

## BLUE TIGERS

Liz Downes

Running down the track we came breathlessly  
upon the place of butterflies.  
Here where the air was green-shadowed,  
sun-dappled,  
they danced, the blue tigers, in their scented lair.

We stood huge and heavy  
rooted to the ground  
while they spun shimmering haloes round our hair,  
bobbed like marionettes on chocolate wings  
spattered with blue sky-paint.

Returning after sun-down  
we thought they'd gone,  
felt the dim stillness in the empty air,  
until our eyes picked out on every branch  
the alien leaves,  
darkly triangled.

Reaching my hand to one  
it slowly, sleepily  
transferred each thin black foot  
from twig to finger  
and, till my warm breath woke it,  
clung briefly there,  
a dreaming tiger,  
captured in its lair.

+++++

**Judge's Comments:** In Third Place is Liz Downes' "Blue Tigers," a poem full of lucid images of this stunning butterfly species, "like marionettes on chocolate wings / spattered with blue sky-paint." Liz's poem captures the sensuousness of contact with more-than-human life as the butterfly "transferred each thin black foot / from twig to finger". Through clear, simple yet engrossing language and images, the poem transports the reader to that transformative moment of encounter that lingers in memory.