

RM Vaughan / FOUR POEMS from *TROUBLED: a memoir in poems and one video script*

Session 28

Here is where you cut my heart, inserted snakes in the folds, blood holes garters
not pythons, not eels nothing monstrous or broad, fanged nor rattle tipped finger curls not fists
because you are so clever, smart as salt

you said We'll have to find We can fix We'll talk this and I nodded
bobbed, wet faced, a drowning man you said There are ways around

One gesture from disaster, isn't everything always the rail jump, the iced wing, the
downed plate, the slit the bruise the scald preventable?

Here is where you said Relax and meant Come to my house, take dinner, meet my children,
buy me a book, sit in my lap grow used to the hiss inside

Session 1

Orchids, a man who breeds orchids (Faulkner's pet hate, their hoary throats & stick insect limbs unnerving harbingers *Nasty things* He wrote, in bed, tingly with bursitis and drink *Their flesh is too much like the flesh of men, and their perfume has the rotten sweetness of corruption*) if only that

So, he parents orchids, my latest psychiatrist and watercolours, by the meter so many beach fronts, fir groves, rose gold maples, whirling brooks & blotch flowers an outdoorsman, hobby artist unoriginal but energetic (already, my critic voice, already five minutes past the office door) and so, too, his body a recap of all the top muscle groups of the 90's the baseball bicep, the cleft chest, shoulders like whale backs & a teen waist tucked into purple and yellow plaid, Easter colours in September (stop it stop it stop it)

because he knows my type, my talents, he begins with rules (we critics love rules, and are all bottoms) I must not be late, not cancel, not lie expect, begrudge, sour, shirk disrespect the process, steal the magazines, pick the flowers, wear muddy shoes treat him like a friend

Session 2

On a flowered couch, I seed crack like milkweed pods in frost, spores in mud
call all the old gods to harvest
— my father, mad as a paper kettle, as three glass balls
in a blender & my mother, her sleepy violence, a limbless she-cat all caterwaul & cant
& my body, a wrung pillow & the quiet habit of rough sex, for spice —

He flexes, winds his fingers takes no notes, no notice

All my embarrassments, summoned, cast on the floor runes and bones and shiny stones our
first magic, first sniff of the glands, presenting of horns and he says, only,
Save something for later

Session 27

To tell it is impossible a sea crossing on a cardboard tray, a hike over Nepal
in glass shoes I try, speak in damp gusts, verb spirals in footnotes full
as Christmas trees, bottom trawls & gill nets with mud in my teeth

To tell love, name attraction catching bats with envelopes