

Never Saw

Category: Behind Closed Doors

written by Julie A. Dickson | February 14, 2022

When I was a child, I never saw my mother unclothed; she always got dressed and undressed in the semidarkness of her bedroom. I caught a glimpse of her bare thigh once, until she told me it was rude to look. If I woke up in the late evening and knocked on the door of our only bathroom, I was admitted to pee only after mother had covered herself with washcloths while reclining in her nightly bubble bath. All I could see were pale, bare shoulders above the bubbles.

In contrast, my father paraded around naked from bedroom to bathroom so often that I never noticed, never stared, never wondered what his body looked like. When I entered my teen years, my mother badgered him to wear boxers, so as not to leave everything visible to his daughter.

My mother didn't own a swimsuit, though she had been the captain of her high school swim team. At pools, or on her rare visits to a beach, she wore a blue seersucker skirt and white blouse with navy blue espadrilles—her summer uniform.

My father cannon-balled and dove, splashing everyone within his radius. When he developed a hernia in his sixties, he freely uncovered himself to show me his scar. My mother was horrified but forgave his lapse as he was still slightly drugged.

Then it was her turn to be hospitalized. She was in the intensive care unit, hooked up to monitors and an IV, wearing only a johnny, open down the back. When I entered her room, a nurse was giving her a sponge bath. My eyes opened wide at the sight of my mother's naked back and buttocks—but at least she hadn't seen me come into her room. I quickly closed my eyes, not wanting to be rude.

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