

## The Quilt of Joy

**Joy** /jɔɪ/ *n.*

- A. The emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires: delight
- B. the expression or exhibition of such emotion: gaiety
- C. a state of happiness or felicity: bliss

**Joy** /jɔɪ/ *n.*

- A. I researched color associations in high school. I wanted the stitch of my sewing project to represent my mood. Each new thread of color penetrating the composition would reflect back onto me. I scrolled with my right hand -- my dominant hand, and felt my fingers, in repose, fuse together. My eyes swept across the words quickly and my mumbled words fell into each other like dominoes, not waiting for the other to fully fall before crashing down. *“Redisthecoloroffireandblood no; Yellowisthecolorofsunshine maybe; Greenisthecolorofnature -- no; Blueisassociatedwithdepth -- definitely not. Orange combines the energy of red and the happiness of yellow. It is associated with joy.”* The dominoes stopped falling. I rummaged through the golden sewing kit I snuck out my nana’s room and grabbed the spool hugged tightly by the orange thread. Ever So carefully and calmly I began to thread joy.
- B. Joy is my mother’s middle name, whom I see in everything. My mother’s hair twists into itself. Each strand locking together as soulmates bounded in matrimony and fall along her face covering her almond eyes. Every day her hair looked longer, and fuller, and older --

not old as in age, but as in mature. Gray hairs would be born from the roots of her head but would quickly be silenced by her black hair dye. She had been dying her hair black since she was 26 and doesn't know the color anymore. She refuses to go grey like my grandmother, and her mother. My mom gets bored quick of things, and places and hairstyles and people. On Sunday, the sun knocked against her window, bleeding out onto the floor which would reflect along the walls. She sectioned her long dreads into fours and placed hair ties not-so-strategically in her hair, stopping just at her chin (at least in theory). A pair of orange standard scissors sat on the bathroom counter.

"I'll hold, you cut," her reflection said to me in the mirror. With slowness and steadiness, I placed the opened sears at the end of the first section. Then the second. Then the third. Then the fourth. My hands had grown weak and tired by the time the last hair fell pathetically. I like long hair. But as her hair hit her face stopping just around her chin (in theory), she smiled and her almond eyes squinted and I felt surrounded. My mother accorded, to her daughter, the same middle name, who later passed it down to her own daughter. Joy is the bold light birthed four times over. So bright it could puncture your retinas and leave you blind. I always liked the middle name Joy more than my own: bliss

C. Joy is in the treehouse that I climbed every day after school. We walked together hand in hand to the wooden, crumbling steps. I lifted her up before hoisting my backpack up and later myself. Dried orange, pink and purple paint spelling out my cousin and I's unfinished names tinted the already rain-stained wood. Outside stood the peartree, whose old bark reflected the hues of the earth. During the early school year, he'd fed the bees and the birds and me. I knew the drill -- grab the closest branch and pull it down then

back before shaking. The more forced the shake the more pears would fall. Most would begin its no-stop, one-way trip to the ground, but a lucky one would roll into the tree house (which had no roof) and towards my feet. The trees surrounding gave a path to the sun, which illuminated a seat for me. The rays' heavy heat would hug around my arms and juice from the pear would glide down my chin and onto the never-clean-shirt of the day: gaiety

D. Joy is the sun, which outlines each bump and turn of her wild orange curls as if it rose just to see her -- and why wouldn't it? I remember when her hair was brown, I didn't quite like her that much then. She kept her hair straight and long and I never thought I could hate long hair but I didn't like it on her. I think it was my prejudices. I hadn't known her at the time and didn't plan to know her more. But she cut her hair and let it grow wild with curls stretching out in each direction as if trying to run towards each of the sun's rays. She tells me I talk too much and I say I know but I want to say "it's just because I like talking to you." She is all feigned cool detachment but it is not hard to see the fires that spark inside her soul waiting for the chance to erupt. She told me she found God when she was younger and I had to admit that I found God when I turned 21 and looked at the world from her green eyes which resembled the green leaves clinging onto the last few seconds of summer before fall. I remember what I read on color association when I'm around her. *"Red is the color of fire and blood and the warmth that she emits. Yellow is the color of sunshine which pirouettes across her hair. But mixed together the colors create orange which is the joy I feel with her."*: happiness