Women will not follow a law they believe will eventually lead to their own material insecurity. Over the years they have become aware that crossing certain boundaries entails questioning male authority which, in turn, will result in undesirable consequences, socially and economically. Elimination of FGM without addressing the inferior status of women in Sudanese society will not, therefore, succeed through state imposed legislation nor through intervention by international organizations. The battle against FGM is a political one. Breaking the chains of dependency and the hereditary forms of power is imperative for women across the world that are bound together with the string of subordination. What we need to build is a consensual oppositional consciousness to demand that the state first and foremost consolidate women’s education and training, provide the opportunity for equal labour force participation, access to health and birth control services, access to legal rights and political participation. Once these demands are met, women will be able to halt the practice of female genital mutilation.

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VIRGINIA ADAMSON

Pledge to Mother

My mother, her rail of a body flat on her back.
My father put her there again.
The red and white tiles next to her still glisten.
She polished the floor on Monday, it is Wednesday night and upstairs Don Messer’s Jubilee is playing on the CBC.
My father and my brother wrestle with vicious determination.
Their angry footsteps mark the shiny floor, flip the handmade rug with the golden viking ship trapped in the embroidered centre, Eric the Red standing at port side.

My father’s arms, are skinny next to his potbelly body, and scramble and punch at my brother and mother.
The smell of his sweat coats the walls.
My brother pushes back a tear a tiny trickle.
My sister trembles, her soft white skin turns crimson against her silk hair.
She and I sit on the frozen stairway, our numb eyes watch and that winter Wednesday I make a vow a silent pledge— I will never be a victim, I promise you mother!

My brother, like a frightened monster slips away into his cave.
The lonely television is playing Hockey Night in Canada and my father retreats upstairs. We collect ourselves off the steps, my sister and I, and drag our mother like a huge rug to the bedroom.
Pulling at her beanpole arms, her hair rubs the floor, dusts like a mop, wipes up a familiar despair, soaks up the tears that fell from my brother’s eyes and the sweat that dripped from my father’s forehead.

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