

Bop: The North Star
By: Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon

Polaris sits still in the sky, and if I knew
which one it was I could follow it all the way
to Auburn. Oh, Harriet, who did not need the poise
of freedom knocked into your head like sense, who found it more
than possible to sleep, pistol shoved deep into your pocket
along this route, I cannot tell a dipper from Orion.

Yes, the springtime needed you. Many a star was waiting
for your eyes only.

The university twinkles on the hill above my house.
The fat moon rises and a girl holds out her arms. She twirls
in a blue Polly Flinders dress. Mama's precious
cameo – a white woman's silhouette on black satin ribbon
chocker tied around her neck. Poise begins here:
in cinders, in rhyme, in splintering beauty into this
and this: – the image at my throat: the summer's pitching
constellations: the twelve o'clock scholar's midnight lesson.

Yes, springtime needed you. Many a star was waiting
for your eyes only.

At the prison at Auburn I cross the yard. Inmates whet tongues against
my body, cement, sculpted, poised for hate, pitch compliments
like coins – (wade) – their silver slickening – (in the water) –
uncollected change. A guard asks, Think they're beautiful? Just wait
til they're out here stabbing each other. Oh, Harriet, the stars
throw down shanks, teach the sonnet's a cell, now try to escape.

Yes, the springtime needed you. Many a star was waiting
for your eyes only.