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Human Rib Bone, \$10

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Human Rib Bone, \$10

By Shiann Dawson

A little gift shop, nestled into a house of death

Filled with...well,

Trinkets, mostly.

Marbles, stuffed plushies,

Representative mementos of the skeletons in the next room,

except, of course, cute and fluffy.

Paperweights in the form of resin containing butterflies,

emeralds and sapphires that once lit the sky,

now permanently encased, finding a home next to coffee-stained papers

and ugly black pencil sharpeners.

"Look at that," my husband murmurs, and my eyes follow his pointing hand.

REAL Human Bones declares the sign, and I blink a few times.

Your eyes are fine,

whispers the little voice in the back of my head.

I walk to the display, still doubting,

but no,

they're real.

My eyes trace over the scattered selection of skulls,

Phalanges,

Vertebrae,

And ribs.

For some reason,

I can't look away.

There's something about it that's just



Sick

Cold

Maybe even cruel.

One of the rib bones is close to the edge of the glass,
Brightly lit by the fluorescents, every detail highlighted.
The organic curve of collagen and calcium is pocked,
Imperfect,

with lines, cracks, pores that used to hold veins.

How many times, I wonder, was this rib clutched in laughter?

How many times bruised by play that was too rough?

How long did it serve to protect a heart, lungs?

What kind of person was this rib part of?

Were they happy?

Did they imagine this for their remains?

Did they know they were to become

souvenirs?

Human Rib Bones, \$10

It seems...

... Obscene.

And yet...

...I want one.

"What would you do with a rib bone?"

I don't know.

What would I do with a rib bone?

I just don't want to leave it here.