

Wings

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(Senior Nonfiction, Second Place Winner)

Be it a winter stop at the feeder or a summer's evening on the front deck, the Brown Wren, black and white Chickadee, Blue Jay, yellow Goldfinch, or red Cardinal dart and dive. Different-sized wings flutter against the white of the snow, spring greens or sweet summer breeze, beauties swooping high and low. Graceful but with a swift speed they beat, pulling me out of my routine, taking me back to that moment. That powerful shifting moment.

Our room was beautiful, nestled in the woods, with lovely French doors leading to a screened in porch. It was close to water, and the designer was thoughtful using many natural elements to create a peaceful, quiet space. The nurse was gentle wearing a badge and dressed in flowers of varying blue shades. Her voice was soft and well-practiced. She looked at me but said to all of us, "You have to tell her you will be alright." She was fighting; afraid to leave us.

One by one, each leaned in and sweetly said their good byes. I went last, getting as close as I possibly could. Leaving words only intended for her, I whispered the things she already knew while big drops of me fell on her cheek and neck.

That was all she needed, and all I needed, and all I could allow. Shallow breaths replaced the labored ones. She was slowing, preparing, and summer had gifted her the perfect day. We opened the doors and windows in the room. It was still, so very, very quiet. We were gathered around, holding her hands, touching her cheek and crown, when she exhaled her last breath and her incredible life left the room. My heart broke.

Within seconds- the shift. Every bird in that soundless wood suddenly started to dance and sing. We all turned our heads towards the door and window in astonishment. It was as if her beautiful soul lifted and flew past them to the heavens. The silence was broken by their songs of joy and celebration. Quiet smiles and nods filled the room. We knew she made it, thanks to the wings.

A true account of my mother's passing