

PRAYER AFTER

AMANDA HOPE

I pray to whichever god keeps me from missing trains.
Each prayer exacts a price. This time I give my lungs.

Not all parts of the self are needed in this world.
Sometimes damage is beautiful – the spark

Of the pitted window, the glaze of colors in the spilled oil
Coating the feathers of a dying bird. I give my fingers,

And pray to the god who turns doorknobs and ties shoes.
Would it surprise you to learn what I can do without?

I lived ten years as a creature of claws, trying to conjure
Kindness by spilling blood. Another ten I was a lizard

And whenever someone reached for me, my tail fell off in their hand.
Now I have traded my apologies to the god who gives bread,

My secrets to the one who will grant me a warm place
To curl in sleep. All that is left to me, my

Fear of doing harm, more vivid than the memory
Of temperate seasons. I pray to whichever god will take it,

Leaving me simple. Leaving me shimmer. Leaving me
What's left, unrecognizable, imperfect and final.