

Karner Blue

by Donelle Dreese

The Karner Blue Butterfly was federally listed as an endangered species in 1992.

for Danny Miller

Scientists have tried to bring it back
to Ohio
to other places where wild lupine summons
a blue sea across an April field.

Wind howls through the hollow log
where the last Karner Blue in this oak savanna used to fly.
It is like the ache that blows through the college corridors
where you gave everyone your natural and unreserved iridescence.

You were last seen in a soft dreaming body
making your way home from the deck of a hospital bed
with small tubes keeping you anchored until you made your decision.

How many landscapes and seascapes did you cross?
Did you need a spirit guide beyond Appalachia
or did you already know the way?

I imagine a stopover in North Carolina
where the lost convictions of childhood rose from their nests
to honor you
for warming cold river valleys
bringing butterflies to the city
for enduring the long emergency
and for making friends with the demons
who tried to detain you.

What we know is simple:
everything that lives will die
but your love was like the Karner Blue Butterfly
a rare
gentle
surprise.