

Exoskeleton

by stephen hastings-king

The exoskeleton lay on the floor, a hollow transparent self looking back at him.

Shedding came as a vague itching that formed itself into a restlessness that gathered a momentum that scattered every thought but squirming and pulling at his skin. After a period of both, he wriggled free.

The collapsed balloon is already turning a strange mottled yellow.

Shedding had seemed quite outside system specifications.

He runs his hand over his skin, which is unusually sensitive like newly exposed after a time with a beard.

Maybe this happens to everyone. Maybe everyone reacts to anomalous situations by being ashamed. Maybe everyone is waiting for someone to say it's OK.

On the amorphous yellowing form, mottles are expanding into puddles.

As he recognizes himself in it less, his interest slips away.

The shell sloughs into a pool of itself.

Watching himself dissolve comes with no sense of meaning. It is simply what it is. He finds that curious.

He turns to leave.

