

SHERREE CLARK

to the bone

I've had this dream before
I'm sitting at a table
by myself
in an empty room

and laid before me in
ordered heaps
are small misshapen bones;
fingers, toes
assorted joints;
grey and yellow
hairline fissures etched
like crooked black veins

I pick one up
chew slowly
22 times for good digestion

fragments catch
in my throat and lodge
in the spaces between my teeth
few pauses exist
between the shattering of one joint
and the selection of another

I awake
before I finish
remembering
that animals
when trapped
will bite off their
legs to escape

if I had magic fingers

if I had magic fingers I would
touch you deeper than ever
before

I'd tell you stories
using my hands to guide you
through
the labyrinths and pitfalls
of my words

I'd write *I love you* on your belly
indented
so you could read it like braille whenever
you doubted me

I'd make you come
to me with only a gesture and
without regrets

I'd hold you with hands strong
and straight and purposeful
lift you up and fly
with you to places I've imagined
that exist only
outside
the confines of this crooked body

These poems are part of the series, "on living with arthritis," which was part of an art exhibit for lesbians with disabilities, entitled, "Poster Kids No More," held in October, 1993.

Sherree Clark is an artist, poet, writer who currently divides her time between Toronto and Kingston.