

Shaina Phenix  
clinic

*doyouhaveanyquestions?wearesendinganantibioticandcontraceptiontothepharmacyonfile.areyoureadytobegintheprocedure?*  
x, 17 tells friend about anesthesia, says it'll be quick. I will be out of it. I need someone here. Friend can't stay.  
pee on stick. slick abdomen with gunk. see figure on screen. quick chat. undress from the waist down. drink apple juice.

x, 25 balls her meat into a waiting room chair, bundles flat mouth beneath mess of hair hanging down.  
a girl comes for her, girl wraps tongue in the air, asking are you okay. x, 25 just wants to get out of this place.  
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x, 20 is blood. is a tiny heaving set of collar bones, asking her big sister, will it hurt? sister is small sound.  
sister knows the story. knows blood and vacant crux. knows it will hurt if she is unsure. knows she can break.  
pee on stick. slick abdomen with gunk. see figure on screen. quick chat. undress from the waist down. drink apple juice.

x, 37 has been big with babe four times. the bones clay-thick with tired. stretch marks peek through paper gown.  
likely goes home to the children, kisses husband hard on the mouth, says honey I handled it on my lunch break.  
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x, 15 arrives with a boy on her hip. the family, they all sit. she struggles through intake form. kisses the boy's brown.  
asks her mother about chronic illness. mother shrugs. she bubbles in no. boy asks what she'll get him on his birthday.  
pee on stick. slick abdomen with gunk. see figure on screen. quick chat. undress from the waist down. drink apple juice.

a waiting room in the south bronx is black with x, brimming in so many of us they run out of chairs. we run out in brown  
paper bags, synopsis of service, prescription fill. ghosts will call us murderers. judges won't hear our sides of the body. replay,  
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how we will heal when we die

*In conversation with Physiology. Class in emergency work.  
From the Hampton Album 1899-1900 by Frances Benjamin Johnston.*

In the schoolroom healing spot, between Clifton  
Blvd and Madam CJ's Street—the women

seance the cicatrix, sage out disease, swaddle the newborn black things  
in Dax hair grease life everything that is dead somewhere.

\*

Audre calls, *Aiyana Jones*. Harriet carries  
a palm-tree girl of fifteen, a bush  
of unwinding tendrils overhead,  
arms dangly as old skin, legs running  
like cut open dams. *what you done broke now, girl?*

*Miss Harriet, it was the last quarter, Aiyana builds her fist  
into a measuring stick—I was this close  
to the hoop, game point, Rekia Boyd passed  
the ball and I had to lay it up.*

*And you come down like a flood? Aiyana nods. Harriet wraps,  
kisses the girl on the forehead, keep coming down, ya hear me? It let you know you  
alive.*

\*

Audre calls, *Mary Turner*.

Mary is eight-months swole with three babies, say  
she want four more, waddles  
to the table, waits.

OB Hennie Lacks, or Henrietta (for long)  
corks her fist in a rubber glove, waters  
the slicked palm against the bulbous black.

Mary massages a soft tune into her abdomen,  
tiny folks underneath her ribcage dance  
and dance inside. Hennie joins in,  
humming Ella's, *A-tisket, A-tasket*.  
with song.  
are alive  
and well.

\* Soon, a room of them throb  
Soon, a room of them

kaleidoscope of girl with her tits out

In a dream  
I am the girl with her tits out.

I am black fins and nipples gyrating  
against window glass at home.

And if  
somebody comes to stop me  
saying I can't be  
what I am very clearly, here  
naked. Let them watch black body be a hell fire.  
Let my unquenched flesh feast,  
until I have been fed, until I am freed

and I am the girl with her tits out.

Clifton is here  
singing about being here and black,  
about breasts, too. *Summertime* is  
my fifth vertebral bone and the living is easy  
on my black feet bottoms.

I am Ella Fitzgerald singing *Summertime*.

I am as alive as a pistol  
breaking up boy bones on the corner  
when it is 95 degrees in Harlem. It  
is summertime and the boys do not die.

I am a stage—as alive as a pistol, as alive as  
a bulletless body in the smoldering hot.  
*Summertime* is bone and I am singing  
about breasts, too.

I am Louis Armstrong gargling

my flesh from the devil's hot bed  
and I am the devil, hot bed gargling  
the lover in a bloodied peach body.  
The lover wants me un-blooded  
so bad, and will every time forget  
her own blood, every time forget  
her own bruise.

Then  
today is March, and Spring has no eyes

for smelling what loves comes out of soot. Soot-love is March  
on fire, all flesh melts, melting is excruciating  
and rain-love is wet March.  
into almost.

March is sprinting

See March run  
See March burn. Run!  
See love run. Burn  
See her. Run. Burn.  
See run run  
See. see, see? BURN.

I leave the party with March.

I am black fins and nipples gyrating  
against window glass. I am out —  
the girl out in a dream.

I am chainless, naked, I am nobody's lover  
and I am just the girl, tits out,  
singing Ella Fitzgerald.