

Ep. 120 | Quicksand and The Unquiet Dead

[00:00:11] **Kendra** Hello, I'm Kendra Winchester, here with Sumaiyya Naseem. And this is Reading Women, a podcast inviting you to reclaim the bookshelf and read the world. Today, we're talking about our discussion picks, QUICKSAND and THE UNQUIET DEAD.

[00:00:26] **Sumaiyya** You can find a complete transcript of this episode on our website, readingwomenpodcast.com. And don't forget to subscribe so you don't miss a single episode.

[00:00:36] **Kendra** Well, we are back for round two discussing crime fiction, which I think we have pretty much surmised has also inspired us to go, like, read more crime fiction because . . . I don't know if I want to call this episode inspiring per se, but it's definitely getting me in that kind of itch that happens around spooky season and all sorts of things, even though we've already read a bunch of books for this theme.

[00:01:01] **Sumaiyya** Yeah, I mean, I feel like I've been avoiding reading thrillers and crime fiction over the past almost two years because of the pandemic. But now I feel like, okay, I need to read this. I need to explore more because I used to enjoy it so much in the way that you enjoy a book about murders and bad things happening. Yeah, I definitely want to, like, rekindle my love for crime fiction. And it's definitely started with this theme. Like, it's helped me get back into that zone.

[00:01:34] **Kendra** Yeah, same same. And I think—and we discussed this—but I think QUICKSAND is my first Scandinavian crime novel, which I'm like, really? But I was looking back through my Goodreads, and I am pretty sure that's true. So it's like a whole new world.

[00:01:49] **Sumaiyya** Yeah, I've read quite a few Scandinavian crime novels, and it's definitely one of my favorite subgenres. So I'm excited for you. And just to let other people know, it can get quite dark and gritty and disturbing and graphic. So, you know, be prepared.

[00:02:09] **Kendra** But before we jump into our discussion on the crime genre—because we are very excited to chat about that—some updates. So we have the updates on the JCB Prize will be linked in our show notes. We don't actually know what that is as of this recording, but you all in the future will know. So we will link that down in the show notes for you.

[00:02:31] **Kendra** Also, we will mention our Patreon. So our Patreon is very important as it keeps the lights on and pays for production costs in our transcripts. It makes everything as accessible as possible. And we greatly appreciate all of our patrons and the support they give us. We have a wonderful little community over on Patreon. We have a quarterly book club and exclusive patron episodes, lots of Fur Baby Friday updates, which is adorable. RuthAnn does a lot behind the scenes. And so while you might not see her on social media or in a regular newsletter or on the podcast, per se, she does a lot as far as organizing and keeping everyone straight and scheduled and all this stuff. And so I greatly appreciate her work. Also, love her Patreon newsletter that she puts out—of course, also with her dog, Ted, who we love. So anyway, please check out our Patreon, which will be linked in our show notes. And you can go check out all of those exclusives.

[00:03:34] **Kendra** Now, we are going to recap our theme and talk about how women are changing the crime genre, or maybe more their unique take on the crime genre and how women write crime fiction and what that looks like.

[00:03:49] **Sumaiyya** Yeah, I mean, I'm not sure if everyone is aware of this, but there's definitely been a surge in women writing crime, especially in the last five or six years. And actually, even before that, I've read some sources that say that for the past fifteen years, women have been writing a lot of crime. And that has definitely changed the landscape of crime fiction. And to the extent that—and we laughed about this earlier—but male crime writers now feel the need to use female pseudonyms. What are your thoughts on that, Kendra?

[00:04:29] **Kendra** I think it's . . . I think it's ridiculous. Like, that's it. I remember when Riley Sager, that whole thing came out that he was actually using a pseudonym and he was a guy . . . and how disappointed a lot of mystery and thriller lovers were when they thought they had found this amazing, you know, woman crime thriller writer. And yeah, I remember it being a whole thing. And so a lot of interesting pieces have come out about it as well.

[00:04:57] **Sumaiyya** Yeah. And actually, there's quite a few crime novelists have recently become quite popular. And they're . . . they have ambiguous kind of names. So writers like S. J. Watson, J. P. Delaney, S. K. Tremayne, and A. J. Finn. And all of these writers are actually men, but you get the impression that maybe it's a female crime writer in perhaps in the way that the book is packaged or, you know, marketed. So I find it really ironic that this has become the new trend, considering the history of women writing and, you know, women in publishing and how they've been marginalized, you know, as writers because their work is not taken as seriously. And now women are pretty much leading the changes within the crime genre.

[00:05:52] **Sumaiyya** And I think it's fascinating that when you read a lot of the books by male crime writers, there is this hero complex that features quite prominently. Or when you have the femme fatale, who you know is this terrible woman who leads men astray or something. And compare that to what you find in women who write crime novels. Women kind of focus more on the human element and the human condition and what drives people to do terrible things and perhaps also how this affects women. And as a woman, you know, we all know the dangers that we face in our everyday lives. So I feel like when a woman is writing crime, there is that intimacy of knowledge and experience that really colors the way that the narrative unfolds and the way that the reader then understands the position of the characters, whether they're victims or whether they're the perpetrators. There's a lot of complexity involved. And I feel like the characters written by a women are usually more complex and well-rounded in crime fiction.

[00:07:12] **Kendra** I really appreciated the conversation that Autumn and I had a few years ago with Alice Bolin, who wrote an essay called "Dead Girls." And it's kind of about what you just said, Sumaiyya, about how—she's talking a lot about TV and true crime—but she was talking about that when men are the, like, investigators, these are the kinds of things that happen. And there's like this patriarchal nature to their investigation and all of this stuff, which I thought was very interesting, as someone who, you know, I have a very general, casual relationship with crime fiction. I read a few a year. But I really loved that conversation. And it made me think about what you were saying, Sumaiyya, about when women write crime, when women are in places where they are informing this kind of conversation or doing the storytelling, that there's just a different approach to it than men have taken with their crime fiction.

[00:08:14] **Sumaiyya** Yeah. And I think one of the criticisms that's been leveled at male crime writers is that when they portray or describe violence that has been committed on the female body, it is indulgent and sometimes graphic. It's an element that exists without really there being depth to the person that the victim used to be. You know, the mangled, brutalized female body just serves the function of, you know, showing evidence of that violence. But when women write crime, you do get like a different sense of the way that the violence is written. There's a lot more, you know, the psychological aspect to it. And there is more of the—I don't know—like, it doesn't feel as gratuitous as it does when perhaps a man writes a crime novel. And this is obviously a generalized statement. I don't mean to say that every man who writes a crime novel, you know, is doing a disservice to the way that women are written about. But I do think that it tends to kind of float that way.

[00:09:25] **Kendra** Yeah, there is that there, that tendency there. And there, you know, there have been men who've written very character-driven, well-rounded books. But most of the ones that, you know, like in the articles that we'll have linked in the show notes, that women tend to write more character-driven story. It's like you think about even Tana French, right? Like, she is very well known for her mysteries. And her mysteries are very, very character driven. And when I read one of her mysteries, when I read it, I know I'm getting to know the characters first and foremost. And that is just something that really fascinates me when we talk about crime fiction.

[00:10:02] **Sumaiyya** Yeah. And I don't think that I'm a seasoned crime fiction reader. Even though I do enjoy the genre, and I have read it over the years, I feel like I'm not an expert on, you know, on the trends or whatever. But with certain books like the Lars Kepler series of books—you know, Lars Kepler is the pseudonym of a husband and wife duo that write Nordic noir crime fiction. And what I like about their books is their work generally has this balance of there being a lot of, like, that graphic violence that is particular to the subgenre of Nordic noir. And then there's also the psychological aspect, which goes deep into the psyche of the killer or just in general, the psychology of the events that are happening. Like, what has led to this, the human factor. So I like the balance. And I wonder if that's because you have both a man and a woman kind of working on creating these stories.

[00:11:09] **Kendra** That's very interesting. I would . . . I would love to read a paper or something on that, you know. Like what research has been done on this? Is there anyone who specializes in this that would love to write essays about it. I would love any recommendations the listeners have on that. That would be really . . . that would be really insightful to read something like that.

[00:11:28] **Sumaiyya** So Kendra, tell us about your discussion pick, which I know falls under the Nordic noir crime genre.

[00:11:35] **Kendra** Yeah. So I'm very excited as this is my first Scandinavian crime novel, Nordic noir—any of those. I have not read any of them before. So picking this up was something I really wanted to do. I really wanted to visit two different countries' crime fiction subgenres. And so our discussion pick today is QUICKSAND by Malin Persson Giolito, which is translated from Swedish by Rachel Willson-Broyles. And this is a book about a young woman who is on trial for her possible participation in a school shooting. Her boyfriend was also a student there. And he brought guns to school and started the school shooting. And then she picked up a gun and shot him. And so now they're trying to figure out this whole thing during this trial. But then we jump back in time to the beginning of her

relationship with Sebastian, her boyfriend, and kind of how she got there. And so we're jumping back and forth in time. And it's a beautiful dual timeline kind of narrative that the author has going on. And it just really worked. And this novel was just so well structured. And it's just a well-told story as well.

[00:12:56] **Sumaiyya** Yeah. And I think there are, like, three kind of points-of-view that we get that is sort of, you know, showing us what led to the school shooting. And you have, like you mentioned, that the courtroom drama and, you know, you see the procedures. And you see the battle happen in the court, you know, between the prosecutors and the defendants. And then you also have, you know, when Maya is in solitary confinement, so her thought process of being in that position and as she reflects back to what happened. So it reveals this very dynamic and complex portrait of who she was. And, you know, like what are the events that kind of led to what happened?

[00:13:44] **Kendra** And Maya is a very interesting person to kind of take our hand and lead us through her story. She's . . . she's an unreliable narrator. And this is like a . . . very much in the style of like a confessional. And she also has some PTSD from the events, so she genuinely does not remember some of what happened. And it's also her process of rediscovering that for herself. And I found that a very interesting take on getting to know her as a character. And she has a lot of depth to her and how she tells her story.

[00:14:19] **Sumaiyya** Yeah, and one thing that definitely stood out to me was the way that we have all of these assumptions or preconceived notions of Maya, you know, knowing the basic facts of the . . . of her, of her life, that she comes from a very wealthy background, and she has a lot of privilege in life. So from the get-go, we do have these assumptions that we as a reader are also the judge and jury. And we're kind of like getting to know this person. And I felt like throughout the reading experience, I was very much conscious of my own thoughts about her. Like, do I think that she did it? And do I think that she's guilty? And I mean, when we think about these issues, you know, of whether someone is guilty or not. . . . So Maya is in a unique position because she's just turned eighteen. So there's also this question of whether you can fully view her as an adult and as well discuss—now, Kendra—there is also that issue of, you know, the adults in her life. So when you're thinking about justice—when you are thinking about guilt or whether she's done it or not, you know, is she complicit in the crime—we also have to be mindful of her age and, like, her position in life, you know? So there's also judgments regarding that.

[00:15:46] **Kendra** Yes, definitely. Because all of the adults in her life, they seem to be willing to shove any concerns they had about Sebastian under the rug because he is the right kind of boy they would want her dating because he is from one of the wealthiest . . . he is the son of one of the wealthiest men in Sweden. And so like, you know, when they meet, they're on like this yacht situation. It's like this very romantic thing. And it's just, you know, they, you know, all of them would say, like, they never expected this to happen. He's such a good boy or whatever. Like, there was that kind of mentality, I should say, about it. And I just wanted to shake some of the adults and be like, she is only seventeen when all this is going down. Like, oh my stars.

[00:16:40] **Sumaiyya** Yeah. And I think that this kind of leads us to the wider concern in the story, which actually comes up as a subtle theme, which is about class and privilege and the social gaps. And I feel like the adults in the story from the very beginning, you know, Maya's parents in particular were kind of enamored. They were enamored by the wealth that Sebastian is surrounded by because he is the son of the wealthiest man in Sweden. And so they're kind of attracted to the idea of him. And there is almost this kind of

like a mirage kind of situation that's happening where they see the glitter, but they don't see what's behind it. You know, they don't really see who he is. They see him for what his privilege is. And I feel like their bias, because of his wealth, kind of puts her in a vulnerable situation where she then is, you know, in an abusive relationship. And she's left alone to deal with it and doesn't really have any adults looking out for her.

[00:17:50] **Kendra** And you can definitely see that discussion of class and privilege in her other relationships. She has a friend named Samir, whose family immigrated to Sweden. And you know, he is not rich and wealthy like the other kids around him, particularly the white kids around him. And you can see her relationship with him. You know that she's known him for a long time as well. And it's just like this stark contrast to her relationship with Sebastian.

[00:18:25] **Sumaiyya** Yeah. And I mean, with Samir, there's also this conflict between them that comes up because, you know, being an immigrant, he has to work twice as hard as everyone else. And I think there is a part in the story where this is very directly addressed by them, by Maya and Samir. And he, you know, there is this idea that he has a good story to tell. You know, like his success is not just him having . . . him being successful because he already had all the ingredients, it's because he fought for it or he worked hard for it. And I think this kind of leads to the the theme in the novel, which is all about the stories that surround a person or the narrative that kind of surrounds a person. Like, what does that person appear as? You know, like, what is their story? And I felt like the way that the case kind of took on in the media, you have that idea again of who is Maya and what is her story? I know that you have thoughts on this, Kendra. So I'd love to hear about it, about the way that the media portrays, you know, kind of like presents Maya in a certain way. So tell us about that aspect of the novel.

[00:19:42] **Kendra** So at the very beginning of the book, we know that she is on trial for this. And it is a high profile case. People outside the country even. It has this international fame. And I believe someone mentioned that there was over, like, a million . . . millions of hits when you typed in Maya's name into Google. And she just . . . it's like she was tried even before her trial started. And she talks about this in the very beginning of the book. And it kind of plays itself out throughout the book as we jump back to her like courtroom present timeline. And you can definitely . . . you can definitely see that. And one of the things we wanted to look at was the miniseries as well because it is, I think, a great adaptation of the book. And this is something that they play with a bit more in the miniseries because you can actually see this playing out in her life in a—I don't know—it seemed a much more upfront way, particularly as the trial progresses.

[00:20:50] **Sumaiyya** Yeah, I really love the adaptation because of the way it kind of also leads up to the courtroom drama. Because in the book, what you have is from the very beginning we're in the courtroom. And we know that, you know, people are kind of dissecting the case and what happened. And they're trying to figure out very publicly whether she was guilty or not. But in the adaptation, you kind of really see it happen like a story from the beginning, middle, and end with—of course—flashbacks being incorporated into that.

[00:21:30] **Sumaiyya** So yeah, I also really love the casting. Like you said earlier as well. So good. Maya's dad was actually kind of really nice—compared to the book, by the way, because in the book I didn't like him. But in this show, the actor who portrayed him was quite handsome. And I felt like, oh my god, I really like this character now. I mean, you

look for all the nice moments you can, you know, when you're watching a crime drama. You have to get the good vibes.

[00:22:09] **Kendra** Yeah, you know, I love the casting. Like, she had this ordinariness about her. And of course, the actresses is beautiful. But the way that she plays the character and the way that she looks is not like flashy in particular. So her prettiness is more subtle. And I appreciated that about the casting because she's also been compared to her friend Amanda, who's much flashier and also pretty, but just like . . . it has a different way about her. And so I really loved that. And Sebastian I disliked immediately in the book, but he was actually charming in the beginning of the miniseries. So I was like, oh, okay.

[00:22:50] **Sumaiyya** In the series. Yeah.

[00:22:51] **Kendra** Yeah.

[00:22:51] **Sumaiyya** Yeah, he was great. He was like. . . . There was actually so much chemistry between them. . .

[00:22:58] **Kendra** Right?

[00:23:00] **Sumaiyya** . . . in the adaptation. And one thing I really liked about the visual representation of the story is that we kind of see her turning into the person that she becomes with Sebastian. You know, the way that she dresses at the start compared to the way that she becomes more of a party girl—when, you know—to the way that she becomes more involved with him, you know, with his parties and stuff like. . . . So you see her present herself differently because she's with him. It's possibly also because of the pressures of being his girlfriend, I guess, that she goes through that.

[00:23:37] **Kendra** I mean, it was . . . it's a six-episode miniseries. And the pacing is great. The adaption is really faithful to the original. I think it is just so. . . . I enjoyed the book, but I really enjoyed the miniseries. I think it just made certain aspects of the books pop, you know, of the story pop. And that was . . . I don't know. I was sitting there, and I just watched it all in one sitting. So it was . . . it was very engrossing.

[00:24:07] **Sumaiyya** Yeah. And I love a good courtroom drama. And this one definitely delivered. One of my concerns, actually, when, you know, I was . . . when I first read this book and also like when I read this book again for this theme is the correlation of like a white terrorist and mental health. And I feel like it's always used as a cop-out for why these things happened. But the way that this story handled it was very well done. And actually the themes related to class and privilege. You know, that really accentuated the why. Often you know what happened. And I feel like it was all done in that regard.

[00:24:53] **Kendra** I agree. And it's such a delicate topic. And I feel like it was well handled. That was something I was concerned about as well. And there's also the fact that Maya is a white girl in this very privileged situation. How much is she culpable for these different things? And that's something the novel explores. And it continues on with that throughout the book. And by the end, you're thinking about what is justice in this situation? What does that look like? And it really makes you think about that very deeply.

[00:25:28] **Sumaiyya** To conclude, like from my end, I would say that one of the things that hits you really hard at the end—you know, regardless of the outcome of the trial—is the fact that she has to now live with what happened and that is what comes after.

[00:25:48] **Kendra** Yeah. You're not left with the feeling that all is well with the world. It's more like now she starts this new life where everything is different, whatever that happens to be. So that was QUICKSAND by Marlin Persson Giolito, translated from the Swedish by Rachel Willson-Broyles.

[00:26:08] **Sumaiyya** So one thing that I find is common between the novels that we're discussing today is that both writers are lawyers and have that expert kind of perspective. And both books also look at justice. And so the book that I've selected for my discussion is THE UNQUIET DEAD by Ausma Zehanat Khan. And it's a police procedural, which is a bit different to, you know, a courtroom drama in the sense that a police procedural kind of presents the procedure of the investigation. So it kind of is dealing with who did it? What was their motive? And you follow the detectives on the case. And so that is basically the genre or the subgenre that THE UNQUIET DEAD kind of falls under. And I really loved it. And speaking of adaptations, I feel like THE UNQUIET DEAD is one of those books that definitely needs its own TV series. What do you think about that?

[00:27:20] **Kendra** Definitely. It's actually on my like most-want-an-adaptation list because—we talked about this in the first episode—but like her writing is so detailed, I could like see it as a TV series in my brain. Just all these little details. You could imagine these shots, you know? Oh, it'd be beautiful.

[00:27:43] **Sumaiyya** Yeah. And with a police procedural, you know, when you have two detectives who are partners working on a case, it's very important for them to have a balanced perspective. In this series—and THE UNQUIET DEAD is a first in a series of novels featuring the same detectives. So Esa Khattak and Rachel Getty, they are the duo that work on the cases. And so they are . . . they're in the police. They're in the . . . they're in the Toronto Police Service. And the branch that they work for is the community relations, which basically looks at crimes that affect minority communities. And what I like about this duo is that they have a really good chemistry in the sense that Esa is, you know, a man of faith. He is a second-generation Canadian Muslim. And Rachel, on the other hand, is, you know, she comes from a troubled background. She comes from an abusive household. And she is not, you know, she's not observing any faith, but she is quite an intelligent woman. And although he is her mentor, he does give her a lot of space to kind of form her own opinion. And I feel like they really balance each other in the way that they approached the case. So the aspects that he had grasp on, you know, with regards to sensitive issues of faith and culture and within the minority communities, he had a perspective of that. And then she kind of fulfilled all the gaps that he kind of lacked. So I really like them as a duo for a police procedural.

[00:29:24] **Sumaiyya** And again, one thing I really loved about this book is the pacing and the plotting. I felt like it was so consistent. And I never felt bored while reading it. I always felt like there were new clues that we could look at and, you know, try to figure out what was going on. And one of the things I really loved is that the novel kind of starts with a mini-mystery that Rachel herself has to solve first because Esa knows more about the case that they've been assigned, which is of this wealthy white man who falls to his death. And they're investigating whether he really died or whether he was pushed. And so Rachel has to figure out what's happening. And I really like the way that this investigation was kind of portrayed, you know, with regards to that.

[00:30:11] **Kendra** They definitely make a great duo. And I really like how they're so different, but they really work. Like you said, you know, Rachel is very secular soul. And

so. . . . But she has some great conversations with her partner about faith throughout the series. And that's something that I think is really great about their partnership. And it was really interesting getting to know also the Canadian criminal investigation side of things, which is a bit different than in the US. And I just found that the whole setup really worked. And then she also has great storytelling ability as well.

[00:30:54] **Sumaiyya** Yeah. And I mean, I don't want to give out any spoilers about this. But essentially what the story is about is that they are assigned a case where, you know, the man who's died, he might have a past that people didn't know about. So there's that mystery of who he was. And also, there's a mystery of whether he was a victim or a villain. So what I loved about this book is the different aspects that, you know, she brings to the story, the different topics that she brings to the story. And one of those topics is the golden age of the undullah, which is, you know, part of the Islamic history. And this kind of opens up that theme of multiculturalism and coexistence, you know, and about how people from different faiths and communities can kind of live together in harmony. And in contrast to that, we have the idea of communal identity and, you know, nationalism that creates ethnic conflicts.

[00:31:59] **Sumaiyya** So set against all of this investigation is the larger historical event that kind of runs parallel to this idea of multiculturalism and nationalism, which was the genocide of Muslims in Bosnia. So what I really appreciated about this book is the way that, you know, this case that Esa and Rachel are investigating is about a man who might have had ties to the the war in Bosnia. And he might have been a war criminal. So it's really his identity that they're trying to determine, along with the fact of whether he was murdered or whether it was just an accident when he died. And so this case and this investigation kind of takes us to the historical event that happened in the '90s, which is, you know, the genocide that was conducted against Muslims in Bosnia. So it's a very recent chapter in European history. And unfortunately, I feel like there's very little awareness about what happened. And I'm not sure if this topic is properly covered in the school curriculum because I wasn't taught about it. But being Muslim, like, I knew about it. Over the years, like, I've learned about it. So what is your experience with, you know, learning about this event? Was it introduced to you through books? Or did you learn about it in school?

[00:33:26] **Kendra** I knew that it had happened via a lot of the documentaries I watched. And just generally, it's been mentioned in passing in world history, etc., etc. I was homeschooled, so I'm not sure what the public school system is like. But I did also remember learning about this in world history in college, though it was just like on a very cursory level. But one of the things that this book did inspire is to look more into it. And so I did. And also, Ausma has some interviews online as well, which I'll link in the show notes, which she also talks about because she has like a PhD in the study of war crimes at that time. And so she has all sorts of information as well.

[00:34:11] **Sumaiyya** Yeah. So just to give our listeners a recap, this basically . . . this massacre and the ethnic cleansing basically happened after the breakup of Yugoslavia in the '90s. And it basically led to ethnic conflict in Bosnia, particularly in Bosnia, where, you know, you had the Serbs and the Croats. And you had Bosniaks, who were Muslim. And what makes this a very troubling time in recent history is that, you know, when the massacre was being carried out, when the ethnic cleansing was being conducted and being very . . . like . . . it was done in a very calculating way. What makes . . . what is troubling is the fact that there was no international intervention to help and to stop it from happening. And even the UN was complicit in what occurred. And that's why, like, this is

such an important topic to discuss and, like, learn about because when we read crime novels, like, we think of it as fiction. But this book is so brilliant because Ausma is bringing in all of this research and information about historical events that happen. And she's kind of grounding them in reality. And an example of this is the epigraphs in the novel. Kendra, while you were reading the book, what was your experience with the epigraphs? And did you know that they were actually excerpts taken from real testimonies?

[00:35:52] **Kendra** I didn't know that actually until you told me about it earlier. And I mean, it definitely makes sense because of her background, but I think it's all the more effective and meaningful, like having known that now.

[00:36:10] **Sumaiyya** Yeah. And I think that they lend a lot of impact and power in the story because you really feel the gravity of the words. And I didn't know that they were real testimonies until I finished the book, and then I read the author's note and, you know, the extensive bibliography and notes that she'd shared at the end. And so some of them are actually verses from the Qur'an that I recognized while reading. But most of them are snippets taken from human rights reports or actually mainly from testimonies and letters written by survivors of the war. And these were presented to the International Criminal Court. And, you know, I feel like their words were so devastating and carried a glimpse of the mindless pain and loss that they'd suffered. And using these testimonies, you know, was such a powerful move by the writer because, you know, she really grounds the story in reality. And she reminds the reader that this is not purely fictional—you know—that this story actually deals with larger events that happen and that are very real. And this is the world we live in, you know, where a possible war criminal might be able to reinvent themselves and, you know, pretend that they are someone they are not and live a life that seems innocent, you know, but is really not. And so this kind of makes you think about justice again. You know, when this case is being uncovered is what is happening here. You know, like, who is responsible for this man being able to get away with so much crime? So I'm really glad that I read this book because now it's introduced me to Esa Khatkhat and Rachel Getty. And I'm really looking forward to reading more of their cases from the next book. So, yeah, that was *THE UNQUIET DEAD* by Ausma Zehanat Khan.

[00:38:12] **Kendra** Well, those are our two discussion picks. If people want to go on and read more crime fiction, which I definitely do, where should they start, Sumaiyya?

[00:38:25] **Sumaiyya** I have so many recommendations. But I'm going to try and like, just give you a bunch of them. So most recently, most recently, I read *REVENGE* by Yoko Ogawa, which was translated by Stephen Snyder. And it is one of the best short-story collections that I've read. And that is saying something because short stories as like a collection don't always work for me. I enjoy reading them individually, but I struggle to finish collections. But this collection I literally read within a day. And it was so thematically consistent. And I think what worked really well for me is that the stories are interlinked. So each story concerns a character or event that was mentioned in the preceding story. And they all had elements of mystery, horror, crime, and thriller. So it's really like a bunch of different experiences within the crime genre that you get with this book. But it was mostly really, really creepy. And literally, I got nightmares after reading this book. So, yeah, that is my first recommendation for further reading. It's *REVENGE* by Yoko Ogawa. So good. Brilliant book.

[00:39:46] **Kendra** So my first recommendation is a young adult novel, *FIREKEEPER'S DAUGHTER* by Angeline Boulley. And this is about a murder that happens in an Anishinaabe community. And a young teenager is shot, and her best friend is the witness.

And so it's about the best friend trying to find out what happened to her friend and the boyfriend who shot her and then turned the gun on himself. And so her dad is Indigenous, and her mom is white. So there's that complication where she comes from this old white family in town, but she's also part of the Native American community there. So it's a very fascinating mystery. Would recommend. And I would say it's on the older end of YA, almost like New Adult. So if you're giving that to a teenager, just keep that in mind. And Sumaiyya, what's your next one?

[00:40:51] **Sumaiyya** So my second recommendation is *A DEATH IN SHONAGACHHI* by Rijula Das. This book was longlisted for the JCB prize earlier in September. And I can definitely see why it's on the longlist. It's a literary noir and murder mystery that takes place in India. It's set around the area called Shonagachhi, which is a red-light district in Calcutta. So for those who don't know, a red-light district is the area in a city where you have a high number of sex-related businesses that operate close to one another. So the events in this novel kind of take off when a sex worker is brutally murdered by a client. And since people have very little regard for the life and safety of sex workers, her case is pretty much ignored by the police. But other people, including activists and her coworkers, you know, they kind of start a movement to counter that and to bring to light what happened. So this novel looks at a few characters, including a prostitute and an erotica writer who are caught in the web of the underworld. So it's quite a brilliant novel. And it will be publishing in the US very soon. So I think that people should definitely keep an eye out for it. And what's your second selection?

[00:42:20] **Kendra** So I chose a historical mystery, the Perveen Mystery Series. This book is about Perveen, who is one of the first female solicitors in Bombay in the 1920s. And so because they will not legally allow her to practice law, she practices in her dad's practice. And then he just does all the official, like, signing and stuff. And so I love this because it very much feels like a cozy mystery in some ways. It's not very detailed or graphic in that way. But it's also very character driven. It just has so many things that I really love in mysteries. And so the most recent book in the series just came out. And I dropped everything I was reading and read that book. I haven't felt that excited to read a new book in a series in a while, so it was really lovely to come back. And, like, Perveen feels like my friend at this point. So I would recommend those. They are so fabulous. And they come out from Soho Crime, here in the US. And they're a great indie press. I love them.

[00:43:33] **Sumaiyya** I've actually got *THE SATAPUR MOONSTONE* on my TBR. So, yeah, I'm so excited to dive into that. And my final recommendation—although we all know that I have a billion other books to recommend—so I tried to select a few different books for this. But my final one is *EARTHLINGS* by Sayaka Murata, which was translated by Ginny Tapley Takemori. This is a horror novel with elements of fantasy and magic realism. But it also has like crime fiction elements in there. I generally do not know how to describe this book. But I will say that central to this story is Natsuki, who grows up being quite an imaginative individual. But some events in her childhood and adolescence become catalysts for the complete train wreck that this book turned out to be. It starts off a bit normal, but then you absolutely can't look away from what's happening. And you know, there's quite a lot of dark and disturbing things that, you know, happen in this book, including assault, child abuse, incest, gender roles, and oppression, and even cannibalism. So all I'm going to say is, read it at your own risk. And of course, I think all of the books that we talked about for this theme, there are a lot of trigger warnings for this book.

[00:45:03] **Kendra** All right. Well, those are our picks for our theme of She Writes Crime. Sumaiyya, where can folks find you about the internet?

[00:45:13] **Sumaiyya** So my main online presence is Instagram, where you can find me (@sumaiyya.books).

[00:45:20] **Kendra** And everyone can find me (@kdwinchester). And that's our show. Many thanks to our patrons, whose support makes this podcast possible. This episode was produced and edited by me, Kendra Winchester, with music by Miki Saito with Isaac Greene.

[00:45:39] **Sumaiyya** You can find Reading Women on Instagram and Twitter (@thereadingwomen). Thanks for listening.