

her arms up, up against those binding her, breaking free herself. She looked at her mother.

"I'm sorry." It left her neck as a whisper. The Queen tried desperately to regain her composure. "I apologize." Virginia's lips moved the words out. The Queen was stunned but she managed to say, "So you should be young lady. So you should be."

Father would never have believed it possible. She wanted to laugh. Virginia had saved the Queen! Not God! And the women knew it. And their gratitude filled the girl with shame. Mother said, "Let her be now Doreen." Mother actually said that.

Virginia left the silent room and quietly shut the door behind her.

DIANNE BATES

OLDER NOW

Restored,
the brass bed looks impressive
where we lay in nightly ritual
watching stars cascade through space —
Death, the ancients said.

Once, stars were our passion
exploding
two strangers into one
though the world revolved
as it always did.

We never noticed then.
Now all stars and blood are lost
that could make another flesh.
We turn to walls and sleep,
stars falling about our brass bed.

In the morning I complain of springs,
you, of another day.

