

Skin (A Short Story)

by Jessenia Hernandez

Once there was a girl with a small piece of skin jutting from her finger, hanging there and begging to be removed. She absentmindedly began ripping, and to her surprise, it just kept peeling. The raw skin beneath was first revealed on her finger, then her hand, her arm, and on to her shoulder. She was mortified, but much too addicted to stop now. Bit by bit, she removed the layer from above her heart, from off her breasts, from over her stomach. Down her legs and all the way to the tips of her toes.

At last, it was complete. A full replica of her own body now stood in the form of a thin film of skin. Ripped from her so precisely that it could now be split, split, split down the front and worn as a full body suit. Finished, staring at what she had removed from her being, she began to feel the sting. Every inch of her body, throbbing and sensitive to even a soft blow of air. She tried to sit but realized she was in too much pain to do so. She tried to put her arms down to her sides but couldn't stand the feeling of one part rubbing against another.

She was raw, exposed, vulnerable to the elements.

So she stood in her home, legs apart and arms held high, staring at the old skin that she wore not minutes before. She saw the wear of the skin, how it had been burned and cracked and aging every day. But she realized that it had been her only protection. And she cried for the loss of it.

Like one does, she began to heal. With friends and family aware of her situation, she was fed, gently cleaned, reassured of her healing on most days. However, there were also days that they were fed up with her troubles. They scorned her for ever getting herself into this situation, and she would sometimes go days with no one to feed her, gently clean her, or reassure

her of her healing. She would stand alone, no movement except fresh tears gliding down her face, trails of stinging skin left behind.

Every day, despite the pain, the sting decreased. Eventually the girl could lower her arms and sit in a chair. She could once again feed herself, clothe herself, go outside. Her exposed layer of skin hardened, once again protective, just like the one she so delicately removed. She walked outside for the first time in weeks and felt rain drops on her shoulders, on her face, on her back.

Her head tilted to the sky, and she wondered how she had ever run for cover when she felt the first raindrop of an approaching storm. Returning inside, she saw the layer of skin waiting, since the day it left her body. An empty shell, once her, but now seeming miles away from anything she could ever identify with.

She lifted the skin from its resting place, throwing it in the trash. She stuffed, and stuffed, and stuffed until her entire prior body sat crumpled and useless at the bottom of the can. She smiled, because it was no longer hers.

The skin became simply a blurred memory as it sank lower into the can. Now she was the girl with thick, beautiful skin that could be splashed by water and caressed by rough hands. Now she was herself again, just with a new layer of protection, of passion, of pride. Every time she remembered the old skin, and felt the new one covering her, she smiled. And one day, while admiring the skin she could touch, she saw a small piece, jutting from her finger.