Minus Mammalian Skin

by Katie Moore

This is learning to live
without skin, each nerve ending
exposed, flayed. I'm meat.
handled with bitter lack
of understanding, sometimes
my nerves scream.

It's soundless, but they're
saying please,
don't let it hurt, don't let us
be consumed by the air,
don't let it be madness.
My muscles tense
in bare rhythm.

I am small and skinless
like the chihuahua grabbed
by the fur between my two
strong sets of pit bull jaws
and shook like a squeak toy.
Somehow it lives that way,
yapping its displeasure
and trotting on its short legs.

Without a skin, person or dog
is left vulnerable
to pricks and pinches. Even soft
touch hurts. Me and the chihuahua
aren't waterproof, protected from
sick squirming germs,

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or good at keeping warm. We're
cold blooded creatures now.