

## Mammal

by Alison Reed

I was reptilian, fleeing at the first sight  
of heavy steps. I draped myself in iridescent  
destruction, crawled through cracks to avoid  
spiked heels on stairs. Suffering can shimmer  
if you writhe about at clubs, remembering sex  
that saved him from suicide and led you to it. Now,  
a less devastating desire. I am learning to be  
mammal, bones arched, the comfort  
of our particular curvature. But I still freeze  
when sustaining sharp notes or anyplace  
addiction does not come easy to me  
or your Cuban links at restaurant chains  
where we can't even feign normalcy and that  
pleases both of us, I think, until I drink too much  
wine out of a to-go container and fall asleep  
on your couch. The flashy jewelry two layers of irony  
yet something tells me when its 18-karat plated heavy  
drapes around my chest like a slutty Mary you want  
nothing more than to hold my scales in your palms  
and sing them to sleep in a voice that can't breathe  
deep into diaphragms, in a body that holds water  
in your mouth so you can swallow the pills that keep  
you swallowing—so I can walk sideways through ruin  
with your absurd dances, so I can cradle your head  
and whisper consolation when violent dreams  
storm, so we can find land that isn't toxic although  
always stolen, we see, so we don't want to ingest  
all we left behind, basal ganglia glued to our shoes  
so stop tapping on a silent stage and come to bed  
where our bodies, finally, know everything