

GABRIELLA MIROLLO

Free Clinic

I'm first. The counselor arrives,
laughing at the blizzard that never hit.
She leads me to the intake room.
At the gray metal table,
she assumes a neutral tone
to talk of anonymity and risk,
land mines and rattlesnakes
unreal until you stumble on them.
What's being tested but the limits
of my tricky love affair with luck?

Date of birth. Not my fault.
Number of partners. Stop shoving, boys,
there's room for everyone here.
For what I've been reduced to
I take responsibility. Release me.
Do you practice safe sex? Not enough.
Could you notify past contacts?
What a call to take or make.
Remember me? What's new?
I'm cool but sweating.

The counselor walks my forms
to an unnumbered door.
The nurse calls my number.
I need a moment to respond.
The window gate interests me.
Mild steady snow falls.
I watch the needle going in
so easily (I have good veins)
and into tube 4086 goes
every blood red thing I've done.