

## In the Service we said

In the Service we spoke clearly and distinctly:  
We said, This is Jane from Women's Liberation;  
please leave your name, your number and a message.  
We'll call you back. When she did, we did; then  
we said, What was the date of your last period?

When we met to talk, we said, Are you sure  
you want to do this? When she said Yes,  
we said syringe, speculum, dilator, curette;  
we said vagina, we said cervix, we said uterus,  
telling how to open it from the outside;  
sometimes we had to say forceps, placenta, labor,  
trimester, hours, contractions, fetus.

(To each other, learning, we said it feels like  
the roof of your mouth, those ridges up in there;  
the curette scrapes along those ridges, spoonlike.  
We said you can feel the shape, like a textbook  
illustration; it feels just like the picture looks,  
it feels just like you think it will; that helps. Later,  
sometimes we said, She was more afraid of the shot  
than anything else. Or we said, Her cervix was so tight,  
I thought I'd be there for an hour, my arm frozen,  
my shoulder numb, holding that dilator still.)

Lying there, some would ask, so we said No,  
we're not doctors; we're women just like you.  
We needed to know how, so we learned it –  
you know, just like you learn anything.

*The Abortion Counseling Service of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union, now called "Jane" in histories of women's health movement in the USA, worked with more than eleven thousand women and girls (the youngest under twelve, the oldest over fifty), all of whom came to the underground group for abortions before the Supreme Court decision on Roe v. Wade in late January of 1973. Women in the group always called it "the Service," and referred to ourselves as "Janes."*