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Shortest Woman Living

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SHORTEST WOMAN LIVING

Madge Bester is just 2ft. 1.5 inches tall.
Sadly, she suffers *osteogenesis imperfecta*
(characterized by brittle bones and
deformities of the skeleton.)

— Guinness World Records 2002

Tell me what other way is there to suffer.
My fragile bones attract the eye – there is no reason
to feel sorry for me.

Fifty cents for all you can stand
to look at. Twice as much to pick me up,
carry me with you around the room.

You must imagine
me a foreshortened version of your own worn-out
body. It does hurt a little.

But this is my life, right?
I'm the living one, says this book of broken records,
which makes me different from other tiny skeletons
stretching out at last

in abbreviated coffins.
I'm listed between the shortest man and woman ever.
When I die, my living title

will be given away.
I should be glad. The others grew beyond their lives –
nails, hair, and bones crowding their resting place.

Someone once told me that grief fills a person
the way gas fills a room –

expanding
to take any space it's given. This book gives
thirty-four words for what

I must endure –
my entry into a painful world. Take these words
into your mouth

and carry them with you.

Every day I open the book, bend back the spine,
and read how "*Sadly, she suffers.*"

It's all true.

I won't promise these words will grow easier to bear.