

on boys & lizards

by Eli Shaw

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i used to hate them. particularly
the lost creatures found
in the corners of my childhood
bedroom – how their hearts
threw themselves against
feather-light ribcages.
the easiest push
with a broom, or paper towel,
would make me convulse
with terror because their innards

seemed so close to the skin,
because they were so afraid,
and because i could barely feel
my own revolting heartbeat.
i usually gave up on rescuing them,
rolled my bed back over
their hideouts, laid awake with
a fist squeezed shut around my chest.
i used to count on one hand the
number of boys i had hugged.

but this spring and my second
puberty wears on, sun
soaking the atmosphere until
the cold-blooded wake hungry,
and testosterone in our blood
dampens our bellies with sweat.
twice this season i've stopped
in my tracks besides a boy
to watch a lizard be alive,
all of us basking

in its revelation of a patch
of shade and a sip of water, or
a good snack in the mid-afternoon.

each time the other boy and i
share a grin and it's so simple,
right then, to see each other
and to love this thing that just
rose, dirty and delicate, from a
sleep too deep for any human
being to survive unscathed.