



# Library podcast

## Speak to Me! Poetry Readings

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[00:00:35] Let's give it up for the writers you're going to hear.

[00:00:41] Number one after I read is going to be Kemarre.

[00:00:46] Number two is going to be Carolyn. Number three is going to be number four. Jack Khiva and last Tara Hardy and I will give you all a nudge if you if you forgot that order.

[00:01:00] I really wasn't planning on reading and then all my friends gave me mean looks.

[00:01:05] So I guess that means I should read two poems.

[00:01:11] Yes it's a yes and I'm going to read No.

[00:01:17] No. There are people using eight dollar words to talk about race and race relations and you think that's great.

[00:01:28] And all that you can hold in your mouth today is this No.

[00:01:37] And you know it isn't frosting on a gluten free cupcake or Ph.D. esque but it's all you can muster with the vulnerability of the self spread around like hummus and a whole food Cracker no women are wearing pricey clothing and expensive jewelry and they are slaying it with the power in their education. And the folks are saying yes yes you are totally speaking our language. We are going to be your ally. It's great. You're awesome and all you can push out of your barren lips is no.

[00:02:17] And this will not put you in the New York Times best publications or land you a grants or Lanzhou an award or land you anything on the bestseller list and you get circulated as a great person but not the most educated black woman on the scene.

[00:02:33] But that's ok.

[00:02:35] Your lineage is a worker bees haven for desecrated wombs and deaf ventricles that swarm all you can revolution up is no now no no no you are right.

[00:03:08] Ok so checking in on Yeah I read one piece substitution by Bohlabela about doo doo doo doo doo doo that addenda dead in that bop bop ah and your name shall be called jazz how will we substitute you today we hear you in the elevator. It's not you just a cover of you boo boo boo bop bop bop

[00:03:40] Bop bop bop me. Miles Davis mom. Nina Simone mommy boo boo boo.

[00:03:47] We will only play a cover not the real you boo boo boo.

[00:03:51] You will drink your coffee but what about you. It's the real you. What about you.

[00:03:59] We don't know. Where's my latte rubab boo mommy. Nina Simone. Miles Davis

[00:04:08] And your name shall be called jazz sold to the highest bidder smooth proprietary pimps make you holler Kinni make you holler crawl for your name in curly fonts stick you between corporate Happy Hour and read rhyme and riff. Roots show just enough to present you as exotically acceptable. A hint of kink and a James remake at last from a single lady vegetarian speaking bird suburban baby's name Coltrane Rouba boo mommy host Miles Davis BB2 boo hoo Billie Holiday boo boo boo. Where did the band get that and your name shall be called jazz. Just a substitution not the cover not the cover.

[00:04:52] We want the real the real the real jazz Davis and Nina Simone sold sold to the highest bidder sold sold to the highest bidder.

[00:05:03] Public radio tries to resurrect who you are is was there is a cost sold sold sold to the highest bidder bebop only when there is barbequed chicken watermelon or poverty.

[00:05:15] Mommy plus miles davis Buddu.

[00:05:20] Billie Holiday is a holiday for that substitution.

[00:05:23] We want your names to be called jazz though real jazz.

[00:05:29] We don't want you to be in the black ground against broad daylight but doo Calloway Horace Silver Sarah Van Dexter Gordon Dinah Washington W.C. Handy Maxine Sullivan Lee Morgan Nancy Wilson Louis Armstrong Nina Simone King Oliver Hazel Scott Carmen McRae Eubie Blake. But boo boo boo boo boo. ALICE. ALICE. Alice Coltrane. Charlie Mingus. Mary Lou Williams dizzy to collapse the Adam Jones The Loneliest Monk.

[00:06:05] Mommy The Loneliest Monk.

[00:06:10] Kid Ori Lena Horne. Art Blakey. Bessie Smith. John Coltrane. Melba Liston. Sidney Bouchard's. Alberta Hunter. Coleman Hawkins. Duke Ellington. Sun Ra. Shirley Horn. Max Roach.

[00:06:27] But doo doo doo doo.

[00:06:29] Nat King Cole. Esther Phillips. Betty Carter.

[00:06:33] But doo doo doo doo doo.

[00:06:37] Real jazz. No cover.

[00:06:39] No substitutions and your name shall be called jazz.

[00:06:51] All right I'm going to welcome my first poet and then the night will go along on its own.

[00:06:56] Please get up for Kemarre bright Hello lo.

[00:07:07] I definitely thought Anastasio will be reading at the end. So we have to go right after.

[00:07:14] My name is Kemarre right.

[00:07:15] I'm going to be reading a mixture of poems for you all some from my book and some from a new project in the first piece is retold fables on a day overwhelmed with sunlight in a kingdom like never seen before. She looked from atop her throne and doubted herself face stolid and unmoved heart retched. She looked at every face that shone towards her every mouth that blessed her steps every hope that deemed her queen and she doubted herself. Was pulled between the possibilities. Either she would be the pride and protection of her own reflexions standing before her or she was vain and selfish in denial about her connectedness to the Rays out yonder. So she sat there confined in that throne unsure of what she'd done was right.

[00:08:17] And she opened her mouth to speak with the people hanging on her lips. But made no sound of reassurance. Instead taking that moment to the throne her doubted self as the kingdom watched in collective agony. On the day the queen plummeted two hundred feet down from Glory's tower. This piece is called notebook. She wrote the perfect poem once not perfect because of its meter or form but perfect in its account. It took that Tennessee spring day with her face to the sky and back on a slab sitting next to a committed. Lee Brown boy who was either a guard or a thug. The difference being comfortably minuscule turned that one day into all the days she had captured the wind in her script. Halane still listened to the secrets of old whispered in a breeze that experienced those experiences and made them a poem perfect scribbled in the notebook of a guide or author.

[00:09:32] She decoded the secrets of the wind and never saw its perfection again.

[00:09:45] And I am working on a new project that looks at the connection between Christian myths and their influence on present day patriarchy.

[00:09:55] And so that's a little bit of context for these. So the next forum is called How to Make a belief. Number one lacquer your ideas ten fold until they neither bend nor flex. Use the thick bile from your liver to provide them structure. Keep them from becoming something else. Number 2 let dry. Number 3 wrap your ideas in shrapnel discarded from wars with other ideas. Shrapnel and opposing incisors. Number 4 varnish your ideas with your plasma graft them patches of your skin. So in tufts of your hair now your ideas are beliefs. Now they are personal and attack against them is an attack against you. Number five allow your beliefs to set numbers 6 once they have set. Wrap yourself in your beliefs. They are your second skin. They will not pry from you easily. Number 7. Drill a hole through all the layers back down to the core idea but only pin sized it is not there to remind or we center. It is only there to relieve pressure.

[00:11:21] In the beginning in the beginning there was her the abyss the abyss looked in upon her self and saw all the possibilities and things to come.

[00:11:32] She saw God read order forming in her midst and the creations that were soon to follow. And as is the case with most chaos a secret order. Read god came from her endlessness and God sprang forth from the abyss and created limitations.

[00:11:52] Those were a he and he despised her with all of the triviality of a self dimensional creation. But she cared not of his anger from her. He had come and through her he would be lost and God created a she in the likeness of her. With a piece of endlessness in her belly God called it the firmament. So he began to hate she for the source that would always be within her.

[00:12:21] But he needed she to remember being endless. Because to feel but not recall his own vastness was an ache unhindered by consciousness a torture freshly born soon his feelings of despise independence mixed in an upset stomach until he vomited them and created land.

[00:12:46] In this way since the genesis of time the relationship between Earth and Sky has always been complicated ceremony take wound and pan sear flesh side down. That is seal off any bleeding parts let wound rest retain juices for bone deep cuts.

[00:13:20] Garlic and turmeric Peck back to where you used to be whole allow yourself time to absorb and transform submerged in water and boil until you no longer bleed. Until you are not so easily sliced your blood is caked and you are done.

[00:13:46] You are ready OK.

[00:13:55] Two more another beginning. We landed in the middle of a plot. Walked around under the weight of our own importance. That's how we came to be here. That's what kept us grounded from

being called up to the sky like Rapture things and we didn't speak about the possibility that we may not have been what we said we were important because we knew that something that is no thing floats and we liked our dead underground and dirt beneath our souls.

[00:14:38] So when we we count the story we make our selves the heavy start in the beginning and the last piece that I want to share is something I wrote for an exhibit that I have coming up in the summer that looks at marginalized communities relationship with the United States. And it it changes it from person to institution to person a person. So we personified Americans said What would your relationship look like if the mayor who was a person. And so that was the inspiration for this poem. And this is called impasse. You've got this loving man and you don't know what to do.

[00:15:20] His love goes deep like the crimson of your ruptured capillaries burst. You tell him you can't breathe that far below sea but he keeps on because his love is pure like your white bone gasping for air through waves of flesh and agony. Break. You try to tell him not to summon buoys from your limbs but his love is thick like the patches of Deep Blue Velvet sprawled across your carcass.

[00:16:03] Batture you aim to say that your body can't hold a galaxy of starless skies. But by then he has loved you.

[00:16:13] Red white and blue. What to do what to do what to do with this love.

[00:16:25] Thank you stop clapping here.

[00:16:41] Like oh all these wonderful tall people. And you know when you've been riding for a while and they start talking about poetry of stature and I say yeah I'm always the shortest. So that takes care of that well. Thank you so much for inviting me for speak to me. Thank you all for coming. I'm going to read a couple of things. I'll start with my new book this dream world. I was very I always tried to reply to the context. And so the reading turns into kind of a conversation. So I never quite decide what I'm going to read. I have an idea but i always change it. This poem from the new section of this stream the world New and Selected is called woman at the well. And you may recognize that image because the woman at the well it's the well of Jacob which was in Sumeria I believe and it is a well that is sacred to all three of the religions of the book. Right. Judaism Christianity and Islam. And after 9/11 which was you know a terrible trauma for this country and really the whole world. I found myself trying to think of an image that would speak to all three communities and this is the poem that came out. It's in it's in memory of the poet Agha Shahid Ali who was the poet who brought the ghazal form in its true form to America to English to the English language because it's a form from Arabic Persian word do et cetera.

[00:18:26] So you'll hear repetition at the ends of the first two lines and at the end of each succeeding couplet woman at the well in this late season who is the woman at the well drawing water reflecting on the woman at the well millennial fishers in the whale room weed choked cracks were brackish water rises for the woman at the well at the bottom of the well shaft the sky's reflective eye opens

closes on the woman at the well where are the reins of bygone era as predator it whether yields more rusted buckets full for the woman at the well ancestral well of Jacob where weary traveler rests where Jesus asks for water from the woman at the well old plain trees of Sumeria where in whose shade a stranger speaks of artesian faultlines to the woman at the well Khaldi in fountains oases of date palms and minarets how they flourish in the dreams of the woman at the well mirages of marble pomegranate flowers cedars of Baalbek shimmer in the sight of the woman at the well.

[00:20:00] On the night of Destiny The Angel Gabriele descends and hovers by the footprints of the woman at the well.

[00:20:10] Jacob's Ladder leans against the door of heaven on the bottom rung the woman at the well women of sea car women of Sheringham draw aside your veils reveal the features of the woman at the well wise ones.

[00:20:33] Why do you weep. Do you fear your fate. Tips a mirror toward the woman at the well o artisan of sorrow mysteries precision. Sit down beside your sister.

[00:20:51] Second Self the woman at the well I went.

[00:21:03] One thing I forgot to mention about that poem is in the ghazal the final couplet the poet is supposed to name him or herself or refer to him or herself.

[00:21:13] Now what do you want to do when you to send the poem to a competition where you are your identity has to be anonymous right.

[00:21:20] So you find little you know sort of ways of disguising your name so the name right of course means artisan right. So o artisan of sorrow is how I did that. You know so obliquely referring to myself I'm going to read one more poem from this book and then two more after that as some of you know I'm going to be going to Brazil Brazil as we say in in June. I'm going to be there for nearly two months on a wonderful residency fellowship in the state of Bahia just across from the city of San Salvador which Salvador is the third largest city in Brazil. It is the center of Afro Brazilian culture. And I guess the best way to describe it for you know North Americans is it's kind of like the New Orleans of Brazil and it's really the spiritual heart of Brazil. Well I was there once before and I'm going back but while I was there I was there during Carnival and not Mardi Gras carnival and you know which is usually February January February. And I had a wonderful experience talking with people dancing in the street etc. and at some point somebody said you need to go see this lady she will tell you your fortune because I was very concerned about some little aspects of my life at that point. So I went to see this woman and she was really what is called my son. She's one of the leaders of the the houses of Candomblé which is the Afro Brazilian religion which has been preserved many people in Bahia are both Catholic and members of houses of Candomblé are heroes as they're called. Well so I went to her house she was dressed all in white you know lace blouse big skirt kind of a turban white and colors and she literally had a crystal ball. I mean it was just round glow you know and it was

seemed to have a glow from within. And this was the experience that that I had from it. There's a few Portuguese words in here but I think they'll be clear from the context.

[00:23:36] The Qonja woman South Salvador the by year she blows on the crystal ball tells me I can have anything hibiscus flowers Jacques on da wood charms a powder from the Mikado Modelo that drives men wild in the waiting room. The man I want drums his fingers makes eyes at the honey colored woman stirring something in the kitchen strands of blue pearls passion flower Lanzhou on her head a little Sumba on the red floor tiles. Yemanja sea goddess smiles and waves her fish tail from the poster on the wall. The congresswoman turns her wedding rings around a long story about the sea Bahia dialect the hushed syllables palm trees reflecting on the water. Whole sentences. I want to understand samba school drums at the corners cachaça bottles passed around women singing the carnival tune no is scarce Ajee mean don't leave me.

[00:24:56] Don't forget my future full of missing words. Eavesdropping at the tables of the deaf late afternoon smell of exhaustion he's gone. Lady Yemanja laughs in the room above the kitchen. I crossed the conjure woman's palm and go out. The whole town is in the streets. Masked dancers drumming their true names from continents that still would fit together embracing face to face like lovers in the salt and sweat of their seed displacing passion fishermen drag in their nets and fall to their knees. Be tween the silver thighs of women who worries.

[00:25:50] I'm going to read one from raising Lilly Leadbetter women poets occupy the work space. This is partially because tomorrow is May 1st which is Labor Day for all the rest of the world. And why of course does the U.S. have Labor Day in September because we can't have a holiday the same as all those communists the rest of the world over. So ours is in September but in honor of Labor Day tomorrow May 1st. And also in honor of the title one of Terry's books. I just saw over there you know it has chandelier is in the title so I'm going to read a poem by poet in your name Maria TEHR Meenie called chandelier K.. This was her job cleaning chandeliered as awkward carrying that 14 foot ladder excavated out of the junk filled basement. I fished up narrow stairs and around corners into the small square space of the hallway. Careful but still the latter bumps the chandelier. Today I am repairing water damage. I climb to a 16 foot cathedral ceiling on an aluminum ladder that wobbles. If I had wings I'd feel so relaxed but I don't look down and there is work to do. The chandelier is inches from my nose covered with fuzzy dust.

[00:27:14] Only I can see. Meanwhile Rusty stains from melting snow bloom where the ceiling meets the wall plaster has cracked and bubbled in spots. I balance with one hand on the door trim the other scraping loose plaster sanding patching up and down moving the ladder to other spots. Careful but still the ladder bumps the chandelier. The chandelier is a preposterous affair. Circles of green glass form a wedding cake that sways like an ominous pendulum hanging from one weakening wire cracking like the defined ticking of a clock. It could crash at any moment ricochet off the ladder slicing my face into noodles and it would be my fault. I would have to pay for it. And surely it's expensive. I worked through the morning respecting the chandelier. Careful but still the latter bumps the chandelier. I sneak the latter back into the basement replace the pictures on the walls as I leave the job. The chandelier messes with me. I see a trace of its slow mocking dance but we have an

agreement that when it crashes down I won't be around. That's that's Maria Herminia who's in Philadelphia. All right. The last one here. Now you may know me as Carolyn right.

[00:28:48] But there's another poet in there somewhere whose name is Yuliana and she's invaded my email address. She's taking it over. She's sort of like my my own personal poetic virus or something.

[00:29:04] Anyway she is here in this wonderful anthology that came out from last horse press called nasty women poets a subversive anthology and an apologetic anthology of subversive verse. And this of course you remember the good old nasty woman comment in the one of those election debates campaign debates such a nasty one. Well we nasty women all rose up and this is one of the results in good ole pussy pink cover. All right so here is your Lean's contribution or is it a subtraction.

[00:29:43] It's called The Confessions of Julian a I eat too many Twinkies. I ask God to make me virtuous but just not yet. I pick tater tots off other people's plates.

[00:30:00] I order 40 large pizzas for the house where my old boyfriend lives with that new baby hears and I use his credit card number.

[00:30:12] I go through my new boyfriend's wallet looking for photos of his old girlfriend's I get most of my ideas off the internet.

[00:30:23] I steal the rest of my ideas from the renegade saints with names like Augustan and Aloysius and Simon still light. Who spent years standing on pillars in the deserts of Iraq.

[00:30:39] I stuck my bathroom with toilet tissue swiped from fast food restaurants dispensers I swear on amenities perplex whatever that is. I take naps anytime especially when stuck in rush hour traffic.

[00:30:58] I'm a Capricorn with kundalini rising. I make videos of myself on YouTube dressed entirely in marshmallow paste and little pink squiggles of birthday cake icing in high school. I snuck out with all the punk poets in my home room and Flamingo and the vice principal's front yard. Now I'm casing the lawn of the college presidents McMansion. I raised my grade point average like a hot air balloon. Aitel only lies in my confessions.

[00:31:37] Thank you. Thank you so much.

[00:31:41] And who is next right.

[00:31:49] I'm shorter.

[00:31:52] Hello everyone. I would like to start by thanking all of my dear friends that came tonight. You can't imagine how meaningful that is to see your smiling faces. So let's see. Let's do a little art here.

[00:32:08] So you want to be a Post-Impressionist artist 1862 Monet meets Degas and the color of day time is changed forever when ballerinas date boat men pink meets blue on a river like nobody dared to paint before white paint on wet paint will pass for reflection. This is Franz. Paint lilies on different water. Still Water Violet flowers floating on canvas floating Violet flowers on flat canvas paint this over and over until they begin to sell then stop stop using yellow for the sun make yellow look like real gold gleaming expensive tell knowing how you did it pretend your first picture is of the tree in front. When you're really painted a sunset using only tiny orange dots practice dots don't lick the brush and paint. Innovative trees that move when you do go without food to buy the new emerald green and innovate until well past dawn. Add leaves join an argument with artist friends about the actual colour of air. Emphatically vote for pale stars with star colour and. Time now to rent a freezing attic studio and find a practical model. One who sleeps in the nude drinks too much cadmium red and dream about a brand new tube of surreality and blue. Prepare for year after year of cleaning brushes and writing home because now you are an artist.

[00:33:51] So paint stars with star coloured paint.

[00:34:03] I wrote this in Anna Anastasios workshop blue and hard are no different. SUSAN believes homework is for cats. She takes the silverware away from the heated area as quick as she can. Glass bottles former defense of compliance and emptiness. Why bring peace into it. Taking Susan at her word is just like not. Forsaking her beloved objects is so so hard and smells of old milk and honey. She traces beardie on the walls and reads it like fiction novels. There is no science fiction because she has never seen a star forsake Susan. If you can says and tries to sew by spreading pins. Up and down on the diagonal cooking has hurt will hurt. That is one thing for sure blue and car are no different. Her mother was black and not very hard. Susan has never seen the sky somebody burned the books between three and four days or age or cups of sugar. What is sugar Susan. Look for the answer on the wall and under the plants in the top drawer put your blouse on at least. And forgive me if you can.

[00:35:25] Really.

[00:35:31] It personification is when the poet the character takes on the characteristics and personality of something that is not human. I chose a color. It ain't easy. That little shit Kermit was right.

[00:35:45] It ain't easy being green meant avocado olive drab supposedly sister to yellow younger brother of blue everybody's favorite color blue skies blue jeans blue moon over Kentucky. The final word in red white and see what I mean. OK. That's one to America brief for me. I win and the prize is Ireland. Kelly spruce chartreuse Yeah I have heard the talk something something about envy. I have improved the vocabulary of countless jealous high school girls. I've inspired college men to study something of value that young couple covets that cute house with the green carpet inside and the green grass outside. Envy is the mother of ambition. Green is important to farmers. They dream about me both awake and sleeping. Farmers wives mourn my passing while the sweat runs down their face like tears. I can change entire prairies to gold just by turning my back to the sun and

refusing to move. Sometimes I wish I was the sun. Back in 1937 a very nice family from Ohio knelt on rocky frozen ground and prayed to me because I am the father of spinach baked beans and that California style manicured lawn. I am mother to nearly write perfectly all lime but my personal glory my very best trick is being a Christmas tree. You see I do have hope if we can all make it through just one more winter because green is still the color of a leaf and I represent farmers chartreuse and Ireland.

[00:37:45] Well I'm just going to do one more short one before I before I literally evaporate. Red is beauty.

[00:37:54] Beauty is not truth. Blue green is neither blue nor green. Tis a color blind translucent is not clear except to children or the color blind Prussia's can't be seen although I know it's pink pink is in fact red and white. Red is beauty. Trust is supposed to be white but I'm not sure it always is.

[00:38:20] Beauty is not truth but truth is sometimes beautiful sometimes.

[00:38:53] Well all right so I'm going to read a few poems from my poetry chapbook Lizeth all lovers and other strangers. It follows two faded souls on their quest to find love and understanding.

[00:39:08] And so it's told from the perspective of two different people. Also I bloom my voice out of I start to sound like a squeaky 14 year old boy.

[00:39:17] Just because I had a good time this weekend.

[00:39:22] Port au Prince 1991 those summer nights I sat near the stern of my rooftop sailing the ten waves of the high seas wishing to go beyond the gaping Ma'a of shock on houses rusting in the rain soaking the floor. The only joy was watching tiny paper boats floating by.

[00:39:41] I'd pull back the metal roof hoping to catch white fins sprinting down Brown Streets beast to beast I couldn't hear the rain on the tin roof of my first home singing me to sleep. I think of you always in the spring that you saved us all Anadan from drowning in our gutter. The two of you silver haired and shaking from the cold he stroked its fur. With hands heavy enough to crush its skull. One beast showing affection to another empire of dreams Charles Semic once talked about torsos hanging on telephone wires. It gave me nightmares of my own torso thick with blood and electrical cords squeezing out my spleen and gorged and delicious for a crowed and born it's gross but I kind of like Hogan diner diner Martinique.

[00:40:46] We lived in a studio and Hell's Kitchen above the only Creole restaurant amid a row of shotgun Irish pubs where beautiful dark proud black women with hips that swayed with sexual frankness and Liberty wore bright skirts hiked high up to their waist. Their voluptuous chest and strong needy arms carrying trays of golden curried potatoes red beans and rice thick juicy chunks of chicken and sausage. We ate the eggs you smuggled upstairs in your apron scented with cayenne and cardamom. The smell of which would always wake me long before in the morning you held the

nice white orbs up into the half light of the room to inspect it for cracks the pop and fizzles of the radiator coming to life at the foot of our bed. Warming my tiny feet reminding you of bills the Irish boys below serenade the Caribbean women with catcalls and playful jabs about their headscarves. The three of them former barbershop trio screaming into the vacant storefronts their meandering words falling away into a tuneless song. You open the window and bairns at them to shut up. There's a child up here and she gone get somewhere. Not like your pasty drunk ass the egg falls out of your hand rolls off the brick ledge and disappears into the night.

[00:42:11] Tinker Siegel took a shot at me. That's a sign from the Lord Almighty. Don't quit your day job boy.

[00:42:17] There tackles more Jaggard than there singing. You slump into the bed your skirt flaring out your back hunched over rubbing Shea butter on your legs and feet. You know mahogany skin touched with silver. I can see every fine crack you roll a little on your index finger and sweep it across my lips as the boys fade away down the street. Hey take our killed folks. SIEGEL You shake your head. The Peacock colored scarf coming undone. You climb under the covers when you put your feet on the radiator next to mine.

[00:42:51] Best not to be Irish she say. And your last exhale before sleep.

[00:42:55] One egg one goes a long way past the drunk Latinos sleeping in the stairwell of your brownstone. The stirred up with top ramen in a was they when they lunge at you the carb boost or make it easy to leap out of their hands. The nails black like Crescencio one egg last the whole walk to school past Madec mouths Arabs cigarettes dancing on their lips leering at your high Redbones skin and voluptuous breasts growing by the second. Add some green onion for flair. The taste is unfamiliar but nonetheless welcome. Those late nights fell asleep in the crevices of books their spines arched beneath your cheekbones. You dream and wavy noodles and fried eggs billowing like clouds over your professor's head. Some nights you find yourself awake at the stove shells hatched and sizzling in your cast iron skillet the smell reminding you of home of one of Don's running wild on the roof. Your father singing sweetly before he breaks its neck pouring the blood in the dirt the earth so dry and hot it bubbles. He sees your future in the droplets dancing on an endless diamond. Your heart red and beating on the opposite side and the careful hands of a stranger.

[00:44:11] And now go to the second perspective in the book is reversible. Ah

[00:44:18] The magic Polaroid ten kids gather around a camera near the square.

[00:44:24] All pastels and khakis and golden skin. Some pull back their mounts and stick out their tongues. I wonder who they will be when they look at this photo again when today is long forgotten. While their lips pull back the same way the license plate game. My mother never complained when we moved from Arizona. The three of us crammed like sardines in the front of the family station wagon. Her only friend Mrs. landing him shrinking behind the boxes of our lives.

[00:44:53] As we crested the hill to a new future Warpaint my first kiss was from a girl named Tina who wore red lipstick slicing her mouth into two. Ruby Rose petals that swayed and dance to young Americans sitting on the neon orange cat shag carpet of her basement.

[00:45:15] The bite of Ogar whiskey on her tongues smuggled from my father's smoking room. We sat side by side facing the record player. She confessed that she had been a crack baby and that her father had kissed her too much. She said she had never known a nice boy her fingers running through my copper hair. I asked her how she would look with a mustache and goatee too much like my father. She spoke her voice like the dead. She asked me about Arizona. The expanse of sky and the immensity of the desert make her come to life again.

[00:45:48] I will take you there one day. Promise we can go anywhere. All you have to do is close your eyes. Her fingers cascading down my face fastening my eyelids shut. I can see large clouds blocking the sun creating silhouettes of brown baked canyons and feel the incredible warmth of Tina's body where her lips on mine. The whole way home twin vipers. Your sharp metallic Fang bites into my virgin skin. Tina wax your serpent back to break the bubbles out of your venom. This will set you free she says wrapping a yellow python around my arm. I bite the head and feel my blood boiling.

[00:46:33] Polaroid part 2. This is how my friends will look on their old dolorite and bloodshot outside Vermillion nightclub's a Turkish silver between their yellow calloused fingertips that sweet smoke streaming like a train. They are too late to catch.

[00:46:50] Sincerely the junkie detoxing in the tube station Dear Mr. or misread.

[00:46:58] I hear you creeping up the walls between the pipes scratching that it she just can't scratch. For him is hard for me to. And then eventually spoiler alert the two folks come together.

[00:47:12] And so now we're going to see how they converge into powder and salt skate street is iridescent under the lamp sporran copper light reflecting off the cobblestones slick with fresh rain and paper thin ice the English winter shakes the bone white powder off my hands. They are trembling so bad perhaps that six cold half dozen hunger Latar whose Serch have not eaten since we've gotten to this White US town the only thing of color the stoic facades of this walled in city trapped in black buildings in a sea of fog. I contemplate life choices three high to no ask her eyebrows knitting up. Renee takes off her cap. It's flacid mouth sinking into the wet stone.

[00:47:57] I fly Janella on my shoulders her feet sinking into my back. Rene stands on my thighs her buyable shoes floating away as I hoisted Nell high in the air. The three of us a total of smiling black faces a little brunette girl and a crimson petticoat pulls at her mother's finally manicured hands. There is the wet flap of coins and the hat followed by the unamused click of heels. We lean into the wind a Murtha remodeler scattering three tumbling balls. I hunched my back and push against the earth. I'm airborne free from everything that binds me. All I have is second nature guiding my feet to the ground. An answer that would be Polaroid part 3 My first honest job bakers apprentice aka doing all the shit that Mr. and Mrs. Bingham are too old and too feeble to do. There are good people that time and a

good life have weathered. I carry the brown knapsack of rock rock salt and sprinkle it on the slick cobblestones leading to the shopfronts. There is a commotion gathering in the square so we leave our door ajar hoping the aroma of croissants and dark chocolate will lure passers by three figures bound and swerve in the middle of the square a thin veil of fog making Dreamer's of us all. I call back to Mrs. Brenham Hursey shape back stooped over a silver tray of golden pastries. Horace cracked as she drizzles rivulets of Carmel over bulbous apple turnovers on old boy her peasant face curling into a smile. The three girls stand erect against the sky one by one they roll away phantom elements in the fog. The last girl dives from the ground her bony whitened hands land on the slick ice and she falls under her head. Her legs splaying open like silk scissors she is face to face with the German shepherd narrowly escapes its teeth. Her friends pull her up like a rag doll into a bush bow. The audience claps and turns and walks to their desired destinations.

[00:50:11] Do it again. I say salting the earth beneath her feet. This will be the last one T with Pavlov. I can't feel my heartbeat in my hands pushing against the porcelain mug. The mouth of which whispers out steam a thin golden river of honey drizzles from the lip of the potbellied container. The sizzle of bacon from the cooks counter is like a Pavlovian response. My whole body is suddenly starving again. Now that there is no show to smile through I pull out a nickel plated flask and splashes of cognac. I don't do that kind of stuff anymore. You say fingering the crook of your elbow. There is pain and darkness underneath that nervous hooked smile and the side of your face. I bored out the window. Let's start over I say fresh teabag wrapper out of my mouth. A river of honey a cloud of cream swirled with a tiny spoon. You thumb the traces of the edge of your mug the smooth density of your words are like aged whiskey and stone. Id like to begin again you say. Back before words. Who would you be this time around. Anyone anything.

[00:51:23] Something monstrous and new you're hooked smile wanes underneath the cup the marbled mint tea making clouds and your irises. I see a ruby heart in the shadow of your sleeve. You catch my eye and let her smile flickers to life again.

[00:51:40] Thank you.

[00:51:52] I never said I was graceful and I'm flail around a lot and so I run into things.

[00:52:01] Thank you. Stasia. Oh my goodness.

[00:52:04] The readers rate.

[00:52:12] Oh my goodness the readers right. Can we respond for a second. Can we just say wow

[00:52:18] I didn't want you to stop.

[00:52:22] In fact I can hardly ever hear a poet before I read because I'm nervous but I was riveted. And then I was like oh crap I have to get up there. Okay so I'm going to read a few poems. As it turns out having a body is a tricky thing. One of the things about it is that we're alone in here and that's

weird because we're not alone. Most of the rest of the time. And so one of the things about being alone in here is that we have this task of telling others what it's like in here. Right. And it's a tough task. And so the. My latest book is all about chronic illness. It's a comedy. And this poem is one of my attempts to tell you what it's like in my body and it's called fatigue fatigue is not.

[00:53:09] I totally get it. Because last month I work too much. Imagine that someone has had an individual keg party in every single one of your muscles. Imagine now it's the morning after. Imagine that someone has taken each of your muscles out of your body even the ones the size of a baby sunfish beaten them with a meat mallet and then put them back in. Imagine your bones are made of smoke whispers imagine scarves are what keep your skeleton together. Imagine your sleeves are filled with cement. Try to make dinner.

[00:53:47] Imagine your legs are filled with marbles. Try to run up stairs in front of neighbors on a July day when everyone is coming back from a cookout. Try not to feel rage. Imagine that your head is made of a building. Your forehead is your last regret. Try to hold them up at the meeting in front of everyone. Wonder if they're thinking why isn't she in bed or why is it so hard for her to sit up this only last an hour. Imagine the bodybuilders are holding on to each of your limbs for so hands around each limb hey can you swing by drop off that document. Imagine the document is made of an old growth forest. Imagine you are an old growth forest and you need to relocate which part of you do you preserve first. Imagine your shoes are filled with tomorrow but you're trying to wade through yesterday imagine yesterday is made of sand and tomorrow it's a flood. Imagine there is no sun. Just the idea of one and you get up every day thinking that this is where they said it would be. This is where the sun would herald a right to live among the living. Again this is where I am supposed to find morning renewal tomorrow. That isn't made of night. If everything is made of night then how do I ever get to call it a new day.

[00:55:03] I promise I get cheerier. Okay. But not yet. Okay so this is one of the interesting things that happened. Suddenly I'm boiling up this is what it is to be in your 50s. Okay. One of the fun things that has happened or weird things that has happened is that I had chemotherapy at some point I do not have cancer so far as I know but chemotherapy was a thing. I had a day to adjust to it got the information within the next day and as you can imagine there was an emotion associated with this news. And so I need help. Reading this poem from one person and I'm wondering if it could be Rebecca OK great. This is all you need to do. You can stay right there. You can see right there. And all I need you to do once I tell you the word the emotion is I need you to repeat the word over and over. I'll conduct you here. And sometimes the pace will vary just a little bit but not much. And I'll say the word with you four times over and then you'll just keep saying the word as I read the poem OK.

[00:56:04] The word is fear. Fear fear fear fear is a drop fear is a drop fear is a drop of whisky. Fear is a drop of whisky.

[00:56:31] Fear is a drop of whisky hanging fears a drop of whisky hanging fears a drop of whisky hanging on a low fears a drop of whisky hanging on a low fears a drop of whisky hanging on a low branch. Fear is a drop of whisky hanging on a low branch. Fears a drop of whisky hanging on a low

branch. Becky fears a drop of whisky hanging on a low branch bagging fears a drop of whisky hanging on a low branch begging me fears a drop of whisky hanging on a low branch begging me fears a drop of whisky hanging on a low branch begging me to put my tongue out.

[00:57:56] Last summer last summer while the healthy were out picnicking and dashing skimpily across crosswalks I was at home making friends with a spider who had taken up residence in a corner outside my window.

[00:58:09] She was fast and brutal would wait for sunset when the bugs came out and then Pownce watched her suck the life out of the heads of several good bees while I cheered until the day a ladybug clearly out past curfew started waddling across the pain towards the web.

[00:58:31] I thought about tapping on the glass to warn the lady but then I thought why should just the pretty survive and who am I to reroute fate.

[00:58:41] So I did nothing but watch life dash up life's terms me sick and brutally odd in my pink chemotherapy gown watched as God marched that lady nine inches 2 inches 3 millimeters away from the web. When my Marvel at the velocity of life there in the twilight Sheafe told Joe I was going to leave you in the sad place the whole time.

[00:59:15] You can you can relax a little bit. True story true story.

[00:59:21] I was there and I was like do a to ITAP what would you do. What would you do.

[00:59:26] You know Spider and I were friends. So you know I wanted her to eat. She was her anyway. We had long conversations very long conversations. She was ferocious and she stuck around until late October actually. And so like yeah through the cold did you know that spiders can live up to six years and that they check out this word. They overwinter they overwinter. One of my favorite words in a hole in a board or under a leaf. They're incredible and they turn their blood to like antifreeze spiders are amazing. Anyway as I was making friends with her they don't get to come inside. I'm just saying make your friends. We had this conversation. OK. So. All right. One of the things about having an illness is navigating the I have two more Pomes separate second. OK great.

[01:00:14] So you had to navigate the medical industrial complex. So that's fine. At the hospital I am met with pressed lips. Can smell the white referral before I'm ever ghosted at the free hospital nurses lean over my bed whisper. How did you get here. They don't mean did I take a bus. At the hospital. It is as if I have turned into something ticking. Concern is a town over which doctors pass my body back and forth at the free hospital. I am a Faberge egg.

[01:00:54] Something to pedestal protect white as a believable victim privilege is that in the street outside both hospitals no one sees my skin as something to let lawfully bleed.

[01:01:13] Ok so one of the reasons I read that poem is that as somebody who has benefited from white privilege every single second that I've been alive including when I'm sleeping I think that it's only appropriate when a person with white privilege has listening to talk about dismantling white supremacy and dismantling racism. And so first of all I don't have the answers. OK I fucked it up regularly. I want to say that and I don't need congratulations for saying this at all but I want to say that one of the things that I do is I bring an article about well here's the thing as it turns out people try to talk to white people about race. We get defensive and weird and awful and then because we don't want our feelings hurt. People are dying and so we need to get over that. And so it's a whole phenomenon. You probably know called White fragility and so I brought an article on white fragility. It is two pages back and front and I take it with me to some readings and on occasion the only folks who come up to get the article are people of color and we absolutely have to do better than that. So the article is here.

[01:02:24] And please take it. Pass it on etc.. Okay so try and see if there's any I don't say oh I want to say thank you to Anastasios so much can we thank her.

[01:02:36] Thank you for doing this. You are the busiest woman I know.

[01:02:41] Thank you for asking me to do this. Thank you to the library for letting us do this. How amazing and there are a lot of people here who I love a lot and I'm extra nervous. I don't know if you've noticed but I want to thank the people who I love who came out and to be here for this.

[01:02:59] Ok. And this is my last home. Here we go.

[01:03:01] Chronic illness is a river of losses a rising river of losses and occasionally you go over the falls in nothing but a barrel wearing nothing but your birthday suit a suit. It becomes very apparent is on loan. When my illness lurches forward shovels into the fish yard yet another chunk of my life. My first response is to laugh in the emergency room when they said I needed a brain scan. My first thought. You know what.

[01:03:30] I'm not in the home I have to step back for a second. I get grounded. I know I'm being weird here. Do you get grounded. I'm hovering. You ever hover and you're like not in your shoes. Let's get in our shoes. I'm just telling you the story started. Dealing with

[01:03:53] Crime. This is a river of losses the rising river of losses and occasionally you go from. Nothing but a barrel wearing nothing but your birthday suit suit it becomes very apparent illness lurches forward shovels into the shark give another chunk of my life.

[01:04:14] My first response is to laugh in the emergency room when they've got a grandstand.

[01:04:20] My first thought was Fuck I'm just listening to this.

[01:04:24] No reason to.

[01:04:27] It's delightful and I like to keep her for as long as I can but I'm back organisms organs and my brain wobbles in your seat. Since stopped like a repeat.

[01:04:38] Let me stop grinning so this is yesterday. Quit.

[01:04:44] I don't mean flat out couldn't walk. It's going to occur. My response was to get up and dance one foot. I loved being alive. I loved the shit out of being alive. I loved the monster of being alive.

[01:04:58] Are you kidding me.

[01:05:00] Mango's is married to popsicles in July 3rd birthday songs with my to skateboard parks and Bogen tough applauding her back in the bathwater when the doctor said I needed chemotherapy. I could either save or kill but never to signed on the dotted line and then I moved to an island. My favorite father lives because if I'm going to die and we are all going to die I wanted to float my mother of all salt baths is my favorite blossom perch.

[01:05:30] Now I guess you could say I didn't want to leave without saying goodbye.

[01:05:34] The first thing I do when presented not conceptually it is always nonconsensual with another boss laugh or dance or change into joy. The second is dissolved and shut off the sky. Why are we watching other people bicycling swimming Santa Barbara community summer wedding dance. Both feet. The answer is no logic. I reckon people love being a mommy. When I'm sitting Blossom's on the day after poison drips into my arm. They love me when I am living on biography of insulation. What they don't love as much as I collapse and rage erupt into terror and resentment it's not part of the business. The grief is no less precious no less righteous and dancing after diagnosis.

[01:06:21] Grief is no less rejoice and hallelujah. Grief is your choice. Is the counterbalance. Just like you have a base in which to snuggle and dog shit which is to say you should be bursting open unusually Dali's I become wrapped up with this disease regularly Ramasamy.

[01:06:41] You should see me here Lerche and show the tears of my loving. You can see that is to witness the death of just how glorious it is to be alive. Next time you see someone weep because she has lost yet another thing the grip of illness. Maybe instead of pity or fear make set closer look in her eyes and ask Would you like to take.

[01:07:04] What did you say that flower smelled like when it liked to dance.

[01:07:20] Just saying I'm so happy that you got this opportunity to experience this tonight.

[01:07:30] And I'm so honored that everybody I asked to read said yes and could read it. It's really important to me that the city makes changes and that people who are amazing get more time to be

amazing if that makes sense so I'm happy you came as part of the series in the beginning I have to say when you start a new series you try new things you figure out what works and then you say oh no I'm going to tweak it.

[01:07:57] So in the beginning I actually had a writing component because most people that attend are also writers. But what was happening is that people were doing the writing prompt and then they would be like but I didn't get to talk to the writers because I was doing the writing prompt or they don't get to buy a book. So what I've been doing is doing a prompt to go free you.

[01:08:20] So I'm going to give you the prompt to go. For those of you who are active writers who want to go outside of this space and do some writing and then you can send it to me.

[01:08:33] I would love to read your prompt. That's the fun part. You can e-mail it to me and I would love to read your response so I'm going to give you the prompt to go then I'm going to give you a chance to talk to the readers slash writers and to peruse the books in the back.

[01:08:48] Is that cool. All right. So for the writing prompt you'll need to listen first.

[01:08:53] I'm one of those writers who actually writes When people are reading it kind of looks like I'm being rude but it's just because I like you and you inspire me. So I'm writing. So I took some lines from the poets that read tonight. Your job is to pick three lines. And finish the poem. You can put the lines in any order but take three lines and make your own poem and I'm not going to tell you who the lines are from. It doesn't matter. You just need to pick the lines. Cool. Here we go.

[01:09:25] Which part of you do you preserve first. Green is important to farmers don't like the brush. One bees showing affection to another.

[01:09:39] I can see every fine crack varnish your idea with plasma wrap yourself and your beliefs.

[01:09:48] So the woman at the well poetic virus so you pick a line or two or three and then write the poem send it to me. I would love to see what you come up with. And now the exciting part. I'm going to I'm going to go for him again. I was just going to say if you want the lines again. Come see me. I will give them to you but I want to give you a chance to go talk to the writers peruse books. Is that OK.

[01:10:17] Ok. But whatever you do just don't leave don't leave right away and say oh that was really awesome. We don't want to do Seattle Freeze. OK. Talk to somebody you don't know. Stick around for 10 minutes. Ask a writer a question. Look at a book don't act like you haven't been changed because I know you. I know you have. So let's take 15 minutes to do this. And thank you so much. Thank you to the library.

[01:10:41] Thank you thank you thank you.

[01:10:56] This podcast was presented by The Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to The Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.