

Vera Manuel / TWO POEMS

LOCKED DOORS

I never knew until years later
 why she kept locks
 on her bedroom door.
 I never imagined...
It never dawned on me...
though I asked her once,
 “why so many locks
 on your door?”
 “...to keep my father out”
 she replied,
looking me straight in the eye,
 I never thought that odd
 at the time.

You see I grew up with sunshine
 spilling into our house,
and lots of children's laughter,
 happiness.
 I knew never to allow
 her dad
 to kiss and hug me.
 I never let him near,
felt not quite right about him,
 but I never imagined,
 it never crossed my mind.
 I never figured out why
she liked to come to my house
 and stay, and stay, and stay.
Sometimes I grew tired of her

hanging around so long,
now I remember
it was always her dad
who called her home,
but I never imagined...
never knew such a thing.
No one ever invaded my childhood
with such a thought
or act.
I always knew
never to accept
unwanted hugs and kisses
or attention from adults
when I didn't want it.

I was lucky I guess
to be allowed
such luxury
such freedom.

DANCERS IN A NIGHTCLUB

“How do you know
when they’ve been abused
if they don’t tell you directly?”
I asked.

“...by their lifestyle
...they’re prone to depression
...they drink too much
...never look you in the eye
...they become prostitutes, or
dancers in a nightclub...”

echoes of a past
a secret past...

“...they keep lots of secrets...”

I never knew I was
so transparent,
so easily read,
...we never told a soul,
was so sure
no one could tell
...never spoke of it
not even to one another,
between the dances
and the liaisons,
of course.