The Same Cloth

(content warning for self-harm scars/ideation, body image issues)

My likeness stares into me
The stomach creases where my fat folds
Stands its ground as I
Bend
          Twist
          Thrash
Begging the layer of blubber to dissipate

My bikini line is red, indented
Hairs peak out of their follicles
I attack with tweezers
My skin’s in the way

Hemline cuts the crease of my leg
Fingers graze raised stripes
Decorating the length of my thighs

I asked Mother if I could swim in leggings
Said I didn’t want Brother to see scars she knew about
Suspicion in her eyes
She let the pants slide

Leggings absorb water
Limbs bulky
A skinsuit
Crafted with nylon and plastics
fish catch in their gills

She made me show her the next day
Barcodes stretching across cellulite
Raised, rosy gashes like I fell in a thornbush
I remember it was April
The rest fades
Tears melting into face lotion
A sensation that refuses to leave my mind
Salt down my cheeks
Dissolving cream into pores

Devastation behind her irises
I had torn holes in her painting
Ripped the portrait
Like it was mine
Like I was the one who spent nine months
Smearing oil on blank canvas
Making it my own

She never got any say in what hues stained my cloth
Once I was freed from her womb
I smattered myself with any paint I liked
a belligerent child with no knowledge of color theory

Father called it a mistake the first time
He rarely says things so foolish
My fingers, numb as he spoke
We talked outside
It wasn’t on my terms
Conversations for him
To feel he’s doing something
To feel he has control
Control over me
My being

Speaking in new territory
Full of piss that isn’t mine
Predators lurking in the foliage
With expectations of
Excellence
Stability
Over-achievement

Waiting to claw fresh marks into
Empty canvas arms
They look so bare