Penny Pepper - Being A Writer podcast

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

burnout, splurge, writing, writers, TLC, feel, bit, writer, friend, memoir, journey, people, disabled, read, lovely, overdoing, nice, difficult, story, seafront

**SPEAKERS**

Nelima Begum, Penny Pepper

**Nelima Begum**

Welcome to the Being a Writer podcast Penny, it's lovely to have you here. How are you feeling today?

**Penny Pepper**

I am feeling good today Nelima I'm very very chuffed that I've been invited on by TLC.

**Nelima Begum**

Oh well we're so glad to have you here and obviously you and TLC go way back you're a legend, as far as I'm concerned. There are only nice things to say about you, within the TLC team.

**Penny Pepper**

Oh I'm blushing basically TLC has been most wonderful, majestic, supportive organization for me and I, I really feel they changed my life as a writer for the better.

**Nelima Begum**

Oh gosh we're all gonna be blushing when we listen back podcast now. So I'm really excited to have you on here today because I feel like you know you you can really help us speak to this topic, which is how to protect your energy and deal with overwhelm. Now I'm going to jump straight into the first question because obviously we want as much of your wisdom as possible. So, you work across a variety of formats and mediums of expression, let's talk about your energy as a creator. What inspires you and influences your creative practice, slash energy?

**Penny Pepper**

Um, first of all, I think, I'm very, I am very driven. And maybe a better word is passionate about what I believe in. And what I believe in is diversity, inclusion, intersectionality within literature. Firstly, but in no sense of hierarchy, but as a disabled writer who wants to write the disability story, but also because it just isn't really there - it really isn't. And I won't sidetrack into that, but also knowing that, even though, you know I'm older now, I'm older I've been doing this a long time, but it still, if anything, I feel like my tendency to overdo it and burn out, it has increased with time because the work still needs to be done. So I see it, I see it in every, every other hour, if you like I see something someone wrote to me today about inappropriate language involving disability. And I know I have a profile. I'd like it to be bigger, of course, as all writers, well I'd like to be writing more fiction, but TLC and help me go on that journey and I've had a few little bits published [of] fiction lately and that's always a really positive move forward. But I also did this article for Byline Times, I'm very proud of it, which is carrying on this journey. So these opportunities, give me hope, and then hope gives me that passion. These things have to be done and I will say that to have inclusion of story from all human beings, is what we must work towards because we need them. Definitely, and you know, it's definitely you know we can see you doing the work. You're quite active on social media and everything so it's brilliant to see that, that that's what drives you. Also what drives me within that is it's still very difficult for disabled writers who want to write, if you like, the disability story. And I'm very specific in that it's still very difficult for them to get exposure and serious consideration and I will say yet again - you can blush, you can all blush! - the lovely TLC that you've done it and you have done an amazing amount of work around that and I, I feel, I feel privileged I've been involved in that journey because, as I say now as long as there's still this issue that, if you don't, if you say you're inclusive, but you don't have disabled writers you are not inclusive. And if you need to know what that means in sort of sociological sense if you like then, there's plenty of people out there who can guide you. Yeah. And some, some disabled writers will be writing their own story. And what by that, I mean, you know, I know quite few writers won't surprise you, but they may be writing romance stories and that's fine. They may not feel - one of my influences, just to be a writer was Rosemary Sutcliff who wrote a lot for children; she did a lot around the Arthurian legends and stuff. And I managed to write to her when I was about 18. Now, as far as I know she never consciously wrote about her life. And that's not, I'm not saying that as a criticism, that too has its place but the barriers to that to that, to that life and that journey in that career are still so present, really, you know, so you could say that that that's the first sign of my, um, not only my passion but also it could take me on that dreading that dreaded dark alley of overdoing it.

**Nelima Begum**

Okay, another thing I wanted to ask you actually was, you know, do you have any, as a writer you invest so much in your work and it can sometimes feel very personal. How - I mean what do you recommend for writers who kind of need to protect themselves and their work but still push on and find ways to carry on doing it.

**Penny Pepper**

Do you mean in the sense of what they're writing, or do you mean, just that passion to push on...?

**Nelima Begum**

Both but I think mainly the passion because that's where the energy is and that's the thing that drives you but sometimes you can feel very vulnerable and that can hold you back.

**Penny Pepper**

I think it is, it's a journey - I keep using that term today but it is one concern that maybe doesn't have a perfect arrival point, and it's good to know that. And I've learned that I mean I'm naturally a splurger, every writer is going to recognize this i'm sure, I splurge. And I do that thing where I write, because I'm working on my new novel at the moment, and I do that thing where I write something that might be in the middle of the novel and splurge it out. And over the years I've realized that's okay but as long as you don't keep continually splurging so that you don't even know what day it is, it will not help your writing. And also I feel it's just about looking at yourself with how you protect yourself if you feel vulnerable. In my new novel I'm going to be writing about domestic violence, for instance, but actually the novel itself in the synopsis is, it's, it's folk horror. It's sort of drama, comedy, it's a friend of mine the writer Jake Arnott, lovely Jake, he helped me with the synopsis so it's very signature Penny Pepper, it's dark and light. But obviously, I knew when I even when I did my memoir, First in The World Somewhere, which was kind of born at TLC by the way that I, there were certain things I had to do to protect myself and others, actually. And, and I know it's different with memoir, but I think it's learning how far you want to go - also a biggie, I don't want to sound like a celeb now but I've learned off my lovely lovely very good friend Lisa Carr the actor, you just don't pay attention to people in, around you that you don't really know or I won't say who don't matter, because it's, you know, that sounds unkind but who really may have negative, harassing, difficult things they want to say but they're not really anything to do with you. I have phases when, although I'm not particularly on Twitter and Instagram I don't on Facebook I don't do a lot directly I've got a lovely person who helps me. And you can always do that as well, I mean I have to have physical help to write, and I've done that on another little film for TLC. So, I have a buffer zone, and I think everyone should have this sort of buffer person whether it's a good friend, that you say, you know, I need to talk about this or whatever point I'll be doing this podcast. Post. See what they think or see if they'll check for you I'm really terrible with reviews. Yeah, I don't, I don't really read them. And I've got a few on Amazon so far. And I've got a very very loyal partner, and he goes in there like a liberal dog with a bone and goes 'rerererere', he particularly used to hate it when I, I did, I did quite challenging things for The Guardian I would do you know, opinion pieces, and you would get some real hateful stuff. I just don't bother.

**Nelima Begum**

Of course, yeah, it's difficult because obviously we live in a time when everyone is allowed to share their opinion and it's very easy to see them. It's kind of knowing what your boundaries and your limits are like how are you keeping your, like what are your, how are you deciding what the limits are.

**Penny Pepper**

Well I would say on that, you see, don't, you know, if it's in that it's within that arena then give yourself space from it because I can see that within a week... although so much is online now we can't say where the newspapers are but you take some of that off, and that's not a bad thing, and then you come back and do something else and it's fine but leave a gap. I think it's important to leave a gap. If you've done a hell of a lot of work. And you get caught in that trap between, oh my god if I just, if I just don't eat or do anything else, I'll even write on the toilet, and do it. It won't come out well.

**Nelima Begum**

Do you mean that in like the throughout the drafting process as well as after it's been published or put out there?

**Penny Pepper**

I mean even in the creative process to avoid that really raw kind of burnout. I mean, I can't tell you a lot about my current novel. Because what did they call it what's the, I should know my agent Abby will know - it's with publishers, or something, it's got particular, it's, it's, she's submitted my current novel to 10 publishers and COVID has affected her, the response times and whatever but there is a bit of a thing which I'm so lucky I have a lovely agent with the Good Literary Agency, and they really believe in me and they believe in my novel, which is great because even now, I think there's still a fear because my novel is just well, I'm not going to tell you a lot about it but it is very -

**Nelima Begum**

- Yeah we should keep this as you know, not giving too much away -

**Penny Pepper**

- Yeah the lead character, the lead protagonist is a disabled woman. And it's a bit magical realism, a bit speculative, a bit dark knight and a bit set in Victorian... well it's set in 1875 and Nancy's the main character and she meets the Elephant Man and all sorts of stuff it's... But that's that I just, I just feel... 'come on publishers, come in!' and that gives me a burnout. I don't wanna be begging and pimping myself in it but it is. It's so frustrating, but Abby's my warrior, and I'm lucky. I do you think that moved things on for me about what how to protect myself because I've got Abby who, she knows me pretty well she knows how I splurge and how, and if an opportunity comes up, generally, I'm like, 'yeah, I've done it, done it!'. I think that comes from so many years in the wilderness. I'm sure a lot of listeners will recognize that you're, you always feel like you've got do something better or, and it's -

**Nelima Begum**

 - absolutely -

**Penny Pepper**

It's so crushing that you end up thinking, you've got to sell your soul on social media and whatever -

**Nelima Begum**

- It's like the goalposts move further and further away sometimes... -

**Penny Pepper**

And I would also say I think that, although in many ways it's more democratic and it's more accessible, particularly for disabled writers to have social media. And it's very important to not get lost in it. I'm. I'm like, developing different things I'm, I'm even on Tik Tok now can you believe it.

**Nelima Begum**

Oh Amazing! That's brilliant!

**Penny Pepper**

Yeah, well I'm gonna do this, make it funny, I want to make it funny but always about work so I'm, I'm going to be brazen on there and go 'buy my book, buy my book!' and do that because what else can you do places like that? Like even on Instagram, you can be more nuanced I've been invited to do live readings and stuff, you know, the team being big, they have and that that's all great, but at the same time, I always tried to avoid social media burnout by thinking what what does this bring me? It's not like being, you're not, you're not you're being pragmatic rather than just pimping yourself out so it's not just like, without heart but I think you still have to be pragmatic; I've got quite a few friends, who have no social media - writers who have no social media profile whatsoever.And then when they try and do say a YouTube thing they might have one viewer. Okay, I'm gonna trigger all this stuff about -

**Nelima Begum**

 - 'what if I was on social media, this might be easier', yeah -

**Penny Pepper**

yeah, it is technically easier but I do think that in the times we're in. It's good to have something. It also makes up for a lot of the barriers, disabled people face and other people, you know, have faced due to all kinds of discrimination because I think you've got your own little world where you can put

**Nelima Begum**

 - it settles and you kind of mold it to suit you -

**Penny Pepper**

Yeah, and you can then break down prejudice and discrimination by being yourself within that world where, you know, but I mean I just, I think, going back to the burnout and looking after yourself, I think it's keeping sight of that pragmatism. Yeah. Because when I, when I used to do, I used to do a lot of mentoring with sort of newbies. Back in the day, and what used to amaze me was how they were all so obsessed with the, the end product that they managed to do the work and some of them didn't actually do, I suppose it's like the opposite of burnout. It was the fear of writing anything.

**Nelima Begum**

Yeah, sometimes fear of progress and success of moving things along can actually hold you back too...

**Penny Pepper**

Yeah but then, then you get a different kind of burnout, I think, because you get a sort of wishful thinking burnout about your grade model. And so, it's about finding that balance they say moderation is a good thing. So sometimes you do have to give yourself permission to splurge though.

**Nelima Begum**

It's interesting that you said that you've mentioned wishful thinking burnout because that's something that I had never considered before, so it's a it's an interesting angle to look at it from. I mean when we're talking about burnout and overwhelm obviously you've mentioned that you've been doing this for a while you've had this really great colorful career so far. I mean how do you, how can we recognize what overwhelm and burnout might feel like because sometimes we're so caught up in the process, it's really difficult to kind of step back and see that it might be a bit too much, sometimes.

**Penny Pepper**

The first thing to notice your burnout might be for your friends. I get that a lot.

**Nelima Begum**

So having a good network of support around you is key.

**Penny Pepper**

Yeah it's very good - people you trust, whether it's through family, friends, a mixture, where you start to think or your friend start to say to you, 'well you were meant to call me three nights ago.' And then, or three afternoons ago whenever you know whenever you're splurging and also then you go, Oh I know but I was really busy really really and right in the zone I said I was in the Penny zone. And then they'll go 'well, you said that a week ago as well'. And I'm lucky where I live, I live on the coast in Hastings, and I have a regular thing of going to look at the sea, now we may not one always go with a friend at the moment because it's socially distanced but that's my wellbeing hour. Now because I go with a friend or a friend will meet me there, and all that. It's like if I stopped doing that, they then nudge me gently and say we think you're overdoing it. And you know you're gonna get it. At my worst, Nelima, I was writing till three in the morning -

**Nelima Begum**

 - Oh my goodness.

**Penny Pepper**

And finding it really hard to stop now I would say, at times that was how I have to do it. And it's okay, it's okay if you then lie into gone 12 The next day, maybe. Yeah, that's never really been how my life goes. Yeah, and it's not good, I would say is Larry's work when you work best, but keep keep moderation and keep a self awareness of it, you know, maybe you can set a timer I've done that, partly because I often do my work now through voice dictation or another person - that helps. If another person is typing for me, they will be going, 'okay, we got 10 minutes, and then I'm having a cup of tea.'

**Nelima Begum**

Right, so they kind of remind you of your breaks and things

**Penny Pepper**

Yeah and I might go, 'oh, oh, can we just finish this little bit, because... Well, if it isn't it will be.' But let's get we'll make notes, and that's another thing I've learned on the journey I mean these days I do a lot in my head. That's partly because of my impairments where I don't use keyboard maps and so on and it's quite often it's quite an interesting skill, and particularly with sort of the commentary in journalism stuff I've done I can write a lot of it. It's not that I remember it word for word but I do remember the points, and the flow and all that. And I can remember stuff. I remember things like scenes in my head that are going to go into the novels, you know, short stories or whatever so it's good to practice that - you can do that anywhere. And then you start to. You can then then not feel like worried or because you're not splurging or you're not sat down there like you think writers are meant to be and so on. So, I would say at the moment. This was a funny thing for me and I think we talked about it during the first lockdown. I just finished my novel.

**Nelima Begum**

So within the first lockdown you just, you know, wrote it all?

**Penny Pepper**

I can't talk a lot about it, but my novel, it's taken me a while to get to this point for various reasons, a long time, and I'm not going to tell you how long but a long time. And I don't think the world was ready for it in the first draft and stuff like that. But yeah, I got signed up to Abby and the Good Literary Agency. And, yeah, it was like, I, you know, Abby guiding me through getting the final draft and that's basically what I did. Right up to last August I almost didn't know we sliding into a second lockdown...

**Nelima Begum**

because you were occupied.

**Penny Pepper**

Yeah, and I think, you know, writers are solitary beasts, aren't we?

**Nelima Begum**

Yeah and sometimes it can get overwhelmingly lonely as well when you feel like no one else could understand what you're going through. You're having to go it alone and because you're essentially holding yourself accountable for everything.

**Penny Pepper**

Yeah. Yeah, I mean I've had live-in personal assistance, but nothing to do with my work and I sometimes do have issues there, it must be the same with well you know anyone who's read my memoir knows I've been married twice, and that thing that my work in hospitals, didn't work. So, because you know it's all in it's all there in the memoir, but my second husband, we're still good friends and he lives close but he, he just could never understand the splurging aspect. And I admit that it's a delicate again it's a delicate balance on that journey because splurging can become obsessive over, and I have a slightly obsessive personality. So, and, and he's seen me get ill, he seen me as, you know, serious episodes of mental distress and blah blah blah so it's me and then of course you know, you have to get away from the guilt trap, but just accept it that that is not the way to do it. Yeah. Your burnout will make you unwell.

**Nelima Begum**

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, it goes back to that thing of if you don't take time out and, you know, choose your moments of rest and relaxation, your body will decide for you. And most of the time it will be at a point where you didn't intend to do it, but your body will pick that time to kind of say, look, I need to... I need a timeout.

**Penny Pepper**

Yeah I had that a bit around the launch my memoir. So I was in hospital 10 days before the launch event at Royal Festival Hall. It's really scary and I thought, well, I didn't feel, you know, I worked through the guilt because there was probably not a lot I could do but over a long period of time I realized it was a factor, I wasn't resting. Yeah, and I find rest quite hard actually. A friend of mine, Janet, - I'm gonna name check her - and she, later, she was saying 'why can't you?' know, like she's one of these people that can relax in bed, have a lie-in, have breakfast in bed, listen to radio four or put some, you know, silly telly and I can't and she'll say to me 'can't you just stare into space?' And I'll go, No. So she's maximally meditating maybe...

**Nelima Begum**

Where do you think that comes from? That finding it really hard to switch off. It's quite common. Where do you think that comes from as a writer?

**Penny Pepper**

I think for me it sounds so so precious and a bit annoying maybe, but everything I tend to look at can become a story, it almost becomes like, annoying sometimes. I've taken it a step further in my next novel where the lead protagonist can kind of read and absorb history in houses. And so that's very embedded into the actual story, but just that, you know where you look at something and you immediately create story out of it or things just pop in and I've learned the hard way and over a long period of time to that, to, to then turn that back into some more meditative. Yeah. You know, I've got lots of flowers in my lounge right now so I can look at, you know, just try and think about the shape and color, and how to arrange them in the bars and if you find doing that that's effectively. You know, focusing on one thing. And I was yeah, I was taught mindfulness. That way, because I have the butterfly checks in mind. So, there's no point telling me to focus on my breath. It doesn't do anything for me. So, and I also think the other practical tip, just write down at ground roots of surviving this stuff we call writing is to remember to break. It's such a, you know, a hole of so many circumstances where you might be on a computer. Yeah. I try and break now as I'm working with someone else on Zoom and they're doing typing making a make me break.

**Nelima Begum**

Yes, so just knowing when to kind of step away.

**Penny Pepper**

Yeah. Yeah.

**Nelima Begum**

And what's really interesting because it leads nicely on to the next question where, how do you distance yourself? Are there things that you tell yourself or things that you do in particular that kind of make you think right I need to step away for a minute now I'll come and look at it some other time.

**Penny Pepper**

Well, I think that I've learned, again, just from experience that if something's not going right, it's much better to step away. And you can't quite get something to flow how you want it, and working on some really difficult poems at the moment and sestinas, I don't know if you've heard of sestinas but yeah very tricky, but I love them. I like, I like the challenge of them and I like the fact that they've got a form where you can tell a story. And I'm doing one about. Richard the third, believe it or not. Oh nice, trying to bring that down to the fact that he had scoliosis of the spine. And you know, sometimes I can sit there thinking, am I going to attempt to use scoliosis as a word that you repeat in the pattern. And I think that when I get to that point, it's like, no, you've got to stop. You got to step back. I've done another, another sestina about - and it's difficult - about adults, confronting me with racism, when I was about 11. And so I've done this in a sestina to tell the story. I'm slightly removed from me but remember, remembering the emotions of my best friend. My best friend was Black. And we were like little peas in a pod. But we were in hospital together and so I'm going through all the emotion I'm trying to put into this poem. And then wanting to really make it count. And I think that goes back to what you said about vulnerability because at the moment, I won't share that with anyone, not yet, because I need it to be right for my friend, I want it to be right for me and the friendship we had, where we didn't, you know, and I, I at 11 I didn't know what privilege I had. And also the sort of muddle of layers of things because neither of us had privilege in the sense we were both disabled and not well. And I had no idea. I really, and that still gives me a kind of weird feeling in my stomach to this day, that people would not like my best friend and call her names. So that's quite raw and vulnerable and it comes to a point where I think now I need to go away. It's time to keep that back. Let me rest, let me look at my friends now let me, you know, take myself right away from that space, you know, just do something comforting that'll kind of keep you away at that. When you're involved in that level of emotional debt if you like and memory and creativity, you do need to know when to protect yourself. You certainly won't write a good sestina if you keep just, you know, going over your work as well.

**Nelima Begum**

I think the last time we spoke to you actually. You mentioned reading as well as a means for dealing with overwhelm kind of re inspiring yourself almost as well.

**Penny Pepper**

Yeah, reading is a good thing, and in whatever way you make it accessible to yourself I read a lot and I do a lot for audible. And I just think to do yeah we talked about how you choose something that's not anything like what you're writing. It's very easy to suck up the influence of other writers I think for us. So, you know, I might read non-fiction if I'm doing the work on the novel. And, or I might read a silly magazine. Although recently, this took it to the edge for me. I bought one of those, those... oh, you know, you've got, I was joking I was out with my PA, and I was really just a bit, easy. Yes. So, she said well you've got Hello magazine.

**Nelima Begum**

Nice.

**Penny Pepper**

And I said, well, is there lots of pictures of royalty and she went by, there might be I went, nah can't go that far. I did buy Grazia cuz I said I don't mind the fashion I'll be really, like, you know, I'll just be kind of some really expensive clothes that will probably be the face that's all. And I did. And I'm glad. And now I know what to avoid in terms of fashion disasters.

**Nelima Begum**

But it's nice because it's kind of just this mindless -

**Penny Pepper**

mindless activity -

**Nelima Begum**

- that just takes you away. Yeah, yeah, yeah and in doing so yeah you'd like you said, like you said before, sometimes you actually come across a new idea or a new perspective or approach to what you're actually working on.

**Penny Pepper**

Yeah, exactly because you know and I'm not, I'm not, I don't want to sound snobby about those magazines at all but they're not something I would read regularly. I used to read things like, Take a Break - do you know Take a Break?

**Nelima Begum**

Yeah I remember that.

**Penny Pepper**

 That, and I do read things like the wonderful Mslexia - I was in the December edition - very proud of that. I had a little short story in it but I think I've got every copy - it's like an in-between because I love reading about what other people are up to and you know, it's so useful.

**Nelima Begum**

Oh we love Mslexia here at TLC!

**Penny Pepper**

Again it comes back to this thing of perspective and just refreshing that time and time again. Definitely and it reminds you of the journey that others have been on that might echo your own and give you that reassurance...

**Nelima Begum**

That's beautiful. That's a lovely way of looking at it as well.

**Penny Pepper**

And also it gives you insights, like you've said really into ways you can progress yourself. So it's halfway on the, on the spectrum as well isn't it as in it's sort of still writing so you might feel good about that. It's still in your, your zone of what you're yearning to do, that over the top splurge but so you still feel it's useful to you but you are actually having a rest.

**Nelima Begum**

We're currently recording this in the third lockdown. I think a lot of people might be feeling that sense of overwhelm by this point just because of everything that's going on, and especially if you're working on your own project. I mean, how have you been dealing with it so far?

**Penny Pepper**

Well, I know we touched on it that the first lockdown I did my novel edits, and that that was quite good. I felt quite lucky again living by the sea. Then, I would say the last one, well, kind of the one we're in now really, the post Christmas time has been very hard. Yeah, I've had I've had a little bit of, you know, I've had my little bit of depression biting my backside and just just trying to think through it. I feel again I'm lucky I'm very good friends who have been there for me throughout and they'll call me and cheer me on. And I'm and I, the irony is, if you can avoid burnout, or lockdown burnout, it's quite, it's quite a healing process to write absolutely anything.

**Nelima Begum**

Okay so just get your thoughts down somewhere.

**Penny Pepper**

Yes, I've been right in haikus. And luckily, a couple of projects out there that are using haikus to share experiences around COVID. And I find that, because it's, there is an art to haiku but at the same time you can, you know, just just writing for yourself for a little while. See how that feels. Look at the form and, you know, see it as a little gentle bit of practice.

**Nelima Begum**

Yeah, again, try out mediums of expression that maybe you previously haven't done before. And a haiku is a great example of that. So if you, let's just say you're writing a novel, have a go at some poetry.

**Penny Pepper**

The other thing to do is that I say is read poetry. Because so many young poets - no I take that back actually. So, beginner poets are - I hate ageism in writing I could do a whole podcast on that. And -

**Nelima Begum**

I have to bring you back on for that.

**Penny Pepper**

Invite me on if you do want to do something about that. So new poets, new poets, I think often don't read enough, or even because it's such a broad genre now. And I think people love poetry, but they don't always realize it. And it can be very...

**Nelima Begum**

I think it's about reading around it and finding something that speaks to you.

**Penny Pepper**

Definitely. Of course poetry isn't just the one you were forced to learn at school, which is not going to be good for anyone usually, but it's about finding something you like. And that, like you say speaks to you but also brings you that perspective, I absolutely love reading poems about nature, which sounds terrible cliche, we're all being told 'nature, nature', but it's true!

**Nelima Begum**

It's great to just kind of go beyond yourself, and that's the power of you know as cliche as it sounds, the power of reading, that it transports you elsewhere.

**Penny Pepper**

Yes, and even, you know I've been, I've been reading some Thomas Hardy and, oh, even, because we kind of know each other, and Salena Godden - Hastings girl! And I love to make this work, or adore it. And I, I feel jealous that she come up with pessimism this lightweight, because it's so true, and avoid burnout by looking at the window -

**Nelima Begum**

- oh that's a really great tip.

**Penny Pepper**

Yeah. Just look at look at the sky...

**Nelima Begum**

Look at the window, just look at anything else.

**Penny Pepper**

Yes. Look out. Also I know people have preferences. Let the light in.

**Nelima Begum**

Oh, that's a really important one actually and one that we don't think of often enough, really easy to forget natural light is key.

**Penny Pepper**

Yeah, let the light in, and, well, I just, I just think that looking. It's become a cliche and never should be about what nature does for us because we forget we're connected to it. We're absolutely connected to nature because of who we are, we are part of it, and we just then get distance from that. I'm so lucky that I've got a nice little garden.

**Nelima Begum**

Oh, and you're by the sea as well.

**Penny Pepper**

And sometimes I can get my front door, I can actually see the sea from where I live, it's about eight minutes and stroll to the seafront. But from my sort of front door with the road I can see it. And sometimes you can hear it if it's windy, there's nothing like it. Yeah, it is a true magic to me and I think that's the other thing with nature - connect yourself to the magic of it. You know I've been working on a poem about three foxes, that come and visit my road.

**Nelima Begum**

Oh, nice.

**Penny Pepper**

I love the fact that they come down from the woods because it's you know outside the town is quite rural, but they have their little moments and some people are hand feeding them and all these lovely things but you know that you're with something. You're in the presence of something -

**Nelima Begum**

- that you're living in the moment and there is something beyond yourself.

**Penny Pepper**

Yes. And that is a great thing to do, but I think on that point, I would say with the skies. When it's clear. Now, even in London, there are clear, there are dark skies in areas because I used to live near, in the Walthamstow marshes. Yeah I can do that when we're allowed.

**Nelima Begum**

Yeah. Just get out there.

**Penny Pepper**

I can go to the seafront and look at the sky and it's like, it still fills me with relief and wonder. So, you know, it's useful.

**Nelima Begum**

Penny thank you so much. There is so much wisdom within this one podcast, there's so many great tips and bits of advice for writers and I'm sure the listeners will find this really useful as well. Thank you for joining us. It's been an absolute pleasure to have you.

**Penny Pepper**

It's been lovely talking to you.

**Nelima Begum**

Thank you so much Penny!

**Penny Pepper**

Bye bye!