

Sleepwalker
(Song for Rona Hartner)

8th of January, 1999. 6:55pm. In post-communist Romania, it snows blue and up to the window ledges. Approximately 60 percent of the country's population are sitting in front of their televisions, about to watch what will become the first, and most successful, tabloid talk show in the history of Romania.

The guests are a far-right presidential candidate, seen as the frontrunner in the upcoming elections, and the 25-year-old actress Rona Hartner. Inspired by the Lewinsky scandal in the US, the candidate has accused the current president of having an affair with Hartner.

About 10 minutes into the programme, he will ask: 'What sort of name is this anyway – Rona Hartner? It doesn't sound Romanian. In one interview you declared that your father was Jewish; in another, that he's German. What is the truth?'

She will lie back in her chair, smiling, and say: 'I'm an actress. I can say what I want.'

I want to spell it out for you tenderly: today
we are only allowed to feel as homely
as a bedroom in a furniture shop window.

Counting my knives, I find my talent is
plausible deniability. Some examples include: no,
I was never interested in that man,

no, this mouth has not always been
a wasp nest, no, I was never interested
and played with the man like an ocelot

with a crystal ball, scratched at him until he grew
perfectly opaque. Where's your future now?
It's alright, I also obsess over vulnerability, but she

came to me in a dream once and said,

repeat after me: I am an actress,

I can say what I want.

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8th of January, 2019. The presidential candidate never became the president, and is now dead. He is survived – and mourned bitterly – by an aggressive pit bull he named ‘Rona’.

Rona Hartner is 45 and lives in Paris. She has released a few music albums, to lukewarm critical reception.

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In her twenties, my grandmother could not afford more
than one dress, so she crocheted herself
seven collars, one for each day

of the week. Potential suitors were tricked
into thinking she had seven different
dresses, and also such a cohesive

aesthetic! I said to the man: Tuesday
I was a wildflower, yesterday an improbable
hare, today I am St. Sebastian, sexy

yet completely unthreatening. I sleep all day,
although if I wanted I could order
the fucking sun to stop in the sky, after all I

can say what I want