

girl with
Good Bones

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*To anyone who has grieved and learned to live life
again.*

*(And especially to my children. My spring and
summer. I'm learning. I love you.)*

STEAL ME BACK

grief left me skin and bones
and skin left me to deal.
so my youth creaked
through space and then
seeped down into dirt.
and I couldn't feel
my heart break,
or the light steal me
back.

THIN SKIN

the thing about skin
is it grows back in
softly with the light.
one layer over bone.
and if it grows back right,
it won't be thick,
it will be vulnerable
with life.

LIGHT

so there in dirt,
thick bone, thin skin,
I saw six feet of light
instead of my skeleton
and I sat up to greet the things
I could not feel at all,
like myself breathing
past hollowness
and my story being
something more
than only
skin and bones.

OKAY

hearing the heart beat again
sounds like what does not make noise. . .
being in the same place
but sitting up.
picking flowers only
in arm's reach.
letting sky be gray,
and drops of rain and tears
stay on my skin.
the erratic thud, thud,
falls between good and grief.
light pokes through
old wounds and thin skin again.
a fresh healing heart
feels harsh against
bones that never broke.
okay, but not okay.

STRANGER

to rest my bones,
I press my back against
the earth again.
but it feels different,
less like home,
less like somewhere
I could stay forever,
less like it was friend,
and more like I
the stranger.

CHANGES

the sun beats downs

I let my heart go

with that rhythm

light, light, light.

I stand up again,

weeks later,

breakable, translucent.

light, light, light.

next to bone, hope settles in.

and it changes nothing

where I've been,

somehow still changes

everything.

SOMETHING NORMAL

I opened the door
to my house,
it had been awhile.
I felt so brave,
one foot over
the threshold,
doing something
normal,
standing in the dust,
not angry at the
damage.

WHEN YOU'RE READY

they say a lot of things,
“if one door closes. . .”
(you know how it goes)
but not always.
grief is grief.
light steals you back.
bones can't hold you prisoner.
and none of this is linear.
but your door knows your hand
even with different skin,
even though you don't know
yourself anymore,
still it will open
gently. . .
when you're ready.

ALL OVER ME

something happens when
you wander through rooms,
remembering.

thin skin lets you feel
and bones that never broke
finally feel strong
in worn walls of home.

I'll open my own windows,
thank you very much,
and it's light, light, light
all over me
again.

BACK DOOR

when I had mustered
enough life
to brave the back door,
I leaned on it heavily,
but it opened softly.
I shut my eyes tight,
afraid.
it used to be lovely
before.
what could it be like now?
and what could I do
anyway?
I'd been replaced.
could this skin tend to
flowers?

ALL THAT TIME

I couldn't tell you
how long I played the statue
in my own garden,
but I'd learned to love
the light.

so my eyes flew open
to flowers grown
and seeds sown,
to colors I'd not seen
in years,
to a river, roses, willow trees.

like all that time as skin and bones
like all those days spent in the dirt
was how this garden
grew.

WILD THING

I sat awhile
to take it in,
how far I'd come
without knowing it.
grief and hope did
the wild thing,
but it was me
with this new skin
who faced the choice
to choose this life.
so I found my old watering can,
filled it up, said yes.

DEAD

it became my favorite morning thing
to open my back door,
coffee steaming,
walk slowly in my garden.
but fear crept in slowly too
(as it often does when things
are well and good and right.)
I'd learned to trust the flowers
grown by my skeleton,
but what about the flowers here?
more lovely than I'd ever dreamed,
more vibrant than I could believe.
would I just wake up
one day, Be Dead,
inside this beautiful story?

COUNTDOWN

the back door got heavier
my coffee grew colder,
the watering can got cobwebs
and I braced myself
for death.

one. . .two. . .three. . .

three. . .two. . .one. . .

I made up a countdown
to inevitable tragedy.

BREATHE

but light. . .
that thing I can't control
kept showing up
through my windows,
on my skin,
bouncing off the watering can.
I wasn't dead,
nor was I
about to die.
and what about last time?
didn't the garden grow
in the company of bone?
six feet of hope.
I breathe free in my
skeleton.

HERE

I let the breeze be the breeze,
instead of an impending storm.

I let the birds sing melodies
without imagining them mocking me.

I let the flowers grow past my knees
without the fear they'd suffocate me.

I let myself be happy,
because happiness was here.

LEAVE

it was time to leave
my house,
and live outside myself.

I was safe to go,
full of peace,
clothed in light.

I'd come back, of course.

but it was time to see
something more than
me.

SOFTLY

I carry my pain in these
unbroken bones,
but my heart has learned
to beat softly with grief,
push me forward down the path
toward life, more life,
more life.

SOMEONE

not long before

I meet someone

along the winnowed way.

eyes are the window to the soul,
they say.

but if you're actually looking,
everything else is, too.

hands, worn skin, labored lungs
free breathing.

we find a bench

and talk for hours. . .

whispers first,

then songs.

GOOD BONES

“that house has good bones.”

I know what they mean

now.

because I stayed,

but was replaced.

pain in me,

me in light.

I grew into a new story

confined by an old frame,

and kept the walls that braced

the windows

to keep the windows open

to welcome back the day.

girl with good bones,

she kept her house,

and flowers always

grow.

note to readers

*I wish I knew your name because I'd start this little note much more personally. But I don't need to know your name or who you are to share these words with you. **Girl with Good Bones** has been such an important collection of poetry for me to write. In 2019, I found out I was pregnant after three+ years of infertility. The pregnancy and birth of my firstborn son remains one of the greatest gifts I've ever received. Motherhood has been rich with laughter and lightheartedness.*

I wrote a book about my infertility years, [Hope Gives a Eulogy](#), because long before my son was born, life was born in me. God healed my heart and soul so deeply before I ever became a mom, and so I not only wanted to remember and share the emotions of infertility, but also the presence of God with me as He healed me from the hollow, life-altering pain of infertility. Still there is a lightheartedness to motherhood grief and

infertility would rarely allow even with such deep healing.

Since my son's birth, it has been good gift after good gift crescendoing into a second pregnancy we found out about this summer. God has surprised us again. Our second child is due to arrive earthside April 2022 the same month I published [Hope Gives a Eulogy](#) . The goodness of it all is overwhelming. It feels scary to be handed these gifts after such pain and heartache. It seems too good to be true, and I admit I've recently crumpled in fear more days than I've celebrated the joy of it all.

*For me, **Girl with Good Bones** reflects my journey beginning in the dust and ash of infertility into healing, saying yes to my life, being given beautiful, unexpected gifts along the way, and then learning not to be afraid of those good gifts from God. I will carry the history of*

infertility and grief inside me forever. It is a part of my frame, but it is not my story. But these days, I'm learning to take long, slow walks in the garden I've been given without fear of death and the dying of all good things. I am beginning to understand good gifts from God will always be good gifts from Him even if the pain and brokenness of this world touches those good things. Once received, always received. I can trust God in the bad times and the good times.

Girl with Good Bones may mean something else to you. That's the beauty of poetry. Let your story live in these words. God heals and He is always with and for His children. He is the Light we long for. Keep those windows open. Walk slowly in the garden you've been given. Let the beauty be beautiful, the happiness be happy. We are safe to grieve and we are safe to rejoice. God is with us. Forever.

CONNECT

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