

My Skeleton

by Jane Hirshfield

My skeleton,
you who once ached
with your own growing larger

are now,
each year
imperceptibly smaller,
lighter,
absorbed by your own
concentration.

When I danced,
you danced.
When you broke,
I.

And so it was lying down,
walking,
climbing the tiring stairs.
Your jaws. My bread.

Someday you,
what is left of you,
will be flensed of this marriage.

Angular wristbone,
cracked harp of ribcage,
blunt of heel,
opened bowl of the skull,
twin platters of pelvis--
each of you will leave me behind,
at last serene.

What did I know of your days,
your nights,
I who held you all my life
inside my hands
and thought they were empty?

You who held me all my life
inside your hands
as a new mother holds
her own unblanketed child,
not thinking at all.

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Jane Hirshfield was born in New York City in 1953. After receiving her B.A. from Princeton University in its first graduating class to include women, she went on to study at the San Francisco Zen Center. Jane Hirshfield is the author of numerous books of poetry, including *Come, Thief* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2012). She is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and lives in the Bay area.

About This Poem

"Where the self begins and ends, what it is and isn't, is a question that's long been with me. There's no objective measuring stick for metaphysical ponderings, but I've come to prefer thoughts that calibrate toward both realism and tenderness--toward life's bite but also its dearness. I've also come to like poems with facts in them. Bone does, quite factually, reabsorb into the body as the growing pains of childhood turn into the diminishing bone mass that marks its other end. Self returns to non-self. But in between, neither quite one or the other, the skeleton is there, almost always ignored and invisible, every step and breath of the way." --Jane Hirshfield

Comment [JD1]: Cranium, Scapula, Clavicle, Rib Cage, Sternum, Humerus, Vertebra, Radius, Ilium, Pelvis, Carpals, Ischium, Metacarpals, Phalanges, Femur, Patella, Tibia, Fibula, Tarsals, Metatarsals, Phalanges

Comment [JD2]: Mandible (or Cranium)

Comment [JD3]: Carpals

Comment [JD4]: Rib Cage

Comment [JD5]: Heel

Comment [JD6]: Cranium

Comment [JD7]: Pelvis

Comment [JD8]: Carpals, metacarpals, phalanges

Comment [JD9]: Carpals, metacarpals, phalanges