Okay, here’s the masterpiece you’ve been waiting to read. (And when you watch *Ghostwriter*, you’ll hear me read part of it in an episode.) I hope you learned a little bit about the two things I LOVE to talk about: poetry—and me. Write on!

**ODE TO A TAXI DRIVER**

by Kwame Alexander

I.

I like to listen to the city life.

The *BOOM BAP* of hoop dreams dribbling, the slick, sweet *TAP TAP* of Double Dutch, the laughter from the stoop’s morning chatter, and the neon screams of the night: Blues

**WAILING LIKE A DOG**
without a bone.
So, I take my time,
drive slow,
you know, give 'em the tour,
let the rhythm
color the day

like the **CRIMSON SKIRTS**
in that window
over there. You see,
that used to be a corner dive
called Etta Mae’s
where the hacks ate a meal
and hung out
after the shift.

It was all **JAZZ JIVE**, 
and **JAM**: back then,
after the war.
That’s when the food stuck to you good

like your daddy’s Saturday night **LAUGHING**

and your momma’s Sunday morning **SINGIN’**.
Today, the food’s just mostly okay.
That’ll be eighty-three cents.

II.

**T**hing about driving a cab
is you know all the shortcuts.
Take a left down that street,
turn right up this one,
**ZIP** straight through the east side,
**ZOOM** right across the west.
But you can’t take any shortcuts
in life, ya know.

This one fella I knew
had demons chasing him
like **COYOTES ON A SQUIRREL**.
Hopped in, said he needed
to skip town in a hurry.
Told me to **head towards**
the clocktower, and
Keep driving, fast.

Jesse Owens fast, so I did.
Thing was, it was a parking lot up here,
'cause a great big ol' barge down below
was taking its own sweet time.

Turns out, the demons were The Police,
and the law caught him right here.
It's a shame he got arrested
before paying the fare.

III.

Each time I pass by
that church
I marvel
at its pristine beauty.

The way it skates the sky
reminding this cabbie
to soar
even when you're being pulled down.

But, my favorite place
for all eternity
is the next stop,
and here's why:

It was a Saturday, high noon.
Right after the double feature
I see a river of honey,
a lady with the sweetest smile
hailing a cab.
I pull up, next to
the candy-apple-red hydrant,
get out to open her door,
which I never do,
'cause I'm nobody's butler,
and by the time I get to her,
I look at her, stare at her,
start feeling woozy,
like I can't breathe.
Like I'm in another universe.
On a different planet.
Saturn, maybe.
I’m spellbound.
Her eyes
are two moons.

I’m so busy being captivated
that I FORGET ABOUT GRAVITY,
which takes Etta Mae’s milkshake
right outta my hand

and onto the most beautiful pair
of red heels I’ve ever stood next to.
She grabs my arm,
asks if I’m all right,

and before you know it,
I’m driving her home,
SIPPING LEMONADE on her porch,
and never missing the Saturday matinee.

We got married
in that fine church, and

I’ve lived with the SWEETEST SMILE
in outer space ever since.

IV.

NOW, if you like spices
this part of town has got your number.
We call it The Plaza,
on account of the fountain

and the oak tree
at the CENTER OF ITS WORLD:
The white and blue flags
The familial folks
Small fry’s playing tag
Women breaking bread
Men playing Spades.
Matter of fact, that’s where I’ll be.

Not taking any more fares today.
Gotta meet a man
in a fedora.
CASE CLOSED...