

Skin Wins

by John Olson

One day, my feet and hands got into an argument. My feet argued that they were superior because they were not only the foundation of my body, but the cause of its mobility. They were modest in size, yet supported and transported an entire body that towered over them. They provided comfort and balance. They provided autonomy and walking. Who can beat walking? Walking is wonderful. Walking is a miracle of self-propelled bliss. Not to mention running, which is a source of ecstasies.

My hands agreed that the feet provided a significant service, but that they were also prone to blisters and gout. Walking is no small feat (so to speak), but what good is walking without the ability to hold a mug of coffee or brush one's teeth or caress one's lover? Without the ability to wipe one's mouth, hold a pen, turn a steering wheel, type on a keyboard, comb one's hair, or feed a goldfish a pinch or two of goldfish food?

All very fine, say the feet, but not nearly as crucial as mobility. What good is it to comb one's hair when one is being chased by a grizzly? Or lift a morsel of meat to one's mouth during an earthquake and the plaster begins falling on one's head?

Speaking of the head, says the head, I am the crowning achievement of this versatile sprawl. Without me, there would be no house for the brain, and without the brain, there would be no argument at all. For the brain is the source of language, and language is what gives argument integument.

I am integument, and clothe everything: head, hands, fingers, feet, arms and legs in a covering of skin. For that is what I do. I am integral. I am eminent. I am integument.

The hands clapped. The feet danced. The head nodded.

Skin wins. For that is the softness that envelops the whole, and without a whole, the whole shebang is an unholy mess.

