

## Ep. 115 | Nature Writing

[00:00:11] **Kendra** Hello, I'm Kendra Winchester, here with Sachi Argabright. And this is Reading Women, a podcast inviting you to reclaim the bookshelf and read the world. Today, we're talking about books around the theme Nature Writing.

[00:00:25] **Sachi** You can find a complete transcript of this episode on our website, [readingwomenpodcast.com](http://readingwomenpodcast.com). And don't forget to subscribe so you don't miss a single episode.

[00:00:34] **Kendra** All right, so this is our nature theme. And I am so excited, Sachi, that you are joining me and the rest of the world as we talk about nature writing.

[00:00:45] **Sachi** Yeah, I think that this is definitely a little bit out of my comfort zone. So I'm glad to be part of this journey. But I really loved the theme a lot more than I thought I would. I am . . . if I were to prefer, you know, whether I like to be indoors versus outdoors, I probably lean a little bit more towards indoors. So I still like going outside and going on the occasional hike. Nothing too intense. But this made me want to, you know, go out and explore a little more just to see how passionate these authors were about the great outdoors and animals and plants and nature. And so this is really good. You know, Reading Women is a great way for me to expand my horizons. And this is another . . . yet another month where I've done that. So very thankful for the experience.

[00:01:41] **Kendra** Well, I am very excited that you volunteered as a tribute for this. This has been on our potential theme list, which we have a running theme list that we've had ongoing since pretty much 2017. And nature writing has been on there since 2017. And every year, I've been hoping someone would choose it. And so Sachi was like, "You know what? I'll do that." And it was like a point of bravery, like to go out there, to go into the unknown. And I was so excited because some of my favorite books are nature writing. And I feel like it's a very underappreciated kind of genre of writing.

[00:02:26] **Sachi** Mm hmm. Yeah, I definitely. . . . I wasn't sure, you know, exactly what we would pick up. But the the four picks that we have are really very different from each other. I figured that a lot of the books would just be around one certain thing, whether it be about, you know, hiking through the woods or things like that. But everything that we picked has a really different viewpoint and covers a different type of subset of nature. And I think what I learned the most through this theme is that nature writing is way more broad and vast than I originally thought. I had a very narrow perspective of what nature writing would be, and that's kind of why I've never really volunteered for it before because I'm like, ah, you know, I don't . . . you know, I'm not super interested in that, in that piece. But with the books that we found and the ones that I read, like, there is so much depth and so much that our books had to offer that we picked that I was pleasantly surprised with how, you know, interesting and how much I learned about different things from each one of the books. So, yeah, I think it was great.

[00:03:37] **Kendra** I am very excited to talk about it because what really got me wanting to do it this year was I was talking about a particular book of nature writing on my BookTube channel. And someone was like, "This book isn't just nature writing." And I thought about that, like "just nature writing." Like that's insulting to nature writing. I was thinking, you know, I think . . . I think the way that humankind undervalues nature kind of connects with how we undervalue nature writing. And this is something that I'm looking into. It's not something that I have done a ton of research on this concept or idea. But I have noticed

that, you know, we much more highly value stories about urban centers or about traveling to different cities as opposed to traveling through nature. And that's something that I've been trying to correct in reading more, not just experiencing in my personal life and and in my family history and the way that we have been connected to nature, but also reading about it. And so that's been kind of what I wanted to do with the theme for me. And we definitely accomplished that.

[00:04:57] **Sachi** Mm hmm. Yeah, absolutely.

[00:04:58] **Kendra** So before we jump into our theme and kind of like our approach to trying to figure out what books we wanted to talk about, I wanted to mention a few updates on Reading Women content. So we have our Patreon podcast. And so my audio files for the June episode, they kind of died. Or they were. . . . It did not work out. Let's just say. And then, so I . . . we rerecorded the June episode. And so I decided to ask Erin if she would be up for it. And so, Erin (erins\_library) over on Bookstagram was very up for chatting about her experience being a Native woman and an actor and trying to get into the audiobook narrator, kind of, realm. And she's narrated part of one audiobook and then an entire audiobook from the same author. And I love her work. She has the most amazing voice.

[00:05:56] **Sachi** That's great.

[00:05:57] **Kendra** Just. Ugh. She's so good at what she does. And so she kind of gives us an inside look about what it's like being an audiobook narrator, some of the challenges she faced, and all sorts of things.

[00:06:09] **Sachi** Awesome. That sounds really interesting.

[00:06:12] **Kendra** We also talk about BRAIDING SWEETGRASS a lot, which is one of my picks today. So, like, that's a bonus.

[00:06:17] **Sachi** Extra discussion.

[00:06:21] **Kendra** Yes, exactly. And then the second one, which is actually July's Patreon episode, is with Adam (@debutiful). And, you know, Reading Women was founded as a passion project to promote books by and about women. And Adam started his passion project to feature debut authors. And he really stepped it up during the pandemic when debut authors were getting hit so hard. And he interviews a diverse range of folks who have started out with their debut books. And so I really appreciate the work that he does. And he focuses on craft like I love to do in my interviews. And so I got him on the phone to chat about his project and kind of what that process looked like for him.

[00:07:06] **Sachi** That's awesome. I feel like it's so hard sometimes to get the word about debut authors out there and for them to really, you know, get their name in their book out to readers. So it's good that there's just another vehicle and platform that can feature those debut authors for the readers who are interested in reading them. I love, you know, exploring and reading debut authors because it's then just someone that, you know, could potentially be on your, like, forever must-read list. Right? So I think that's awesome.

[00:07:41] **Kendra** Yes, definitely. So links to those, to our Patreon, will be in the show notes. Speaking of our Patreon, our shout-out of the day is Stephanie LaBeau. Thank you

so much, Stephanie, for supporting the podcast. We greatly appreciate it. And it's because of patrons like you that we are able to do the work that we do.

[00:08:02] **Sachi** Yes. Thank you, Stephanie.

[00:08:05] **Kendra** All right. So. In, I just want to say, "into the unknown!"

[00:08:13] **Sachi** Hahahaha. Into the unkno-oo-oo-own.

[00:08:13] **Kendra** So into nature. So, Sachi, you've talked a little bit about like heading into this and like, you know, stepping outside your comfort zone. What is your experience with nature? Is that something that you have explored? Or is that something that you've more been like a tourist for? What's been your experience with that?

[00:08:37] **Sachi** Probably the second one. Probably more of a tourist. So. I did. . . . When I was younger, and, you know, we didn't have all the social media and all the technology and all these types of things. . . . We even, when we were younger, my mom didn't let us have like a gaming console until I was in, like, a freshman in high school. And she was convinced it was going to rot our brains. So we grew up all over the East Coast. My father's in the Navy. So when we lived in Boston and when we lived in Mississippi, you know, kind of my formative years that I remember the most from from like six to ten, we spent all of our time outside playing because there really wasn't anything else to do. And so I have a lot of fond memories of playing on the beach, you know, down in Mississippi and playing with bugs in the creek. Or the crick, as we would say down South. And everything.

[00:09:41] **Sachi** And even after I moved up to Ohio, we would play outside with like the fireflies and everything, which I know is something that we might talk about later with one of our picks. So that meant a lot to me because my grandmother on my father's side, when we lived in Ohio, we spent so much time with them. She loved fireflies. Up here we call them lightning bugs. And so she would always talk about the lightning bugs. And she taught me how to catch them in the jar and all those things. And you have to do it at a certain time of night, not to get too much light near them and all that stuff. So that was kind of my extent.

[00:10:16] **Sachi** But as I got older, I, you know, focused on on school. And, you know, I work an office job, so I'm not. . . . I'm inside all the time. And so now when I go to nature, a lot of it is when we go on trips. So it's kind of the touristy part. Like when I lived out on the West Coast in the Bay Area for about a year, we went up to Yosemite, and we went up to Tahoe. We did a lot of hiking, went up to Muir Woods and things like that. And even sometimes, you know, here we have Cuyahoga Valley National Park kind of right in my backyard, only twenty minutes away. So we visit there occasionally. But I don't hike and do as much as I probably should. My mom's really into hiking. And she's always like, "Come with me!: And I'm like, "I'm good." So, I probably should do it more. And after reading some of these books, I do feel like I probably should get outside more, especially since I have so many great parks and such that are free in my area. So maybe this will help push me in a better direction of getting more attuned to nature like I did when I was a child. So.

[00:11:21] **Kendra** I deeply relate to the firefly/lightning bug situation because lightning bugs are such a huge part, you know, of my childhood . . . and putting the plastic over it, making sure there are air holes. And then letting them out in the morning was always a big

deal, like "you should not kill anything that you catch unless you plan on eating it" was a huge principle, which sounds odd. But that just means like you catch and release.

[00:11:44] **Sachi** Yeah, right.

[00:11:46] **Kendra** I grew up in southern Ohio. And my dad's parents. . . . And my grandfather was a woodsman. And going to my grandparents house was, you know, going out up the holler and learning about trees. And my grandfather was very much into chopping wood. That was his stress relief. And so he was like, oh, look, this is a dead tree. It's already dried out. We should chop it and use it for firewood. That's using your land respectfully, is doing that. You should be very careful if you plan on chopping down a tree that's alive. You have to be very careful and not over chop your land. Like, you have to be careful of your resources, essentially. But that's not how he described it to like, you know, a twelve year old.

[00:12:31] **Sachi** Yeah.

[00:12:32] **Kendra** So I really came to appreciate the fact that we have to respect the land that we are in. And we need to understand the plants that are around us because we are . . . we are part of that. We are sharing land with them. And that's why it was, you know, a lot of different reasons why we wanted to talk about nature writers today and honor and respect their work and chat about some of our favorites. And yeah. So, I guess, Sachi, you have our first one.

[00:13:08] **Sachi** Yes, so my first pick is TWO TREES MAKE A FOREST: TRAVELS AMONG TAIWAN'S MOUNTAINS AND COASTS IN SEARCH OF MY FAMILY'S PAST by Jessica J. Lee. And that is out from Catapult. And this book is a memoir focused on Jessica J. Lee discovering her Taiwanese heritage through the country's expansive nature and mountain ranges. So the book kind of begins where she finds part of her grandfather's personal memoirs. And she decides to return to Taiwan to explore her own family history. And then the terrain in Taiwan and also, you know, linking back to long-lost family members based off of the kind of passages in her grandfather's memoir.

[00:14:02] **Sachi** And this book was the one that, you know, the first one I read that was really focused on Taiwan, as a country and as a focus on its foliage and terrain as a key element of the story. Like I've read books set in Taiwan, but then, you know, they barely ever really talk about the country. It's just really a setting. So it's almost like the country is like a character. And it is a very key focus of the book, which I thought was interesting. And the story flips back and forth between, you know, Lee's family stories, but also the history and colonization of Taiwan through the many hikes within the landscape, which I thought was very unique. And, you know, the . . . my only thing was like, when I read this, there's a lot of really technical nature details. She—in her actual job, a day job—she studies plants and nature. And so some of the things that she had written were really technical. And I was like, oo, I don't know if I fully understand this, but I appreciate the passion behind talking through some of these things because when she notes that she's an environmental historian, she definitely really knows her stuff.

[00:15:24] **Sachi** So if you're really into nature from that lens, of exploring history through the environment, this is definitely the book for you. It went very in depth, which I thought was very different than anything I'd ever read before. But I really appreciated it because I'm a big memoir lover, and it really ties together that element in addition to the history and the environment of Taiwan. And I thought it was such a really great book to, at least for

me, to kind of start getting into the nature writing because it's part memoir and part focused on nature. But yeah, I learned so much about Taiwan in this book. And I really recommend it for those who love nature or memoirs. Yeah, I think it was a really great book.

[00:16:21] **Kendra** With her going back and, you know, wandering through Taiwan's natural settings, is that something that inspires you to go back to Japan and to wander through the gorgeous landscape that Japan has?

[00:16:36] **Sachi** Yeah, probably. Like I . . . we've always mentioned or talked about as a family, about, you know, I've gone back to Japan three times now. I was hoping to go for a fourth during 2020. But pandemic derailed that. So hoping to go, you know, next summer. We were hoping it was this summer, but obviously not happening. And we've always talked about, hey, you know, we always stay, you know, in a large major city. And then my grandmother, who we always stay with, she lives in the suburbs. But we said, you know, what if we just took a . . . the entire trip is just us going through the Japanese countryside?

[00:17:15] **Sachi** And we were thinking about spending a good chunk of time in the mountains and the countryside on this upcoming trip. And so I . . . The Japanese countryside is so beautiful, to your point. And they, you know, Japanese people, especially in the countryside, are very attuned to nature and like using up all of the natural resources, whether it be the the plants or the food that is grown there or the fish that are in the rivers and such. And so there are even just, you know, different types of ryokans, which is like a traditional Japanese inn that are right in the countryside or in the mountains. And it's like every meal that they have has locally sourced fish and produce and such. And they talk about the history of all of the farms and all these things that help provide, you know, resources to the area that they live in. And we've always wanted to do that, just have never been able to, you know, get it worked out itinerary-wise with all the other competing things that we want to do. And so, yeah, I would love to go and explore more about Japanese culture and Japanese heritage from that countryside perspective versus some of the cities that we usually go to.

[00:18:39] **Kendra** You know, I know you've done nature of photography and landscape photography before. That would be an amazing opportunity.

[00:18:46] **Sachi** Yes! That would be so cool, for sure. And so that was TWO TREES MAKE A FOREST: TRAVELS AMONTH TAIWAN'S MOUNTAINS AND COASTS IN SEARCH OF MY FAMILY'S PAST by Jessica J. Lee. And that is out from Catapult. Now, Kendra, how about you tell us about your first pick today?

[00:19:05] **Kendra** So my first pick is BRAIDING SWEETGRASS: INDIGENOUS WISDOM, SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AND THE TEACHING OF PLANTS by Robin Wall Kimmerer, out from Milkweed Editions. And I have the gorgeous anniversary hardback edition from Milkweed. And I adore it. And I'm going to just hit the highlights of this book. It is a long book, and she has so much wisdom that she writes about in these essays that I will not be able to talk about everything. So, you know, fellow BRAIDING SWEETGRASS lovers, I apologize for only being able to hit a couple things. But I adored this book. It is probably my favorite book that I read this year. And I got this book when we moved down here to the Lowcountry. And for me, when I first got down here, I was very disoriented. I didn't recognize anything around me. And I realized that anxious feeling was that I didn't recognize any of the plants around me. I didn't recognize most of the creatures around me. I mean, I live with lizards now for the first time. And I realized that that was important to

me, to understand who kind of I was sharing the neighborhood with, as it were. And that's something that Robin Wall Kimmerer wants to communicate in this book. A lot of times when we and, you know, modern "society" talk about nature, we talk about it as separate from humanity. We go into nature. We explore nature. You know, we are taught in a lot of ways that if human beings touch nature, that we are going to ruin it.

[00:20:42] **Kendra** But what Robin Wall Kimmerer does is she combines her cultural heritage of the Indigenous knowledge from her nation. She's a member of the Potawatomi Nation. And so she talks about how human beings are part of nature. And we are part of a lot of ecosystems with different things. The biggest example she uses is sweetgrass throughout the book. One particular essay is about how she and one of her grad students did this study on different patches of sweetgrass to see whether or not harvesting sweetgrass made the plant diminish or wither or if it actually helped the sweetgrass plants. And they found out that actually harvesting responsibly actually helped sweetgrass produce more sweetgrass. And the patches where they didn't touch withered. And that was her point, that human beings often are part of nature and that natural process of different systems. And that means that we need to understand who we're sharing our space with. We need to understand, you know, who else is on our team to reach this mutual goal of caring and respecting the land.

[00:21:59] **Sachi** That's great. Yeah, I think I get very intimidated by larger books. Anything, kind of, in that 350+ range, I'm like, oh, I feel like it's going to take a long time to read that. That's always my worry, is like, oh you know, especially you know, like you said, with essay collections like. . . . Okay, what all unique things can be said in four hundred pages, you know, with these collections of these thoughts. Right? So that's great to hear that not a lot of it really overlaps. And there's really something very, you know, very prominent to take away out of each different piece of work within the book.

[00:22:39] **Kendra** Yeah. And I listened to the audiobook, and she reads it herself. And it's so soothing. She has the most amazing voice for nature writing. And it's not like soothing in that you relax, and you want to fall asleep. It's more like you just . . . you kind of relax into the book. And you're like, Okay, I'm going to slow down. . .

[00:23:01] **Sachi** That's great.

[00:23:02] **Kendra** . . . and listen to this. So we'll be talking a little bit about some of the principles that she talks about for our discussion episode that we're going to apply to our discussion picks. But so I'll just leave that there. But obviously, would definitely recommend BRAIDING SWEETGRASS by Robin Wall Kimmerer. And that's out from Milkweed Editions. And Sachi, you have our first discussion pick.

[00:23:28] **Sachi** Yes, so my discussion pick today is called THE WAY THROUGH THE WOODS: OF MUSHROOMS AND MOURNING by Long Litt Woon. And this is translated by Barbara J. Haveland. And this is out from Spiegel and Grau. And this book really focuses on Long Litt Woon's life after the sudden death of her husband. And I'll be referring to the author by her last name, which is "Long." She uses the traditional, you know, Asian custom of putting the surname first. And so I didn't want there to be, you know, any confusion. I'm not calling the author by their first name. But she finds herself in a depressive state, you know, obviously losing her husband earlier in his life. She had tried various things to kind of pull her out of her state, meditation and yoga and things like that. But she remembers that her and her husband were hoping and planning to do a beginner mushrooming course. And she says, you know, let me try this out and see, you know, how

I like it. And she realizes that she finally found something that could pull her out of the house and encourage her to move on, learn something new, and become very passionate about.

[00:24:54] **Sachi** And so I'll be the first to tell you, as you could probably guess, from some of my earlier comments, a book about mushrooms and mourning is a little outside of my comfort zone. But I was very pleasantly surprised by it. And I don't know if it's because Long Litt Woon is just such a really great writer, and I just really empathized with her story. Or if it was just because, you know, that broad spectrum of nature really gets narrowed down to this one thing, mushrooms. And I don't know if, like, having that shorter focus or more-centered focus was good for me, but I really loved this. And I'm actually the first person to tell you, like, I don't like mushrooms. And so I wasn't sure if I was really going to like this book because my . . . I'll do an aside. But like, I famously tried mushrooms at the dinner table with my grandparents once. And my grandpa all the time would say that he swore I'd turned green after trying mushroom ravioli because he said I didn't like it. And I hadn't touched mushrooms for a while. I'll eat mushrooms now if they're cooked in something, but I'm not going to have it by itself.

[00:26:06] **Sachi** And so I was like, am I going to get, you know, this this book and I'm not really going to be into it because I'm not really into eating mushrooms or anything like that? But if you don't like mushrooms and you're not really into eating them or learning or, you know, learning more about them, like I thought I would, I really was very fascinated about all the different types of mushrooms, the mushroom hunting community—which I did not know it was a thing—which was, honestly, so fascinated. And Long is an anthropologist. And so she puts like this lens of human behavior too into what she learned about mushrooming and the community and the secrets behind it and some of the patterns that that folks do to like remember where patches of where mushrooms grow and all these different things. It . . . I don't know what it was about it, but like all of the mixture of those things kept me so intrigued.

[00:27:12] **Sachi** I finished this book fairly quickly. And I was . . . I thought it was going to take me a lot longer. But it was so fascinating. And, you know, the book is really informative without being super technical. And there are some simple illustrations peppered throughout the book as well, which just like adds to the style. I thought the style was really cool. The book—I will give the caveat—the book is weighted a little bit more towards mushroom than the grief and mourning part of it, which I was hoping there'd be a little more balance. But honestly, the mushroom stuff was still really cool. I actually really liked it. And so this book would be great for, you know, nature or mushroom enthusiasts or, you know, those who love memoirs but like want to step outside of their comfort zone a little bit. And I have nothing but great things to say about this book. And I know we'll be discussing it at our next episode. So I won't gush too much because I still think there's so much to talk about this book. And I, you know, am really thankful that we are covering this book. I think, Kendra, you are the one who suggested this book to me. So. So thank you.

[00:28:26] **Kendra** Yeah, it seemed right up your alley since. . . . Long is Malaysian, and she moved to Norway.

[00:28:34] **Sachi** Yeah.

[00:28:34] **Kendra** And married her husband there. And she talks a lot about like being in that interracial marriage and mixing their cultures and discussing, like, you know, there are mushrooms in Malaysia that look similar to the mushrooms in Norway. And she has that

great perspective that I think really fleshes out the discussion of mushrooms because it's not just, you know, a Norway-focused conversation. She brings a very international approach to it.

[00:28:59] **Sachi** Yeah, I really appreciated that. It was one of my notes, actually, in the discussion episode, just how unique her perspective is and how she very much talks about the standard and the general practice of, you know, the mushroom community in Norway. But then she also takes a step back to say, you know, but in X-country, they. . . . You know, when she talks about like toxicity and the scale of like from edible, you know, completely safe to eat to all the way to toxic, hey, avoid this. It's—you'd think, you know, just as someone who doesn't know anything about mushrooming—like, okay, there's this scale, and this scale is just used everywhere, and it's very cut and dry of like where it falls. And she had found, you know, by her time, you know, in this community that it varies by country. It can be very widely debated. There's some people who say, "Oh, yeah, this really belongs in toxic." But then others are like, "I've been eating that for years. It's fine." And like certain times, mushrooms get moved into that toxic category. So, like, what makes it change from decades of being safe to them now not being safe? And all of that was just so very fascinating. And she really evaluates what it means, you know, in different places and how mushrooming in Norway is taken very seriously and is done a certain way. But there's all these other countries and all these other folks who have different perspective. And it causes a lot of debate sometimes in the mushrooming community globally, which I thought was really cool too. So that was *THE WAY THROUGH THE WOODS* by Long Litt Woon, and that was translated by Barbara J. Haveland. And that's out from Spiegel and Grau. And Kendra, what is your discussion pick for this month?

[00:30:48] **Kendra** So my discussion pick is another book from Milkweed Editions. And that's *WORLD OF WONDERS: IN PRAISE OF FIREFLIES, WHALE SHARKS, AND OTHER ASTONISHMENTS* by Aimee Nezhukumatathil. And this was Barnes & Noble's Book of the Year last year. I saw it everywhere. And then I heard this excellent interview on *Thresholds*, which is also part of LitHub's podcast network, LitHub Radio. So shout out to *Thresholds*. I really love the way that she discussed on the episode being a Asian American woman who loves nature and being often the only woman of color in those spaces. And so it made me very intrigued to read this essay collection. And then you actually get the book in your hands. And it is gorgeous.

[00:31:38] **Sachi** Oh yeah. It's beautiful.

[00:31:40] **Kendra** Oh my goodness. Like, the illustrations are phenomenal. I just. . . . I fell head over heels for this book. So I paid like full cover price for it. So the illustrations are by Fumi Mini Nakamura. And they are amazing. I want to hang them on my wall.

[00:32:00] **Sachi** Gorgeous.

[00:32:02] **Kendra** And so these essays take a creature. One is a nature. . . . It was a monsoon. It might be a plant. And she kind of uses that as a springboard to discuss something that's part of her life. And I wanted to pick this book as a discussion because she provides a unique perspective, having moved all around the United States and having to reorient herself to the flora and fauna around her, but also because a lot of people don't understand that nature writing isn't just about nature. The discussion of nature is always connected back to us as human beings oftentimes because we are part of nature. And so that's something that she does, is that she takes principles from nature and discusses them in her life. And I think that's something that a lot of people don't understand is an



important part of that process of connecting to nature and understanding your place in nature. And that's something that she discusses in these essays. And some of them are really short. Some of them are longer. And she shows a lot of range in this collection as well.

[00:33:11] **Sachi** Mm hmm. And her writing style is very lyrical. I think it's be. . . . She's a poet by trade. And so you could definitely tell because I, like, read the first essay. And I . . . it's . . . I was just, like, so . . . I don't know . . . like, in awe of like, oh, this is just . . . just . . . feels so beautiful. And then the illustrations even add to that like whimsical, I think, like nature—nature, pun intended—of the writing that I, every time an essay ended, I was like, okay, what's the next animal? Or what's the next plant? Could it be an—oo! Look, there's an illustration! Like, how beautiful is this? And I just felt like. . . . It's a slim novel. It's pretty short. And I think I read it in like two settings because they're just like. . . . I just kept wanting to see what was going to come next.

[00:34:07] **Kendra** Yeah, yeah. And as I was reading—or listening in my case—I kept looking up the creatures that she mentioned. And I remember spending Sachi this giant email of links to, like, look at the monarch butterfly as it leaves its chrysalis. Like, I wanted to see this. I want to listen to the weird bird—not weird bird, but a lovely bird—that kind of makes a frightening noise, that kind of sounds like it's a, you know, free spirit wandering around the forest. And so I loved learning about that and how it inspired me to go look up these creatures in nature, to watch the dancing frogs dance and, you know, the birds of paradise and, you know, do their little mating dance and whatever.

[00:34:50] **Sachi** Yeah! Their dance! Which I remember seeing on Planet Earth or something. And I was like, oh, yeah! Like that. . . . You know, it's so cool when you can really take some of your own experiences—whether it's you have seen that like the fireflies we had talked about; fireflies is featured as one of the essays in here—using your own personal experience or things that I've learned through documentaries or, you know, at different museums and such. Kind of seeing that, you know, woven through this collection and how it relates to her life and her experiences versus my life and my experiences was really cool because you can see how nature and animals make a different impression on each and every one of us. Even though, you know, many of us have been exposed to the same thing, we react to it different ways, which I thought was cool.

[00:35:41] **Kendra** Yes, so we are going to be discussing this book for one of our discussion picks. And we're also going to be discussing the episode from Thresholds, where Aimee is talking to Jordan Krisner, who hosts Thresholds. And they have that conversation about being a woman of color talking about nature. So we're going to discuss all of that in our discussion episode. Also would highly encourage you all to have Google handy during that conversation because we're going to be talking about like vampire squids and how frightening and terrifying they are, but also amazing and all sorts of things. You'll want to see what they look like because you definitely want to. Or you could just buy the book and follow along.

[00:36:24] **Sachi** Oh, yes, absolutely. The illustrations will take you pretty much all the way there.

[00:36:28] **Kendra** Exactly. Exactly. So that is *WORLD OF WONDERS: IN PRAISE OF FIREFLIES, WHALE SHARKS, AND OTHER ASTONISHMENTS* by Aimee Nezhukumatathil. And that's out from Milkweed Editions. Well, those are our six picks for our theme on Nature Writing. Sachi, what are you currently reading?

[00:36:48] **Sachi** So I am currently reading AGAINST THE LOVELESS WORLD by Susan Abulhawa. And this was recommended on last month's episode of the podcast about books about Palestine. So I had this book for a while because we had nominated it, I think, as one of our top picks for the year last year, I believe. And hadn't had a chance to pick it up. But after hearing the wonderful episode from you and Sumaiyya, I said, I absolutely need to read this book. And I'm only about fifty pages in, but I'm loving it so far. So thank you both for the wonderful recommendation.

[00:37:29] **Kendra** It's so, so beautiful.

[00:37:31] **Sachi** Yes. Like, I was so, like, immediately drawn in by the writing style. And it is, you know, very kind of tough, tough to read subject matter. But I am still making my way through it very quickly just because the writing is just wonderful. So I'm really enjoying it so far. It's a . . . it's a kind of a chunkier book, so I still have a lot to enjoy for it and the upcoming sittings that I have with it. Kendra, what are you reading right now?

[00:38:04] **Kendra** And I'm currently reading a recommendation from Jaclyn, so we're all represented today. And that's ONE HUNDRED DAYS by Alice Pung. And she is a Cambodian Australian author. We, Jaclyn and I, have discussed Alice Pung's, I think, one of her memoirs in a previous episode where she talks about her relationship with her father and, you know, what it was like for her parents being immigrants to Australia from Cambodia. And I have never . . . I don't think I've ever read any of her fiction. And so I'm reading this book. And it's very . . . it's very claustrophobic because it's about this young woman whose mother in particular is very restrictive on her in a way that isn't as much protective as it is trying to construct her daughter into this little box. And so I can't really read it in large sessions because it's so intense. And Jaclyn said she read it during one of Melbourne's lockdowns.

[00:39:06] **Sachi** Oh my god.

[00:39:08] **Kendra** She's like, that might not have been the best choice, but it is an amazing book. So I am very much enjoying it. And the audiobook is great. So would recommend. And Alice Pung is an amazing writer. And unfortunately, America just has not got on board yet. So America, like publishers, if you're listening to this, chop chop. Go buy Alice Pung's work.

[00:39:31] **Sachi** Yes, I've heard amazing things about her work. I still have yet to pick up some of her books. But this one sounds very interesting. I might have to get this title.

[00:39:42] **Kendra** Yes. And so that's ONE HUNDRED DAYS by Alice Pung. And that is currently out in Australia. And also you can probably get it on websites like Book Depository if you're in the US or another country that Book Depository delivers to. All right. Well, Sachi, where can people find you about the internet?

[00:40:01] **Sachi** People can mainly find me on Instagram (@sachireads).

[00:40:05] **Kendra** And folks can find me (@kdwinchester) on primarily Instagram. And that's our show. All right. So many thanks to our patrons, whose support makes this podcast possible. This episode was produced and edited by me, Kendra Winchester. Our music is by Miki Saito with Isaac Greene.

[00:40:28] **Sachi** Join us next time when we dive into our discussion picks, *THE WAY THROUGH THE WOODS* and *WORLD OF WONDERS*. In the meantime, you can find Reading Women on Instagram and Twitter (@thereadingwomen). Thanks for listening.