

# 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,

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

