

Perforated Skin By Susan Hodara

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Image by Sofie Hodara

There are days when it seems like my skin has been perforated and all the negativity floating around slips into me undeterred. Then it's an onslaught I cannot stop, all my senses attuned to evidence of my inadequacies, my failures, my sorry state.

A seemingly curt email? I'm about to lose my job. I never deserved to have had it anyway.

The honk of a horn at my car? I don't belong in this neighborhood. I don't have enough money, enough clout, enough grace.

The irritation of someone in the grocery store? I am ugly and fat. My clothes are wrong. My entire heritage is wrong. My shoulders slump and I avoid my reflection.

Then, just as slyly, I find I'm okay. I wake up feeling better. If I look carefully, I can identify the antidote: usually an act or comment equally as insignificant as what had set me off. It is a relief, a freedom, permission to stand up straight and enjoy who I am.

But I am never safe. No matter how cautious I am, how guarded against the things that affect me so deeply and so dangerously, the holes remain, their covering a membrane I have learned not to trust.