

For Serena Williams, and my mother

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Black skin
White coat

No matter the lifetime, cotton hair
is parted and shaved. The crowning

achievement of womanhood is the
attention of the operating table,

legs splayed, an offering to
nitrile glove and silver scope.

History dilating, she cries
alongside her burgeoning womb,

skin no thicker than her oppressors.
She is her body and hundreds

of other bodies, slick in water,
in light — a child, and a clot

to compress with black tulle,
the uplifted gaze of the world.

Had ears opened, maybe her mothers
would have guided her with a strength

that I am reminded warrants
jealousy, irreducible to Latin.

But an eleven of ten
remains a four.

Terese Mason Pierre MA

Toronto, Ont.

This article has been peer reviewed.

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