

# I WAS RAISED BY

## SHARONTA PICKERING

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I was raised by smooth talking,  
Money getting, fast moving,  
Wig splitting parents

I was raised by Henderson streets  
A never knew if you were going to make it  
The next day kind of streets  
Watch out for them boys shooting kind of streets  
There goes the ice cream man kind of streets

I was raised by sounds of balls hitting the bat  
Alarming sounds of crowds cheering my name  
Fast running, Kentucky derby sliding,  
Home run hitting type of sounds

I was raised by spade  
A black, silky smooth dog  
Bearing kisses of love and barks of wisdom  
Protecting me from harm

I was raised by the sweet smell of buttermilk pancakes  
French toast, eggs, bacon, and honey  
The everlasting aromas filling the morning air  
Like fresh squeezed lemonade on a hot summer day

I was raised by the Caribbean, Spanish, music of my father's accent  
His peoples St. Thomas talk and my mother's country twang  
Words holding a barrier to the way I speak

I was raised by judgment, and compassion  
Two identities ripped apart through a sea of hate  
Causing pain and confusion among those who cannot speak

# TRUMPET-CREEPER

## FAMILY

LACEY CURRAN

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*A human being becomes human not through the causal convergence of certain biological conditions, but through an act of will and love on the part of other people. —Italo Calvino*

The emerald vines of *campsis radicans* have nearly overtaken the east side of the house, vigorously sprouting, crumbling the concrete foundation. They've already coiled and stretched around loosely hung shutters barely hanging on to rotting timber siding and outlined glassless windows. A ruthless array of creepers have begun to emerge from the cracks in the walk leading to the front door where small stubs shoot from a mat that has turned to earth. The warmth of incessant dedication gradually melts away the nose-tickling moisture each morning, briefly appearing through a transforming sky. Commitment glistens upon descendent dewdrops from *campsis radicans* as they scatter across an expanding garden. Opaque orange blooms call out to a desperate fluttering nearby from yellow throats, offering attainment to starving humming birds. These vines require guidance through specific nurturing in a garden constructed and bound by a limitless kind of love. The substantial dedication required to raise these complex vines from latching on to just about anything and suckering out of control provides *campsis radicans* with many names.

One particular name for this suckering vine might derive from an aggressive yearning, an itch, perhaps a strong desire. Other names might derive from their climbing abilities or destructive behavior. Nevertheless, it really doesn't matter what you call them—humming-bird vine, cow itch, trumpet creeper, these vines are invasive in nature and when not managed properly, trumpet creeper can easily take over and become extremely difficult to control. The vigor of trumpet vine should never be underestimated and when temperatures rise, mouthy little suckers will emerge in greater numbers and latch on to every

available surface. Eventually they will grow into dense, hardy stalks and possess the ability to dislodge established roots with a growing power to overwhelm everything in their path.

No matter where you live or who you talk to, the decision to rear trumpet vine should never be considered lightly, some gardeners will caution that these climbers can overwhelm small-space gardens and easily become troublesome. If after substantial consideration, you decide trumpet creeper is a good fit for your garden, it is probably best to first upgrade to a larger space with room to grow—once these vines start to sucker, it is already too late and before you know it, *Devil's shoestring* will tie its knots around your foundation and suffocate your own roots if you aren't paying close attention. An intense amount of love and nurturing will be required to guide your precious vines in the right direction.

The *cows itch* is likely to come around at one point or another in many lives. Especially when there is heightened pressure and encouragement from others to expand their gardens, but growers beware, vines are very invasive. Raising vines can threaten your existing roots and weaken your resilience with the aggressive aerial rootlets of the colonizing vines as they grow and challenge everything in their path. If you make the decision to bring these vines into the world, always be prepared to pull back your sleeves and have your gardening gloves ready as they climb. And remember, it is your responsibility to guide your *hummingbird vines* and prevent them from growing out of control and this will significantly increase with every milestone.

Raising trumpet creeper is explained as relatively easy in gardening books, encouraged that with proper care and guidance, your *Hellvines* can be kept under control. These books will even tell you what to expect when you're expecting. They'll tell you to expect your vines to grow extraordinarily fast and approximately when to expect them to bloom. Apparently they'll thrive in sunnier areas so you'll have to be careful not to overshadow them. You'll be advised to water your vines in drought but not to overdo it and watch them particularly close after they have bloomed as they will then be capable of producing attractive bean-like seedpods of their own. They will grow fast, oh will they ever grow fast. They'll grow way too fast, but these books will never prepare you for that nor will these books ever tell you that raising vines will change your entire life.

*Creeping vines* will turn your heart to a thick layer of moss. Saturated and splintering shingles will crack away from rusty valves and tired arteries will deteriorate in homage to your ravenous brood. The strands growing atop your head will grow wiry and silver and the lines between your eyes will increasingly hollow with each and every angry squint. Your pointer finger will grow longer, angrier and threatening, and your soul will soften in the same moments it hardens, eventually turning to earth. Your world will grow heavy and your pockets empty. Your gardening bucket will grow bigger, accumulating in tools, but your tool shed will stay the same. You'll say *when I was your age* and *when I was a kid* and *I'd have never gotten away with your behavior* more than you'd ever dared believe when your own parents warned you. You'll have to fight the urge to scream while pounding your fists on the dinner table for your twelve-year-old to grow up and eat her fucking dinner and you'll lose everything and gain even more in return.

You'll go crazy each time the winds upset your precious vines and every time a caterpillar chews away at their leaves and you'll grow crazier each and every time their roots try to reach out over yours. But you'll still be crazier about each and every one of their yellow-throated orange blooms from your deepest starving roots to theirs with a ferocious and vile kind of love that holds no verse, only grows, invading every inch of your garden.

And you'll know, you'll finally understand the mantras your own parents repeated while raising you. And the next time you ask a newly established or wed couple if they plan to raise *trumpet vine*, ask first the strength of their roots and the size of their garden. Recall the simple words of Italo Calvino and this: *children cannot be raised without the sacrificial suffering rooted deeply within unconditional love.*