

The Butterfly Man

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A butterfly man lived in a canyon. He had electric blue wings trimmed with gold and black. No one ever came up the canyon. It was well hidden and out of sight. In winter the butterfly man kept to a cave. In summer he slept in a tree high off the ground. When the sun shone he flew in the air and glistened.

Early one summer's day a laughing of women came berry picking up the canyon. Their find was good and their baskets soon full. The women sat on the banks of the creek and chatted; the youngest wandered further. She surprised the butterfly man sipping water from the creek. He sat on a rock midstream, the water foaming about him and hissing. He didn't hear her coming. He squatted, his hands cupping the water to his lips. When he saw her she saw him. She saw his wings and could not move. Even when he leapt into the air and put his arms around her she did not call or scream. The butterfly man flew away with the young woman and she didn't care.

The canyon narrowed. The air grew cool and moist. Blue butterflies flitted in the air around her; thousands of them.

"Don't look at the butterflies," he said. "Don't touch!"

But the young woman couldn't help herself. She reached out. Thousands of butterflies swarmed around her and she let the butterfly man go.

They found her beside the creek, her body strewn with electric blue wings.