

John Quinn

At the Orchid & Butterfly Farm

In the elephant hills above Chiang Mai,
where orchids are home to butterflies,
beneath a potting bench for bromeliads,
where no sensible butterfly would fly,

the greenhouse screen is frayed and torn.
Outside, a small stream puddles by
as teak trees shed their parchment leaves
ahead of summer's scorching storm.

Then something moves beneath the bench.
Inch by inch, in perfect, glossy camouflage,
a slender emerald serpent bears a smaller,
even greener frog aloft full half its jeweled

length, intent on distant Burmese hills,
all nonchalance and serpent strength.
The frog's legs flutter like butterfly wings
as toxin weaves its compassionate spell.

Here at the orchid and butterfly farm
in the morning shade it's already warm,
and, omen or not, it's like magic to find
a Siamese snake eats its own cold kind.