

#SoAatHome | How I write – in conversation with Nydia Hetherington

Thursday 17 July 2025



1

00:00:02,000--> 00:00:04,428

Welcome, everyone, to
today's #SoAatHome event,

2

00:00:04,452--> 00:00:08,576

How I Write- in conversation
with Nydia Hetherington.

3

00:00:08,600--> 00:00:09,668

I'm Claire Wade.

4

00:00:09,692--> 00:00:11,908

I'm a white woman
with dark blonde hair

5

00:00:11,932--> 00:00:13,028

in a blue jumper

6

00:00:13,052--> 00:00:16,068

sitting in front of a wall of
brightly coloured butterflies

7

00:00:16,092--> 00:00:18,708

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and illustrations of
inspirational women.

8

00:00:18,732--> 00:00:22,708

I am a disabled author,
speaker, and activist.

9

00:00:22,732--> 00:00:26,708

I founded Authors with
Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses,

10

00:00:26,732--> 00:00:27,948

ADCI,

11

00:00:27,972--> 00:00:30,548

in conjunction with
the Society of Authors.

12

00:00:30,572--> 00:00:32,388

It's a peer support network

13

00:00:32,412--> 00:00:35,000

for authors living and
working with health challenges,

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14

00:00:35,000--> 00:00:37,868

and it's free to join for
Society of Authors members.

15

00:00:37,892--> 00:00:41,708

ADCI connects and
supports disabled authors,

16

00:00:41,732--> 00:00:44,348

and works towards better
access and inclusivity

17

00:00:44,372--> 00:00:47,000

within the publishing industry.

18

00:00:47,000--> 00:00:48,788

My first novel, The Choice,

19

00:00:48,812--> 00:00:51,548

won the Good Housekeeping
First Novel Competition

20

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00:00:51,572--> 00:00:54,748

and the East Anglian

Book Award for Fiction.

21

00:00:54,772--> 00:00:56,268

In 2023,

22

00:00:56,292--> 00:01:01,000

I won the Romantic Novelists'

Association Inclusion Award.

23

00:01:01,000--> 00:01:03,228

This event is part

of our #SoAatHome

24

00:01:03,252--> 00:01:06,000

Spring/Summer 2025 programme

25

00:01:06,000--> 00:01:07,678

and is in conjunction

with the SoA's

26

00:01:07,702--> 00:01:10,108

Authors with Disabilities and

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Chronic Illnesses Network,

27

00:01:10,132--> 00:01:12,068

ADCI.

28

00:01:12,092--> 00:01:14,868

This SoA at Home

event is free for all,

29

00:01:14,892--> 00:01:17,468

but, if you can afford to,

30

00:01:17,492--> 00:01:18,988

please consider donating

31

00:01:19,012--> 00:01:21,000

to the Society of

Authors Access Fund

32

00:01:21,000--> 00:01:23,508

which provides grants

to authors so that travel,

33

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00:01:23,532--> 00:01:24,948

subsistence,

34

00:01:24,972--> 00:01:26,788

childcare costs and access needs

35

00:01:26,812--> 00:01:28,708

aren't barriers to
authors taking part

36

00:01:28,732--> 00:01:31,908

in events, residencies
and retreats.

37

00:01:31,932--> 00:01:35,068

We suggest a
minimum donation of £5.

38

00:01:35,092--> 00:01:37,868

This session will
last 45 minutes,

39

00:01:37,892--> 00:01:42,000

including a 10 to 15

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minute Q&A at the end.

40

00:01:42,000--> 00:01:44,388

Please do turn on the

closed captions option

41

00:01:44,412--> 00:01:48,000

if you would like live

subtitles during this event.

42

00:01:48,000--> 00:01:49,628

We also have BSL interpretation

43

00:01:49,652--> 00:01:51,548

provided by Ali Gordon.

44

00:01:53,732--> 00:01:56,228

The recording of this

event will be available

45

00:01:56,252--> 00:01:58,508

on the SoA's

website for members

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46

00:01:58,532--> 00:02:01,228

which can be accessed by
logging into the members area

47

00:02:01,252--> 00:02:03,668

and going to our resources page.

48

00:02:03,692--> 00:02:06,028

And for non-members, the
recordings will be available

49

00:02:06,052--> 00:02:09,000

via the SoA's Vimeo channel.

50

00:02:09,000--> 00:02:10,548

If you have any questions,

51

00:02:10,572--> 00:02:13,000

please do post
them in the Q&A box.

52

00:02:13,000--> 00:02:15,588

You can post them

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anonymously if you prefer,

53

00:02:15,612--> 00:02:18,988

but do post your general
comments in the chat box.

54

00:02:19,012--> 00:02:22,668

I would now like to introduce
you all to today's guest,

55

00:02:22,692--> 00:02:24,068

Nydia Hetherington.

56

00:02:24,092--> 00:02:26,908

Nydia is an author
living with chronic illness.

57

00:02:26,932--> 00:02:28,308

She grew up in Leeds,

58

00:02:28,332--> 00:02:29,868

but moved to London in her 20s

59

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00:02:29,892--> 00:02:32,000

to embark on an acting career.

60

00:02:32,000--> 00:02:33,748

Later, she moved to Paris,

61

00:02:33,772--> 00:02:36,188

where she studied

physical and devised theatre

62

00:02:36,212--> 00:02:38,588

for creating her own

theatre company.

63

00:02:38,612--> 00:02:42,000

After 10 years, she

returned to London

64

00:02:42,000--> 00:02:44,428

after being diagnosed with

the autoimmune disease

65

00:02:44,452--> 00:02:46,188

rheumatoid arthritis.

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66

00:02:46,212--> 00:02:48,388

She began a
creative writing degree

67

00:02:48,412--> 00:02:51,000

and graduated with
first-class honours.

68

00:02:51,000--> 00:02:52,108

Her debut novel,

69

00:02:52,132--> 00:02:56,000

A Girl Made of Air, came
out in 2020 during lockdown.

70

00:02:56,000--> 00:02:57,588

And her second novel, Sycorax,

71

00:02:57,612--> 00:02:58,628

is published...

72

00:02:58,652--> 00:03:01,108

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was published in 2025.

73

00:03:02,000--> 00:03:04,000

Nydia, welcome.

74

00:03:04,000--> 00:03:05,068

-Hello, Claire!

75

00:03:05,092--> 00:03:06,788

Hi! Hello, everyone.

76

00:03:06,812--> 00:03:08,748

Um, so I'm Nydia Hetherington.

77

00:03:08,772--> 00:03:10,988

I'm a white woman

with cropped, short

78

00:03:11,012--> 00:03:12,748

blonde hair,

79

00:03:12,772--> 00:03:14,188

bleached blonde hair.

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80

00:03:14,212--> 00:03:18,000

Um, I'm wearing glasses,

I'm wearing a blue top

81

00:03:18,000--> 00:03:20,268

and a white moon-shaped pendant,

82

00:03:20,292--> 00:03:23,188

and I am sitting in

front of a bookcase.

83

00:03:24,500--> 00:03:27,588

-A Moon Pendant is very
appropriate for Sycorax, isn't it?

84

00:03:27,612--> 00:03:29,468

-Yes, very appropriate.

85

00:03:29,492--> 00:03:33,000

She is of the sun and the moon.

86

00:03:33,000--> 00:03:35,708

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-So, talking about Sycorax,

87

00:03:35,732--> 00:03:38,268

how did you find

writing about disability?

88

00:03:38,292--> 00:03:40,351

Because Sycorax is disabled.

89

00:03:41,092--> 00:03:44,068

-It was very freeing, and...

90

00:03:44,092--> 00:03:47,468

So, for the first time ever,

91

00:03:47,492--> 00:03:50,388

I was really putting

down on the page

92

00:03:50,412--> 00:03:53,188

a character who

93

00:03:53,212--> 00:03:56,468

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was experiencing the
same health problems that

94

00:03:56,492--> 00:04:00,000

I've experienced
throughout the last 12...

95

00:04:00,000--> 00:04:02,868

12, 13 years since my diagnosis.

96

00:04:02,892--> 00:04:05,868

Um, and I'd never
really done that before.

97

00:04:05,892--> 00:04:07,708

I'd only ever, sort of, hinted

98

00:04:07,732--> 00:04:09,548

at maybe somebody being disabled

99

00:04:09,572--> 00:04:11,388

or living with chronic illness.

100

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00:04:11,412--> 00:04:13,708

I'd never actually just

101

00:04:13,732--> 00:04:16,228

had a full-blown character

102

00:04:16,252--> 00:04:19,000

who is just living

their life, um,

103

00:04:19,000--> 00:04:20,828

with this disease,

104

00:04:20,852--> 00:04:22,468

and not only one

character, but two,

105

00:04:22,492--> 00:04:24,508

because it's both

her and her mother.

106

00:04:24,532--> 00:04:27,268

Both suffer from

the same illness

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107

00:04:27,292--> 00:04:29,228

that they don't
really understand.

108

00:04:29,252--> 00:04:31,068

Um, so Sycorax is

109

00:04:31,092--> 00:04:33,428

obviously

110

00:04:33,452--> 00:04:35,308

based in the 16th century,

111

00:04:35,332--> 00:04:37,428

so, um...

112

00:04:37,452--> 00:04:40,308

illness was looked upon
in a very different way.

113

00:04:40,332--> 00:04:42,388

You were almost a monster,

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114

00:04:42,412--> 00:04:43,828

especially if you were a woman

115

00:04:43,852--> 00:04:46,268

with illness.

116

00:04:46,292--> 00:04:47,828

You know, you were certainly...

117

00:04:47,852--> 00:04:52,000

I mean, we talk

a lot about, um...

118

00:04:52,000--> 00:04:55,788

Certainly, from a European

perspec-- perspective,

119

00:04:55,812--> 00:04:57,468

we talk a lot about women

120

00:04:57,492--> 00:04:59,508

and witchcraft, for example.

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121

00:04:59,532--> 00:05:02,748

So, anybody with any kind of

122

00:05:02,772--> 00:05:06,000

illness would have

had devilry in them.

123

00:05:06,000--> 00:05:10,468

You know, and it's not necessarily coming

from, like, a fundamentalist Christian

124

00:05:10,492--> 00:05:12,588

kind of viewpoint,

because a lot of people...

125

00:05:12,612--> 00:05:15,428

You know, they

weren't that religious,

126

00:05:15,452--> 00:05:19,488

but there was this idea of the devil

and badness, and something bad.

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127

00:05:19,512--> 00:05:24,000

It's almost like a

folkloric sort of badness

128

00:05:24,000--> 00:05:26,668

that is in someone who...

129

00:05:26,692--> 00:05:28,828

who isn't healthy

130

00:05:28,852--> 00:05:31,068

or is disabled in any way.

131

00:05:31,092--> 00:05:33,000

And I wanted to explore that

132

00:05:33,000--> 00:05:36,628

through this character,

and the, the sort of...

133

00:05:36,652--> 00:05:41,908

Sort of this sort of

feminist history behind that,

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134

00:05:41,932--> 00:05:45,048

sort of the medical

misogyny that we've had.

135

00:05:45,072--> 00:05:46,072

Um...

136

00:05:46,096--> 00:05:49,148

Not just throughout history,

137

00:05:49,172--> 00:05:51,588

but also through literature

138

00:05:51,612--> 00:05:53,348

and through the arts.

139

00:05:53,372--> 00:05:54,488

I thought that would be...

140

00:05:54,512--> 00:05:57,268

I mean, that was my

way in to writing the book.

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141

00:05:57,292--> 00:06:01,000

So, to answer your question,
yes, it was extremely freeing.

142

00:06:01,000--> 00:06:02,668

And, um...

143

00:06:02,692--> 00:06:04,748

I loved...

144

00:06:04,772--> 00:06:06,551

I loved writing this book

145

00:06:06,575--> 00:06:08,868

and that hasn't
always been the case,

146

00:06:08,892--> 00:06:10,068

um, with writing.

147

00:06:10,092--> 00:06:13,308

Don't get me wrong, I found

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it difficult. I find writing hard

148

00:06:13,332--> 00:06:14,508

in general,

149

00:06:14,532--> 00:06:16,228

but I loved writing this book

150

00:06:16,252--> 00:06:19,000

and it... and it's all because

151

00:06:19,000--> 00:06:22,988

I felt like I was opening a door
that I'd never allowed myself

152

00:06:23,012--> 00:06:24,348

to open before.

153

00:06:24,372--> 00:06:26,588

And that is to just
talk very openly,

154

00:06:26,612--> 00:06:27,908

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just to have this character

155

00:06:27,932--> 00:06:32,788

who is just openly unwell

and openly disabled.

156

00:06:34,372--> 00:06:35,468

-That's fascinating.

157

00:06:35,492--> 00:06:36,688

Do you think there's anything

158

00:06:36,712--> 00:06:40,268

that contributed to you getting to

that stage of now being the time

159

00:06:40,292--> 00:06:42,000

to write about this character?

160

00:06:42,000--> 00:06:45,668

-Well, it was definitely

the old pandemic.

161

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00:06:45,692--> 00:06:48,148

Yeah, it was definitely that.

162

00:06:48,172--> 00:06:52,068

Um, it was such
a difficult time for...

163

00:06:52,092--> 00:06:55,000

um, people living with,
um, chronic illness.

164

00:06:55,000--> 00:06:58,428

Um, you know, suddenly
being told that we're

165

00:06:58,452--> 00:07:02,788

clinically vulnerable,
clinically extremely vulnerable,

166

00:07:02,812--> 00:07:05,518

all these kind of
different information about

167

00:07:05,542--> 00:07:08,068

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should you be shielding?

Should you not be shielding?

168

00:07:08,092--> 00:07:10,628

Do I get the letter?

Do I not get the letter?

169

00:07:10,652--> 00:07:13,828

Um, all these, like,

this advice, and...

170

00:07:13,852--> 00:07:16,508

From both clinicians

171

00:07:16,532--> 00:07:18,508

and also then from

the wider world,

172

00:07:18,532--> 00:07:20,268

from politicians, from...

173

00:07:20,292--> 00:07:22,000

and just not knowing

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174

00:07:22,000--> 00:07:25,908

how to be safe, and
not know if I was safe,

175

00:07:25,932--> 00:07:28,000

and suddenly becoming this

176

00:07:28,000--> 00:07:31,908

vulnerable, isolated thing,

177

00:07:31,932--> 00:07:33,308

and then when the...

178

00:07:33,332--> 00:07:35,108

when the world started opening,

179

00:07:35,132--> 00:07:40,000

it was still always,

180

00:07:40,000--> 00:07:42,271

um, dangerous for
vulnerable people.

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181

00:07:42,295--> 00:07:44,628

And I was one of
those vulnerable people.

182

00:07:44,652--> 00:07:47,508

And so, the last 5 years,

183

00:07:47,532--> 00:07:51,105

I've been... I've felt more
isolated and more vulnerable.

184

00:07:51,129--> 00:07:54,000

I mean, I don't think I ever felt
vulnerable before that, really.

185

00:07:54,000--> 00:07:56,588

It wasn't really a
word that I'd ever had...

186

00:07:56,612--> 00:07:59,000

have used for myself.

187

00:07:59,000--> 00:08:00,000

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Um...

188

00:08:00,024--> 00:08:02,948

But yeah, so the last 5 years,

189

00:08:02,972--> 00:08:06,000

I felt more isolated and
more vulnerable than ever

190

00:08:06,000--> 00:08:10,000

in my life, or than I
ever thought I would be.

191

00:08:10,000--> 00:08:11,268

Um...

192

00:08:11,292--> 00:08:15,000

And so, yes, it was definitely...

193

00:08:15,000--> 00:08:16,428

the pandemic, which

194

00:08:16,452--> 00:08:19,308

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opened the door

to the idea of writing

195

00:08:19,332--> 00:08:22,228

Sycorax from the point of view

196

00:08:22,252--> 00:08:23,828

of

197

00:08:23,852--> 00:08:26,908

Sycorax being a disabled woman,

198

00:08:26,932--> 00:08:29,268

isolated through her

199

00:08:29,292--> 00:08:31,588

chronic illness and her pain,

200

00:08:31,612--> 00:08:34,308

because one thing

that, um, I have

201

00:08:34,332--> 00:08:36,731

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as someone who has this disease,

202

00:08:36,755--> 00:08:39,908

rheumatoid arthritis

203

00:08:39,932--> 00:08:42,430

is a great deal of pain.

204

00:08:43,000--> 00:08:46,148

Um, and I wanted

to explore that.

205

00:08:46,172--> 00:08:47,868

Because quite

often, people sort of...

206

00:08:47,892--> 00:08:51,000

You say to people...

207

00:08:51,000--> 00:08:53,019

You try and explain to

people that you're in pain,

208

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00:08:53,043--> 00:08:55,721

because you don't look... I don't
look like I'm in pain, look at me.

209

00:08:55,745--> 00:08:58,271

I often look very, very healthy,

210

00:08:58,295--> 00:08:59,951

and people will often say to me,

211

00:08:59,975--> 00:09:03,263

"oh, you look well, though.

Oh, you do look well."

212

00:09:03,287--> 00:09:04,948

You know, but I'm not well

213

00:09:04,972--> 00:09:07,044

and I'm struggling to stand,

214

00:09:07,068--> 00:09:08,748

and I'm struggling to...

215

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00:09:08,772--> 00:09:10,063

You know, when I get on a bus,

216

00:09:10,087--> 00:09:15,000

I'm struggling to hold on
to the rail, and I'm strugg--

217

00:09:15,000--> 00:09:18,548

I'm just struggling,
because I'm in so much pain,

218

00:09:18,572--> 00:09:23,000

but you get used to
a certain level of pain.

219

00:09:23,000--> 00:09:28,376

And it's just your default
way of living is with that pain.

220

00:09:28,400--> 00:09:30,828

And I found that when I
was trying to explain to people

221

00:09:30,852--> 00:09:33,668

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what it's like to be

in pain all the time

222

00:09:33,692--> 00:09:36,000

and to just live with it,

223

00:09:36,000--> 00:09:37,308

there was no real understanding.

224

00:09:37,332--> 00:09:39,068

It was like, "oh,

yeah, oh, I've got...

225

00:09:39,092--> 00:09:41,268

I've got a bad knee

sometimes, too."

226

00:09:41,292--> 00:09:44,708

You know, and that's

fine, because that's their...

227

00:09:44,732--> 00:09:47,598

lived experience

of what pain is.

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228

00:09:47,622--> 00:09:49,963

But I just was wondering...

229

00:09:49,987--> 00:09:53,302

if I can explore it,

230

00:09:53,326--> 00:09:58,000

um, in a literary way through...

231

00:09:58,000--> 00:10:00,508

through language, through, um...

232

00:10:00,532--> 00:10:02,388

Poetic prose.

233

00:10:02,412--> 00:10:07,028

Can I explore what pain is?

What pain looks like for somebody

234

00:10:07,052--> 00:10:09,451

who's living with it?

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235

00:10:09,475--> 00:10:12,388

And, um, will it make sense?

236

00:10:12,412--> 00:10:15,000

Will I be able to

do it a lot easier

237

00:10:15,000--> 00:10:18,418

than I can when I'm trying

to have a conversation?

238

00:10:18,442--> 00:10:19,588

Um, because...

239

00:10:19,612--> 00:10:21,268

because writing is

240

00:10:21,292--> 00:10:23,988

my way of expressing myself.

241

00:10:24,012--> 00:10:28,508

Especially, you know, I'm

very fond of poetic prose

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242

00:10:28,532--> 00:10:30,908

and that is my language.

243

00:10:30,932--> 00:10:35,000

And so, it was just my way of

244

00:10:35,000--> 00:10:37,538

exploring if I could...

245

00:10:37,562--> 00:10:39,891

If I could...

246

00:10:39,915--> 00:10:45,192

Um, show... really show what it is

247

00:10:45,216--> 00:10:47,268

to live with pain.

248

00:10:47,875--> 00:10:49,265

-I think you did a beautiful job.

249

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00:10:49,289--> 00:10:52,708

It's so well done, and
I thoroughly enjoyed it,

250

00:10:52,732--> 00:10:53,975

so it was nice...

251

00:10:54,000--> 00:10:55,788

I mean, obviously, I
have my own experiences,

252

00:10:55,812--> 00:10:58,428

so I was relating to
everything you were saying,

253

00:10:58,452--> 00:11:00,000

um, and...

254

00:11:00,000--> 00:11:02,668

I like how-- There's a
section where you talk about

255

00:11:02,692--> 00:11:08,000

the other people's

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reactions to her illness, and...

256

00:11:08,000--> 00:11:09,068

Um...

257

00:11:09,092--> 00:11:12,268

the way they want to forget some
traumas that happen in the book,

258

00:11:12,292--> 00:11:13,388

and I thought, yes!

259

00:11:13,412--> 00:11:15,988

I relate to that and I
know what's inspired that,

260

00:11:16,012--> 00:11:18,668

so it was really
good to see that,

261

00:11:18,692--> 00:11:20,108

so I appreciated it.

262

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00:11:20,132--> 00:11:21,148

What about other readers?

263

00:11:21,172--> 00:11:23,028

What's their reaction been like?

264

00:11:23,052--> 00:11:27,000

-Oh, well, thank you, Claire,
so much and I'm so glad.

265

00:11:27,000--> 00:11:29,868

So, I've had readers
reach out to me which...

266

00:11:29,892--> 00:11:33,858

So much more than I ever
had for A Girl Made of Air,

267

00:11:33,882--> 00:11:37,000

which is a book about
trauma and it is a book about

268

00:11:37,000--> 00:11:40,028

sort of invisible disabilities.

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269

00:11:40,052--> 00:11:42,228

But it's, again,
it was hinted at.

270

00:11:42,252--> 00:11:45,405

It was never just sort of
fully blown on the page.

271

00:11:45,429--> 00:11:47,305

And I think with this book,

272

00:11:47,329--> 00:11:51,765

people who do live with
chronic illnesses and disabilities

273

00:11:51,789--> 00:11:56,188

who... really... who the book
has really resonated with,

274

00:11:56,212--> 00:12:01,348

um, they have reached out
and it's been really moving,

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275

00:12:01,372--> 00:12:03,446

to be honest, because...

276

00:12:03,470--> 00:12:06,548

as a writer, as writers anyway,

277

00:12:06,572--> 00:12:08,771

we have to be

278

00:12:08,795--> 00:12:10,548

in a certain

amount of isolation,

279

00:12:10,572--> 00:12:12,328

because we need to

put our bum on the seat,

280

00:12:12,352--> 00:12:16,000

we need to sit in front of that

computer, and we need to write.

281

00:12:16,000--> 00:12:18,068

And, um, for that, you

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need to be on your own

282

00:12:18,092--> 00:12:20,508

for long periods of time.

283

00:12:20,532--> 00:12:23,000

I mean, because you need
to get that book finished.

284

00:12:23,000--> 00:12:25,468

So, so that's isolating anyway.

285

00:12:25,492--> 00:12:28,268

And then pain
isolates you even more,

286

00:12:28,292--> 00:12:31,000

because you feel like
nobody can understand.

287

00:12:31,000--> 00:12:36,308

And it's also, like, you
feel locked within your pain.

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288

00:12:36,332--> 00:12:38,476

It's a really difficult
thing to describe.

289

00:12:38,500--> 00:12:40,057

We feel locked within our pain.

290

00:12:40,081--> 00:12:43,000

I feel locked within
my pain, because,

291

00:12:43,000--> 00:12:45,555

um, when my
medication isn't working,

292

00:12:45,579--> 00:12:49,000

which unfortunately has
been the case for the past

293

00:12:49,000--> 00:12:50,468

5 years, and I'm still...

294

00:12:50,492--> 00:12:53,228

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I start on new medication in
a couple of weeks, which I'm

295

00:12:53,252--> 00:12:58,248

both dreading and
really looking forward to.

296

00:12:58,272--> 00:12:59,668

Um...

297

00:13:00,466--> 00:13:02,388

When it doesn't work,

298

00:13:02,412--> 00:13:04,108

there's no way around it.

299

00:13:04,132--> 00:13:05,628

You just have to live with it.

300

00:13:05,652--> 00:13:09,000

And so you just feel
like you're in this kind of...

301

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00:13:09,000--> 00:13:11,228

Sort of solid shell that
you can't get out of.

302

00:13:11,252--> 00:13:12,548

So when you reach out...

303

00:13:12,572--> 00:13:16,000

So reaching out with
my books and my book,

304

00:13:16,000--> 00:13:18,748

Sycorax, the
character of Sycorax,

305

00:13:18,772--> 00:13:20,508

the story of Sycorax,

306

00:13:20,532--> 00:13:22,228

and me trying to make that story

307

00:13:22,252--> 00:13:25,350

poignant but beautiful

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308

00:13:25,374--> 00:13:27,428

was my way of reaching out.

309

00:13:27,452--> 00:13:29,548

And of course, here

in this little room,

310

00:13:29,572--> 00:13:31,000

which is where I am

311

00:13:31,000--> 00:13:33,308

for the most part of the time,

312

00:13:33,332--> 00:13:36,668

even when the book is published

313

00:13:36,692--> 00:13:39,748

and, you know, you have

your lovely publishing party,

314

00:13:39,772--> 00:13:42,668

and it's all really nice

and you talk to the editors,

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315

00:13:42,692--> 00:13:44,000

and it's all lovely.

316

00:13:44,000--> 00:13:46,028

You still don't see

317

00:13:46,052--> 00:13:50,188

the people buying the book, sitting
with the book, reading the book.

318

00:13:50,212--> 00:13:52,788

You know, you
don't... you don't see

319

00:13:52,812--> 00:13:55,431

my hand reaching out to them.

320

00:13:55,455--> 00:13:57,408

So when they come back

321

00:13:57,432--> 00:14:01,000

and get in touch

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through Instagram or...

322

00:14:01,000--> 00:14:04,588

or through X, sometimes, although I'm not really on that platform very much any more.

323

00:14:04,612--> 00:14:06,668

But when people do come back to me,

324

00:14:06,692--> 00:14:10,000

or they've even emailed me from my, um, website

325

00:14:10,000--> 00:14:15,000

and they... and they say how much it resonated with them, and

326

00:14:15,000--> 00:14:16,548

how much the book means to them,

327

00:14:16,572--> 00:14:18,868

I've had people say, "this book means so much to me",

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328

00:14:18,892--> 00:14:21,508

you know, "I'm going to
keep it with me forever"

329

00:14:21,532--> 00:14:22,621

and all this kind of stuff.

330

00:14:22,645--> 00:14:24,948

I can't even begin

331

00:14:24,972--> 00:14:27,108

to put into words

332

00:14:27,132--> 00:14:28,498

how much that touches me.

333

00:14:28,522--> 00:14:31,028

I mean, I feel like I'm
welling up a bit here

334

00:14:31,052--> 00:14:33,000

just thinking about it

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335

00:14:33,000--> 00:14:34,748

because it's like...

336

00:14:34,772--> 00:14:37,468

That reaching has worked,

337

00:14:37,492--> 00:14:42,000

and I've reached... and I've touched
somebody, and they're reaching back!

338

00:14:42,000--> 00:14:46,588

And it's like a literary
kind of coming together.

339

00:14:46,612--> 00:14:50,000

It's almost like a
literary hug, in a way.

340

00:14:50,000--> 00:14:52,948

You know, and it is...
it is rather amazing.

341

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00:14:52,972--> 00:14:55,000

It has been...

342

00:14:55,000--> 00:14:56,028

Amazing.

343

00:14:56,052--> 00:14:57,388

The reader's reaction.

344

00:14:57,412--> 00:14:59,028

Of course, I'll go
on to Goodreads,

345

00:14:59,052--> 00:15:04,748

and I'll see that I've got
four one-star reviews!

346

00:15:04,772--> 00:15:07,008

Ah, not everybody
can like your book, huh?

347

00:15:07,032--> 00:15:08,032

Doesn't matter.

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348

00:15:08,056--> 00:15:10,708

But, um, but yeah, in general,

349

00:15:10,732--> 00:15:13,000

it's... I've been bawled over

350

00:15:13,000--> 00:15:16,068

by readers reactions,

and it's touched me

351

00:15:16,092--> 00:15:18,308

deeply, yeah.

-Good.

352

00:15:18,332--> 00:15:19,348

Oh, that's great.

353

00:15:19,372--> 00:15:22,508

You mentioned

writing in your room.

354

00:15:22,532--> 00:15:25,228

How have you adapted

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your writing process

355

00:15:25,252--> 00:15:28,028

to fit around your health

and your requirements?

356

00:15:28,052--> 00:15:30,748

It's all to do with time.

357

00:15:30,772--> 00:15:33,068

So, um...

358

00:15:33,092--> 00:15:35,308

For the most part, and this...

359

00:15:35,332--> 00:15:38,508

This isn't a general

thing, it is for the most part,

360

00:15:38,532--> 00:15:40,468

I'm better in the mornings.

361

00:15:40,492--> 00:15:42,668

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So I will try my best

362

00:15:42,692--> 00:15:45,988

to write as much as possible

363

00:15:46,012--> 00:15:48,865

in the early, sort

of, hours of the day,

364

00:15:48,889--> 00:15:51,000

not the early morning, but from...

365

00:15:51,000--> 00:15:52,868

I don't know, anywhere between 8

366

00:15:52,892--> 00:15:55,788

and let's say 1

o'clock. By 1 o'clock

367

00:15:55,812--> 00:15:59,668

I will really be, um...

368

00:15:59,692--> 00:16:01,068

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flagging,

369

00:16:01,092--> 00:16:04,308

and that's because, um,
with rheumatoid arthritis,

370

00:16:04,332--> 00:16:06,148

you not only have, like, um...

371

00:16:06,172--> 00:16:08,628

It's an inflammatory
autoimmune disease

372

00:16:08,652--> 00:16:11,428

and it affects every
single part of your body,

373

00:16:11,452--> 00:16:13,000

including your brain.

374

00:16:13,000--> 00:16:17,068

And you live with
terrible chronic fatigue,

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375

00:16:17,092--> 00:16:18,668

as well as the pain.

376

00:16:18,692--> 00:16:20,428

Just to put you
in the picture of

377

00:16:20,452--> 00:16:22,788

why I have to work
the way I work.

378

00:16:22,812--> 00:16:25,000

So re... so...

379

00:16:25,000--> 00:16:29,028

It depends on the day,
because it is so very changeable.

380

00:16:29,052--> 00:16:31,000

On a good day,

381

00:16:31,000--> 00:16:33,348

I can get up and I can sit here

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382

00:16:33,372--> 00:16:36,061

and I can work

383

00:16:36,085--> 00:16:40,000

for a couple of hours, have a
break, work for a couple of hours.

384

00:16:40,000--> 00:16:42,148

By that time, I'm
absolutely exhausted

385

00:16:42,172--> 00:16:45,000

and I'm falling apart,
and I need to stop.

386

00:16:45,000--> 00:16:47,745

Um, on a bad day,

387

00:16:47,769--> 00:16:52,000

I will do 10 minutes and stop

388

00:16:52,000--> 00:16:54,708

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and have a 20-minute, half
an hour, even an hour break,

389

00:16:54,732--> 00:16:57,188

and then think, right, no,
I really need to carry on,

390

00:16:57,212--> 00:16:58,212

and I'll come back.

391

00:16:58,236--> 00:17:00,108

I'll do another 10 minutes.

392

00:17:00,132--> 00:17:03,508

And I'll maybe only do,

393

00:17:03,532--> 00:17:06,708

um, 3 or 4 sentences that day.

394

00:17:06,732--> 00:17:10,588

But I will be happy
that I've done those.

395

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00:17:10,612--> 00:17:12,331

Because my most...

396

00:17:12,355--> 00:17:15,548

The most important thing
for me when I'm writing

397

00:17:16,115--> 00:17:20,628

a story is that I'm
engaging with that story

398

00:17:20,652--> 00:17:22,428

and I'm engaging
with the characters,

399

00:17:22,452--> 00:17:25,000

and I'm in that universe,
and I'm in that world.

400

00:17:25,000--> 00:17:27,788

So, whether I write
a thousand words

401

00:17:27,812--> 00:17:30,070

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or 20 words,

402

00:17:30,094--> 00:17:32,908

It doesn't really matter.

403

00:17:32,932--> 00:17:36,000

I'm not on the clock. I

don't put myself on the clock.

404

00:17:36,000--> 00:17:38,508

And say to myself, right,

405

00:17:38,532--> 00:17:40,588

I need to do a

thousand words a day,

406

00:17:40,612--> 00:17:43,548

2,000 words a

day, there is no way

407

00:17:43,572--> 00:17:45,828

I can live up to that,

because I can't do it,

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408

00:17:45,852--> 00:17:47,908

because my health

is too up and down,

409

00:17:47,932--> 00:17:49,468

my fatigue is too up and down,

410

00:17:49,492--> 00:17:50,868

my pain is too up and down.

411

00:17:50,892--> 00:17:52,628

It's just impossible.

412

00:17:52,652--> 00:17:55,388

So, as long as I'm engaging

413

00:17:55,412--> 00:17:58,000

with what I'm writing

414

00:17:58,000--> 00:17:59,868

at any given time,

415

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00:17:59,892--> 00:18:01,948

I'm okay, I'm happy with that.

416

00:18:01,972--> 00:18:05,000

It's... it's the times

when I fall back

417

00:18:05,000--> 00:18:06,708

and I don't

418

00:18:06,732--> 00:18:10,000

open the document and I don't

419

00:18:10,000--> 00:18:12,628

sort of engage with

the story I'm writing,

420

00:18:12,652--> 00:18:15,648

and then things

get a bit tricky,

421

00:18:15,672--> 00:18:17,911

and I start to get a little

bit depressed, to be honest.

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422

00:18:17,935--> 00:18:20,548

It really affects my mental
health. I feel... I need to be writing

423

00:18:20,572--> 00:18:24,000

and I need to be in
that creative space, so....

424

00:18:24,000--> 00:18:25,588

Even if it's just
10 minutes here,

425

00:18:25,612--> 00:18:26,948

10 minutes there,

426

00:18:26,972--> 00:18:29,828

that engagement
is... is... is what works.

427

00:18:29,852--> 00:18:31,000

And...

428

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00:18:31,000--> 00:18:33,428

You know what? I

get there in the end.

429

00:18:34,332--> 00:18:37,068

Every word on the page

is a word on the page.

430

00:18:37,092--> 00:18:39,428

-So, all progress

is good progress.

431

00:18:39,452--> 00:18:41,000

-Yes, exactly that, yeah.

432

00:18:41,000--> 00:18:43,748

-And some... yeah, sometimes

you just have to accept that

433

00:18:43,772--> 00:18:47,508

your timeline might look different to

other people's, and that's okay too.

434

00:18:47,532--> 00:18:49,628

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As frustrating as it can be

435

00:18:49,652--> 00:18:51,668

that, you know, you

just have to accept that

436

00:18:51,692--> 00:18:54,000

it will happen when it happens.

437

00:18:54,000--> 00:18:55,000

-Absolutely.

438

00:18:55,000--> 00:18:57,948

-So, did you have any

specific requirements, um,

439

00:18:57,972--> 00:19:01,000

for access that you

requested from your publisher?

440

00:19:01,000--> 00:19:02,988

-So, for this book...

441

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00:19:03,012--> 00:19:06,000

Obviously, so Quercus,

442

00:19:06,000--> 00:19:11,000

are my publisher for Sycorax
and for my debut novel.

443

00:19:11,000--> 00:19:14,348

Um, I was very lucky,
because my editor

444

00:19:14,372--> 00:19:17,628

also has, um, lives
with chronic illness,

445

00:19:17,652--> 00:19:20,000

so she was very understanding

446

00:19:20,000--> 00:19:23,701

about everything,
as you can imagine.

447

00:19:23,725--> 00:19:28,000

Um, and I'd built up a

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relationship with her over the years.

448

00:19:28,000--> 00:19:30,599

So, by the time Sycorax

was coming out...

449

00:19:30,623--> 00:19:33,000

Obviously, it's about a woman

450

00:19:33,000--> 00:19:36,428

who lives with pain and

chronic illness and disability, so

451

00:19:36,452--> 00:19:38,548

The subject matter

speaks for itself

452

00:19:38,572--> 00:19:39,708

and it was really obvious

453

00:19:39,732--> 00:19:43,068

that I was somebody

who they were going to ask

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454

00:19:43,092--> 00:19:47,108

if the, you know, if I had any,

455

00:19:47,132--> 00:19:49,588

you know, special

requirements, et cetera,

456

00:19:49,612--> 00:19:52,000

accessibility requirements.

457

00:19:52,000--> 00:19:55,828

So, they kind of sent me a form,

458

00:19:55,852--> 00:20:01,000

almost just as before...

459

00:20:01,000--> 00:20:02,366

Before publication,

sort of during...

460

00:20:02,390--> 00:20:03,828

Sorry, that's my brain fog.

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461

00:20:03,852--> 00:20:04,948

It takes over sometimes

462

00:20:04,972--> 00:20:08,000

and I can't think of what

I was just about to say.

463

00:20:08,000--> 00:20:10,108

So, apologies for that.

464

00:20:10,132--> 00:20:12,908

But, um, so yes,

they sent me a form

465

00:20:12,932--> 00:20:17,000

before publication, quite a

few weeks before publication

466

00:20:17,000--> 00:20:18,561

asking me what my

467

00:20:18,585--> 00:20:21,000

accessibility needs were.

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468

00:20:21,000--> 00:20:23,668

I found that difficult because...

469

00:20:23,692--> 00:20:25,308

Not that they sent me the form,

470

00:20:25,332--> 00:20:26,581

that was wonderful.

471

00:20:26,605--> 00:20:30,268

What I found is difficult is what

I was saying before about, um...

472

00:20:30,292--> 00:20:32,628

My condition is

very up and down,

473

00:20:32,652--> 00:20:35,000

and it's different one

day from the next.

474

00:20:35,000--> 00:20:39,908

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And I tried to
express to the people,

475

00:20:39,932--> 00:20:43,548

um, you know, so it was
a publicity department

476

00:20:43,572--> 00:20:46,000

and marketing and
all those people

477

00:20:46,000--> 00:20:48,588

that really what I needed
more than anything

478

00:20:48,612--> 00:20:52,000

were people to be understanding.

479

00:20:52,000--> 00:20:54,948

And that's really hard
to put into words, again.

480

00:20:54,972--> 00:20:59,000

So there was, like, oh, the

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form's almost like a tick box thing.

481

00:20:59,000--> 00:21:01,548

And I couldn't
really tick the boxes.

482

00:21:01,572--> 00:21:04,668

So... so I just had
to sort of write on it,

483

00:21:04,692--> 00:21:07,068

because I'm just asking
people to be really open

484

00:21:07,092--> 00:21:10,000

and understanding
that, you know,

485

00:21:10,000--> 00:21:11,308

can you... [sighs]

486

00:21:11,332--> 00:21:13,828

So... Yeah.

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487

00:21:13,852--> 00:21:15,148

It was a bit of a difficult one.

488

00:21:15,172--> 00:21:18,428

Obviously, there were
obvious things, like, um...

489

00:21:18,452--> 00:21:20,828

You know, try not to...

490

00:21:20,852--> 00:21:22,268

If I'm doing events,

491

00:21:22,292--> 00:21:25,828

try not to have places which are
upstairs, downstairs, too many stairs.

492

00:21:25,852--> 00:21:28,388

I'd like to have this much
space as possible around me

493

00:21:28,412--> 00:21:31,000

because of, you know, um...

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494

00:21:31,000--> 00:21:32,948

You know, viruses, basically.

495

00:21:32,972--> 00:21:38,000

Um, but my main thing

was to say to people,

496

00:21:38,000--> 00:21:41,108

can we just be really understanding

that this is really changeable?

497

00:21:41,132--> 00:21:42,228

-Hmm...

498

00:21:42,252--> 00:21:44,188

-You know, and that was hard.

499

00:21:44,212--> 00:21:46,931

That was hard, and I

still don't think I got it right.

500

00:21:46,955--> 00:21:49,000

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You know, and
that's what... it wasn't...

501

00:21:49,000--> 00:21:51,388

It wasn't for want
of them trying.

502

00:21:51,412--> 00:21:55,000

You know, they did a really good

503

00:21:55,000--> 00:21:57,548

accessibility form that
they asked me to fill in.

504

00:21:57,572--> 00:22:00,561

It wasn't their fault, it was
just I didn't know how to

505

00:22:00,585--> 00:22:02,207

put that across to them.

506

00:22:02,231--> 00:22:06,047

I'm gonna... it's something I really
want to learn how to do better.

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507

00:22:06,071--> 00:22:09,028

-And I think that it
does take practice.

508

00:22:09,052--> 00:22:10,548

I think it's being vulnerable

509

00:22:10,572--> 00:22:13,000

and asking for help, which,

510

00:22:13,000--> 00:22:15,108

as a disabled person,
you are told you

511

00:22:15,132--> 00:22:16,348

shouldn't do,

512

00:22:16,372--> 00:22:18,918

because it's making
you stand out.

513

00:22:18,942--> 00:22:19,942

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Um...

514

00:22:19,966--> 00:22:21,178

But it's something that...

515

00:22:21,202--> 00:22:23,084

With ADCI, we've been working on

516

00:22:23,108--> 00:22:25,430

and we've put together this
access requirements form,

517

00:22:25,454--> 00:22:27,000

so if people...

518

00:22:27,000--> 00:22:29,108

Agents or publishers
don't have their own,

519

00:22:29,132--> 00:22:33,148

um, you can get it free from
the Society of Authors website

520

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00:22:33,172--> 00:22:35,000

if you go to the ADCI page.

521

00:22:35,000--> 00:22:36,868

Um, and you can fill in

522

00:22:36,892--> 00:22:38,641

what you need

523

00:22:38,665--> 00:22:41,188

at different stages of
the publishing process,

524

00:22:41,212--> 00:22:44,228

so everything from when you're going
through edits to going to the events,

525

00:22:44,252--> 00:22:45,848

um, or not being
able to do events,

526

00:22:45,872--> 00:22:47,602

having to do things online.

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527

00:22:47,626--> 00:22:50,508

And, um, we've also
got a list of examples of

528

00:22:50,532--> 00:22:52,308

things that other
people have requested,

529

00:22:52,332--> 00:22:54,302

so you can have a look and see

530

00:22:54,326--> 00:22:57,830

what you might be able to
do, and there might be things

531

00:22:57,854--> 00:23:01,068

that you hadn't thought of or you
haven't had experience of asking for,

532

00:23:01,092--> 00:23:03,948

so I'm hoping that
that's going to take off,

533

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00:23:03,972--> 00:23:06,548

and we're gonna get that
as an industry standard.

534

00:23:06,572--> 00:23:09,948

So, you wouldn't be feeling
like you're the first person

535

00:23:09,972--> 00:23:11,428

asking for these things.

536

00:23:11,452--> 00:23:14,908

-Yeah, it's very difficult,
because you just...

537

00:23:14,932--> 00:23:17,668

You can see, especially
if you go to meetings

538

00:23:17,692--> 00:23:20,428

with people, sort of, in
person or even on Zoom,

539

00:23:20,452--> 00:23:23,708

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and you can see their faces, you
can see that they just don't understand.

540

00:23:23,732--> 00:23:26,000

You know, and I
can't expect people

541

00:23:26,000--> 00:23:28,591

to understand who
haven't got lived experience,

542

00:23:28,615--> 00:23:31,628

but there's also, another
type of understanding,

543

00:23:31,652--> 00:23:35,588

you know, which I feel that we
live in a society at the moment

544

00:23:35,612--> 00:23:38,071

which, I mean, look at what's
happening at the moment

545

00:23:38,095--> 00:23:41,000

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with welfare reforms and all that.

546

00:23:41,000--> 00:23:43,348

Absolute awfulness

547

00:23:43,372--> 00:23:45,193

that's happening for

the most vulnerable

548

00:23:45,217--> 00:23:48,308

disabled people in

our country, it's just...

549

00:23:48,332--> 00:23:49,665

I don't even have the words

550

00:23:49,689--> 00:23:51,668

and I don't really

want to go there, but it...

551

00:23:51,692--> 00:23:53,948

It is a real mirror

552

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00:23:53,972--> 00:23:57,000

to how our society view

553

00:23:57,000--> 00:23:59,403

people with illness

and disability,

554

00:23:59,427--> 00:24:02,468

and people who, you

know, are chronically unwell.

555

00:24:02,492--> 00:24:04,000

It's a mirror.

556

00:24:04,000--> 00:24:06,388

This is... this is...

this is, you know...

557

00:24:06,412--> 00:24:10,428

It's like, people think this is

some kind of lifestyle choice.

558

00:24:10,452--> 00:24:14,388

I would do

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anything not to be ill.

559

00:24:14,412--> 00:24:15,475

I would do anything.

560

00:24:15,499--> 00:24:19,078

I would sell my soul, I

would do anything not to be

561

00:24:19,102--> 00:24:20,668

in this pain.

562

00:24:20,692--> 00:24:23,391

But that's just not

the way the world is.

563

00:24:23,415--> 00:24:26,385

And I think that's why I

wanted to write Sycorax as well,

564

00:24:26,409--> 00:24:28,748

because this is

just the reality of it.

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565

00:24:28,772--> 00:24:30,628

I do have this illness

566

00:24:30,652--> 00:24:33,193

and I'm quite happy to share

567

00:24:33,217--> 00:24:35,748

what it's like.

568

00:24:35,772--> 00:24:37,691

You know, and to

show what it's like.

569

00:24:37,715--> 00:24:41,005

I'm quite happy to share,

you know, my personal...

570

00:24:41,029--> 00:24:43,348

Um...

571

00:24:43,372--> 00:24:45,268

habits and things

that I have to do.

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572

00:24:45,292--> 00:24:48,000

I'm open, you know, look at...

573

00:24:48,000--> 00:24:51,388

You know, I almost

want to say, just look!

574

00:24:51,412--> 00:24:53,388

You know, look.

575

00:24:53,412--> 00:24:56,000

This is

how it is. But, hopefully,

576

00:24:56,000--> 00:24:59,948

you know, with a beautiful story

of Shakespeare's silenced witch

577

00:24:59,972--> 00:25:02,000

all wrapped around it.

578

00:25:02,000--> 00:25:03,628

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But, you know, I'm...

579

00:25:03,652--> 00:25:04,868

[sighs]

580

00:25:04,892--> 00:25:06,108

I don't know, I'm not...

581

00:25:06,132--> 00:25:08,318

I'm not scared of

582

00:25:08,342--> 00:25:10,748

Shouting about it any more.

583

00:25:10,772--> 00:25:14,068

And I really, really

want people to listen,

584

00:25:14,092--> 00:25:16,030

because we are in this world.

585

00:25:16,054--> 00:25:17,708

where not only...

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586

00:25:17,732--> 00:25:19,748

I used to say, you know,

587

00:25:19,772--> 00:25:21,308

it's an invisible disability,

588

00:25:21,332--> 00:25:24,108

so people can't see your
disability, so you're invisible.

589

00:25:24,132--> 00:25:26,332

And I don't think it's
that we're invisible.

590

00:25:26,356--> 00:25:29,548

I think the society
doesn't want to look at us.

591

00:25:29,572--> 00:25:32,024

I don't know if it's...
Are they scared?

592

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00:25:32,048--> 00:25:34,548

Because, you know,
anybody can become disabled.

593

00:25:34,572--> 00:25:37,000

You can get... you can
become disabled tomorrow.

594

00:25:37,000--> 00:25:39,068

You suddenly go, what's that?

595

00:25:39,092--> 00:25:40,748

Why am I in pain?
What's happening?

596

00:25:40,772--> 00:25:44,228

And then never not be in
pain again your entire life,

597

00:25:44,252--> 00:25:46,000

and then have to go on,

598

00:25:46,000--> 00:25:49,701

you know, extremely strong

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599

00:25:49,725--> 00:25:54,000

immune-suppressing drugs,
that's what happened to me!

600

00:25:54,000--> 00:25:55,468

You know, one
day you're healthy,

601

00:25:55,492--> 00:25:57,268

the next day you're
not, and that is

602

00:25:57,292--> 00:25:58,825

the truth of things,

603

00:25:58,849--> 00:26:01,788

and I think society wants
to turn away and just say...

604

00:26:01,812--> 00:26:05,748

It's almost like we've come
back to a kind of Dickensian way

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605

00:26:05,772--> 00:26:07,988

of looking at

illness and disability.

606

00:26:08,012--> 00:26:11,068

It's like, you know, these

people are undeserving.

607

00:26:11,092--> 00:26:13,988

You know, they've

chosen not to work.

608

00:26:14,012--> 00:26:17,188

They've chosen to be on

benefits and not to work.

609

00:26:17,212--> 00:26:19,000

They're so lazy.

610

00:26:19,000--> 00:26:21,068

When in fact, you

know, most of us,

611

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00:26:21,092--> 00:26:23,748

we just want to

get through the day

612

00:26:23,772--> 00:26:25,108

without being in pain.

613

00:26:25,132--> 00:26:28,068

We just want to get to

the day and be useful

614

00:26:28,092--> 00:26:29,511

and do things with our lives.

615

00:26:29,535--> 00:26:32,188

And live fulfilling

616

00:26:32,212--> 00:26:35,711

lives where we can thrive.

617

00:26:35,735--> 00:26:38,308

And we can! We can thrive!

618

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00:26:38,332--> 00:26:41,278

And this was another
reason for writing Sycorax is

619

00:26:41,302--> 00:26:44,348

I wanted to show a woman in pain

620

00:26:44,372--> 00:26:47,948

who is disabled, who
lives with a chronic illness

621

00:26:47,972--> 00:26:49,268

that will never get better,

622

00:26:49,292--> 00:26:53,000

who is living a thriving life.

623

00:26:53,000--> 00:26:55,038

Even though the
people around her

624

00:26:55,062--> 00:26:57,388

are othering her, are,

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625

00:26:57,412--> 00:27:00,539

you know, putting
her into boxes.

626

00:27:00,563--> 00:27:02,807

She's still thriving.

627

00:27:02,831--> 00:27:04,628

And... And...

628

00:27:04,652--> 00:27:06,868

I've forgotten what
the question was now,

629

00:27:06,892--> 00:27:10,000

I've probably gone
wildly away from it.

630

00:27:10,000--> 00:27:12,068

But... so you can tell that,

631

00:27:12,092--> 00:27:14,268

yeah, um...

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632

00:27:14,292--> 00:27:16,000

[sighs]

633

00:27:16,000--> 00:27:17,588

-Yeah. Yeah.

634

00:27:17,612--> 00:27:19,708

No, no, it's very...

635

00:27:19,732--> 00:27:22,828

It's valid, it's what

we're all going through,

636

00:27:22,852--> 00:27:25,148

it's what we're all

experiencing, and...

637

00:27:25,172--> 00:27:26,988

More of us need to speak up.

638

00:27:27,012--> 00:27:29,498

And I think books... and

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we need more books

639

00:27:29,522--> 00:27:30,988

with disabled main characters,

640

00:27:31,012--> 00:27:33,613

we need more books

about disability, and we need

641

00:27:33,637--> 00:27:36,175

more stories that

feature disability,

642

00:27:36,199--> 00:27:37,948

even if that's not

the main focus.

643

00:27:37,972--> 00:27:41,000

And you did that

beautifully, so thank you for

644

00:27:41,000--> 00:27:42,908

being vulnerable and

putting that out there,

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645

00:27:42,932--> 00:27:46,000

because it does take an enormous
amount of courage to actually

646

00:27:46,000--> 00:27:48,028

mine your own experiences,

647

00:27:48,052--> 00:27:50,328

but also to put it
out into the world

648

00:27:50,352--> 00:27:51,748

and see what the
response has been,

649

00:27:51,772--> 00:27:55,000

so I'm glad that it's
been a positive response.

650

00:27:55,000--> 00:27:56,611

-Yeah, it has been [inaudible]

651

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00:27:56,635--> 00:28:02,000

-What advice do you have
for other disabled writers?

652

00:28:02,000--> 00:28:03,975

So, I mean...

653

00:28:03,999--> 00:28:06,588

So, writing is a
difficult thing anyway,

654

00:28:06,612--> 00:28:09,000

whether you're disabled
or you're not disabled.

655

00:28:09,000--> 00:28:12,508

Um, writing with disability
and chronic illness,

656

00:28:12,532--> 00:28:14,571

like everything we do in life,

657

00:28:14,595--> 00:28:17,391

is 100 times more difficult

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658

00:28:17,415--> 00:28:22,208

because we're managing our
disabilities and our illnesses.

659

00:28:22,232--> 00:28:25,236

So, obviously, it's
going to be hard.

660

00:28:25,260--> 00:28:29,000

My advice is
really to just, um...

661

00:28:29,000--> 00:28:30,028

Write!

662

00:28:30,052--> 00:28:33,668

Just do it. If it's your
creative out... outlet,

663

00:28:33,692--> 00:28:36,468

then just do it any
which way you can,

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664

00:28:36,492--> 00:28:39,108

even if that is just the
10 minutes a day thing,

665

00:28:39,132--> 00:28:40,588

like I was talking before.

666

00:28:40,612--> 00:28:45,000

If you're engaging with
your creative process,

667

00:28:45,000--> 00:28:46,308

that's the most important thing.

668

00:28:46,332--> 00:28:49,908

Writing and publishing are
two different things, obviously.

669

00:28:49,932--> 00:28:52,000

Publishing is an industry

670

00:28:52,000--> 00:28:55,145

and so it has lots

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of industry norms,

671

00:28:55,169--> 00:28:59,265

which, as a chronically ill,
disabled writer, you won't fit into.

672

00:28:59,289--> 00:29:02,548

You know, obviously,
we want that to change

673

00:29:02,572--> 00:29:05,000

and we are trying our best

674

00:29:05,000--> 00:29:06,781

to make that change.

675

00:29:06,805--> 00:29:09,668

One of the things with Sycorax
I wanted to do was to write

676

00:29:09,692--> 00:29:13,188

a book about disability without
writing a book about disability.

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677

00:29:13,212--> 00:29:14,405

So it could be

678

00:29:14,429--> 00:29:18,468

marketed, um, at

so many other...

679

00:29:18,492--> 00:29:20,348

Well, markets, basically.

680

00:29:20,372--> 00:29:21,372

You know?

681

00:29:21,396--> 00:29:25,713

Um, but fundamentally, it

is a book about disability.

682

00:29:25,737--> 00:29:28,751

Um, so...

683

00:29:28,775--> 00:29:33,301

Yeah, so I would just say just

keep engaging with your process.

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684

00:29:33,325--> 00:29:35,008

Um...

685

00:29:35,032--> 00:29:38,068

As far as publishing

is concerned,

686

00:29:38,092--> 00:29:42,748

the only advice I would give, really, is just
to know that it's really difficult anyway.

687

00:29:42,772--> 00:29:45,000

So it's going to be difficult.

688

00:29:45,000--> 00:29:47,308

And, um, just to be aware of it

689

00:29:47,332--> 00:29:49,331

and to sort of brace yourself.

690

00:29:49,355--> 00:29:50,791

Just brace yourself.

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691

00:29:50,815--> 00:29:53,188

It's... it's a tough world anyway,

692

00:29:53,212--> 00:29:56,228

and there's a lot of

heartache and heartbreak in it.

693

00:29:56,252--> 00:29:58,468

Um, but as a disabled person,

694

00:29:58,492--> 00:30:01,468

you've got the extra

things of disclosure.

695

00:30:01,492--> 00:30:03,971

Do I disclose? Do

I want to disclose?

696

00:30:03,995--> 00:30:05,791

For me...

697

00:30:05,815--> 00:30:10,000

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I'm very much of the
mind now at where I am

698

00:30:10,000--> 00:30:13,548

is, um, disclosure is
very important to me,

699

00:30:13,572--> 00:30:15,360

and I will shout from
the rooftops that

700

00:30:15,384--> 00:30:17,388

I have a chronic illness,

701

00:30:17,412--> 00:30:21,000

I am a disabled writer, and uh...

702

00:30:21,000--> 00:30:23,428

That's just the way it
is, and that's my life,

703

00:30:23,452--> 00:30:26,388

and this... this is who
I am and what I do.

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704

00:30:26,412--> 00:30:30,188

I know lots of people
are not at that place

705

00:30:30,212--> 00:30:31,548

and they don't want to disclose,

706

00:30:31,572--> 00:30:36,308

and so that's an extra,
sort of, burden on them.

707

00:30:36,332--> 00:30:41,000

But I would say...

708

00:30:41,000--> 00:30:42,268

You know,

709

00:30:42,292--> 00:30:45,908

it would probably make your life

710

00:30:45,932--> 00:30:48,068

more comfortable

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if you did disclose.

711

00:30:48,092--> 00:30:50,508

Even if it is just quietly,

712

00:30:50,532--> 00:30:54,948

to do it quietly, um,

with your editor. I mean,

713

00:30:54,972--> 00:31:00,000

most editors, if you've been

working with them for a while, um...

714

00:31:00,000--> 00:31:02,668

You have a pretty

good relationship,

715

00:31:02,692--> 00:31:04,228

quite a close

relationship with them,

716

00:31:04,252--> 00:31:08,000

because you're working on, you know,

something that's very, very dear to you.

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717

00:31:08,000--> 00:31:12,488

Um, so hopefully you'd
feel able to do that.

718

00:31:12,512--> 00:31:15,868

But I know it's not always easy,

719

00:31:15,892--> 00:31:20,493

but I do think in the
world of publishing, um...

720

00:31:20,517--> 00:31:23,548

you might feel a bit more
comfortable if you do disclose

721

00:31:23,572--> 00:31:25,388

that you're a disabled author

722

00:31:25,412--> 00:31:27,000

and disclose that...

723

00:31:27,000--> 00:31:29,028

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that you have access needs.

724

00:31:29,052--> 00:31:35,000

The other thing about
the access needs thing is...

725

00:31:35,000--> 00:31:38,498

Although I did get, um, the
form through for my second book,

726

00:31:38,522--> 00:31:40,028

I didn't for my first book.

727

00:31:40,052--> 00:31:44,000

It wasn't even something that
went through anybody's mind...

728

00:31:44,000--> 00:31:46,908

until I absolutely
shouted from the rooftops,

729

00:31:46,932--> 00:31:50,385

look, you know, I live with chronic
illness, there are things I can't do,

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730

00:31:50,409--> 00:31:52,708

things I can do, and
this is where we're at.

731

00:31:52,732--> 00:31:54,388

And that came about, again,

732

00:31:54,412--> 00:31:58,000

through the pandemic, because
I was shielding, blah, blah.

733

00:31:58,000--> 00:31:59,308

Um...

734

00:31:59,332--> 00:32:02,068

Where I want us to be

735

00:32:02,092--> 00:32:04,751

in publishing specifically

736

00:32:04,775--> 00:32:06,468

is that

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737

00:32:06,492--> 00:32:09,431

when your book gets acquired,

738

00:32:09,455--> 00:32:13,131

whether it's from a Big Five,
you know, traditional publishing

739

00:32:13,155--> 00:32:15,041

or through the
indies, or whatever,

740

00:32:15,065--> 00:32:17,000

once your book is acquired

741

00:32:17,000--> 00:32:19,708

when they send you all the forms

742

00:32:19,732--> 00:32:22,228

and informations
that they send you,

743

00:32:22,252--> 00:32:24,000

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they send you an access form.

744

00:32:24,000--> 00:32:25,548

They don't ask you

745

00:32:25,572--> 00:32:26,908

if you're disabled,

746

00:32:26,932--> 00:32:29,668

they don't ask you

if you need access,

747

00:32:29,692--> 00:32:35,000

it's just part and parcel of what

they send to every single author

748

00:32:35,000--> 00:32:37,188

that they acquire books from.

749

00:32:37,212--> 00:32:39,000

It's just part and parcel of it.

750

00:32:39,000--> 00:32:41,708

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And so we're not

751

00:32:41,732--> 00:32:43,068

"special",

752

00:32:43,092--> 00:32:45,000

we're not "other".

753

00:32:45,000--> 00:32:50,068

We are just one of many
types of writers they have

754

00:32:50,092--> 00:32:52,503

on their books.

755

00:32:52,527--> 00:32:55,428

And that's what I
really, really, really want.

756

00:32:55,452--> 00:32:57,505

It's not too much
to ask, it's one form,

757

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00:32:57,529--> 00:33:04,000

they can send it, just as part
and parcel of any acquisition, really.

758

00:33:04,000--> 00:33:06,828

Yeah, it's... it's
such a small thing,

759

00:33:06,852--> 00:33:08,108

it's an easy thing, and

760

00:33:08,132--> 00:33:10,428

most people will not
have access needs.

761

00:33:10,452--> 00:33:12,508

Most people will
be able to just say,

762

00:33:12,532--> 00:33:14,708

it's fine, I can do whatever
you need me to do.

763

00:33:14,732--> 00:33:16,868

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And the ones that do
have access requirements,

764

00:33:16,892--> 00:33:19,108

most of the times
the solutions are free,

765

00:33:19,132--> 00:33:22,948

easy, or very cheap
to be able to fulfil.

766

00:33:22,972--> 00:33:26,000

And if you are building in access

767

00:33:26,000--> 00:33:27,228

from the beginning,

768

00:33:27,252--> 00:33:30,000

it's going to be so much
easier than scrambling

769

00:33:30,000--> 00:33:33,868

for, um, solutions to things
that could have been avoidable

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770

00:33:33,892--> 00:33:36,228

just if things had
been discussed, so...

771

00:33:36,252--> 00:33:37,588

It really is

772

00:33:37,612--> 00:33:38,748

a small thing.

773

00:33:38,772--> 00:33:40,828

-It's the smallest
thing, but it also...

774

00:33:40,852--> 00:33:42,148

what it does,

775

00:33:42,172--> 00:33:43,765

it gets rid...

776

00:33:43,789--> 00:33:48,000

it eliminates completely

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this idea of disclosure.

777

00:33:48,000--> 00:33:51,075

You don't have to worry
about disclosure any more.

778

00:33:51,099--> 00:33:52,828

You know, because the...

779

00:33:52,852--> 00:33:57,348

one of the things we talk about
most in ADCI and with other...

780

00:33:57,372--> 00:34:01,708

groups of people who are living
with chronic illness and disability is

781

00:34:01,732--> 00:34:04,748

how do I disclose? When
do I disclose? Do I disclose?

782

00:34:04,772--> 00:34:07,508

Will it put a bad mark
on me as a writer?

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783

00:34:07,532--> 00:34:08,988

Will it stop me
from getting this?

784

00:34:09,012--> 00:34:12,000

Will it stop me... is it a
bad thing to disclose?

785

00:34:12,000--> 00:34:14,308

Now, if it was just part
and part of acquisitions,

786

00:34:14,332--> 00:34:16,148

oh, here's an accessibility form

787

00:34:16,172--> 00:34:18,825

for every single writer
who ever existed,

788

00:34:18,849--> 00:34:19,849

um...

789

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00:34:19,873--> 00:34:22,908

that whole thing about

disclosure is gone.

790

00:34:22,932--> 00:34:23,948

-Yeah.

791

00:34:23,972--> 00:34:26,108

-And it's such a...

792

00:34:26,132--> 00:34:29,708

a stress and it's so

unneeded, unnecessary.

793

00:34:31,489--> 00:34:32,671

-Well...

794

00:34:32,695--> 00:34:34,588

At the moment, we

don't have any questions,

795

00:34:34,612--> 00:34:36,268

but if anybody has a question,

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796

00:34:36,292--> 00:34:37,948

I know we've talked a lot,

797

00:34:37,972--> 00:34:39,908

um, there's not

that much time left,

798

00:34:39,932--> 00:34:43,768

but if you would like to drop

them into the Q&A chat box,

799

00:34:43,792--> 00:34:46,708

that would be fantastic.

800

00:34:46,732--> 00:34:50,963

Um, I don't know if we've

had anything in the chat...

801

00:34:51,000--> 00:34:52,308

Um...

802

00:34:53,822--> 00:34:56,148

And everybody's saying

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how they're agreeing,

803

00:34:56,172--> 00:34:58,428

and how, you know,

it's their experiences.

804

00:34:58,452--> 00:35:00,108

I think, um, another

thing that helps,

805

00:35:00,132--> 00:35:02,988

um, is solidarity and community,

806

00:35:03,012--> 00:35:04,048

and I would...

807

00:35:04,072--> 00:35:07,348

I mean, I can see a lot of the

people here are already in ADCI,

808

00:35:07,372--> 00:35:09,278

but if you aren't in ADCI,

809

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00:35:09,302--> 00:35:11,071

I would thoroughly
recommend joining.

810

00:35:11,095--> 00:35:12,388

It's a lovely community.

811

00:35:12,412--> 00:35:13,788

It's very supportive.

812

00:35:13,812--> 00:35:16,948

It's a place where you
can share your experiences

813

00:35:16,972--> 00:35:18,256

and you can ask for help.

814

00:35:18,280--> 00:35:21,188

And people can tell you

815

00:35:21,212--> 00:35:22,488

what they've been through,

816

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00:35:22,512--> 00:35:23,908

what they've done,

how it's worked,

817

00:35:23,932--> 00:35:25,411

what they would do differently.

818

00:35:25,435--> 00:35:27,068

It's just... it's...

819

00:35:27,092--> 00:35:31,000

Makes all the difference

not feeling so alone.

820

00:35:31,000--> 00:35:33,748

For me, that has

been what's made me

821

00:35:33,772--> 00:35:37,945

more confident in speaking up

about disability, more confident in

822

00:35:37,969--> 00:35:40,268

featuring disability

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in my writing.

823

00:35:40,292--> 00:35:43,954

It feels like I'm not

alone, and that has been

824

00:35:43,978--> 00:35:45,028

a game changer.

825

00:35:45,052--> 00:35:46,828

It's been huge.

826

00:35:48,092--> 00:35:50,468

-There's one thing I

wanted to say as well.

827

00:35:50,492--> 00:35:53,000

I'm going back to

my book, Sycorax,

828

00:35:53,000--> 00:35:54,468

is that it's...

829

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00:35:55,652--> 00:35:58,548

One thing I was
really, really wanting to

830

00:35:58,572--> 00:36:00,073

do was to write a book

831

00:36:00,097--> 00:36:02,668

which is magical,

832

00:36:02,692--> 00:36:04,148

so it is...

833

00:36:04,172--> 00:36:06,548

It's kind of historical fiction,

834

00:36:06,572--> 00:36:08,828

it's kind of got magic in it,

835

00:36:08,852--> 00:36:10,468

it's got elements
of fantasy in it,

836

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00:36:10,492--> 00:36:14,428

it's got elements of
fierce humanity in it.

837

00:36:14,452--> 00:36:17,000

And I wanted to do this...

838

00:36:17,000--> 00:36:22,000

I really can't stress enough
that I wanted to write a book

839

00:36:22,000--> 00:36:26,068

which was nothing
to do with disability

840

00:36:26,092--> 00:36:29,228

at all, but just
happened to have

841

00:36:29,252--> 00:36:32,308

the main character

842

00:36:32,332--> 00:36:36,000

as a disabled woman.

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843

00:36:36,000--> 00:36:41,068

And to explore that
within this magical world

844

00:36:41,092--> 00:36:42,788

and this world about witchcraft,

845

00:36:42,812--> 00:36:44,588

and this world that Shakespeare

846

00:36:44,612--> 00:36:48,000

actually invented
in The Tempest.

847

00:36:48,000--> 00:36:50,308

Um, just as an example

848

00:36:50,332--> 00:36:53,000

that this is what we can do.

849

00:36:53,000--> 00:36:57,668

Um, we can be involved

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in every single story.

850

00:36:59,000--> 00:37:00,188

-Yes, because we are.

851

00:37:00,212--> 00:37:02,028

Because that's...

You know, disability

852

00:37:02,052--> 00:37:05,676

is the largest minority

group, you know.

853

00:37:05,700--> 00:37:07,948

One in three people

has a chronic illness.

854

00:37:07,972--> 00:37:10,148

It's... it's important to be seen

855

00:37:10,172--> 00:37:11,508

and to be part of the stories.

856

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00:37:11,532--> 00:37:14,828

There's been quite a couple
of questions about whether you

857

00:37:14,852--> 00:37:16,788

let, um...

858

00:37:16,812--> 00:37:18,948

When you were querying agents,

859

00:37:18,972--> 00:37:21,668

did you disclose
or did you wait until,

860

00:37:21,692--> 00:37:24,000

um, you'd been signed?

861

00:37:24,000--> 00:37:25,908

-I did not disclose.

862

00:37:25,932--> 00:37:31,000

It was a long time ago now, and um...

863

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00:37:31,000--> 00:37:33,465

When I was first diagnosed,

864

00:37:33,489--> 00:37:37,000

I was put on a course of treatment
that worked really, really well.

865

00:37:37,000--> 00:37:38,388

And

866

00:37:38,412--> 00:37:40,068

so it worked, so it's...

867

00:37:40,092--> 00:37:42,508

12, 13, 14, 15, 17...

868

00:37:42,532--> 00:37:45,468

So about 6 years, it
worked really, really well.

869

00:37:45,492--> 00:37:47,668

And...

870

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00:37:47,692--> 00:37:48,868

I... [sighs]

871

00:37:48,892--> 00:37:51,388

I got very, very good

872

00:37:51,412--> 00:37:52,668

at masking

873

00:37:52,692--> 00:37:54,028

and I only realized

874

00:37:54,052--> 00:37:56,818

this in the past year or two
that that's what I've been doing.

875

00:37:56,842--> 00:37:58,508

I've only realized
this year, really,

876

00:37:58,532--> 00:38:01,470

that's what I've been
doing for so many years.

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877

00:38:01,494--> 00:38:04,708

So I did not, when I
was querying agents.

878

00:38:04,732--> 00:38:07,505

Would I now, in hindsight?

879

00:38:07,529--> 00:38:09,348

Yes, I think I probably would.

880

00:38:09,372--> 00:38:11,108

It would be in my biography,

881

00:38:11,132--> 00:38:15,000

"I am
a writer living with chronic illness."

882

00:38:15,000--> 00:38:16,068

That's what I would say.

883

00:38:16,092--> 00:38:17,588

It's that simple.

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884

00:38:17,612--> 00:38:19,468

I don't think I'd even...

885

00:38:19,492--> 00:38:22,488

say any more, I'd

say, "this is my book,

886

00:38:22,512--> 00:38:24,351

I'm a writer living

with chronic illness."

887

00:38:24,375--> 00:38:26,948

Blah, and the rest of your biog.

888

00:38:26,972--> 00:38:29,788

You know, that's... that's...

that's what I would do now,

889

00:38:29,812--> 00:38:32,000

but no, I did not do it then.

890

00:38:32,000--> 00:38:33,348

Um...

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891

00:38:33,372--> 00:38:35,108

And again, it's been...

892

00:38:35,132--> 00:38:38,548

It's taken the pandemic
and my meds to stop working,

893

00:38:38,572--> 00:38:41,588

and for my disease to get worse,

894

00:38:41,612--> 00:38:45,143

um, for me to understand

895

00:38:45,167--> 00:38:48,000

that masking isn't the way

896

00:38:48,000--> 00:38:49,268

forwards, it won't help you.

897

00:38:49,292--> 00:38:51,691

It doesn't... it hasn't
helped me in any way.

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898

00:38:51,715--> 00:38:53,000

All it's done

899

00:38:53,000--> 00:38:57,908

is make me more stressed
and worried and anxious.

900

00:38:59,000--> 00:39:01,188

-Yeah, and I disclosed
when I was querying,

901

00:39:01,212--> 00:39:03,708

because I knew I had
to, because I knew that my

902

00:39:03,732--> 00:39:06,948

condition was severe enough
that there was no way, I...

903

00:39:06,972--> 00:39:09,708

Although I could mask
for certain amounts of time

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904

00:39:09,732--> 00:39:12,148

and I could pass

as non-disabled,

905

00:39:12,172--> 00:39:15,588

I... as a whole kind of process,

906

00:39:15,612--> 00:39:17,625

it was never going to

work, and I would rather

907

00:39:17,649--> 00:39:19,628

an agent not sign me

908

00:39:19,652--> 00:39:21,131

out of ableism

909

00:39:21,155--> 00:39:23,508

than be stuck with

an ableist agent

910

00:39:23,532--> 00:39:25,348

who was not going

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to work with me,

911

00:39:25,372--> 00:39:27,348

and it was going to

make the process harder.

912

00:39:27,372--> 00:39:28,628

So, uh...

913

00:39:28,652--> 00:39:32,068

I mean, I think it's... I

think it's a good idea.

914

00:39:32,092--> 00:39:33,388

-Yeah, absolutely.

915

00:39:33,412--> 00:39:35,748

-But again, disclose how

much you want to disclose.

916

00:39:35,772--> 00:39:37,288

You don't have to

disclose everything

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917

00:39:37,312--> 00:39:39,224

and as you build a
relationship, you can

918

00:39:39,248--> 00:39:41,708

tell them more information
as you go along.

919

00:39:42,511--> 00:39:45,000

Um, we've had
another question, um...

920

00:39:45,000--> 00:39:50,000

About how we use writing to
expose people to issues that matter.

921

00:39:50,000--> 00:39:52,788

Um, but we also
write for escapism.

922

00:39:52,812--> 00:39:55,348

Is there an element
of that for you too?

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923

00:39:55,372--> 00:39:56,428

-Absolutely.

924

00:39:56,452--> 00:39:57,788

Stories are everything.

925

00:39:57,812--> 00:40:00,498

You know, I, um...

926

00:40:00,522--> 00:40:02,308

[sighs]

927

00:40:02,332--> 00:40:04,028

Stories are everything

928

00:40:04,052--> 00:40:06,588

and I'm a great lover of
stories, and I always have been.

929

00:40:06,612--> 00:40:09,451

I mean, my first favourite stories
were fairy stories as a child.

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930

00:40:09,475--> 00:40:11,000

I was obsessed.

931

00:40:11,000--> 00:40:12,388

Do you remember
those Andrew Lang...

932

00:40:12,412--> 00:40:15,588

Do you remember the
Andrew Lang fairy books?

933

00:40:15,612--> 00:40:19,468

So there was the violet fairy, and
the blue fairy, and the pink fairy.

934

00:40:19,492--> 00:40:22,548

Um, I was obsessed by
those books when I was a child.

935

00:40:22,572--> 00:40:24,548

And, um...

936

00:40:24,572--> 00:40:27,748

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me and my best friend are
best friends since the age of 4,

937

00:40:27,772--> 00:40:29,000

and she's still, like,

938

00:40:29,000--> 00:40:30,278

really important in my life.

939

00:40:30,302--> 00:40:32,708

I actually mention her
in the credits of the book.

940

00:40:32,732--> 00:40:37,788

Um, we lived in a story world and
told each other's stories constantly,

941

00:40:37,812--> 00:40:41,000

and I still live in a
story world in my head.

942

00:40:41,000--> 00:40:42,668

And, um...

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943

00:40:42,692--> 00:40:44,988

Writing is that for me.

944

00:40:45,012--> 00:40:49,000

It's... it's telling stories

and being in those,

945

00:40:49,000--> 00:40:53,228

that's what my creative process is,

it's just being in a storytelling world.

946

00:40:53,252--> 00:40:55,348

And, um, so yeah,

947

00:40:55,372--> 00:40:57,748

having that fantasy

element, that...

948

00:40:57,772--> 00:41:02,908

Taking me away from,

um, the mundanities of life.

949

00:41:02,932--> 00:41:04,348

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Although I find

950

00:41:04,372--> 00:41:07,468

the mundanities can be
really magical, sometimes,

951

00:41:07,492--> 00:41:09,428

when you're telling stories.

952

00:41:09,452--> 00:41:12,428

You know, which is
interesting in itself, I think.

953

00:41:14,572--> 00:41:16,348

-So, Anna's asked, um,

954

00:41:16,372--> 00:41:20,028

about how you've spoken very
openly about Sycorax's disability,

955

00:41:20,052--> 00:41:23,000

but that it's been
less visible in the PR.

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956

00:41:23,000--> 00:41:24,668

Um, was that a decision

957

00:41:24,692--> 00:41:27,348

that you made to help
people find the book?

958

00:41:27,372--> 00:41:29,628

Um, was it a conscious
decision? Is that...?

959

00:41:30,372--> 00:41:32,425

-No, that's... that's
nothing to do with me.

960

00:41:32,449--> 00:41:34,748

That's to do with,
um, the publishers.

961

00:41:35,645--> 00:41:37,588

You know, um...

962

00:41:37,612--> 00:41:40,000

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I don't know what to
say about that, really.

963

00:41:40,000--> 00:41:41,428

I mean...

964

00:41:41,452--> 00:41:46,000

I don't... I don't mind
that it's... it's not...

965

00:41:46,000--> 00:41:48,508

out there, and... and...

966

00:41:48,532--> 00:41:51,000

as much as perhaps it could be.

967

00:41:51,000--> 00:41:53,148

But, um...

968

00:41:53,172--> 00:41:56,985

I think, basically, I mean, I don't
know, I don't work in publishing.

969

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00:41:57,009--> 00:41:59,268

I think with, with, um...

970

00:42:00,212--> 00:42:02,833

Publishers, they
need to find a strand

971

00:42:02,857--> 00:42:05,628

that they feel will sell the
book as well as possible.

972

00:42:05,652--> 00:42:07,000

That's their job.

973

00:42:07,000--> 00:42:08,305

You know, and I think for them,

974

00:42:08,329--> 00:42:10,295

the strand was the
whole Shakespeare thing.

975

00:42:10,319--> 00:42:13,028

You know, Shakespeare's
silenced witch.

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976

00:42:13,052--> 00:42:16,388

There are a whole lot of, um,
feminist retellings at the moment,

977

00:42:16,412--> 00:42:18,628

you know, and
they've done really well.

978

00:42:18,652--> 00:42:20,668

And so, obviously,
then they thought

979

00:42:20,692--> 00:42:22,811

they would use
that strand as well.

980

00:42:22,835--> 00:42:25,268

Simply because they're
there to sell books,

981

00:42:25,292--> 00:42:28,000

that's what... that's
what their job is.

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982

00:42:28,000--> 00:42:30,388

You know, so I

don't mind if they... if...

983

00:42:30,412--> 00:42:33,628

if that sells the

books, I'm quite happy.

984

00:42:33,652--> 00:42:36,000

I know what's in those

pages. We know...

985

00:42:36,000--> 00:42:37,788

You know, I know

Sycorax's story,

986

00:42:37,812--> 00:42:39,868

and as soon as a reader

reads it, they'll know too.

987

00:42:39,892--> 00:42:41,308

So that's fine.

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988

00:42:41,332--> 00:42:43,348

So I don't mind so much,

989

00:42:43,372--> 00:42:44,908

because I'm happy...

990

00:42:44,932--> 00:42:48,000

If they think they know

how to sell this book,

991

00:42:48,000--> 00:42:50,708

then I'm happy for

them to do that, frankly.

992

00:42:52,000--> 00:42:54,068

Final question

from Sunita, um...

993

00:42:54,092--> 00:42:56,988

"As a woman of colour talking

about cancer and disability,

994

00:42:57,012--> 00:43:00,000

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infertility, magical

realism, and other cultures,

995

00:43:00,000--> 00:43:03,228

I just feel that I'll never

find the right literary agent

996

00:43:03,252--> 00:43:04,708

who will understand my vision.

997

00:43:04,732--> 00:43:05,868

Any advice?"

998

00:43:07,000--> 00:43:08,988

-Oh, gosh, I just...

just keep going.

999

00:43:09,012--> 00:43:12,028

I... I.... I don't really have

any other advice

1000

00:43:12,052--> 00:43:15,678

other than, um, it's

really hard to get an agent.

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1001

00:43:15,702--> 00:43:17,348

It's just really hard.

1002

00:43:17,372--> 00:43:19,348

And, um...

1003

00:43:20,347--> 00:43:21,887

[sighs]

1004

00:43:21,911--> 00:43:23,975

It's a funny thing.

1005

00:43:24,000--> 00:43:28,000

But I would say all those things
that you've mentioned there

1006

00:43:28,000--> 00:43:31,948

could all actually be very
positive for you to get an agent.

1007

00:43:31,972--> 00:43:34,788

And it's almost like, um...

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1008

00:43:34,812--> 00:43:39,000

We ourselves need to

1009

00:43:39,000--> 00:43:41,068

embrace the positivity

1010

00:43:41,092--> 00:43:43,388

of all the things that have
happened to us in our lives,

1011

00:43:43,412--> 00:43:46,271

and all the things we're going
through, including our illnesses

1012

00:43:46,295--> 00:43:48,668

and disabilities, in a way.

1013

00:43:48,692--> 00:43:50,988

And I don't mean
this flippantly.

1014

00:43:51,012--> 00:43:54,391

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It is our unique selling point,

1015

00:43:54,415--> 00:43:57,148

because as we were

just talking about markets

1016

00:43:57,172--> 00:43:58,948

and that's what the

industry's all about,

1017

00:43:58,972--> 00:44:00,308

publishing as an industry,

1018

00:44:00,332--> 00:44:03,000

and it deals with

markets and selling.

1019

00:44:03,000--> 00:44:07,428

Um, if you've got something

which is a unique selling point...

1020

00:44:07,452--> 00:44:10,271

It is a bit like selling

your soul, I have to admit.

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1021

00:44:10,295--> 00:44:11,868

But if you're prepared

1022

00:44:11,892--> 00:44:13,428

to be that voice, which,

1023

00:44:13,452--> 00:44:16,068

personally, I'm

happy to be that voice,

1024

00:44:16,092--> 00:44:17,468

I know not everybody is.

1025

00:44:17,492--> 00:44:21,308

Um, then that is your

unique selling point and...

1026

00:44:21,332--> 00:44:23,868

I know this sounds

absolutely awful,

1027

00:44:23,892--> 00:44:26,428

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it can be your superpower,

1028

00:44:26,452--> 00:44:28,348

and that's a

terrible thing to say.

1029

00:44:28,372--> 00:44:30,628

I know how terrible

that is to say,

1030

00:44:30,652--> 00:44:32,628

because it is far from that.

1031

00:44:32,652--> 00:44:36,388

It is... it's a nightmare to

live with chronic illness.

1032

00:44:36,412--> 00:44:40,000

You know, and... well, "nightmare".

1033

00:44:40,000--> 00:44:42,308

I actually don't think

it is a nightmare.

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1034

00:44:42,332--> 00:44:45,000

I think it's just a thing
that we have to manage.

1035

00:44:45,000--> 00:44:48,348

You know, it's difficult to live
with chronic illness, I should say.

1036

00:44:48,372--> 00:44:49,668

Um...

1037

00:44:50,615--> 00:44:53,108

But I do think

1038

00:44:53,132--> 00:44:55,828

if we can ourselves

1039

00:44:55,852--> 00:44:58,508

turn our perspective around

1040

00:44:58,532--> 00:45:00,308

to being positive,

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1041

00:45:00,332--> 00:45:02,268

it will...

1042

00:45:02,292--> 00:45:04,988

help the difficult journey

in getting an agent,

1043

00:45:05,012--> 00:45:06,948

because getting

an agent is hard.

1044

00:45:06,972--> 00:45:09,108

You know, really hard.

1045

00:45:09,535--> 00:45:10,548

-Yeah.

1046

00:45:10,572--> 00:45:13,188

Finding the right

person at the right time.

1047

00:45:13,212--> 00:45:17,068

Well, that takes us

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to the end of our time.

1048

00:45:17,092--> 00:45:19,188

I'd like to say a big

thank you to Nydia

1049

00:45:19,212--> 00:45:21,000

for joining me

for today's event,

1050

00:45:21,000--> 00:45:23,748

to Ali Gordon for the

BSL interpretation,

1051

00:45:23,772--> 00:45:26,148

and thank you all

for joining us today.

1052

00:45:26,172--> 00:45:27,788

Uh, thank you to Elsa Woodmeade

1053

00:45:27,812--> 00:45:29,628

for moderating today's event.

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1054

00:45:29,652--> 00:45:30,908

If you've enjoyed it

1055

00:45:30,932--> 00:45:33,388

and aren't yet a member
of the Society of Authors,

1056

00:45:33,412--> 00:45:36,388

please consider joining our
community with our special

1057

00:45:36,412--> 00:45:39,428

#SoAatHome offer

1058

00:45:39,452--> 00:45:43,000

and get 20% off for the
first year of membership.

1059

00:45:43,000--> 00:45:46,828

Use code "SOAATHOME20".

1060

00:45:46,852--> 00:45:50,348

This was the final event taking part

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in the Spring/Summer Programme,

1061

00:45:50,372--> 00:45:53,748

but the SoA at Home programme
will continue this September

1062

00:45:53,772--> 00:45:55,755

with their Autumn/Winter
programme.

1063

00:45:55,779--> 00:45:59,748

For more, head to
societyofauthors.org/events

1064

00:45:59,772--> 00:46:03,000

to book or check out
our events programme.

1065

00:46:03,000--> 00:46:05,381

This SoA at Home
event is free to all,

1066

00:46:05,405--> 00:46:06,868

but if you can afford to,

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1067

00:46:06,892--> 00:46:10,268

please consider donating to our
Society of Authors Access Fund

1068

00:46:10,292--> 00:46:13,908

where we suggest a
minimum donation of £5.

1069

00:46:14,804--> 00:46:17,668

You can also help the
Society of Authors Access Fund

1070

00:46:17,692--> 00:46:19,948

by making a purchase
on our virtual bookstore

1071

00:46:19,972--> 00:46:22,000

on Bookshop.org

1072

00:46:22,000--> 00:46:23,508

where you can
find books by writers

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1073

00:46:23,532--> 00:46:27,000

taking part in the SoA at
Home Events programme.

1074

00:46:27,000--> 00:46:30,028

Another big thank
you to Nydia and Ali,

1075

00:46:30,052--> 00:46:33,000

and all of you that have
joined us for today's events.

1076

00:46:33,000--> 00:46:34,828

And let's continue
this conversation

1077

00:46:34,852--> 00:46:37,228

on social media with
the festival hashtag

1078

00:46:37,252--> 00:46:39,278

#SoAatHome.

1079

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00:46:39,302--> 00:46:40,508

Thanks, everyone.

1080

00:46:40,706--> 00:46:42,748

-Thank you, thank you,

Ali, thank you, Claire.

1081

00:46:42,772--> 00:46:44,161

Thank you, everyone.