The Butterfly Effect

In the flower power sixties, a flutter of butterflies flashed black-rimmed wings — tiny stained glass windows

grabbing sunlight, a kaleidoscope of peacocks, adonis blues, red admirals, purple hairstreaks, orange tips.

This abundance is no trick of memory airbrushing childhood summers — it’s decimation recorded

for half a century by volunteers who squatted in damp grass counting absence on clipboards.

Sensitive to changes in climate in warmer winters, adults emerge from chrysalides too soon, cling on

unable to flap their frosted wings or suck nectar through straw tongues die rigid as sugar confections.

We order a cup of caterpillars and three weeks later, release five painted ladies. In chaos theory,

one butterfly can flap its wings, turn a tornado in Texas — who knows what five will achieve.

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