

"Promises, Promises"

I asked you for help
and you told me you would
if I told you the things
my Dad did to me
it was really hard for me
to say all those things
But you told me to trust you
then you made me repeat them
to fourteen different strangers.

I asked you for privacy
and you sent two policemen
to my school in front of everyone
to "go downtown" for a talk
in their black and white car
like I was the one being busted.

I asked you to believe me
and you said that you did
then you connected me to a lie detector
and took me to court where lawyers
put me on trial like I was a liar
I can't help it if I can't remember times and dates
or explain why I couldn't tell my mom.
Your questions got me confused —
my confusion got you suspicious.

I asked you for help
and you gave me a doctor
with cold metal gadgets and cold hands
who spread my legs and stared just like my father.
He said I looked fine —
good news for me you said
bad news for my "case".

I asked you for confidentiality
and you let the newspapers get my story.
What does it matter that they left out my name
when they put in my father's
and our home address.
Even my best friend's mother
won't let her talk to me anymore.

I asked for protection
and you gave me a social worker
who patted me and called me "Honey"
mostly because she could never remember my name.
She sent me to live with strangers
in another place with a different school
I lost my part in the school play and the science fair
while he and others all got to stay home.

Do you know what it's like to live
Where there's a lock on the refrigerator
Where you have to ask permission to use the shampoo
and where you can't use the phone to call your friends?
You get used to hearing, "Hi I'm your new Social Worker
This is your new foster sister, dorm mother, group home"
You tiptoe around like a perpetual guest
and don't even get to see your own puppy grow up
Do you know what it's like
to have more social workers
than friends?

Do you know what it feels like
to be the one that everyone blames for all the trouble?
Even when they were speaking to me
all they talked about was lawyers, shrinks, fees
and whether they'll lose the mortgage.
Do you know what it's like
when your sisters hate you
and your brother calls you a liar?
It's my word against my own father's
I'm twelve years old
and he's the manager of the bank
You say you believe me —
who cares if nobody else does.

I asked you for help
and you forced my mom to choose between us
she chose him of course
She was scared and had a lot to lose
I had a lot to lose too
the difference was
you never told me how much.

I asked you to put an end to the abuse
you put an end to my whole family
you took away my nights of hell
and gave me days of hell instead
you've exchanged my private nightmare
for a very public one.

Anonymous