

# Skinned

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*Please note, this work includes content related to self-harm and gore.*

*Author's Note: This poem delves into metaphysical questions of identity and self through the lens of graphic intrusive thought. It is at times difficult to understand, or syntactically difficult, a style intended to add to the imagery of self destruction and confusion.*

I used to have an intrusive thought of pulling at one of the flaps of my cuticle  
Usually cut off before the soft white skin hardened to become yellow and infected  
Cut to leave the skin pink, healthy, angry, and stinging—  
but nothing dead  
Instead I would pull on that thread of my being  
skin stripped like glue in elementary school desks when we would pool it pick at later  
Instead, I would pull the ribbon of flesh to the first knuckle the pain simply stinging  
Past that it would become a true pain  
a red oozing scathing pain muscle exposed to air  
I would reach my elbow and it would be the pain of a toothache  
a bone deep pain into my roots and forever there  
Usually now I would stop  
too disgusted by my own mind to peel the fruit it provided  
But I am no better than Eve  
Soon all that's left is a ribbon of flesh undone to reveal its prize  
The sweetness at the center  
I imagine taking a bite—  
it feels like an orange  
a resistance until the slight give of the sinewy fruit  
Juice runs down my chin as I devour each chunk  
I cannot think of it as myself or I feel an ache in my teeth  
if this body is me what am I  
maybe this answer will come from the screech of bone against bone as I lick up my marrow  
maybe from the choking breath as I swallow my teeth and finally my tongue  
Until my soul has ingested my body  
What will I find then when all that has made me human is gone?