

Forthcoming in *On Spec Magazine*, Winter 2021:

Butterflies Underneath the Desert

There was no map, only a notebook—blank—and a dusty purse at her feet.

The purse had a bent zipper, remnants of a powdery substance stuck to its inner lining. Yellow-striated butterflies helped find brackish water (salty but drinkable) beneath the corrugated surface, where the eerie creatures pulsed in patterns underground of violet, pale green, and pink, mimicking the northern lights.

Off in the distance, cherry-red mesas competed with the sunset, strange flames flickering like candles. The pocket-sized black notebook in her sweaty hand was a clue to this predicament, but the book's crisp white pages had nothing to say.