

# 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.