

A M Y M A R E N G O

Firewood Patrol

I couldn't run with the others.
—Fifteen-year-old Congolese war victim

After the militiaman jams his gun,
shots ring out, as they are known to do
in east Congo. The lucky women run,

clutching firewood, toward the sun-
light. They hear a fallen child tear in two
after the militiaman jams his gun

inside her. Girls with fistulae, shunned,
turned, shamed, are reduced to soil and bruise
in east Congo. The lucky women run

away from the forest while some mother's son
steps up to make his war-crime debut.
After the militiaman jams his gun

hard inside her, he stands there stunned,
watching the fresh rips in her flesh ooze.
In east Congo the lucky women run

to cook dinner another night for their loved ones.
The fistula outcasts, far removed, observe a feral truth:
after the militiamen jam their guns
deep in east Congo, only the lucky women run.

AMY MARENGO'S poems have appeared in *Amethyst Arsenic*, *Pressed Wafer*, *The Cancer Poetry Project 2* anthology, among others. She has received the New England Poetry Club's John Holmes Award, the Marcia Keach Poetry Prize, and the Peter Brooks Butler Scholarship and was a finalist for the Carilion Poetry in Medicine Award. She's currently pursuing her MFA at Virginia Tech.