

Shooting out the Lights: A Memoir

Kim Fairley

She Writes Press (Jul 27, 2021)

Softcover \$16.95 (288pp)

978-1-64742-134-2

Kim Fairley's sensitive, probing memoir concerns her love for a much older man; their marriage was marked by silence and mystery.

Fairley was twenty-four when she became captivated by Vern's smile, wicked sense of humor, and rugged good looks. They made an odd couple: the poetry-quoting, divorced hardware store owner was short, tan, and thirty-two years her senior. Fairley writes that she "felt like a moose" standing next to him. Still, they became best friends, then husband and wife. Three months later, Fairley was pregnant: "I was starting my life, and he, though I didn't know it, was nearing the end of his."

Fairley is candid about struggles to reconcile her love for Vern with her increasing sense that he was hiding something. Her attempts to come to grips with her husband's lingering torment over the accidental shooting death of his fourteen-year-old son, Ben, were met with silence. The past hung over their marriage; the influence of Vern's ex-wife loomed in the décor of their house, and Ben's room was an untouchable shrine.

Despite her unanswered questions, Fairley was sure that she and Vern could face anything together: "He was giving me a sense of security in my life, and I was giving him a way to walk away from Ben's dark shadow." But their relationship took a dire, dangerous turn when Vern, over her objections, gave in to a request to house a disturbed eleven-year-old boy, the son of a deceased friend.

Shooting Out the Lights is an exquisite memoir that analyzes what brought a couple together to face loss and their shattered hopes with enduring love.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July / August 2021)

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