



Library podcast

Virtual It's About Time Writers' Reading Series, #396

00:00:01 Peggy

Good evening, everyone, and welcome to a very informal reading number 396 of the It's About Time Writers Reading series. I'm very happy to welcome many long time friends with this crossover event for the Ballard Writers Collective. The Ballard Writers Collective was founded in 2011, otherwise known as... no, 2010... otherwise known as the year that I got remarried and the year before my father's stroke. I love to remember things when they're on even numbers. Tonight we have four members... and anyone else who would like to do open mic, please let me know... of the Ballard Writers Collective. Oh, good. That adds to our collection with Carol. And I'm going to say about that, two people do not physically, necessarily reside in Ballard anymore. But Lauren Ziemski has timed a very illfated vacation to the Northwest now and will be passing through Ballard tomorrow. And Jennifer D. Munro, as I always call her, because that's how her I read her email is, threatens and promises to visit us soon. So welcome. Alexandra. Just first of all, would you like to explain what's happening in Ballard tonight? Freak Out?

00:01:35 Alexandra

Yeah, there's a Freak Out festival in Ballard. And so right behind my condo, there's a band playing, and I was told that the zoom mic has a noise filter, but I wasn't sure it was up to the task. The walls are kind of shaken. So, anyway, I am in a conference room. Luckily, it was empty, so that's why my lighting is so bright tonight. I figure it's a creative evening. We've got music, we've got poetry, we got writing.

00:02:11 Peggy

Yes. And we're going to start actually, our first reader is going to be from is this a rental car or vehicle? It's owned by someone good parked in Everett. So let me just move on to introducing Lauren so that she can get out of the car. The It's About Time Writers Reading series was founded by Esther Athel Healthgot and dedicated to the memory of her mother, Anna Healthgot, who began writing at age 70, and also to the memory of Nelson Bentley, the quintessential teacher who gave Anna and scores of other help and hope. It's About Time is dedicated to an end of racism, homophobia, antisemitism, homelessness and war. Tonight reading number 300... 396. Our first reader is Lauren Ziemski. I could add a lot more to the bio that she scrawled off right before or between changing shattered window rental cars, as she said. Her two kids, both very lovely blondes, describe her as nice, pretty, and approachable. She would describe herself as a former urbanite turned suburbanite who is trying her hardest to keep the cool stuff out of the landfills and writing in the five minutes

between requests for snacks and more screen time. She lives under a giant pine, not in this state, and does not care one bit about raking leaves. It's been my honor to know her since she first turned up pregnant at the Ballard Senior Center and fit right in. So welcome, Lauren.

00:04:01 Lauren

Thank you, Peggy. And thank you for your patience, Peggy, and everyone else with this unconventional reading room I am in. You may see some backup lights on my face in the next couple of minutes here. So I'm experimenting with poetry, and given that I got very sick this week on vacation, I didn't have time to write anything new. So I sort of scrap together a couple of older pieces and couple together a newer piece. Two of these are about my ears, and the last one is about motherhood. This first one is called Otitis Media.

00:04:41 Lauren

Against my eardrum, a tiny drop of water pushes fervently my pulse, audible when I lay down to sleep in my vacation bed. I've come to be close to the ocean, but it's always in my head, snaking its way into the labyrinth festering, unable to escape. The grill is rusting on the deck, a reminder that nothing is stronger than salt and water. It keeps us afloat. It breaks us down. We build fortresses to keep out the elements, but eventually they get inside us, oxidize our metals, pulse behind membranes, every heartbeat a taunt. You traveled all this way. You never had to leave.

00:05:34 Lauren

This next one is called Emergency Visit Astoria.

00:05:39 Lauren

Gratitude for the babyfaced doctor who gave me a prognosis with his eyes shut, eyelashes, long shoes, new scrubs, not yet faded yellow highlighter neatly encapsulating the word flutter. Kissing said over and over, giving me the giggles. Gratitude for the doctor's parents, for pushing him into premed. Gratitude for the geniuses that came up with the name Mucinex. Gratitude for the baby faced doctor who told me the generic would be half the price. And rage a little bit for a system that charges twice the price for fancy packaging that goes right into the garbage. But ultimately, gratitude for the pharmacy on the sleepy coast that had exactly one bottle of the stuff on its dusty metal shelves. And while I'm at it, gratitude for the spot of sun I'm sitting in down jacket zippered to my neck after days of torrential rain and the steaming cup of tea next to me and honey and lemon from the hotel kitchen.

And for the long time friend who offered to leave it by my door while I sweated through twisted sheets. Gratitude for my even longer time friend who drove me slumped over in her passenger seat into the sunrise through the mountains to the nearest doctor and for the unreasonableness of orange juice on this faraway sliver of native land. And while I'm at it, for electricity and kettles and heated anything in 38 degree weather. For indoor plumbing and for two cells colliding decades ago in a drafty apartment for the miracle of the orchestra of the middle ear that went defunct minutes after it met oxygen and for the bottles of pink liquid and steady hands at scalpels that tried to carve out a solution when I was six and ten and 45 and for that hippie college that everyone said I do well at. For down the hall was a soul tender but sturdier than mine. Gratitude for her and all the years and miles that came after, for

knowing I needed something impractical to drink in a stuffy waiting room who didn't flinch at all for a call in the pre-dawn freeze and warmed up her car for the ride. Gratitude for everything and anything after a day and night like that, but especially that knowing across miles between souls.

00:08:23 Lauren

This last one is about my daughter Eva, ironically also wrote this while I was on vacation in the summer when there was far less calamity called Archaeological Shapes.

00:08:36 Lauren

What tethers her to me, still at four years old, her limbs seeking the give of my body beneath a baby blue top sheet, her still small fist curling into the hollow of my neck, all comfort, all pleasure. I knocked myself into inhuman shapes to accommodate her, my bones arranged like those in a museum, the surest guest by scientists later mother and child. At night, I pour my worries into dreams, fill bucket after bucket with anxious thoughts, hoping they don't spill out onto her golden chest, her heart open form rising to the moonlight, the street lamp. What if I haven't been a good mother? What if I have yelled too much, slunk away to write too much poetry during these formative years? Haven't written enough already? My legacy a messy house and stacks of unread books piled around us. None of it seems to matter to her late at night when she stumbles, dolly tucked under one arm toward my side of the bed. All she wants is the surety of my presence, the warmth of our organs nearly touching, just the thin layer of skin and blood separating us, my body holding all the doubts, the what ifs so hers can splay her arms at rest, her tiny toes tracing calligraphy into my lower back.

00:10:16 Peggy

Oh, Lauren, you make me so proud. You've been so up and down when you first volunteered, and you're like, oh, no, I won't have anything, and then I don't have any thoughts. And here you are. It's like every force of nature has tried to knock you off your feet, and still you sit there showing that probably the best place to read from is actually in a car writing the sound exquisite, wonderful.

00:10:55 Lauren

Yeah, well, thank you for the encouragement.

00:10:58 Peggy

Always.

00:10:58 Lauren

And for just literally reminding me in the 11th hour to turn in all the stuff and sign all the documents and get me moving. You really pull the best stuff out of me. Thank you.

00:11:09 Peggy

You know, I love to poke you because whenever I like, I give Lauren a little poke and say, oh, I saw this little thing and I think you should try out. And then she does it. That's why. I mean, she makes me proud in so many ways now. I completely understand. I want you out of that car. You can watch the others reading another time. I will. Thank you everybody. I will come back and I will listen to you later.

Alexandra Dane Garfield writes about the body in memoir, essay and blog at her. I used to be able to say this the word when like it's your name. Is your blog epidemis? I can't go there tonight. January 23. Her piece, Itch, will be published in River Teeth. Her work also appears in San Fidel Press, American Writers Review, 2020, the Writer's Workshop Review and lunch ticket. Her memoir, manuscript and Cope An Imperfect Story explores coming of age twice at the mercy of cancer, once as a young caregiver for her mother and then as a patient herself. Alexandra Dane Garfield is grateful for the two lives. When not writing, she is knitting. Welcome.

00:12:32 Alexandra

Thank you, Peggy. So I'm reading a piece. It's old and new. You'll get the new part, and it's titled Brave Cake.

00:12:45 Alexandra

I pause the spoon, mid air, mid carton ice cream containers. Blair back at me, the freezer light illuminating too many choices and also the clothes I have worn. For three days I'm wandering and eating and weeping barefoot in the dark kitchen. The time is midnight, March 2012. Piled pandemic shopping cast long shadows around me. The early days of panic. Then I remember the power of cake. Another March. I was 24 years old, exhausted and caregiving beyond my abilities, when I discovered the cake was a superpower. In the upstairs bedroom, my mother battled cancer. Fear hovered over the house. One morning, very early, I dusted off her dented pans and deployed baking to spar with the great loss ahead. White chocolate, swirled fruited, sugared sponged, round square, layered, stacked, frosted in buttercream or shaken with powder, cracked with walnuts or plain with cream. I carried still warm slices upstairs to her on a grandmother's china plate. Cake baked early in the morning made the day worthy, no matter if she took a bite or not, or the cake had risen. Part in the tender crumb held us up. 37 years later, a virus spreads and death covers on a global scale. I slam the freezer door shut and get to work.

At dawn, I tie on an apron. Click. With the surety of determination, the sun rises. Espresso Hisses my grown children sleep upstairs. They are well for now, but nothing is certain. I choose a baking book and secure my hair, pull out the same scarred and misshapen tins packed up when my mother died. Not just any cake will do. No plastic box Gotty store bought excuse for cake. Instead, cake made from scratch, softened pale butter, toasted cane crystals, generous teaspoons of vanilla almond, coffee. The tenuously bound flour hand turned into a yellow batter with yolk folded with air. The first cake of the day, against COVID-19 is a Victorian sponge, sifted, macerated, whipped and lovingly layered as the weeks turn to months of isolation. I'd thrown full of tiny currants on the offcake days turn out slabs of gingerbread, sparkling lemon cakes, dense vanilla pudding traveled socially distance and double mast to farm stands for fruit stalking summer jams simmered down from the windfall of trees. At the beginning, my family eats blindly, so stunned by the abrupt change to their lives. At first, they don't seem to notice. Until one day I am knocking spoons and whirring, beaters and at my elbow the youngest asked, what's today I do a silent victory dance. I have her attention. I have won the day back from this plague. Throughout the summer of rubber gloves and hand sanitizer, face coverings and isolation. The day begins no matter the heat outside with the oven set to 325 degrees, the day ends with crumbs and thumbing through recipes for another never giving up cake. Strong with love,

fierce with flavor, laced with hope. The first quarantine cake cools on the counter jam oozing. The house is silent when I tiptoe past the freezer, lift the foil and eat a forkful of cream and berry and perfect sticky crumb. There is sweetness to be found despite I know that cake will not change a diagnosis or staunch an epidemic. But cake warm from the oven, cradled in my hand, takes the bitter away one brave cake at a time.

00:17:29 Peggy

I'm ready for you to keep going. You're just sharing that with us tonight? That isn't enough. Except that we don't get to lift the perfect bite. That was beautiful. Thank you. I love the dented pans. And they're the same pans. There's been a lot of comfort and cake, but you won the one day back from the plague one cake at a time. Thank you so much for joining us. Make sure. Go ahead. I'm so glad you asked. Yeah, it's our little curve tea party tonight. We'll just imagine the cake. Thank you. Carol Levin. Would you like to give us a little old poem?

00:18:34 Carol

I don't know if you can see that. Yes. Confident music would fly us to paradise. Are you ready? Some of you know this poem, probably. But I started reading poems in my books that I've written, and it's a whole it's like I've never seen them before. Very strange. It's kind of fun. Mark Morris. Paul Hindamath. Comma music number three.

00:19:16 Carol

That moment. Even air held its breath. Violins loosened bows horns shook out, slather the undertow of the cellos. Umber sound rested. Vibrations like ghosts let loose the moment. Suddenly the dancers danced a capella. Had it been a vocal concert, it would have been a Gregorian chant or cantors, alleluia offering an old ceremony, causing the devout to renew vows to God. We made vows to art. It was all about art, this silence and dancers moving, weaving against the backdrop of silence, steady in the silence of their own accompaniment. And then, although we didn't see the pit, musicians lifted their work so dominant cords shimmered over us and dancers walked into skips, skipped into runs, ran into jumps and leaping, flew, extending arms, legs, toes and existing religiously exaggerated until we couldn't sit, couldn't stand to sit still.

00:21:30 Peggy

Do you want to read the last line over?

00:21:32 Carol

No. Anybody can make up the word they'd like.

00:21:42 Peggy

This is an improvisational night, so thank you for putting yourself out there and in there. Thanks, Carol. All right, now Roselle Kovitz co authored the history of public broadcasting with John Witherspoon worked in public broadcasting and as a communication consultant, she backed into poetry writing poetry about a decade ago and enjoys the dance with mystery that writing offers. During the Pandemic, she wrote a children's storybook featuring the unparalleled presence of a tree

and its bunny buddies, which she'd submitted to a boutique publishing house just last month. Welcome, Roselle.

00:22:29 Roselle

Thanks, Peggy. So the poems that I'm going to read tonight reflect on the experience of the Pandemic, the fraught times we live in and some of the things that get me through. I also want to just thank the folks, Peggy and Lauren, who are in my writing group, because some of these poems came directly out of that. And I'll mention the prompts that they came from. The first poem titled Stepping into the World again comes from the first line in January, Gill O'Neill's poem how to Love. And it's the seed that sparked this poem.

00:23:11 Roselle

Stepping into the world again, covered, cautious, carefully wheeling around others, counting feet between conscious of each exhale for what it might carry. Stepping into the world again, where air is no longer weightless, but thick with fear. More contagious, more deadly than a rogue virus, charged with an unseen urgency that lights up every nerve ending. Not enough to spark or singe yet, but raw, ready to send fireworks in every direction. Stepping into the world again as it spins in an unfamiliar orbit tow first in the gathering current, wary of where it will take you.

00:24:08 Roselle

The next poem grew from Jane Hirschfield's reference to a strange and frightening creature in her poem.

00:24:17 Roselle

Each moment a white bowl stepped shining into the world ride of our lives. The world feels like a strange and frightening creature. Careening around hairpin turns with us on its back we pull at the reins dig our heels and its sides say whoa hoping it will slow stop the thunderous pounding around each hard turn another calls this creature on as we bounce and flail, duck and sway to avoid branches offering a strange refuge. If we could only grab hold, swing ourselves off this runaway return to the ground we take for granted the creature undeterred devours the distance, aiming for an opening, rushing our way with muscles straining against momentum. It slows, just short of an edge trembles where the ground gives way, drops to its knees. Our hearts still racing as if it had made the leap, shifting gears. We all have moments and experiences, days and seasons we savor. This speaks to mine in praise of edges, or I might say pseudo edges. I savor edges the nearly moments before moments, the not fully bloomed. Thursday evenings, slant light brushing the brick store front on a fall afternoon, a slight at dawn. The smell of freshly ground coffee as it spooned into the filter. A rosebud's petals still gathered in a collective hug. Fingering a letter from a friend or lover before it's opened, the surrender just before sleep. The soft body and mind upon waking hills and valleys in the comforter as light blooms on the window blinds.

00:26:48 Roselle

The idea for this next short poem came during an acupuncture treatment.

00:26:54 Roselle

Traveling light from 93 million mile away. A bud of light arrived just in time for me to notice it beside a vent in the ceiling, while thin needles did their subtle work, reminding invisible rivers of chi and me of their natural flow, that fleeting bloom, a sign of the distance we travel for the smallest glimpse of light.

00:27:29 Roselle

And during the pandemic, we all had our obsessions. I became fascinated with big wave surfer Larry Hamilton, and he also co invented toe insurfing, especially his legendary ride in Chapu Tahiti. I'm not sure if I say that right. So I watched a documentary of his life, and then I watched a documentary of surfers to surf around the world. And I wondered what it was that drew Larry Hamilton and other big wave surfers to ride these behemoths. So this last poem was a result of that wondering. It's called the Ride.

00:28:12 Roselle

And there's an epigraph you can stop the waves. You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf. John Cabott's, Inn maybe it's the heart that toes you out, lets you go on the rising water, not knowing how far you'll ride or when you'll fall into the deep, the churn or dangerous shallow where sharp edges are deceptively beautiful. Maybe it's the heart that drives your arms into the cold blue feeling at just what point the crest gives way to the inevitability of the drop where you dare to stand in the barrel, the weight of nature driving you forward sideways. Maybe it's the heart that lets currents take you this way and that in mysterious cycles floating along the edge of vastness, as enigmatic below as the expanse above. Maybe it's the heart that draws you into liquid, the same waters where you were shaped, where you too crested, pushed forward sideways into life where breath first breathed you, where you moved with ancient tides, plunged, tumbled through white water an invisible force holding you below the surface until you rose, disappeared into mist.

00:29:53 Peggy

Thank you so much. I want to acknowledge a woman who, like not all of you have met, but Sally Hedges Blancez is the person who told me about poetry of resilience that some of us did together and recognized the January Gill O'Neill poem. So thank you for there's been so many wonderful resources really over the pandemic and I think that quite often I take time out to say that just the fact that we are able to be online together and now have podcasts that are later available on the Seattle Public Library site and the YouTube channel. There have been so many different silver linings in terms of it was always a dream to be able to share this. Now, our words, your words can travel all over the world if you choose. So thank you so much. On a small wave or a big wave. Alright. I can't believe it unless there's another open mic, but I say the words. Our final reader tonight Jennifer. Jennifer D. Munro, as I love to say, is an avid but inept bird watcher and knitter. She volunteers at a wildlife

00:31:15 Peggy

rescue center where she wrangles ducklings and spreadsheets. She's a two time push cart prize nominee, a top ten finalist in the Irma Bomb Global Humor competition, and winner of the National Society of Newspaper Columnist blog contest. In the Blogs Nobody Reads category, I tried it's harder

than you think. There. I never got any notice there. Her prose has appeared in numerous publications, including Salon, Alaska Airlines, Beyond Literary Mama, 9th Letter, North American Review, Gulf Coast Boulevard, Best American Erotica, fullgrown People. The one I can't say is ziziva. And the bigger the better, the tighter the sweater. 21 funny women on beauty and body image. She once sold the world's known supply of organic miso in one day to an endoftherld cult, but is now much more content with her work as a freelance copywriter, a cat approved work from home career. Unless there's a fight over who's sitting where. Welcome, Jennifer.

00:32:20 Jennifer

I really, really, really connected with Peggy the day that I adopted my son, because Peggy wrote an article about it in the Ballard News Tribune and she went to great lengths to keep it anonymous. So that Sam, I call him Ben in my writing so that his name wouldn't be in the article. And when it came out, Sam, he ran around showing it to everybody's teacher and everyone. So much for anonymity. My title for this was Fungus Among Us. But Lill is watching. She's my current teacher and she might have ideas for she's teaching about theme and so it's like, I think maybe it needs a different title. So anyway, thank you, Peggy, for being there on a very important day at bedtime on the day that we adopted our nine year old son.

00:33:23 Jennifer

He said, look at my feet. Ben sat on the hallway stairs and pulled off his socks. Welcome to Motherhood, I thought, backing away as Ben turned the soles of his feet toward my husband and me. No, I don't need to touch them, I answered calmly, then snapped, don't you touch them either. Why not? He asked. I did not say, because those are the most disgusting things I've ever set eyes on outside of that little dog we passed after it had been attacked by that big dog and the little dog's eyeball was hanging out of its socket. I answered, Because that looks contagious.

As in I am repulsed. I've been walking on the same floor as those infectious mushroom plantations. As in you would not want to get whatever's on your feet anywhere near your private or scalp. I asked him, how long have they looked like that? A couple of weeks. Ben had no concept of time, but suffice it to say, this meant his feet had looked lepros for a good long while. Why didn't you say anything until now? I asked him. I don't know. He didn't say, because I thought you'd call us the adoption if you saw that. My feet look like they have a disease only Jesus could heal. Still, the timing couldn't be a coincidence. He harbored the secret until we'd signed on the dotted line, crossing our t's and dotting our I's until the return and exchanges policy with the state's foster care system had expired.

He was ours forever now, and he knew it. He'd stood with us before a black robe judge who banged her gavel. He had a new surname, which my mother had engraved on a silver bracelet that he now wore around his wrist. We'd been trying to discover the source of the smell in our house for a week. We had settled in for a movie on Christmas Eve but changed gears when we all looked at each other to see who had passed gas. No one had. I washed the blankets on the couch. I thought the dog had rolled in something and trapped it onto the rug or the throws that Ben lets drag on for the order lingered. The next day, we all checked the bottom of our shoes. I vacuumed and locked. I wondered if something had died in our walls. Ben's bedroom smelled right, but wasn't that just the normal smell of

active boy? He bathed every day, but that amounted to his lower half getting damp as he focused his energies on singing in the tub and splashing water onto the floor. I washed all of his bedding in hot water. I propped his door open so the room would air. I washed everything in the house that was washable. The smell diminished, and I thought I wouldn't have to call him in a professional cleaner for the couch and rugs after Christmas. The next day, at a friend's house, the topic of amber gree as a stabilizer in perfume came up. Our host boyfriend described ambergris, which is solidified whale vomit, a smelling similar to gunk floss from teeth, a smelling similar to gunk floss from between neglected teeth. Just as he said this, Ben took off his shoes, and it was as if he had conjured the funk of a decomposing whale.

Oh, my Lord. I barked. Put those shoes back on right now. We beat a hasty exit and threw the shoes away in the outside garbage bin. When we got home, we thought the problem was the shoes, which Ben tended to keep wet by jumping into cuddles. We gave him new shoes. Problem solved, we thought. Again, we never thought. The problem was the boy himself. In our defense, we were a tad distracted. With the adoption court hearing less than a week after Christmas, we had outoftown relatives flying in, a huge party to plan and mounds of paperwork and scheduling to do. And I didn't know that a stench like this could come from a human body. Not a live one, anyway.

More experienced parents might have sought to check the child himself, having grown used to expert detection during the first year of their child's life, when they had to figure out why a baby was streaming solving for X and Y without knowing the equation. Soiled diaper upset. Tummy hot. I hate the wall color. Barney sucks. Give me Pink Floyd. But we've never had to hold a baby's bottom up to our schnazzes to sniff for evidence of one job done and another in need of doing. We had no other children and had parented Ben since he was six, an age at which he was already marginally selfsufficient. He arrived on our doorstep, voicing his knees like I'm hungry or I'm tired or Turned your dumbass music off. Now he bathed and dressed himself and expected a certain amount of privacy. I his mother. His own mother had barely glimpsed his bottom and private parts and, just as infrequently, saw the bottoms of his feet.

But mostly we weren't used to Ben keeping his ailments a secret. Normally, he was a walking bullhorn when it came to the slightest perceived damage to his person. He could use his words to tell us exactly what was wrong at any given moment. In fact, he told us any adults in his life that a lot of things were wrong, even when they weren't, which led to him throwing up in the middle of his first play classroom, because no one would believe him when he said his stomach hurt. When the school nursing staff finally cut him off from ice packs and bandaids, it was like a junkie going off heroin. We knew about every paper cut he received, a nudge he had been persecuted with. We never told him when we were sick because he displayed the same symptoms whether he had them or not. He once fell off his bike down the street and picked himself up and started home.

But when he saw a car approaching, he threw himself back down again and pretended to be mortally wounded. So this was new. He's keeping a real problem a secret. Why didn't he tell us? Since he loved the idea of medicines ointments, thermometers bandages, Tourniquets, crutches, curative kisses and ambulances to the point that I almost never gave him anything. If he was given a single

aspirin. He would fabricate ongoing pains in order to get another dose. I stopped his daily vitamin cold turkey because he behaved like an addict over it. Chewable flintstones I can understand, but he was desperate every morning just to hold that gel pill in his hand before tossing it back. It wasn't a huge leap to his Sunday tying off and finding a vein after we tucked our newly forever son and his putrid piggies into bed. That night, I spent an hour online viewing graphic and disturbing photos of athlete's foot and reading about how to cure it. I spent a similar unappetizing bedtime hour online a few years prior when I searched online for hydrostalpinks, which my doctor mentioned might be causing my miscarriages and infertility, and I had shot my rolling officer backwards across the room when the first disgusting image of one popped up on the screen.

But aside from how to treat the fungal skin infection, the bigger question haunted me why had Ben kept this very real problem a secret when he was normally so vocal about illness and injuries? Had he really thought of himself as damaged goods that might be returned to the factory? Perhaps not consciously, but yes. The answer had to be yes. Once he showed us his feet, he had also told us that they itched madly itched. As he told us, he began to claw at his feet like Humphrey Bogart frantically pulling off leeches in the African Queen. He had restrained himself from scratching for possibly weeks. On the happiest of happy nights, a wet, wool blanket of melancholy sogged itself over me. We were his parents. Despite his hypochondria and addictive behaviors, it was our job to keep him safe and healthy, and we couldn't do that if he didn't feel secure with us to trust that we would take care of him instead of turning him back over to the state when a real problem emerged like eleven other families had. But I also felt relief. We have been warned that older children up the ante on destructive behaviors as their adoption date approaches. It's the kids way of taking control.

If this was going to fall through, it would be on their terms, so they fling everything in their arsenal at well intentioned parents defenses. The testing period was no small part of why one in five adoptions of children over age six falls through. Our neighbor's close friends recently took their son back our neighbors close friends recently turned their son back over to the state just before his planned adoption. Ben's biological sister sabotaged her own adoption and was moved again two months shy of her 13th birthday. We had wondered whether we should tell Ben that we were finalizing his adoption. We had determined to call it the stealth adoption. If the thought of adoption through these kids for a loop, then why not keep mom until the deed was done?

I wondered why more parents didn't think of this fortunately, the overshadowing Christmas took care of the stealth adoption for us. Ben was so focused on presents in Santa and a break from school that he hadn't seemed to give much thought to the adoption other than wanting to know if we were going out for pizza that day. Except that apparently he had been thinking about it. Far from disrupting the adoption with negative behaviors and had done just the opposite, he'd withheld what would normally have propagated significant attention the foot fungus we would intermittently eradicate. Though, like Ben's past, it would return to haunt and challenge us. A spore is adapted for surviving extended periods of time in unfavorable conditions. That Ben had done. Only time will heal. Ben's doubt that we, his twelve family, more tenacious than fungal spores, are here to stay. There is no magic cure for either. There's only persistence.

00:43:09 Carol

I love your writing. I have to say.

00:43:15 Jennifer

Carol is so nice to see your smiling faces while I'm reading it's lovely. Thank you, Peggy.

00:43:21 Peggy

It's so interesting to sort of put it all in context and think about it the whole span. Anyway, okay, what I love about Jennifer's writing, which I can talk about her in third person, is I always lose all track of time and I don't worry about anything else to do with anything other than wanting to be able to listen to her words and see where she's going to go. I'm so glad you're writing and retreating and doing all those wonderful things again, even if you don't live in Ballard. Thanks, Peggy. I love the story. I do. Okay, so does anybody else want to hello, Katie. I'm looking at you want to do a last open mic of this very improvisational evening? Otherwise I can end the recording and then we can all just like chat. Off the record, I hope that the people who watch the YouTube always wonder what goes on afterwards. So I have my notes been so busy, but a couple of months ago, when Sandy and my names are neglecting me, she was the last live reader before the pandemic and she had read about what she called self sento. And so a couple months ago I was able to reinterview her and take notes on that writer's craft from the last in person because alas, that one was not recorded. But she made an incredibly wonderful argument for gleaning from your journals. So don't burn those journals. Glean from them, know that they're all fodder. Okay. Alright, well, I'm going to end this recording so that we can chat. It's been lovely. And also a lesson for me in knowing when I can't quite control everything. I couldn't control anything the last month and so I had to just let this evening be and with friends and writers like these, and knew it would be just fine.