

# ***Bruises***

*Jess Vazquez Hernandez*

*January 1, 2025*

Driving down Iowan highways  
Turned Nebraskan roads  
My favorite sky a blooming bruise  
In shades of purple, blue, and pink  
Counterfeit Picasso  
Painted on my windshield

The inside of this car too  
A bruise  
Not yet healing  
Not yet visible  
Achy at the touch  
Of wind and sunshine

Bruise tattooed in familial blood  
Segmented memories, unwelcomed spaces  
Stretching 1,700 miles on skin made there  
Residing here  
Dreaming of a somewhere else

In the safety of midnight  
Sisters trace the history of our skin  
Hold pain up for show and tell  
Find similarities in the gradient  
Of mother and grandmother bruise

If pain was a person  
I imagine it would look like my father  
Small, beady eyes  
Skin perpetually the color of sunburn  
Translucent hair  
neither there or gone  
Just like him

Or it could look like my mother  
Soft falling snow smile

Threatening to melt away  
Unglued at bedtime  
Re-invented by daybreak  
A fleeting mirage  
Just like her

If pain was another person still  
I imagine it would look like my sisters  
Unflinching  
Unreachable  
Unbreakable

But pain is no person  
No father  
no mother  
No sisters

Unsure which pain is mine  
Or ours, or theirs  
We claim it all for our own  
Fearing it will down us  
Hoping it will save us  
Knowing it connects us

#####