Names

Poem by Aashna Soni

She pushes the needle into my skin.

Blood flows out of my vein and through the tube and into the vial.

It is too early,

My eyes are crusty,

The dark sky weighs down on my shoulders.

She makes conversation—

“What do you think your name means?”

My dry lips mutter “beloved, or something…”

I end awkwardly and she smiles.

Did I know I’m a word in Farsi she asks—

Friend, acquaintance—

She pronounces my name in a way foreign to my ears.

My name is not mine to own.

It is a gift, a bequeathment from history.

It transcends cultures,

Is a painting of different colors.

Through my veins

Flow the spirits of many.

She pulls the needle out and crimson trickles down my arm.

The next day

I find my name in a Hindi love song—

A song of despair and angst,

Friendship turning into betrayal and estrangement.

My name is red and passionate again.

Names are red because they're our blood.

Their stories course through our veins,

Carrying with them

The pain,

The anger,

The song

Of many.