings, clearing her brown scales of the dust that had coated them during her slumber. The moth can sense her brothers and sisters similarly stirring as they launch skyward towards the heavens.

The sky is clear tonight, no clouds to hide the billions of stars. They are intimately familiar to her, yet they appear to have multiplied since her ancestors undertook the same journey she now faces. She turns northward, instinct alone guiding her as she searches amongst the millions of pinpricks of light for the path to the high country she has never seen but knows she must reach.

The stars she seeks are dimmer now than they once were, the path less clear even as instinct tugs her northwards. But it is a journey her kind have always taken and she doesn't falter at the new challenge. To dally is to risk not making the journey at all. She is small and though they have numbers now if she is left behind it won't be long before one of the many predators finds her.

The stars are dazzling, dull and sparse above her wings as she flies but full of light beneath her. They promise warmth and home even as instinct tells her to keep flying. Around her, several of her siblings fall prey to the promises of the false stars below, their short lives blinking out as they meet the lights racing incomprehensibly through the darkness.

She doesn't think about how different her journey is compared to her forefathers, having nothing to compare it to. All she knows is that they need to fly north and perhaps if she is lucky she will be amongst those to return to the feeding grounds she is leaving behind when the winter winds chill the skies. She won't get to make the journey twice even if she sees the end of summer.

The odds are not in her favour to even go that far. They are many now but only a lucky few will return to birth the next generation of wayfarers. The path ahead is full of dangers, known and unknown. The wind pulls at her small body, tiring her as she resists the siren song of the earthbound stars.

But the distance ahead is so very vast and the stars below promise a haven.

A particularly strong gust has her tumbling, briefly losing her way northwards. And the lights are right there. She hesitates for a moment, trying to regain her bearings. On weary wings she continues to fly, turning to the east and the promised safety the starlight offers. Her instincts say to keep flying, whispering promises of cool mountain caverns and overhangs. But she has never seen a mountain and the crevices of the buildings below seem as good as anything a mountain could offer.

She flutters her wings tiredly as she lands, crawling into the waiting darkness as several of her siblings join her. Her journey is over, the light winning out over her instincts as more and more moths join her.

To the north there is a similar stirring as a lone possum wakes from her winter slumber. Her stomach growls as she waits, her tail coiled delicately around a twig, staring up into a star-filled but moth-less sky.