

TRANSCRIPT
ONOMATOPOEIA

Silk Sheets and Body Acceptance Feats

Episode Description: Shannon gains a new perspective - literally - during a circus silks class at Aerial Arts NYC. With the help of her instructor, Lisa, Shannon will get out of her head and into the air.

**SHANNON
GEARY:** I step off the subway at Times Square into the cool November morning air.

Normally, I avoid Times Square like the plague. The crowds of people tend to make me anxious. But I suppose today is a day of anxiousness.

I'm headed towards Aerial Arts NYC to take a beginners silks class. Aerial silks are a strikingly beautiful combination of acrobatics, dance, and circus art. I've always wanted to try, but I'm afraid of heights. And I don't have the upper body strength. But watching people twist and flip among the folds of a glorious silken sheet reaching to the heavens - how could you NOT want to see what that felt like?!

[TAPE] Theme music, rolling under introduction

SG: I'm Shannon Geary and this is Onomatopoeia- a podcast about the people and places of New York City. In this episode, silk sheets and body acceptance feats.

[TAPE] Theme music fade out

SG: My instructor, Lisa, welcomes me into the space.

[TAPE] Background chatter of Lisa greeting Shannon and verifying her appointment time

SG It's bigger than I expected. As big as a basketball court. There's a rainbow of silks cascading from the vaulted ceiling. Lisa has me stretch and warm up in front of a bright orange silk.

[TAPE] Lisa giving instructions to Shannon on how to warm up

SG: My chest tightens as a I finish the warm up

[TAPE] Lisa counting warm-up repetitions.

SG: I'm already tired. How can I already be tired? A familiar feeling creeps up. Shame.

SG: I've been in recovery for five years. But what they don't tell you about eating disorders is that sometimes changing your behaviors isn't the hardest thing. It's the thoughts.

Shaming yourself about what you eat. Shaming yourself about how much you eat. Shaming yourself about what your body looks like, what it can do, what it CAN'T do.

That internal dialogue of shame is hard to get rid of.

[TAPE] Lisa providing

SG: But Lisa is good at what she does. She guides me onto my silk, and her gentle voice pulls me out of my thought spiral. . She starts by having me practice standing in the loop. Then I move my feet on and off the loop. Left foot, right foot. Left foot, right foot. Dismount.

I do squats and leg lifts. I practice adjusting my grip on the strands.

And then it's time to attempt a flip. I scoot my butt into the silk hammock, and lift my knees to my chest. Lisa explains that I need to spread my legs and tilt my body backwards, while thrusting my hips back at the same time.

[TAPE] Lisa instructions

SG: I take a deep breath, and let myself fall back. I try to move my body back, but I can't manage more than a floating plank. My legs are flopping around like a toddler in a baby bouncer. I'm out of breath, sweating like a pig, and making unseemly noises.

But I'm also smiling. And Lisa's cheering me on. And there's Dolly Parton on the radio.

[TAPE] Dolly Parton's I Will Always Love You

SG: I find myself appreciating all the things my body is able to do instead of focusing on what it can't.

It's one more step towards acceptance.

[TAPE] Theme music, rolling under credits

SG: This episode of Onomatopoeia- was created by me, Shannon Geary. Onomatopoeia is a production of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. Joanne Faryon is our executive producer and professor. Original theme music by Lee Feldman. Other music by Blue dot session
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[TAPE] Theme music fade out