

A Luna Moth

by [Armando Simón](#) (September 2023)



Giant Peacock Moth (aka Emperor Moth), Vincent Van Gogh, 1889

The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race. –Chief John Roberts

Once again, the price of gasoline had skyrocketed and drivers were forced to empty out their wallets to fill up their automobiles and trucks. As usual, the price had gone up seemingly overnight. This suddenness, in particular, enraged many people, some of them thinking—not unreasonably—that there was illegal price fixing between the oil companies to jack up the prices in order that their respective CEOs edged a few notches up in Forbes' list of multimillionaires.

Some of the gas stations, of course, had not immediately adhered to this escalation of prices, they would lag behind a day—two at the most. This resulted in long lines of drivers lining up at those stations to fill up their cars' gas tanks. To be sure, they would be saving only three to four dollars, but such was the psychology of the situation that, to the drivers, it seemed like they were saving ten times the amount.

It was very, very early in the morning that one driver, on his way to work, his car running almost on “empty,” that he saw one of those lucky gas stations, the lower price visible from the road. He abruptly swerved the car and entering the parking lot, headed for the one pump empty of cars—and almost collided with another car headed for the same pump. Both drivers braked to a stop and began to motion to each other to back up so that he could park at the pump to gas up. Neither yielded. The gestures and facial expressions grew angrier, though not to the point of being insulting. One driver tried to edge the car closer to the pump while the other deliberately blocked the attempt by doing the same. By now, neither car could do so without the other totally backing up.

The second driver, now exasperated, got out of his car, slamming the door behind him. The first driver echoed his move.

“Dude! What’s wrong with you, man?”

“Nothing wrong with me! What’s wrong with you?”

“Didn’t you see me driving in to the pump? What’s your rush that you can’t wait?”

“I was about to gas up and you came flying out of nowhere to cut in line. I hate people who cut in line!”

“Dude, I was here first! Don’t be a jerk and get in line!”
There was some spittle beginning to come out of his mouth.

The confrontation was escalating and it would not be long before the two men, both well dressed and in their thirties, would come to blows, even though both of them realized—on a dim, subconscious level—that they were both being idiotic, yet at the same time neither wanted to back down. Suddenly, the first driver happened to glance at the gas pump and gasped, his expression totally changing. The second driver did not let his guard down, thinking that it might be a trick in order to deck him one when his own glance veered away from his enemy. But the first driver totally ignored him and silently walked over to the spot, his posture slightly bent.

The other, puzzled, followed him to see what had distracted the other man and had postponed the resolution of the argument. And then he saw it.

It was a moth, a huge moth, the size of a hand. And it was emerald green, with a long tail at each wing.

“Is that, is that what I think it is?”

“That’s a Luna moth, isn’t it? They’re rare!”

"I've never seen one before. I mean, I've seen pictures of it, but I've never seen a real one. I always wanted to. Ever since I was a kid."

"I did. I saw one ... about ... twenty years ago. In Mississippi. I didn't know we had 'em here in Florida. They're rare."

"Look how big it is. It's beautiful."

An old man came over. He had been pumping gas on the other side and had wondered what they were hunched over.

"What're you fellas looking at? Oh! I know what that is! Wow! It's a Luna moth!"

The three men stared at it for a few seconds more, committing it to memory.

"You know we can't just leave it here," the first driver said. "Sooner or later, somebody might kill it, accidentally, or on purpose. Or maybe a dog."

"Yeah, you're right about that. Maybe we should take it over there," said the second driver, pointing to where there were a lot of trees and bushes to one side of the gas station.

"I'm going to try. I hope it doesn't fly off into the street." He cupped his hands and gently scooped up the moth, which did not react at all.

"That's the thing about the moths," said the third driver. "In the daytime they're practically comatose."

The three men walked over to the strip of thick verdure and chose a spot behind some green bushes.

"There! It's perfectly camouflaged. Unless you know where to look, or what to look for, nobody's gonna ever see it. That'll do until dark."

"Yeah."

The first driver started. “Oh, my God, I’m going to be late for work!”

“Me, too,” said the old man, who started going to his car.

“Look,” the first driver told the remaining one, “you go ahead and gas up and I’ll take it after you.”

“No, dude! You’re gonna be late for work! I got time. Let me just back up, so you can get in, OK?” He got inside his car and did just that.

The first driver pulled up, quickly filled his tank and drove off, waving his hand out of the car window at the second driver, who waved back before pulling up his car to the pump. As they left, each glanced at the spot where the moth had been placed.

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