

Rachael Sage *Chandelier*

The Songs

VERTIGO

“I briefly dated someone who neglected to tell me that they were married. It was the kind of thing you see in bad TV movies and you think that it couldn’t happen to you. It was so blind-siding and confusing because it made me question my own judgment on every level. Thankfully we only had a few dates. ‘Vertigo’ was sort of where the album started; I realized that I was still really angry about it and once I got that song out all kinds of new songs came to me.”

MY WORD

“I wrote this while I was studying acting at the Shakespeare Lab at the Public Theater. I had been cast, yet again, as a young ingénue and I was a little frustrated with that. I felt like I could’ve sunk my teeth into a meatier kind of role. So this is a song about that struggle in acting to be honest with what you feel as a person and somehow combine that with the character.”

BLUE LIGHT

“‘Blue Light’ is about my friendship with John Lee Hooker. It’s my version of a blues song, but it doesn’t sound anything like a blues song. I met John Lee when I was at Stanford through the fellow who used to play organ in his band. He would deliver the kegs to my dorm and every Friday I would play piano at the dorm happy hour; this guy just started chatting me up.

“One day he invited me to go to a barbecue at John Lee’s house and he told me I should bring my tape recorder because John Lee had just finished an album and might want to be interviewed for the radio station. It was the kind of scene where they loved having young people around and all different kinds of musicians, and after I went that first time I became very good friends with John Lee Hooker; I’d go there almost every weekend. ‘Blue Light’ is about that childlike approach to life that he maintained for as long as I knew him.”

INVINCIBLE

“I wrote this about meeting someone in an unlikely scenario where you’re not supposed to be happy or that social. I met someone at a funeral and connected with them pretty quickly, and the song is about that moment where you’re playing out this whole scenario and seeing where it might go. I tend to gravitate toward the most difficult and doomed scenarios in romance. I tried to have a sense of humor about it, recognizing that I leap a little too quickly; there are symbolic or metaphorical signs sometimes that I probably choose not to see.”

ANGEL IN MY VIEW

“My dad suggested that I write a song like what was on TV in the black & white talk show days, so I took that image and went with it in a ’60s kind of direction and pictured myself with a horn section and perhaps some dancers doing a little movement and chiming in on backgrounds in the chorus only. It’s the most upbeat and lyrically positive song on the record. I was prompted to write it after breaking up with someone; we’re still incredibly good friends so I think of this as a platonic love song.”

WISHBONE

“A young woman asked me if I would be willing to write a song for her wedding. I don’t usually write songs on demand, but it kind of felt like, ‘Why not? What an honor to be asked.’ It’s one of the other upbeat songs on the album because it’s not about my own romantic life—it’s good to exercise those muscles and not write all your songs about yourself. I performed it at the wedding and I’ve since played it at several other weddings as well, so it’s become my wedding song.”

(more on reverse)

MEXICO [a song by Jump, formerly called Jump, Little Children]

“I heard ‘Mexico’ on the radio when I was in Atlanta at WZGC. I was about to perform, but I heard this song right before and I came into the control room and I said, ‘Who is *that?*’ ‘Oh, a local Southern band, Jump.’ I never think, ‘Oh, I’m going to cover a song,’ because it’s just not something I’m drawn to do that often, but it stuck in my head, literally every word, after hearing it once.”

CORINNE

“I wrote ‘Corinne’ about a young woman I met in a ladies room before a show I played in San Francisco. She was clearly under all sorts of duress and she just started talking to me, super friendly—that tends to happen to me. I could tell that she was either homeless or possibly a sex worker; she was using the bathroom basically to take a shower. She opened up to me and told me all kinds of things about her life, asking me for advice. Parts of her story are in this song.”

MOONLIGHT & FIREFLIES

“I wrote this in the beginning stages of a relationship, and it was one of those songs that just come all at once. I was at a festival in Michigan and I think I was even staying in a tent. I guess it reflects that big, expansive sense of life and overwhelm that comes from being outdoors. My friend Rachael Davis sang the ‘oohs’ and ‘ahhs’ in the choruses. She’s a small woman with a big voice, and she definitely sounds like a Gospel singer when she does her own stuff.”

SITE-SEEING

“This is a piece that I have been doing live for a couple of years and it’s about being far away from people who miss you. When you’re a touring artist you can call someone your good friend, your best friend even, but you’re not physically there to help when they need you. That distance can create a huge conflict. When you’re that close to someone you reverse the situation and imagine what it would be like to feel alone or isolated in that way from someone...it’s kind of a perennial touring musician problem.”

HUNGER IN JOHN

“This is a composite parody of several of the guys that I’ve dated who lived downtown and were Bohemian artists, and ended up going to LA and making it big. So it’s sort of a sketch of a few people, and more than anything I think it pokes fun at myself and some of the patterns in terms of the type of qualities I’m drawn to that I should know better by now. To me it’s a satirical folk song.”

BELOVED [her first recorded instrumental]

“I’ve written a lot of music like this for theater and dance, but never something specifically for an album. Sometimes when I play melodies on the piano I do hear lyrics, but they’re not necessarily the lyrics I’m going to keep, and one of the lyrics that I heard in that opening melody was the word ‘beloved.’ I never finished the lyric and it just seemed to want to be an instrumental.”

CHANDELIER

“I started writing this song when I heard that a fellow indie artist had injured her hand and wasn’t going to be able to tour. The song isn’t about that, but it made me start to ask myself whether I was really appreciating every chance that I got to play live for people. Literally that opening line is the conversation that I was having with myself: ‘What if I woke up tomorrow and I couldn’t sing?’ I also had pretty bad carpal tunnel in my hand at the time from all the work I do on the computer, so it was kind of that struggle between balancing the work I do with the label and having that impact my process as an artist. By the time I sang it many months later it started to become more about that urge to want to uplift the people in our lives and sort of be everything to everyone we love.”