

Sphinx

by [Susan Luther](#) in the [May 18, 2010](#) issue

I like to compare notes with him,
to count the shades of blue
on a kingfisher's back . . .

—*Robert Cording*

“Come see this creature before I cut it loose,”
my husband calls to me from the garage, something large
and winged thrashing on a spider's thread
dangling down from the opened garage door—
no holy ghost but a moth, caught there by a wing
until he lifts the silk rigging down with a broom.
The flailing insect twirls like an acrobat till he lays it,
freed, in the grass. Tired, it doesn't move. We admire
and leave it, go about the business of our days.
*May it recover . . . may it not become prey
for the neighbor's cat . . .* Later,
when I remember to look again, it's flown.
(*Like your souls*, I want to take up the old healing grief metaphor,
speaking to my lost father, my mother, my nephew, my grandmother . . .
Flown like your souls, to some heaven we can't—
or can—imagine, or map . . .)

That night, having lost our chance if not the means
to identify it surely, we puzzle over the moth book, pointing:
this? Or this? Or this?—(some type of sphinx)—joined in spirit
as in body in our human need to capture and release meaning, feel
the touch of beloved skin: and keep safe all the facts and fancies
of our world, with their attendant terrors and grace, the mystery
of the present moment and the escaping future, heart to hand.