

Flashbacks

“As I lay on the doctor’s examination table, my heart felt like it was going to beat out of my chest. It was my first time seeing a doctor since being cut. I didn’t want anyone to touch me down there, but now I was pregnant. I knew I needed care for my baby to be delivered safely.”

“When the doctor examined me, I had a flashback to that night when I was cut. I was nine years old and I had traveled from the US to visit my grandmother in Sierra Leone. One night, she woke up my cousins and me, telling us we were seeing a relative. After a lot of walking, we arrived at a hut - with no relative in sight. Inside it was dark. A small lamp was burning, and there were three women inside. My cousins and I were all put in different huts - and cut. I remember the pain. I remember crying out for my grandma, but she was nowhere. A woman forced me down, holding me to the table.”

“When the doctor noticed my scarring, he asked if anything had ever happened to me and then exited the room. I was confused. He returned with a pair of students. The three of them looked at my vagina and me like we were interesting objects - not a human. The doctor hadn’t asked for my permission before he brought the others.”

“Maybe if the doctor knew that I was reliving the night I was cut, he would have thought twice about bringing in the medical students.”