Age loosens the skin, Joe, as if it would unravel from the bones like an old sweater, tired of being worn.

This is part of the long letting go but you, you’re just beginning, have skin folded for the future, the string-bean long drink of water you may well become if your doctor knows his babies.

Skin holds the net of nerves, lets us feel each other’s stunning touch. Your hands on my face set those nerves alight like the netted Christmas strings along Tyrell Avenue, shining out from under your inaugural snow.

Skin is a gift of the first order. We moan its distension after one too many trips to Tim’s or haul and tie it up again when gravity’s unceasing sway pulls us too close to the earth.

I like the loosening, Joe, it gives me more space to grow old in; young, we move light as air but living weighs us down, first revelry’s rich banquets, but then we thicken with loss, the dead carving their names in us that we might carry them on.

Skin is the book of life: everything is written on it scar of the first skinned knee, pucker where bones break through, bubble of fire damage, the slice in your Mommy’s belly where they pulled you free.

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