



1980

The Luna Moth Sonnets

Patricia E. Gunter

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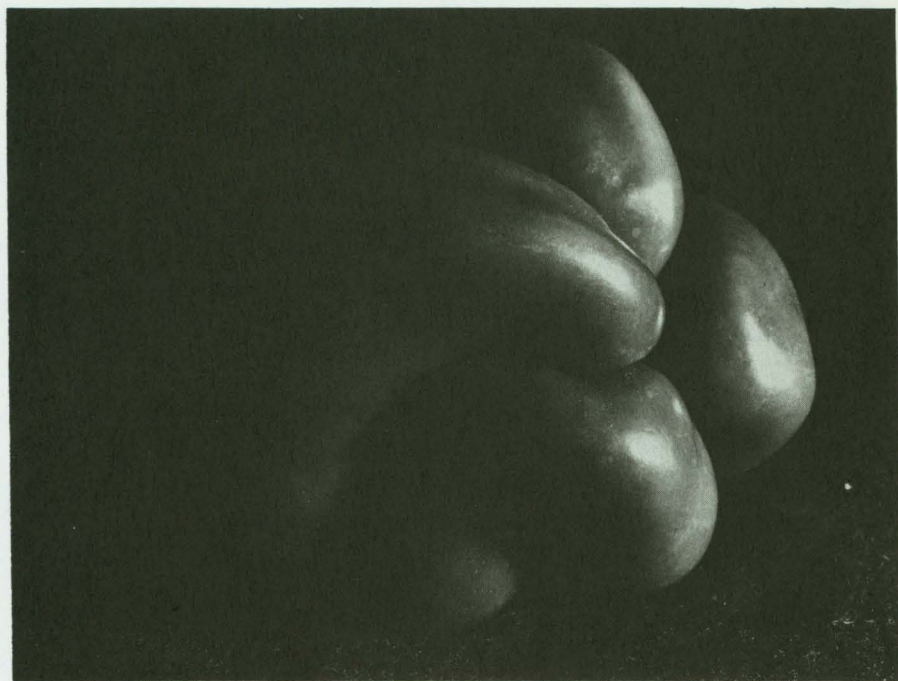
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photograph by James C. Loveless

The Luna Moth Sonnets

Patricia E. Gunter

I

To the lot display light, on the brick,
She of the faery-green wings has entrusted
A clutch of her yellow pearls; on the stone, encrusted
That which made her slow and tumeric.
And while she is no longer whole or quick
(The pavement where she lays is lightly dusted
With froth-green fur and the lot light that she trusted),
Her pearls warm on the concrete, two wings thick.
The floodlight, like an ice storm in the spring,
Glazes the metals beneath it; icelight burns
Across the windshields, and above it all, the moon,
Half-open like a doorway meant for wings,
Powers the sky with silver as it turns
And writhes from its dark cocoon.

Patricia E. Gunter, from Petersburg, Virginia, graduated in August of 1980 with a degree in English. Patty has also published poetry in **Mythlore**, a journal of fantasy studies in California. Her poetry won third prize in the 1980 Mayhew contest and first prize in the Mormon Arts competition.

II

In the forest the Cecropias became vital
(And you on the underside of an ivy frond
For the first time in a thousand were thusly spawned),
And when the forests fell, Cecropias became recital.
Your response was shuddering, burning, tidal;
For while they squirmed into the sun that dawned,
The impression of the immediate luna bond
Consumed with a light that was nearly parasital.
Your flight is an effort to become a constellation
Or a pearl in the necklace breasted by the moon.
I am not surprised to see, against the neon,
A Cecropia fluttering in resignation,
But on each wing, your emblem is a lune,
And the bristling night seems more your odeon.

III

On eastern peaks a hunter was inclining
Who was in my early sonnets. Though he had not slain,
He stalked with familiar silence dark terrain.
The warp between elbow and wrist was aligning
Bicep with ebon arrow, as if designing
To pierce the moon that wandered onto the plain
Whereon he hunted. Too late to feint back again,
The moon lay still, like netted fish, resigning.
O my heart, my luna moth, my moon!
I felt the constriction of a clenching fist
Gather, like cured leather, my paling veins,
Wrench before the arrow flew too soon
With the same mad beauty as the angling wrist
Of the hunter's arm that twisted in the strain.

IV

She dreamed of the sea-foam green arousal of phosphor
Wings, as if she'd ever seen how moon conjoins
With water in a vernal night, the alloy
Of soft light, soft waves like wings she knew before.
But they were coarser, greenless wings that bore
Her down, pressing into her pulpal loins
That pursed with flight a purse of waxen coins
As if she were a reckoned paramour.

The lot light shrinks into its glass as dawn
Floods, while starlights glimmer, cool and wink
Away upon the rising mortar wall
Of morning. Nighttime wings are folded; gone.
The moon totters like a coin on the western brink
Of mountains, where it flashes, faints and falls.

V

You were a night coming upon a night;
You were a wind and a rain of sharp brown dust
And I saw the moon, through wings, with veins of rust
As lichen on a stone. How like a blight
Upon a spring-green leaf you fell, with sleight
Of shadow, twist of silver; how you thrust
Aside my breath! The moon that moment must
Have wrenched like an injured lover from my sight.
Downward then, and downward, you around me
Like the moon in its bitter phase, and downward still,
Till the spires of pines were plunging into the air,
And taken on a branch in a sudden sea
Of dust, and over the high bank of my will
You drank with arid breath my balmy prayer.

VI

I had not thought of it, I had not felt
 The moon beyond a silver piece cemented
 In flat black asphalt before it was prevented
 From drying in the splintered mica veldt
 Grazed by astrologers; nor had I ever dealt
 With stars as water. You, as one demented
 By droughts of light, fled up as if you scented
 Humidity waft from an opening gate in the belt
 I had not thought as closed or open. Then,
 Like a faery mustang breaking from a field
 Of crystal barb, with light and emblems strewn
 Upon your wings, like pages falling open
 In a breeze from a sorcerer's primer, you reeled
 To rise to the widening gate of an ovulous moon.

VII

And death. I think that there is death in this
 Prolific place, where spring remembers you
 In bearing, where fall remembers him, when due,
 In copperhead browns and fauning reds, whose kiss
 Seems early warning that desire's amiss—
 Foretelling skeletal paleness that the dew
 Cannot repair upon your wings—that you are through.
 I am mournlessly past the mourning mist,
 I am mournlessly past Cecropia,
 Returning to the pearls upon the brick,
 The yellow spheres above your husk,
 Crumpled on the ground. I'm past panacea;
 My swollen wakefulness is growing thick
 Upon the tiger prints of stars at dusk,
 Whose moon is dung.