Woman and Luna Moth in a Telephone Booth: Late Evening

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Woman and 
Luna Moth in a 
Telephone Booth: 
Late Evening

The eyes on the wings stare back at her, 
dark-ringed, haunting as the kohl­ 
rimed eyes of young wives 
in the Coptic mummy portraits.

She has come here to make a call 
to a part of her life 
that may no longer answer.

The moth clings with its furred legs 
to the burn-scored edge 
of the telephone table, its wings 
brITTLE, two flakes of parchment.

She is trying to compose a message 
that contains as much of the truth 
as she knows.

Perhaps the green booth light 
echoes the shadows under spring leaves, 
the green bark to which it clung, 
a pupa stirring in a loosening cocoon.

She swallows; she drops a dime in the slot. 
It clattered into the coin box.

The moth shudders for the first time. 
Its elaborate antennae fan the air, 
scanning for signals in a code so ancient 
only it can comprehend them.

The voice at the other end of the line 
wants her again, agrees with anything, 
anything she says ...

The moon regards her through the smudged glass. 
It is not astonished.

The moth grips the table’s edge 
and trembles.

—Carolyne Wright