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Magenta Sunset

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Magenta Sunset

David Schelhaas

Driving south on Highway 81 just past Freeman,
we turn our eyes suddenly to the west,
struck by the brilliant light that filled our side windows.
It came out of nowhere—or seemed to,
this great wall of light that gradually reshaped into
a giant V or, perhaps, a check mark.

I dig out my phone for a photo and click three or four times
as we race south staying even with the brilliant sky we can't
stop exclaiming about. Gradually we turn our eyes
back to the south and our conversation back to fishing,
but only for seconds before my brother exclaims, "Oh-h, look now."

An abstract painting with deep magenta swirls and yellow splashes hangs
at the western edge of our sight. For fifteen miles it stays there,
moving at the same speed that we are, or so it seems.
My phone comes out of my pocket again and again,
but the photos can't catch the brightness, the intensity.

It is not a pillar of cloud or of fire but a suggestion, still,
that God has his hand in this light show, this scattering
of light molecules and small particles, this changing
the direction of the light rays, the long red rays especially.

Who made the sun, the light rays, the molecules?
Who decided to stage the show here, today, in South Dakota?
What kept it galloping beside us all the way to Highway 46?
I look at my brother. "This is . . . "
He nods and smiles.