

Ragged Doll, Dragged Queen
— *Ojaswi Sharma*

My dad told my brother he had to be six feet tall
That, he had to defy genetics, and fate, and predispositions,
That he had to somehow move away from everything that his life offered him,
Defying all expectations to please one.

But the thing is,
That's what my dad's always been like
Wanting everything he doesn't have
Everything he cannot have
Until he has it; or he has some version of it— some semblance of desire he lives with constantly,
repeatedly.

He wants to live in his fairyland
Where we are all versions of ourselves he likes
Where everything is constant in perpetuity
Where no one questions him
Or finds out how he's living.
Where he lives his secret double life
With us but also far away from us
Where we believe his lies
Where maybe he believes them too.

I wonder how he sleeps at night
Does he only live in his dreams
Only feel alive at the crossroads of lucidity
Some far outer life
Some Rick and Morty bullshit
Something on the periphery of my eye
On the tip of my tongue
A laugh that never leaves my throat
A lump that never escapes
But chokes me down
Beats me up
Makes sure I wake up with bruises instead of battle wounds.

I wonder what he dreams about
A version of me he believes in but isn't real
Perfect Polly Pocket
Issueless concern-*less*.

Not this version

This person I am— ragged doll, dragged queen, questionable morals starting age sixteen, never led a perfect day, been grateful for faultless air in my lungs, or soothing voices in my ears.

I wonder how he lives with this version of me

I wonder how we lives at all.