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.