

Moth Woman

by Kathy Fish

The woman who came to pick up the bags of clothes seemed like she wanted more than clothes from us. That was what I'd told Greg later, that she had hungry eyes and that made him laugh. But she did have hungry eyes and long hair the color of whiskey and a way of touching her face when she talked. And Greg asked later why did we let her in? She came in a beat up Datsun. She probably took those clothes for herself. Why'd we let her in? And I reminded him that we got to talking about the moths in the basement and the woman wanted to see.

So we took her down and there they were, hundreds of them, bright green, fluttering around. Greg had thought if we turned out the light and left the sliding door open they would simply fly away, but they stayed. I sat on the top step and watched the woman go down and stand in the middle of the room, raising her hands as if to touch them and I half expected the moths to lift the ends of her hair, the hem of her skirt, and fly away with her.

These are luna moths, the woman said. Do you have a walnut tree? And we said yeah, out there, pointing to the back yard. She said they're mating, they'll mate all night long. Greg wanted to know what then and the woman said they rest. How do we get them out of here, I asked from the step and the woman said, oh they'll just die. They only live a week, their journey is a short one. And I stood and said I'd go and get those bags and it seemed like she'd forgotten all about them.

One of the moths flew directly into Greg's face and he batted at it, saying fuck, fuck. The woman put her finger to her lips, shushing him, like oh no don't swear in front of the pretty bugs and we got pissed all over again remembering it later, like how dare she. She said words get embedded in a place, they settle into the walls and

furniture like ghosts, to which Greg said horseshit and the woman said are you afraid of strange ideas and Greg said no, I'm afraid of strange people and we smirked at each other then because we seriously wanted this Moth Woman out of our basement and finally she put her arms down and came upstairs and carted away the bags of clothes in her crappy little car.

The next morning I went down to the basement, and just as the woman had said, the moths had all died. At first I didn't realize. At first I thought everything, the floor, the furniture, the shelves, was covered in thick, green leaves.

