

DAVID FRANCIS

*The Ear of the Skink*

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Early morning, I grab a skink  
by the shoulder and hold it,  
tail intact. Its skin flushes blue,  
spreading the rash of my touch  
scale to scale, a lukewarm itch  
that leaves just two pockets  
uninflamed: its ears.

Vision in this box-canyon  
is hard enough (the cliffs  
rising beside the peripheral eye  
like blinders) but the ear,  
even flat against the skull,  
quivers when leaves fall.

This skink heard me sleeping,  
heard my hand gather and reach  
through the air. But in such  
wide shade, its race slowed  
to the pace of its ground-cold blood.

The heat in my palm stirs it now:  
it looks at me, angle after angle,  
listening to more voices than I know  
I have, my heart,  
the longer I hold it.