

Ordinary Fairytale

Poetry • Sarah Feingold

Mother measures out our heights on the whitewashed doorframe
Etching our progress into the soft wood with pencil
Documenting our success in a public transcript
Anyone can step up to and see how they compare
New cousins strain on tiptoe to surpass the next mark
Where the crown of my head had crested at three years old

I reigned from three feet and three inches tall, a princess
I'd sit Indian style with my crown and magic wand
Staring, poking the end of it into my stomach
Trying to wish away the fat that no princess had
Giving up and trying to fit all my toes in my mouth

Five, sucking in when I put my Rapunzel costume on
Turning sideways, tilting my head back, my hair dripping
Kissing my hips as I tried to keep my costume dry
I got a new dress when I cut my hair with scissors
It was red, and I lined up my dolls to be my dwarves

Seven and my obsession was now Princess Jasmine
I colored my fair hair black with permanent sharpie
Then drew on my thighs, outlining what needed fixing
So when my fairy godmother came she would know
And beautify me just in time before the clock struck

Twelve and I was stuck as a fat pumpkin forever
Like the ones we carved at Halloween with the steak knives
I taught myself to use for things other than eating
Keeping score with the faded pencil on the doorframe
Of everything I thought I didn't measure up to
I convinced myself that tasting nothing tasted sweet

Sixteen and my markings on the doorframe simply stop
The old whitewashed wood longs for the sweet sting of graphite
To inch up its flat spine and continue my fairytale