



POLYURETHANE SKIN

By Amy Kousourou

Sci-Fi – Body Horror – Posthumanism

CONTENT WARNING: Contains elements of gore and self-harm.

You feel the shifting. Something beneath your flesh that hums and ticks. You pinch your skin, and it snaps back just like it should, but you know.

Something is in there.

Something is wrong.

Your fingers are talons when you scrape at fragile epidermis; skin surrenders to claw and red leaks like tears down your arm.

It looks real, but you know that's no guarantee. Biology became technology years ago. Steel twisted to sinew and blood was pulled apart and reborn in a synthetic rainbow that can fool even the most critical eye.

What is a body if not electricity through wires: tubes and data, the proper cycles of hardware in a delicate system.

A rip. A snap. Your nails fail you. Clogged and catching on plump fat, the hidden shine of muscle sheath taunts you. From your periphery, a shape catches your eye. Light flashing on metal. Something longer, sharper.

You stumble from the red tile beneath you and grip the knife in your fist. Blood loss considers you, and your wild eyes waver in the mirror. Side to side, you are a pendulum swinging between here and there, but the blade in your hand will cut that rope once and for all.

You slide down the cabinets and thump onto the cold floor. There is a voice in your mind—sanity, maybe—that cries for forbearance. It stares into the blood prints tainting that shining metal and tells you to wait, that some questions need no answer. But your arm is already a mystery half opened.

There is no going back.

The blade plunges through the ripped wound, and you fillet to find the telltale signs of artificial life. Blood squirts, and the taste fills your mouth. If there is a scream, then you don't hear it. If there is pain, you don't acknowledge it. There is only the flop of your hollow arm on your bare thigh and the discarded meat at your feet.

The bone gleams in the light, but if it is organic, it is in no rush to tell you. It glistens in the bright bathroom light, but the colour isn't enough to judge. Is it human, grown and repaired and replaced by dying cells in a dying body that struggles against the inevitable, or artificial, eternal and endless and cold and pieced together by those dying creatures who now hate what they created?

The butchered limb that hangs from your elbow mocks your efforts. Mutilated, you have no answers, only the chill of the tile, the crimson lake you've created, and the rusty stench of blood in the room. The knife clatters and sprays on the glass shower cabinet, artistry amongst your decimation.

Your head is in your hand, fingers gripping the strands and pulling. The hum is a shriek. The scream is yours now. Hot, boiling rage seethes through your stomach and past your lips. Can a puppet truly see its strings, or is it doomed to stare forever ahead and never see the hands that control it? Even if you have been lied to since your birth—and were you even born, or simply produced?—can you snip the threads that hang you? Is that possible for one like you, or are you doomed to twist and writhe upon ligatures so tangled that you have no space to fight?

There is something left. An answer you could find, if only you were brave—or desperate—enough. An answer carved in synthabone, numbers and lines so alien on human bone. Your shaking fingers find that knife again, and you stagger like a newborn to your feet. You were already nude, and maybe you always knew that this was the only answer.

The tip of the blade points at your collarbone, waiting.

(Are you ready?)

You push and slide.

(You always were.)

It hurts. The pain flares like needles, like fire, like a knife slicing open your skin. You reach your belly, and it's far enough. The blade *clink-clanks* into the sink, and your blood, like a living necklace, drips after it.

Your fingers push into the space you have created and peel the flesh back, a true blood orange. Your ribs, armour against the world, are exposed. Red veils what you seek, and you grab the towel beside you to rub it away, pain so loud in your head that it has become nothing, and glare through your wavering sight.

A barcode—black lines against pink—stares at you. Relief, or something like it, floods your fake body. You fall, and the cold tile greets you.

The ceiling sways above you. There can't be much left of the liquid you were filled with. You wonder where you were made, when you were created, whose memories you have.

You think that, maybe, you would have liked to find out.

But as you lie on the floor, mutilated and draining, you find solace in only one thing: In death, you are free.



About Amy Kousourou

In between gaming and petting her animals (dogs, cats, birds, snakes, spiders, and Adam), Amy Kousourou completed an MLitt in Creative Writing in 2025. This year, she was the sole organiser of a fandom zine *Enchantment* and spent much of her time glaring at spreadsheets. Amy writes ecohorror, fanfiction, and has persistent brainworm for depressed andriods.