

Dream Rematerialized in Bangladesh

ALISON MORSE

Red threads protrude
from the tips of my fingers,
weaving loom warp
attached to the clucking tongue
of my mother. She says,
why are you wearing that shmattah?
Her words steer my hands
to the nearest fashion outlet,
rifle through rack after rack
for the cheapest blouses, skirts
and trousers to make me
more slender, more
modern professional, more
American *shikse*, less
frum, less
poor, potato-y
Jewish immigrant
Grandma.

Invisible weft
weaves over
and under this warp,
threads of the years
my grandma and great-aunts

made by hand
in garment factories
to trampoline
my mother and me
to more.

Crimson threads
shoot through the skin
of my fingertips, fan out
like scarlet highways
past my American horizon,
touch down in Dhaka
as running stitches
so red, they vibrate
a green kameez,
its label, *Made in Bangladesh*,
We Care, promises
artisans paid enough.

To meet Khadija, twenty,
factory shirtmaker since fourteen,
I wear my green kameez
embroidered with threads
as red as gashes

marking the palms
of women and men
Khadija knew
at Lifestyle, a factory
contracting knifers to cut
deep through the hands
of workers who, together,
marched Dhaka streets
roaring for human workday
goals and wages. Change.

Khadija tells the translator
to ask me: *why are you here?*
I say: *I come from a family
of garment workers.
A century ago, the same
things happened in my country.*
Kadija says: Bandhu, *Friend.*
Bangla and English
hum through the fabric
under my skin.

