

“Octavia’s Parables, Mind of My Mind - Chapter 2 [July 4, 2022]

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{introduction music playing}

adrienne: (00:51) Hello, hello, hello world of Octavia lovers. We are back with Octavia's Parables, our podcast, where we are reading Octavia E Butler's classic text one chapter at a time. We are in Mind of My Mind, which is book two of the Patternist series. And I am your co-host adrienne maree brown. And I'm here with the beloved...

Toshi: Toshi Reagon.

adrienne: That's right. I feel like I could say anything like the brilliant, the outstanding, the ephemeral! {laughs}, um...

Toshi: Come through language. {laughs}

adrienne: {laughter} Yeah. And, you know, Toshi, I wanted to let people know that we just did something really cool, which may happen again and again and again, in, in life.

Toshi: Mmm-hmm.

adrienne: But we did a virtual event in a virtual Parable space that I wanna let people know, cause I think this is the way of the future that we're gonna be doing virtual spaces. And do you wanna say just a little bit about why it felt important to have the Parables take it into a virtual realm? And like if you see that happening in the future.

Toshi: Yeah. Well, everyone should check out Mozilla hubs and this is, you know, Mozilla that, you know, from Firefox, but the Mozilla is a foundation as well as a company and the, um, foundation, um, they do something called MozFest once a year, which is amazing. It's a global event. It's people from all over the world, creating and manifesting in all kinds of ways. And part of the 2022 MozFest extended, um, was a 3D world in their hubs. So you go to Mozilla hubs, just Google that you'll find it. And it's an incredible platform. They built this beautiful world. I have a space where I can gather that have conversations with different people. So like adrienne and Alexis Pauline Gumbs came through. And if you've seen Parable of the Sower, they used our benches that we have in the opera. So we can kind of virtually with our avatars, sit at the benches and talk around a fire. But there is a beautiful science fair with practitioners, global practitioners, problem solving, creating, manifesting there's several rooms. You can go into a room and you can listen to Alexis and I on marine mammal meditations, there's all kinds of Parable journeys to take Octavia's Parables is actually in a space in there too. So it's beautiful to float around with your avatar and go and visit and meet people, have conversations. And then of course you wanna make sure you go and levitate while you're there, which is...

adrienne: Oh yeah.

Toshi: ...kind of a great...

adrienne: Get to fly. {singing} We are learning to fly.

Toshi: It's awesome.

adrienne: Yeah. Yeah.

Toshi: It's so fun.

adrienne: All right. Well, we are here this week with chapter two of Mind of My Mind and really starting to dig into this journey with Mary. So yeah. Toshi take us away.

Toshi: Yes. We are here for Mary and we are also here for Karl Larkin.

adrienne: Hello, Karl Larkin.

Toshi: Hello, Karl Larkin. And this is the man that Doro has decided Mary needs to marry.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: So we start off with, um, with Doro and Doro is like, you know, basically going to visit Karl and let him know like you're about to meet Mary and Karl is not into this any more than Mary, um, is, but Doro wants to be very careful. I have to say this over and over again. So Doro is doing something he's never done before. And he's finally gotten, he thinks, the beings by which to create another being that would hopefully be like on the level of Anyanwu.

adrienne: Mmm.

Toshi: (04:53) And so he has these two active telepaths. He hopes, he hopes if Mary survives her transition, he will have these two powerful, active telepaths and then he will, he will put them together. And he is looking not only at what will happen with the two of them, but their offspring.

adrienne: Yes.

Toshi: So this is, this is, Doro like feeling like he's reaching the plateau of his entire journey. So he has to be careful because this doesn't usually go so well, people die all the time with him trying to do this. So he is being extra careful. He's gonna go visit Karl and he's letting Karl know yo, the day is coming. And Karl is, I just don't even understand {adrienne laughs} why I need to be about this. Karl is living his life. He has a beautiful mansion. He has these people working for him. He, he's kind of just lightly touched them so that they're happy working with him. He picked people who don't have like a lot of family. He picked like loners and he has great relationships with them. The people are very happy to work with him. And then he has a girlfriend named Vivian. And she is, she is also like very lightly touched, but not so much that

she can't be her own person. So he's making it clear to Doro that, you know, this person can come, but that he is gonna be sticking with his girlfriend. And that's the way it's gonna be. And she's gonna be up in the house.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: And the way that they talk about, you know what I said, he's touching the servant. He's touching the girlfriend is they call it owned.

adrienne: Yes.

Toshi: So when the telepath is up in your head, they're like the telepath owns you.

adrienne: Mm mm-hmm.

Toshi: And you really, you really can't, you know, you can't get away from them unless they want you to. So we meet Karl getting out of the swimming pool and having this conversation, very complicated conversation about what's gonna happen. "Do you intend to keep Vivian here? You bet." I'm gonna keep Vivian here. Well, you know, Doro lets him know that if he wants to keep her here, that's up to him, but it'll probably be easier if she wasn't there. And he's like, um, no, that's not really negotiable. And he's like, well, does...? Vivian is standing there by the way. And he is like, does Vivian like to fight {laughs} And Vivian's like, fight? What do you mean fight? And he's like, you know, do you like to get down? {laughs}.

adrienne: I can't even. I can't even.

Toshi: She's like, nah, I haven't done that since the third grade. And he's like, well, this girl fights. So I'm just trying to tell you, {laughs} like look out and then Karl's like, you know, I'm not gonna let anybody hurt you. You know? But {laughs}, y'all don't know about Mary.

adrienne: Exactly.

Toshi: Don't don't mess with Mary. So Doro's kind of like, you know, I hope that like, if there's any conflict, like talking with her will be enough, but it's also very clear nobody should, should hurt Mary. Like this is not even, uh, something. So he's letting him know. You gotta, you gotta take care of your business if you're gonna have these two women around. So he also points out that, that, you know, Mary tends to wanna be close to her family.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: So it, the same way as her mom, they just kind of like need to vibrate around each other. Even if the relationships aren't good. It's just beyond, it's beyond anything that they can control. And so Karl is like, well, what's gonna happen to that cuz we don't live near them? Like, and he's like, well I'm hoping she'll transfer it to you. So he just is kind of like, what should I do? Like if she's so uncontrollable and Doro suggests that he, he beat her up. {laughs} So he's like, you

can't, you can't kill her. But you know, hit her, if she's like acting out. Yo fuck Doro sometimes. Just fuck Doro right now. Oh my God.

adrienne: He's such a fucking mess.

Toshi: He's such a mess.

adrienne: He really is. He just misses it every time

Toshi: He has so many opportunities and he just, for his whatever 4,000 plus years is just not grown so much.

adrienne: No.

Toshi: So, um, Mary is, has just turned 20. And she turns 20, and then Doro's like, okay, we're leaving and you're gonna get married. And um, this is not, you know, this is not going for Mary. So she throws a fit. She's yelling and she's screaming and you know, um, Doro was like, I don't care what you do. You're gonna, you're gonna get married to this guy. And they end up having a big physical fight. That of course Doro is winning. He's got her pinned on the bed and this fight is like, is very violent. And so I know y'all remember from Wild Seed that like, it's very dangerous to be in a physical confrontation with Doro. Um, certain levels of pain, even if he doesn't want to, he's gonna jump out of his body and into yours and kill you.

adrienne: Yes.

Toshi: So he is really, really not trying to have that happen. He's worked hard. Um, but she, she pushes him.

adrienne: Mm.

Toshi: And he's uh...

adrienne: She bites him, right?

Toshi: Yeah. She bites him. And he pins her on the bed so that he's, he's holding her down. He's on top of her. And she's looking up at him and she describes it as, "he looked like a corpse some undertaker had done a bad job on". So whatever she did...

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: ...very much transformed him into, you know, I would say an in between place.

adrienne: Yes.

Toshi: (10:34) Where he's still, still who he is, but can very easily go the other way. And so that journey is really terrifying. She said that she understood it because when she was ten years old

and she was at a public swimming pool, she couldn't swim and somebody pushed her into the water. And then she remembered this idea of like knowing that if she held her breath, she would float to the surface.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: And so she's, she's like thinking that this is a, a place that Doro is like, like, like setting in.

adrienne: Yes.

Toshi: And um, eventually he is like, you know, I know you like knives and he takes this knife, um, that the body that he took had. And he, he says for her like, go ahead and stab him. Because like, if you really wanna {laughter} this is the only way that you're gonna get out of this. Yeah. So she obviously doesn't stab Doro and she just says, "Someday, there's gonna be a way for me to hurt you. And don't think I won't do it". And you know, this is why we love Mary. {laughs}

adrienne: We love Mary.

Toshi: Mary is like, I have my eyes on the prize. And um, she's like...

adrienne: I can't get you right now.

Toshi: Yeah. And it's all kinds of things happening, you know, why the humiliation of the situation, you know, all kinds of things. And Doro's trying to always put out the good side of things. Well maybe if she's there, you know, you don't have to deal with him too much. And you know, this is, this is gonna happen and that's gonna happen. But at the end of the day, he says, "Put your clothes on. We're going." So they get introduced. Karl and Vivian are together looking like, she says "a sister and a brother" and staring at her eyes. And uh, you know, she has these beautiful eyes that people get memorized in.

adrienne: Yah.

Toshi: And so they're staring at her and she saw how pretty, uh, Vivian was and how nervous she was. And you know, also felt that she was a robot and didn't know it.

adrienne: Mm.

Toshi: And so she's, she's not so impressed by the situation. But five days later after meeting them, she was married to Karl and they both had to do something that they didn't wanna do. And they, neither, one of them felt great about it. She gets a tour of the house. It's in a beautiful house. The, the best thing about the house is this gigantic library. And she was like, I'm just gonna be in here. But he let her know that that was where his, um, desk was.

adrienne: Yes.

Toshi: But he said she could be there anytime he wasn't working. So she has access to this library. She has a beautiful room, but she is very isolated and feels very alone. And so she tries to kind of hang with Karl and Vivian, but they're not about that life. They're just like, nope, you're just here. And we don't want to deal with you.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: So, uh, eventually, eventually she has to bounce. It's like, there's, there's not anything really for her to do. And the idea that, you know, she had to get married to Karl was horrible. And even, uh, her and Karl have a conversation and you know, Karl's like, you know, what did you think was gonna happen? And she was like, I thought I was gonna marry Doro, cause her mom married Doro, her grandma married Doro.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: So she was like, you know, I thought I would marry him. And they have this conversation about how much Doro does, how much he forces people to do things, how much he intrudes on people's lives and happiness and all kinds of things.

adrienne: Mm.

Toshi: And, um, and eventually, eventually, like, even though he's hard to people, people don't tend to dislike him.

adrienne: Yes.

Toshi: And so it's just like, they're kind of, they're kind of drawn into his, you know, his power, his essence or something.

Toshi: And so, um, this is frustrating to everybody. So {laughs} everybody, all of Doro's people are by this. So they're married and they are, you know, doing what they're doing. And eventually, um, Karl is like, I'm going to work and he's gonna get on with his life. And, and Mary just decides to go back to the hood.

adrienne: {laughs} She's like, okay.

Toshi: She just like, yeah, I don't have much to do here. So she leaves and she goes back to the hood and she, her mom is doing what her mom does and is hanging with a guy. And so she goes around the corner and she goes to Emma's. And Emma's like, why don't you just stay here?

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: (15:29) And just, just, just sit and stay. And she's like, what? And she's cuz she's like, where's your husband? And she realizes that, you know, she has just, they have just deserted her. And so she's like, yeah, Doro and an active telepath. They're gonna, they're gonna know when

you leave. So just stay. Just leave. And um, and she points out that her leaving is, is like a power move. You know, you left...

adrienne: Yup.

Toshi: ...intentionally, you know? So she, uh, fixes her some food and she's like, you know, drink this Coke and eat this beautiful food I made for you. And I love how Emma/Anyanwu is like, you know what we need to do. We need to eat something.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: Yeah. We're gonna fix it. We need to, we need to start with a meal. And Emma goes back to her desk where she's in the dining room and she's, she's living her life I guess as a world renowned, um, author {laughs} and just taking care of bus, her business. And eventually Karl comes. And he comes to pick her up and you know, Emma, Emma lets him know like, you know, you forgetting where you come from, you're too high. And um, he's trying to be like, no, no, no, that's not me. And she's like, no, you are, you need to get yourself together. And he says, okay.

adrienne: Mm-hmm. {laughs}

Toshi: And Mary asked about that. And the story is that, "She took care of me once when I was between foster homes. That was before Doro found a permanent home for me. She took care of me again when I was approaching transition. My adoptive parents couldn't handle me. He smiled." So Emma knows him very, very well. Of course, Mary wants to know the whole story and Karl's story is, is quite horrific. And as we move into these next couple of chapters, I just wanna throw a trigger warning out that many of the, um, situations are quite violent and horrible.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: And um, if you haven't like already journeyed through this book and understand, you know, what's going on.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: You might take, take a little breath or get a glass of water or even skip over or maybe better to read than to listen. I don't know. But take care.

adrienne: Yeah. Yeah.

Toshi: Take great care. So Karl's mom was in her own trouble, um, as many of Doro's peoples are. And basically when he was three years old, she got upset with him and she held his hand over a fire and basically burned his, his hand. Burned his hand and, and part of his arm. He was healed by one of Emma's granddaughters who is able to be a, a healer the way that, um, Emma/Anyanwu is for herself.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: If you all remember, um, and if you haven't read Wild Seed yet she has the ability of healing herself. And through that healing of herself, she is a great healer of other people, but she can transform her own body into multiple shapes of animals, of, of other humans. As we see in this book, she's usually an old woman or she's a young woman she's...

adrienne: Mm.

Toshi: But she can't do that for anybody else.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: She can't, you know, so she has a granddaughter who's able to. It takes a long time. So over many months though, um, she created a new hand for Karl and then this is how he grew up to be raised by people who cared about him. Eventually, you know, Doro was hanging around. Karl and Mary are, are getting to know each other. And eventually Karl comes to her room and she didn't, you know, they didn't turn the light on, she didn't put up a fight. She kind of surrenders to the moment, intentionally surrenders to the moment that she's in. And it ends with her actually inviting him to stay...

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: ...um, the night, and this is kind of the, the first bridge of intimacy. And I'm just gonna read from the book, "I found myself remembering how Rina would pace the floor at night sometimes. I would see her crying and pacing and holding her head. After a while, she would go and come back with some bum who usually looked a little like her - like us. She'd keep him with her the rest of the night, even if he didn't have a dime in his pocket, even if he was too drunk to do anything. And sometimes even if he knocked her around and called her names that trash like him didn't have the right to call anybody. I used to wonder how Rina could live with herself. Now, apparently I was going to find out. Karl came back to my bed without another word. I didn't know what he was thinking, but he could have really hurt me with just a few words. He didn't. I tried to thank him for that." And that's chapter two.

adrienne: Ooof. Yeah. Theres, I'm really grateful, you did the trigger warning. I think we'll have to remember to do that earlier for these, for a lot of this book, because...

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: (20:54)...so much of what Doro is up to is, he's the ultimate groomer, right? He's the ultimate groomer. He really finds people who are in abusive and traumatic situations and really have a need. And he saves them in some way. Right? He saves them and then he pushes them into these formations and pairs, um, that work for what he's up to, you know? But it's that the balance is always like, oh, you're never just dealing with someone who's reasonably talking with you. When you're talking to Doro, you're never dealing with someone who's just like, oh, it's just this one move. There's never anything simple. He always has this grand master plan. And that's

why there's no benevolence, even when it seems like he's being kind. {laughs} So yeah, I've got questions.

Toshi: I've got questions. You gotta have questions.

adrienne: {laughs} Um, one question for our listeners, you know, Mary is so special, right? The way Doro's handling her is like, she's the one. Like, there's something about her that is only singular right now.

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: So a question I have for y'all is have you currently, or do you currently, or have you ever, maybe that's a better way to say it... Have you ever felt like you were the only one? Like the special one who was the gifted kid or the gifted person or the particularly special leader? The only one who could do something and really track for that in your own life? Like have there been moments like that where you were like... You know, sometimes I hear this a lot, you know, when I'm coaching leaders, I hear this so much, you know, like no one, I have to be the one who does this. Like, I'm the only one who can do this. And I think that more than we realize we can develop this sense of specialness.

Toshi: Mmm.

adrienne: Or we can get treated as if there's this irreplaceable unique, singular specialness about us. And while it seems like that might be a positive thing, I think it actually often ends up as a isolating pressure and an isolating condition. So just reflect on that in your own life. Or have you known someone like? That where you're like, that's a, that person is like really unique amongst humans, special amongst humans. And how did you see people orient around them care for them? Follow them or not follow them?

Toshi: Ooh, I'm just, I have so many thoughts about this question!

adrienne: I wanna hear. {laughs}

Toshi: Okay. So one is, one is my mom, Bernice Johnson Reagon.

adrienne: Yes.

Toshi: So one time there was a project and my mom literally was like, I'm not doing this unless Toshi is the blah, blah, blah.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: And so, and then, and then she said, you're the, you're the only one who can do the bridge between my sonic sound.

adrienne: Yes.

Toshi: And then the sound of these instruments and...

adrienne: That's right.

Toshi: You know, she's like, you're the only one can do it. And so that's the time when I was like, oh, I'm the only one who can do it. It's like at the same time, {laughs}, I had a fear of flying, like really bad fear of flying for time. I, I didn't fly for like, I don't know, almost 10 years, one time at point in my life.

adrienne: It's so strange to imagine you with any fear.

Toshi: Yeah. I, I figured it out. I, I still have a fear of flying, but I have a beautiful system.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: But my mom says, you know, my mom wanted to get me flying lessons. She's like, what if I got you flying lessons? And then I was like, wow. Like, it just was such, felt like such an antidote. But the other thing she said is like, she's like, are you afraid you're gonna die?

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: And I was like, yeah, I'm afraid I'm gonna die. And she's like, well, the funeral's gonna be so great. {laughs}.

Toshi and adrienne: {laughter}

adrienne: Bernice Johnson Reagon. Wow.

Toshi: She's said the funeral's gonna be so great. She's like, we're just gonna sing the entire time. She's like, we, I nobody's talking like, we're just gonna sing and sing. She's like, it's gonna be beau... She was so serious people. I can't even tell you {laughs}. And the relief in my heart was like an abundant relief because she was really saying like, you know? The other thing she's, she said to me one time and she's like, you wanna, you wanna see the world continue? And I was like, yeah. She was like, go ahead and die.

adrienne: Uhhuh.

Toshi: And you know, and so the idea of like you're onlyness and you're only this, and you're only that is like, she's like, here is what it's gonna be. And my mother would, you know, never wanna see me dead, but those...

adrienne: Mm-hmm.

Toshi: ...kind of like, you're the only one who could do this alive. And you're the only one who can be Toshi and die.

adrienne: Exactly. That's right.

Toshi: {laughing} And both of them have a twinkle sparkly wonderfulness about them.

adrienne: Yeah. There's a coyote trickster energy in your mom.

Toshi: Oh my mom. I can't even catch up with her at all. So, but the other thing too, that came to me is we give that away so easily. That only one.

adrienne: Exactly.

Toshi: (26:00) We're like, you know, we're like, Martin Luther king, you're the only one. This one. You're the only one. That one. You're the only one.

adrienne: Yes.

Toshi: When we know like 2,562 people had to collaborate for that person to even have the thing, you know?

adrienne: I mean...

Toshi: It's so interesting.

adrienne: ...this is part of why I feel this way, because I, I think there's a both/and. Like, there are certain people that I meet where I'm like, wow. Or people I see, or people I follow or whatever, where I'm like, wow, there's something really unique in particular about you and how you have come together and have come into this life. You know? People know that I have a special place in my heart for Octavia.

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: I have a special place in my heart for Beyonce. And so, you know?

Toshi: Mmm-hmm.

adrienne: But then I keep having these hilarious moments where I'm like, ah like, you know, we're working on this Octavia E Butler tarot deck. And there's a guide inside of it, of how to create a life profile for your tarot, your, your tarot profile. And the example that we give is Octavia's profile for her life card for tarot.

Toshi: Right.

adrienne: And her life card is the same as my life card. So there's a way that it's like, oh, of course, to me, she stands out as a bright light amongst everything because our lives are concerned with the same things. Right?

Toshi: Right.

adrienne: Beyonce, I found out has a, she's a Virgo sun with a Scorpio moon. Which is a particular combo. And I was like, of course, like her art really appeals to me because she's plumbing, the, the particular kind of depths that I'm into plumbing. Right? And so that singularness is still relative. Right?

Toshi: Mm.

adrienne: And so in this case, like most people would look at Mary and be like, what a little mess? Like what a sullen, little, you know, disrespectful scrappy kid who grew up on the wrong side of town. {Toshi laughs} And like, is like, you know, disobedient. Right? But because Doro was looking for a very particular thing, he's like, she's the most special person of all the people that I have created.

Toshi: Yes.

adrienne: And it's because he wants to use her. It's because he wants to consume something specific, you know?

Toshi: Yes.

adrienne: Um, from her. And so I'm thinking about that in regards to leaders. Right?

Toshi: Mmm-hmm.

adrienne: Cause I'm like, whenever someone's telling you, you're the only one and convinces you, you're the only one, they want something from you. And you know, there might be some respectful way to consume your entire soul. But most of the time, it's not that. {laughter} You know? Like I like to think that the way that I receive Octavia or Beyonce in the way that they want me to, like, I'm like you created heart. {Toshi laughs} And I'm here for it. I actually try not to plum into the depths of your life, beyond that, you know?

Toshi: Yeah.

adrienne: And I'm like, I really feel...

Toshi: ([28:43](#))

I'm gonna buy that record. {laughs}.

adrienne: I want that record. I will wear that sweatshirt. I will watch the videos that you put out. You know, I won't watch this stuff where paparazzi snuck pictures of your kids. Like, I don't wanna consume beyond what you wanna offer. Right?

Toshi: There you go.

adrienne: And I always try to think of that, but in my life, whenever I've been like the head of an organization or a network or...

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: You know? Rockstar, you know, you're the only one who could facilitate this meeting, that those kind of pressures come. It's usually paired with a desire to extract something beyond what I'm necessarily wanting to give.

Toshi: Yes.

adrienne: And it's like, if we can feed your ego enough, we can get you to give us what we want from you. Right?

Toshi: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

adrienne: And in every single instance, if I have said, no, someone else could do it and they might not have done it the way I did it. Right?

Toshi: But they have done it.

adrienne: They might have done something else, but they did something.

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: And every single group that I thought I could never leave, I could never go away from this because I'm the only one. Every, everyone is fine, everyone is fine. And all of my sabbaticals have also taught me that lesson. Like I can't step away, you know? And then I step away, you know? The other fear happens is like, what if I am not the only one? And I step away and I become completely irrelevant. {Toshi laughs} And that's not that hasn't happened either. Right?

Toshi: No.

adrienne: Like, you know, the truth is we're each, the only one of us.

Toshi: Right.

adrienne: And there's a distinction. Yeah. So.

Toshi: Right. Right. Right.

adrienne: I wanted to explore that a little bit, because this whole book, we really get to be with Mary as this singular being who is also not a singular being.

Toshi: Mm.

adrienne: (30:17) And I wanna keep noticing that, noticing that, cuz even now she's going to be with another telepath. Who's actually really special in his powers. Right> Karl.

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: So I also wanna ask people too, what are your first impressions of Karl? Right? Like my first impression of Karl was like, hell no. {laughs} Like, I'm not gonna go live in this white man's mansion, with his white girlfriend and his enslaved servants. Um, that's mine. What is yours? And then does learning about his traumatic childhood and his journey, does it shift that first impression? So really just tracking cuz so often we, you know, if you just take people at the surface of like, here's what I've made of myself, here's who I am now. We don't know like what pain is it born from? You know?

Toshi: Right.

adrienne: What happened to you? And I always, I'm always trying to remind myself to ask people that even if it's only in my mind to be like something hap... Things have happened in your life that I don't know about. I don't know your tragedies. I don't know your punishments. Right?

Toshi: Mm.

adrienne: Um, so I would love to hear people riff on that. Think about that. Mm-hmm and then I wanna highlight this moment where she sees Doro's, the inanimate body, that Doro is occupying. Like there's something that happens briefly where it's like, Doro is not this body. Right?

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: So Doro moves from body to body, but Doro is not this body. And for any of us who have watched someone transition from life to death or watched anything transition from life to death, there's such a distinction between the animated self and the not animated self. And it's not just like breath, right?

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: Like, there's something about the spirit or the soul. I had a dear friend of mine who passed away a few years ago and was in a coma for about a month before passing. And I went to visit her and I was like, oh, she's gone already.

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: Like, the body is still here breathing, but that what animates her has already left. So I wanna ask you all to sort of reflect on what is it, and what is it that you understand to be the animating force of life?

Toshi: Mm.

adrienne: How would you describe it? How do you talk about it to others? When you love someone what is it you're loving in them? When someone's loving you what is it that they're loving? You know, I've really been also on a meditation path. {laughs} lately where it's like, oh, the voice in my head is not me. I'm the one who's listening to that voice. I'm the one who's watching that voice. So I'm thinking a lot about like, how does Doro animate these bodies? What is Doro? You know, if, if you know him now we know him, you know, pretty well. So what is Doro? How is he animating these things?

Toshi: I also like to add this moment to the moment that the, the journey that Anyanwu had with him at the end of Wild Seed.

adrienne: Yes.

Toshi: Where he's trying to take her into his world without, without killing her.

adrienne: Yes. And he's like, I want you to see and feel this.

Toshi: Yeah. And then this version, which is more like catching him by surprise.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: And then making him have to figure out how not to go all the way.

adrienne: Exactly.

Toshi: Yeah.

adrienne: (33:50) Like there's something in this where it feels like not only is Doro telling us that Mary is singular, but in this instance, we get to see something that like, we have not seen so far. No one else has ever done this to Doro, like gotten him to this point...

Toshi: That's right.

adrienne: ...without him wanting to be there and still survived. Right? So then I'm gonna keep asking this throughout this book. Can you see a way out for Mary, right? With all her powers, with her rebellious spirit and her freedom, other than death, can you see a way out for Mary? And just keep asking yourself that, because this is a strategic text, this book is all about strategy. It's all about understanding what to do when you're up against what seems to be an overwhelming power. What do you do? Right?

Toshi: Mm.

adrienne: So be looking for the ways out, just like... You know, this is my recommendation. As you move through the world is always, be like, what are our ways out?

Toshi: Yeah.

adrienne: How do we get out of what seemed like overwhelming conditions of suffering and oppression, right?

Toshi: Yeah. Yeah.

adrienne: And then, you know, so Doro does this thing. {laughs}, it's like his favorite thing is to be like, here's people that I want to be together. And he like pushes them into a relationship with each other. And then, you know, his mode is basically like, and we've watched him do this. He did this all with Anyanwu he was like, he goes off, he has one conversation, basically giving the instruction. Here's how to do it. Here's how I want you to deal with this person and prepping everyone. And then he leaves them alone together. And they have to have these boundary negotiations. How is it gonna be? How are we gonna operate with each other? Because Doro wants us to be in this relationship with each other. So that's, Doro's way of doing it. And it's highly manipulative. There's an aspect of care on the front end and that he almost immediately always pulls away.

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: Um, and then there's a high degree of honesty, usually in the boundary negotiation. So his people are not very prone to dishonesty with each other probably because they can read minds and, and, {laughs} it's like, it's not even worth it.

Toshi: Yeah.

adrienne: (36:10) So I wanna ask our listeners as you navigate life, you know, you're all in complex relationships and dynamics. How do you navigate these relationships? Right? Like when you're introducing, you know, if you're poly, two different partners to each other for the first time. Do you do these pre-conversations because it's like, hey, y'all are in a relationship because of me? You're gonna be in a relationship with each other. Or, you know, when a new person gets added to the family. Right? Um, or you're meeting the mother-in-law or right? The, the new coworker who's really important to you. Just do some reflection on like, do you do this kind of prep, prep, abandon, right. Do you stay and facilitate and try to weave the threads together? Do you encourage honest dynamics? Or do you encourage people to kind of like tuck this part of you away so that you can go be in relationship with this person in the way that I want you to? {laughs}.

Toshi: Right.

adrienne: Which I think a lot of people do with family. Just notice that. Notice how Doro does it, you know? Notice the opposite like Rina. It's like, I, I could give zero fuck on whatever happens. I don't care. Like.

Toshi: Like stop these voices in my head. That's all I want.

adrienne: All I wanna do is stop the voices in my head. Right? Emma is kind of like, I've seen it all and...

Toshi: Yeah.

adrienne: navigating complex relationships. And could you do it better than Doro? {laughs}.

Toshi: Mm.

adrienne: At this point in the narrative, do you think that Karl and Mary's relationship will end up being a, a functional relationship? Will it be beneficial? And then last two questions. So this one, every time I read this chapter, I'm reminded of Beauty and the Beast when Belle is caught in the Beast's mansion and...

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: ...she's walking around and she's like, what? You know, I'm stuck here. But then she walks into the library and the library in the books, and in every movie I've seen, it's always a multi floored library, full of books. And...

Toshi: Yeah.

adrienne: It's the moment when Belle's system generally settles a bit and it's like, okay. If I have these books, I'll be okay. Right? Which feels like Octavia also injecting herself into the narrative of like, how, how would I be able to survive?

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: If I have these fantastical books, I'll be okay. And so we see that happen for Mary. That she's like, well, if he's got these books, he can't be all bad.

Toshi: Right.

adrienne: Just look at this book collection. Right? So I wanna first ask you that is like, do libraries have that effect on you? Like when I walk into people's houses and see a lot of books, it does tend to calm my system down. I'm like, okay, at least you read, you know? {laughs}.

Toshi: Mmm-hmm.

adrienne: It matters. But then is there anything else that you look for when you enter people's homes that are indicators that you can trust that person? Are indicators of the kind of person that they might be? And I never thought about, you know, before we did this episode, I never thought about this, but I was like, this actually is another survival skill that is kind of running underneath my level of attention. But when I, like, when I enter someone's home and I don't see any books, it sends a message to me.

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: When I enter people's home, and they don't have me take my shoes off at the door.

Toshi: Mm.

adrienne: That sends a little, something kind of energetic message to me. If I don't see any markers of like energetic management {laughter} Right? I'm like, hmmmmm. So you don't...?

Toshi: Markers of energetic energy. {laughter}

adrienne: {laughs} Yes! I'm like, so you don't have no crystals. You don't burn nothing.

Toshi: Mm-hmmm.

adrienne: Like, you know, like I was like, there's no bowls of water. Like, how are you managing the energy over here?

Toshi: What's going on over here? {laughter}

adrienne: Um, like I just noticed that, and I, I just went to a doctor's office for the first time and there were like massive blocks of amethyst. And I was like, okay, we gonna be all right. There's just, you know what amethyst is. And there's massive blocks of it. And even if you don't know what it is, amethyst does what it does. So...

Toshi: It does what it does. And...

adrienne: So anyway, just, just notice that, because I think it could be something that would be useful in the future is like, even if we're like in an apocalyptic situation, we're like, we have to find a new place to be. Do we wanna stop at this space? Do we wanna stop at the next one? Right. Like what, what are indications? That this is a well cared for energetic space? That this might be a good person?

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: Pay attention, right? Pay attention. And then, uh, my final, final question. Have you ever met a telepath? To your knowledge? Or have you ever sensed like I'm with someone it feels like they can read my thoughts? They can tell what is happening inside me. Energetically. If you've met one, have you ever had to survive one?

Toshi: Hmm.

adrienne: And/or have you suspected you might be one, right?

Toshi: Mm.

adrienne: about them? Right? Which might be mind telepathy. It might be energetic, but just track this. Are you Mary?

Toshi: Hmm.

adrienne: Are you a Vivian?

Toshi: (Mm-hmm.

adrienne: Always, always keep finding yourself in these stories. Yeah. Hmm. Um, Toshi, are you a telepath?

Toshi: Ahhh. I, I don't think I am.

adrienne: Mmm.

Toshi: Um, but I'm very sensitive.

adrienne: Yeah.

Toshi: You know, like, so I pick up on what I think people want me to know pretty, I think pretty easy. I don't always voice it, but I, I definitely feel it pretty easily.

adrienne: Yeah. That's good. Yup. I feel like, I feel like I'm a childlike energy in a certain, like an ancient child, if that makes sense.

Toshi: Mm-hmm.

adrienne: So I feel like in the way that kids are, like, I can always kind of feel energetically safety or not safety.

Toshi: Mmm.

adrienne: Like, I track for that, but I almost always, I almost never know the specifics of it. Like I'm like people have to tell me the details.

Toshi: Mm.

adrienne: And I very much live... I'm like the details... don't like, I'm like, just tell me the, the, the vibe, the {laughs}, you know? Um, but I can almost like if I meet someone I'm like, there's a very quick, like safe, not safe, safe, not safe. And the only thing that can throw that off is that that person can do energy distortion.

Toshi: Mm. Wow.

adrienne: I almost always fall for it cuz I can see the best in people. So I'm like, oh, you wanna project X? You know, like kindness or whatever. Like I'm, like falling for it. I see the kindness in you {laughter} You know? Um, I'm like, you know, I love seeing the very best in people. So...

Toshi: Right.

adrienne: Um, alright. So that is our chapter two exploration y'all. Thank you for listening as always. Thank you for asking yourself these questions and being with us in this journey. Um, our producer is Kat Aaron. Our show art is from Krista Franklin and we are transcribed by Jess Pinkham. You can find us on Twitter @oparables. You can go on our Patreon page at patreon.com/oparables to support the show and our labor. And transcripts for all episodes live at readingoctavia.com. [Readingoctavia.com](https://readingoctavia.com)

Toshi: And the music for Octavia Parables is *You Don't Know the Time* written and performed by Toshi Reagon and *The Sower Song* sung by the cast of Octavia E Butler's Parable of the Sower: The Opera at Memorial Hall in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, written by Bernie Johnson Reagon.

adrienne: Hmm. See you next time.

Toshi: Bye, y'all.

{closing music begins to play}