



I'M ALWAYS SO SERIOUS

poems

KARISMA PRICE



QUESTIONS

1. Many of the poems in this collection deal with the speaker's loneliness and grief. How have you sat with/examined moments of grief and loneliness in your own life? What do those moments have to say back to you?

2. Why do you think there are multiple poems titled, "I'm Always so serious?" Is the speaker "serious" in all of them? What's similar and/or different in the poems' text? Do you have a favorite?

3. In "Can't Afford Sadness in a Time Like This," the speaker recalls a memory with her cousin and moments they've experienced as a family. Think of a family member that is important to you. What's something you've never told them that you've always wanted to?

4. Are there any ghosts or recurring images in the collection? Who or what are they and how do they present themselves?

5. The collection opens with the poem "Self-Portrait." What themes do you see present in the opening poem? Are they expanded upon throughout the rest of the collection?

6. "Things that Fold" is a poem written after the poet Jamaal May. The poem uses a listing form similar to the way May uses it in his poem "Things that Break." Why do you think I used listing as a form for this poem about family and Hurricane Katrina?

7. Connected to the previous question: Is there a poem, song, or another piece of art that you'd like to emulate? What about it speaks to you?

8. Why do you think the book is broken into three sections? What major theme(s) do you see in each section?
9. “My Phone Autocorrect Nigga to Night” is a poem that explores black life and black culture. Why do you think I decided to replace the word “Nigga” with “Night” in the body of the poem?
10. The collection includes persona poems from musicians such as James Booker and Harry Connick Jr. Why do you think I use personas in a book that contains so many poems based on personal events?

QUESTIONS

1. Paraphrased version of an exercise given to me by one of my creative writing professors that helped me write “Demeter, Reimagined as a Black Woman, Speaks to Persephone”: Take a familiar myth from history and add an element that allows you to reinvent or retell it in a different way.
2. Prompt based on “I’m Always so Serious [which is to say in the winters I dream]”: I tend to be verbose in my drafts and I love a long sentence. In the original draft, I tried to avoid run-on sentences, but the poem wasn’t working with shorter lines. Try writing a poem that utilizes run-on sentences and isn’t afraid of saying “too much.”
3. One of my “I’m Always so Serious” poems uses The Golden Shovel Form. The Golden Shovel form is a form created by Terrance Hayes where the end words of each line spell out the poem “We Real Cool” by Gwendolyn Brooks. Try writing your own Golden Shovel.



Karisma Price’s work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Four Way Review*, *Wildness*, *The Adroit Journal*, and elsewhere. She has received fellowships from Cave Canem and New York University, was a finalist for the 2019 Manchester Poetry Prize, and awarded The 2020 J. Howard and Barbara M.J. Wood Prize from The Poetry Foundation. She is from New Orleans, LA, and holds an MFA in poetry from New York University. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Poetry at Tulane University.