

Yamoussoukro, 2012

by David Backer

The soldiers in blue helmets hold the screaming man by the arms and push him to the floor and handcuff him. He is underneath them. His head is like the head of a worm.

Writhing. Eyes closed.

Dyula watches with white wide eyes with the rest of the people in the voting line. She holds her baby Felix closer to her chest, sensing danger. The man continues screaming.

"Lies! They will not let us be free! They will choose for us! This is the world's dictatorship of democracy!"

This is Dyula's first time voting. This is the first time any of the young women in this line have voted. This is the first time anyone in Côte d'Ivoire has voted in ten years.

Felix wriggles in her arms. He paws with his fat hands at Dyula's breast, his round-brown cheeks rouged with health and dimpled from a fleeting smile.

"These soldiers! They're not our own! They are not ours! They will not let us be free!"

The soldiers in blue helmets remove the man, dragging him. Dyula stares, agreeing. *Take him out*, she thinks. *He is wrong. Now we will be free.*

Dyula hears whispers from other young women in line. She cannot hear what they are saying, but the collective tone of their voices has a certain electricity. She feels this feeling in the air, breathing it in a slow breath. She exhales and whispers those electric whispers to

Felix.

In line, they move forward.

