

Alterations

Bryana Joy

I.

The day suddenly comes,
the day feared and hoped for.

At the sink the seamstress
dries her dark hands.

One by one I slip my legs
into the white fountain.

Charmeuse clings to them
like a refugee

clings to a motherland. The
cold pins arch my back.

II.

When you get married, they said
in the village by the sea

we'll dance all night and
paint your skin with henna.

On the the hillside under my
window, summer nights

were full of songs. They said
this is your home now.

III.

The seamstress says *stand a*
little straighter, her mouth

full of pins, her accent thick
with French and Africa. I want

her to talk about the Congo but
how can anyone ask for that?

IV.

I remember how the bride would sit
under the red scarf

and cry softly, an old custom,
a way to say goodbye.

Sometimes a modern bride
needed a sly onion slice

slipped under the veil.
But some didn't. I remember

being twelve saying I didn't want
to get married if I had to cry.

V.

*What do you miss the most
about the Congo?* I ask.

The seamstress takes my buttons
out of their little loops.

Well, she says. She hesitates.
She has a good job here she says

she is so thankful and I know
she is remembering something

she will not be able to tell me.

Bryana Joy is a writer, poet, and painter who works full-time sending illustrated snail mail letters all over the world. She has lived in Turkey, East Texas, and England, and currently resides in the Lehigh Valley in Eastern Pennsylvania. Her poetry has appeared in an assortment of literary journals, and is forthcoming in *Bracken*, *Dialogist*, and *The Dillydown Review*. She has a thing for thunderstorms, loose-leaf tea, green countrysides, and the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. Find her online at www.bryanajoy.com.