

## Florissant

(for LaVena Johnson, 19)

Before or After,  
he used the backend  
of an M-16  
and struck her in the face,

Before or After,  
he took his fist  
and knocked her 19 year old teeth out,  
breaking her nose,

Before that,  
the Florissant, Missouri, honors student  
who loved to play the violin,  
who every year made time to walk  
for the American Heart Association,  
decided to put college off for awhile  
decided to serve her country first,  
she enlisted in the Army.

She was deployed straightaway,  
to Baled, Iraq, where for all of her six weeks,  
she was a Communications Specialist.

LaVena called home every day.  
Her mother Linda answering,  
so glad to hear her happy upbeat daughter say,  
*Mama, I think I might be coming home early.*

The 5 foot 1 inch,  
one-hundred-and-one pound,  
American Heart Association Volunteer,  
was found in a burning tent  
with bite marks on her upper body,  
the arm and elbow that once held her violin  
now broken and distended,  
her 19-year-old genital area badly bruised,  
*lacerated*, the Army report read.

Before he struck his match.  
(this was the only time he was dutiful)  
he was careful sincere  
lifting her hips with one hand  
to pour the hot lye into her womb

clearing all evidence away,  
of his having been there.

After all this – the Army report read:

## SUICIDE

Dr. John Johnson, father of LaVena,  
filed for his freedom of information  
then wrote another report: The father report.  
A report a father should never have to write.  
A report a country should.

The Army reported the bullet hole was found  
on the left side of her head and it was  
made by LaVena's Army issued M-16.

*My LaVena was Right handed, the father reported,  
How do you take a 40-inch M-16 when you are  
right handed and curl your 5 foot one inch arm magically  
around in the air and shoot your self  
on the left side of your head?*

The Army man, the father,  
will tell you more, much more,  
if you have the stomach for the details.  
*If your love for your country does not impair  
your higher affection for the facts.*

The hole in LaVena's head  
was made by a pistol.

An unfound &  
un-looked for  
pistol.

Dr. John and Linda Johnson  
made the Army  
release the photographs  
from the murder scene.

The pictures show  
the bloody path  
where LaVena was dragged  
through the woods to the tent.

The pictures show the remains of  
dry Iraqi flowers and leaves  
stuck to LaVena's body,  
as if she was dragged  
a long way.

The Army reported that the tent  
belonged to KBR,  
private military war contractor  
child of Halliburton,  
and that is when and where  
the path quickly trails off.

*The tent was burning,*  
Dr. John Johnson's broken heart  
and strong voice tells CBS morning news,  
*the tent was burning.*

In the burning tent LaVena Johnson's  
19-year-old body was fully dressed,  
ready, as if for the day's full inspection,  
even though there was only one white dress glove,  
on her right hand, glued in place.

There are no warning signs  
nailed over recruitment doors  
for a 19-year-old Honors students  
who grow up believing  
they should make time in their lives  
to walk for others,  
fighting for a better world,  
made of stronger hearts.

There are no warning signs,  
nailed over recruitment doors  
for 19-year-old Honors students  
who grow up loving the violin.

The dotted line you signed, LaVena,  
should have included the report  
that your father didn't know about  
until after he saw your autopsy photos.

The report that every mother  
& father & family of every daughter,  
signing up must now learn by heart.

With your hand over your heart,  
Repeat after me: *Every woman  
entering these gates has a higher  
chance of being raped than being killed  
by enemy fire.*

Nikky Finney