

Interview with Jung Yun Pt. 2

[00:00:00] **Kendra** Hello, friends. We just have a little bit of an update, a little bit of housekeeping before we go into today's interview. So usually around this time we have the Reading Women Awards. But this year is going to be a little different. And actually, this is Reading Women's last season. So when our last episode goes up in December, in the middle of December, that will be it.

[00:00:28] **Sachi** Yeah, and we have really enjoyed our time with the podcast and with all of you listeners. And I really hope that you have maybe expanded your reading, you know, added some books to your TBR, got exposed to some different authors and themes that you haven't heard before. We're kind of reevaluating with the team members having different priorities and potentially leaving, valuing our time and mental health given the global pandemic that we're still navigating. We have chosen to kind of let the podcast end on what we think is a really great note. You know? But we love the podcast. We think that, you know, this season just felt right to end, even though it is very bittersweet. Podcast episodes will still be available. You can always go back and listen to them again. But we really enjoyed the time that we had here, and I really hope that you all enjoyed listening as well.

[00:01:27] **Kendra** Yes, it's been a wild almost six years now of Reading Women. And I honestly, you know, I can't remember my adult life without Reading Women. And so there's a lot of . . . lot of feelings, a lot of feelings going on. But I think it's really important that, you know, we go out on our own terms. And, you know, like you said, our bandwidths are so small now because of the pandemic. Hmm. It just seemed like the right time. And I remember listening to "Books on the Nightstand" and listening to them when they announced the end of their podcast. And I didn't entirely understand why. But you know, I respected them and their work. And . . . and now I get it. Now I'm like, okay, I understand. I understand now. So like Sachi said, all of our backlist will still be there for you to go listen to. We're going to keep the website up. You can go check out all of the Reading Women challenges. You can start over from the beginning if you like. We hope that you have enjoyed your time with us as much as we have enjoyed chatting with you all.

[00:02:29] **Sachi** Mm-Hmm.

[00:02:30] **Kendra** So we also have some special things that we wanted to make sure you knew were available. So I'm turning on all of the merch just about that we have ever had. And so you can go on Bonfire today and go get anything that you've missed that you would like in the past. Plus, we have a special end of the series logo that Vanessa Bradley has created for us. And it's a gorgeous. . . . It's beautiful. I'm so excited for it. And so that is also going to be available, so you can grab that as well. And we're also doing some special things over on our Patreon. I'm giving away all of the like in-house merch that I have left. And also, we're doing some special episodes with past guests. There's an episode that just went up about mental health. I'm doing one with my mom again to see how she's doing after volunteering for six years.

[00:03:24] **Sachi** Oh geez. Yeah, that sounds great.

[00:03:27] **Kendra** So, yeah, very excited about all of that. And, Sachi, we're also doing some retrospective episodes.

[00:03:35] **Sachi** Yes. Yeah, we'll be doing some retrospective episodes about some of the author interviews that we've done and some of the other episodes that we've done for our themes. So we're . . . I'm really excited, at least personally, to take a look back and see some of . . . or think about some of my favorite moments and convey them to our wonderful audience. And so if there's anything that comes up in those episodes too, it's also a great opportunity for you to revisit those. Or if you haven't heard those episodes, to go out and find them.

[00:04:05] **Kendra** Yes. So thank you all again for listening. And we greatly appreciate it. I cannot express the gratitude I have of being able to do this for so long. And that's because of you all, because of you all listening to us and supporting us. And we really appreciate it.

[00:04:23] **Sachi** Mm-Hmm. Absolutely. And, Kendra, I appreciate all the time and effort. I'm sure the podcast has become something much bigger and much greater than what you and Autumn might have first thought the podcast might end up being—you know, just two friends chatting about books. But I really appreciate, when you expanded the team, the opportunity for me to join in as well as other other co-hosts and team members because it was . . . it was a great experience. And I really loved all the conversations. And hopefully listeners enjoyed them too because we had a lot of fun recording them.

[00:04:56] **Kendra** Well, thank you. I appreciate it. Well, all right, friends. So without further ado, we have an interview that Joce has done with Jung Yun, who is our second returning guest. And she's actually the first winner of our Reading Women Award for fiction. All right. So roll the tape.

[00:05:24] **Joce** Hello, I'm Joce. And this is Reading Women, a podcast inviting you to reclaim the bookshelf and read the world. Today, I'm talking to Jung Yun about her latest book, *O BEAUTIFUL*, which is out now from St. Martin's Press. 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.

[00:05:47] **Joce** When I read Jung Yun's debut novel *SHELTER* in 2016, I was instantly fascinated. There was something about the propulsion and the interpersonal dynamics that she writes with that drew me in, and I finished the book incredibly quickly. I was so happy to hear that her sophomore novel, *O BEAUTIFUL*, is releasing this year on November 9th. There are definitely some similar topics comparing the two books, such as intergenerational trauma, the Korean American experience, and the danger of enforced gender roles. But they are explored in a completely different setting in *O BEAUTIFUL*. Our protagonist, Elinor, is a Korean American biracial woman. And she's returning to her home state of North Dakota to pursue a story surrounding the Bakken oil boom. Over the course of the book, she also confronts parts of her identity and her past, as well as how the townspeople treat her as a woman of color. One pervasive theme is the concept of being a newcomer to the town versus an old timer, and we see this come up a lot in many different scenarios.

[00:06:49] **Joce** But before the interview, let me tell you a little bit more about Jung. So Jung Yun was born in Seoul, South Korea, and grew up in Fargo, North Dakota. Her debut novel, *SHELTER*, was longlisted for the Center for Fiction's first novel prize, a finalist for the Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Award, and a semifinalist for Goodreads Best Fiction Award of 2016. A 2018 MacDowell fellow, her work has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The Washington Post*, *Tin House*, and others. She lives in Baltimore and serves as an assistant professor at the George Washington University. In our conversation, I talk

to her about the historical context of the story, Elinor's character development, her own upbringing in North Dakota, and her research process. I'm so glad that I had the opportunity to speak with her. And without any further ado, here's my conversation with Jung Yun.

[00:07:48] **Joce** Hi, Jung! Welcome to the Reading Women podcast.

[00:07:51] **Jung** Thank you so much for having me.

[00:07:53] **Joce** Oh my gosh, of course. We are so excited to have you on today. And congratulations on the upcoming release—or I guess, upcoming at the time of this recording—of O BEAUTIFUL. I was just wondering if you could introduce yourself and give our listeners a brief synopsis.

[00:08:08] **Jung** Sure. My name is Jung Yun. And this is my second novel. My first came out in 2016. It was called SHELTER. And my second novel is called O BEAUTIFUL. And it is set in the American Midwest in North Dakota, which is actually the state where I grew up. North Dakota is northern Midwest, so it's near Canada. And it was, for a period of time, largely rural. And it was one of the least populous states in the country. Back in 2007, 2008, however, there was the beginning of a very, very significant oil boom, which really changed the sort of nature of the population, the industries that . . . that took place out in the western part of the state. Tens of thousands of people came to the state very suddenly, looking for work in the oil industry. And my novel is set at the height of this oil boom. And it's filtered through the lens of this woman who is Korean American. She's a journalist, and she's returning to her home state for the first time in many years to chase a story about what happens when a whole bunch of people come to a place that was for a very long period of time, largely white, largely rural, and very, very sort of homogenous in community. So that is the novel. And you know, I grew up in North Dakota. And it's a book that's really close and dear to my heart. So it meant a lot for me to be able to write it and to spend a lot of time back in my home state, researching it and thinking about the boom and how it affected this part of the country that I really love.

[00:10:03] **Joce** My gosh, I was reading your bio, and I just thought that that was so cool. I also read that you spent maybe, like, a good portion of five years researching this novel and writing it. I'm curious. Which parts of this did you have to do more research about? And which parts felt more familiar to you?

[00:10:19] **Jung** Well, you know, I grew up in Fargo, North Dakota, which is on the eastern side of the state. And the oil boom took part on the western side of the state. And there's a really . . . there's a lot of miles in between those two points. And it's a very sort of different part of the state from what I'm accustomed to. Fargo is the largest city in the state. The fictional town of Avery is sort of loosely based on a number of different towns in western North Dakota. So I spent a lot of time in the region physically, spending time talking to people, doing interviews, going around and really getting a good sense of the land. But the research itself was learning a whole lot about the oil industry and what kinds of work these people do, what kinds of labor is needed to do hydraulic fracking and horizontal drilling. . . . And thinking a lot about how . . . what happens when tens of thousands of people suddenly come to an area that doesn't have the infrastructure to support all of them. So I was also doing a lot of research on real estate, housing, education, crime statistics, etc., etc., because the boom brought jobs and money. But it also brought a lot of the complications that come with, you know, jobs and money and a ton of people coming to a place that was sort of unprepared to take them all in.

[00:11:49] **Joce** What were some of like the most interesting parts or maybe surprising parts of your research, especially with maybe some of the more oil-related things?

[00:11:58] **Jung** I think, you know, some of the most interesting and impactful research that I did was about life on the Native American reservations near Williston, North Dakota, which is the sort of epicenter—the real-life epicenter—of the oil boom in North Dakota, and thinking about how much the oil boom affected life on the reservation for the three affiliated tribes that make their home there. I learned a lot about tribal law and tribal law enforcement and was really sort of taken aback by how difficult it is for the Native American residents on these reservations to seek out justice for wrongdoings and for crimes that are perpetrated against them by people who are not members of their tribe. The laws go back for hundreds of years, and they're complicated. And I never did enough reading about them in school, so I was giving myself sort of an education about the population that is also really affected by the oil boom by virtue of living right next to it and having oil on their land as well.

[00:13:17] **Joce** I feel like everything that you said there really plays into this long-running theme in *O BEAUTIFUL* of like newcomers versus old timers or kind of like insiders versus outsiders in the stories that they tell in the book. And I'm curious, what ways did you want to explore those themes in *O BEAUTIFUL*.

[00:13:35] **Jung** Sure. You know, one of the reasons why I think Elinor was the character that I eventually landed on to be the main character in this sort of lens through which the story is taking place is that she grew up in the state to a white father and a Korean American mother. And by virtue of her family background, always sort of felt like she had one foot in and one foot out of different communities—and complicated by the fact that her father was an Air Force officer in a very tightly knit military community. So she has had those experiences of being sort of the "outsider" in her home state in a community that . . . that should have been more accepting of her and her family. And this is one of the reasons why she wanted to leave the state and move to the East Coast as soon as she was able to. The irony is that she gets this plum assignment to write about the oil boom because she's considered an "insider" by virtue of being from the state and being from this region.

[00:14:44] **Jung** So throughout the novel she is . . . is sort of dealing with those tensions of her history and experiencing them kind of anew as she meets people who are either of the community or from outside of the community coming in. And, you know, all of them making various assumptions about who she is and what she's doing there and whether or not she "belongs." So these were issues that I was thinking about very, very early on when the novel wasn't even fully formed in my head as a novel yet. So, yeah, these ideas have been circling around for quite some time.

[00:15:31] **Joce** Gosh, I feel like that totally makes sense, you know? And just tying it back to, like you were saying before, the history that you learned about Native American lifestyles and lifestyles of folks of color who live in North Dakota, I really feel that for a good portion of the book, Elinor is struggling with—especially when she is there and back in North Dakota—the lens of the white man and looking at herself through the lens of the white man and objectifying herself and devaluing herself. So I'm curious, how did you navigate, I guess, her own self conceptualization and her struggling with that throughout the book?

[00:16:09] **Jung** You know, I wanted to make Elinor into a person who was complex and by virtue of her age and her stage of life—you know, the second career, which is asking her . . . which is asking her to do more than she has ever done before it. You know, as a . . . as a catalog model, her job—and several photographers told her this—was to just smile and look pretty. And now here she is, trying to write this very complicated story about the ways in which race and class and gender all intersect in this . . . in this area of the country. So, you know, I wanted to make sure that Elinor was, yeah, I guess I just . . . I really like writing about unlikable characters.

[00:17:04] **Joce** I like reading about them. So that . . . that works perfectly.

[00:17:08] **Jung** Yeah, I like reading them and writing them as well. And I just wanted Elinor to be a flawed human being because I think those are the realest kinds of human beings, like someone who is aware of her past and having reasons and different stimuli and impetuses by virtue of being in the Bakken, surrounded by all these men, thinking about the ways in which she has lived her life, has sort of adopted that male gaze and turned it into . . . inward toward her self, and how—at times in her life—she has not been the best advocate for herself as a . . . as a woman, as an Asian American, as a human being. And she also hasn't been a particularly good advocate to other women and other people of color. So over the course of the novel, you know, this . . . this woman has to—by virtue of being surrounded by so much conflict and so much potential for violence—has to be thinking about these things. She can't avoid or escape them, which is how she's lived her life for . . . for most of her adulthood, sort of escaping and not dealing with the difficult issues because it was just always easier for her not to.

[00:18:26] **Joce** Yeah, I really feel like for a good portion of the novel, she was definitely complex and definitely at times unlikable, but also very relatable, you know? In turning that lens inward and looking at like, wow, like, how have I contributed to this as well? And understanding that, you know, she has had a decent amount of character growth kind of going from in front of the lens as a model to now kind of being "behind the camera," I guess, as an interviewer.

[00:18:54] **Jung** Absolutely. And you know, that's a transition that's hard for her . . . from being a more passive person who is the object to . . . to trying to figure out, like, what the story is and being a much more proactive presence in . . . in her career. So part of what she struggles with over the course of the early part of the novel is, what is this story? She sort of inherits a story from her mentor, who was a professor in graduate school. And because she feels so beholden to him and because she feels so uncertain about herself, she kind of pursues it the way he tells her to pursue it. And over time, she begins to develop a sense of agency about how she would tell the story because she's a very different person than he is and how her own background, her own past history, and her own experiences make for a very, very different lens than the one that she was trying to carry on because she felt obligated to her, you know, "mentor" for.

[00:20:03] **Joce** Yeah, it was really interesting. When you were talking about that, it reminded me of this one scene maybe, I don't know, like halfway through the book where she is on this FaceTime call with Lydia. And—not to give too much away—but I felt like in that scene, she was really struggling with, like, how much am I beholden to this white man that had so much power over me in many different ways? And now this woman kind of communicating to me different things that, you know, some of them are similar, some of them are different. So it's very interesting how through this thing that she's writing, that she's finding herself.

[00:20:37] **Jung** Yeah, I really . . . I did want that for her as a character. Like, you know, she's someone who was so uncertain about herself. You know, she went to college late in life, always felt sort of out of sorts and kind of alien in a classroom with these much younger, seemingly smarter classmates who could have been her children, which was especially awkward. So, you know, she . . . I wanted her to . . . to change over the course of the novel from this person who is sort of finding her way, sort of stumbling through, to actually feeling a bit more confidence in her abilities because I mean—for the most part—she was treated as a person who wasn't particularly smart. She was in a career for the early part of her life where people didn't care if she was smart. And she's smarter than she knows. But it has taken her a long time to understand that.

[00:21:36] **Joce** For sure. And I feel like, you know, like obviously in SHELTER as well, actually. The similarity that I found is that there's so much, I guess, like intergenerational trauma and history. And you see things start to show up as we learn more about Elinor's relationship with her parents and her parents' relationships with one another. How did you navigate conceptualizing their relationship in the context of Elinor's self-discovery?

[00:22:06] **Jung** A lot of . . . a lot of trial and error. It really was. I mean, I don't plan my novels. I don't outline them. And I had a real difficult time with these parents. I didn't know what I wanted or needed them to be for a really, really long time. I liked the idea of them being a military family because I do recall from my own childhood growing up in North Dakota that the few other Korean women who I encountered, who my parents encountered during our time in Fargo had married US servicemen. So that was a part of my own childhood that I remember. And . . . and as a kid sort of observing these relationships and thinking even back then, even before I really understood anything, that there was something interesting about the dynamics of . . . of these marriages that I was looking at and realizing over time that I kept on coming back to this idea because there was something fruitful in it for this particular novel.

[00:23:16] **Jung** I liked the idea of a couple who meet overseas, who come to this country, who are both in some ways sort of using each other for . . . for their idea of what they want. He wants this sort of docile, homemaker kind of wife, which is, you know, very racially loaded, very loaded in terms of gender roles. And she wants to come to America, which she thinks is this beautiful, prosperous nation, which will give her a better life than what she had before. So this is not a love match by any stretch of the imagination. And these two people, once they get together, are predictably . . . like . . . unable to stay together. But they bring children into the world. And this next generation ends up with all of the baggage that they . . . that they never addressed in their own marriage. So, you know, slowly over time, they evolved from this sort of faint idea, faint memory that I have of these military couples from my childhood to these parents who have done, like, a lot of damage to not only Elinor, but also to her older sister, Maren.

[00:24:31] **Joce** I was just going to ask about that. I feel like their sister relationship is so complicated, especially when Maren kind of like texts or calls her and is like, "Hey, let's go out to the bar together." And then some high jinks ensue with men. I don't want to give too much away, but there's definitely some complex relationships and dynamics with men that they encounter at the bar and also their sister relationship. How did you come about the dynamics in their sister relationship? And I guess like writing some of those scenes where they come back together in the book?

[00:25:04] **Jung** I really like the idea of sisters who drive each other nuts, who fight, who fight, who don't see eye to eye, who actually don't have much in common other than blood, and recognizing that they are going to be part of each other's lives, like it or not, because who else do they really have if they don't have each other? But I like the idea of their actual interaction being uncomfortable and argumentative and not heartwarming. You know, you think that when a person comes home after several decades and not seeing their family for many years in person, that it's going to be hopefully nice. And their reunion of sorts is not. It doesn't even resemble that. I mean, there's a reason why Elinor doesn't want to deal with seeing her sister while she's in the area during this interview.

[00:26:01] **Jung** So I really wanted the two of them to have love still between them. Fleeting at times and complicated, certainly. And I wanted their relationship to continue even after the events of that night at the bar. But I also wanted their interactions to demonstrate how damaging their upbringing was because, you know, Elinor left the minute that she could. And when she left, she also left her sister behind to take care of their father. And you know, Maren was the caretaker of their father when he got ill and before he passed away. And she sort of opted for—or slid into—this more traditional role as a wife and a mother. She's a farmer. And she's unhappy and trying to find a little bit of excitement in her life through other pursuits, which I also won't spoil. There's nothing but this . . . this friction between them when they actually get together because they are so different and their lives have gone in such different directions in ways that Elinor has some guilt about and Maren has a lot of resentment about.

[00:27:21] **Joce** Yeah, I think that that is totally it. And I felt that, like you said, Elinor was like this combination of disgruntled but also guilty regarding like boundary setting, you know, and her need to leave North Dakota, her need to just kind of be away from all of this trauma. And I feel like that is one of the hardest things about intergenerational trauma and strained parent relationships is that that boundary setting creates this huge amount of guilt and shame. And I feel like that came out so much in Elinor's relationship, especially in that one interaction with her sister.

[00:27:55] **Jung** Thank you. Yeah, it was. . . . I don't know if "fun" isn't the right word for writing that scene. But I enjoyed having these two women being together after a really long period of time in the context of an oil boom. Because, you know, Maren is just excited to be out of the house and excited to be looked at by men. And through observing her sister, Elinor kind of sees some of her own behavior and past behaviors. And I thought it was . . . those are some of the fastest scenes to write because they just came really naturally to me.

[00:28:33] **Joce** Yeah, I feel that, even as I was reading them, they were some of the fastest scenes that I read because I was like, oh my gosh, what is going to happen here? I mean, I kind of knew what was going to happen. But it didn't make it any less intriguing. What their dynamic?

[00:28:45] **Jung** Yeah, yeah. Oh Maren.

[00:28:52] **Joce** Switching gears a little bit, I did want to touch on something that I think folks have been talking a lot about on social media recently is the concept of like "missing white woman syndrome" and the exposure that beautiful young, thin, white women get in the media when they go missing, especially recently with the search for Gabby Petito and the comparison to the way that folks of color are treated when they go missing or are

implicated for crimes. Could you speak more as to how you explore this in *O BEAUTIFUL* with the one missing woman in the story?

[00:29:22] **Jung** Sure. There's a writer named Angela Geddy who talks in really beautiful ways about how, for . . . for the rest of her life, she is going to be sort of decolonizing herself because by virtue of living in the states, growing up in the states, being educated in the states, we get a lot of things into our heads. We're sort of conditioned to think in certain ways, care about certain things. And I am very much aware that I have been part of this as well. You know, there are all these cases that . . . that have come into the national spotlight of white women who have gone missing, who have been murdered. And if you look at, for example, *People Magazine*, I swear that publication is like nothing but these terrible stories about things that have happened to women, often at the hands of their husbands or their boyfriends. But they're almost always white. And it's really . . . it's really interesting to think about the times in my own life where my eye has also gravitated toward those stories. One, because they're the ones that are always being pushed at us through the mainstream media. But, two, like, that's just . . . that's where my eye has also been conditioned to look. So I am very much guilty of it too.

[00:30:51] **Jung** And I wanted to spend some time thinking about all the women that we don't see, thinking about the women and the girls who's . . . who don't get anywhere near as much attention. And there are many of them. And many of them in the state of North Dakota are Native American. And it's happening so close to the oil . . . to this shale formation where all this oil business is going on. And it's heartbreaking. It's absolutely heartbreaking. So I wanted Elinor to be complicit in this conditioning and realize that she's chasing this story about a missing white woman and realizing it's like, oh, I'm looking at the same story that everyone else has been looking at. I'm conditioned to do this too. And then realizing, like, what's the story that I'm missing? And realizing that she has to sort of turn her eye and turn her gaze to these other stories that don't get anywhere near as much attention.

[00:32:01] **Joce** Yeah. You know, I feel like this is such a great transition—unfortunately, what the topic matter—but it actually rings a bell a little bit to one of the themes that was explored in *SHELTER*, kind of with the opening scene where there is a domestic violence incident perpetrated against a woman of color. And so, before the end of this interview—because *SHELTER* is such an amazing book—for those who haven't picked it up yet, I was wondering, would you be able to tell folks a little bit more about *SHELTER* as well?

[00:32:31] **Jung** Sure, *SHELTER* is a novel that is about a Korean American man who is forced to live with his elderly estranged parents in the year 2008 at the height of the housing market recession and crash. And he's . . . they're forced into this situation because his elderly mother has been the victim of a brutal crime. Both of his parents have been the victim of a brutal crime, a home invasion. And because of that and because the nature of the crime is so depraved, Kyung—despite his better judgment—decides to take them in. And living together sort of reignites all of these hard feelings because this is a family that has had a history of child abuse and domestic violence. And yeah, they shouldn't be back together, but they are because they have to be.

[00:33:30] **Joce** Absolutely. I feel like there are definitely some more themes that come up, kind of like you just talked about, that are similar in *SHELTER* versus *O BEAUTIFUL*. For example, like the intergenerational trauma, the gender role expectations, all of that. What was it like kind of taking those ideas, but in a completely different context?

[00:33:53] **Jung** You would think that if you're able to write one novel, that the second one would be easier. The second one was not easier. The third one is not any easier than the second. It's just a different kind of set of challenges. For me, the challenge with O BEAUTIFUL was trying to figure out the structure and the person who was . . . who was going to be the filter and the lens. I mentioned to someone earlier today that I started writing O BEAUTIFUL as a series of interconnected short stories, and that's how I thought it would be—a novel in short stories. And I wrote eight different short stories before I got to Elinor. And once I discovered her, like everything kind of opened up. Like, it became so clear to me so quickly. I say, "quickly." I'd been writing for years at this point. But it became so clear to me that she was the person through . . . through whose eyes the story should be told. You know, writing from the perspective of a woman and a biracial woman is certainly different than writing from a first-generation immigrant only son, which is the main character of SHELTER. And thinking about trauma in different ways, trauma through absence you know? This wasn't a family that that abused each other physically, but there was definitely abuse through . . . through words, through absence, through neglect and other means. So similar issues. Very, very different structure. And a different kind of main character in the form of Elinor.

[00:35:46] **Joce** I'm fascinated. I have to know. Are any of the other eight short stories folks that we met in O BEAUTIFUL.

[00:35:52] **Jung** Harry. Harry Birgham is a character who appears about midway through the novel. And he is kind of known locally as the the mayor of Williston. He kind of helped bring in a lot of the oil industries. He was the first short story that I wrote. And I just spent a lot of time with Harry and thinking about him. But it was interesting, like, I look back on that manuscript, and the first four—if not five—short stories were about white characters. And you know, it was. . . . It doesn't surprise me now, and I don't know why I couldn't see it then. But I was uninterested. It was kind of like I was writing them. I was editing them. I was thinking a lot about them. But I didn't feel that sense of—I don't know—like love and engagement that I have felt with Elinor and Kyung that I did with with these first five. So, you know, eventually I listened. And eventually, I realized that that meant something.

[00:37:07] **Joce** My gosh. Well, I'm very glad that the iteration of O BEAUTIFUL that was finally published is the actual iteration because I enjoyed it so much. And I mean, I would have been totally just fascinated to see the differences between how it kind of first was conceptualized in short stories versus its final form now.

[00:37:27] **Jung** Oh gosh. I don't know if I will ever . . . I will ever let it. . . .

[00:37:29] **Joce** They'll never see the light of day.

[00:37:32] **Jung** Oh my gosh, that would be terrible.

[00:37:36] **Joce** All right. Well, we'll . . . we'll keep them in the vault.

[00:37:38] **Jung** Exactly. Exactly. That is where they shall stay.

[00:37:42] **Joce** Got it. Maybe one last question here. Are there any books that you are looking forward to that are coming out or that you've read recently that follow any similar topics or similar in tone to O BEAUTIFUL?

[00:37:55] **Jung** You know, I'm not sure if they're similar in topic. But I have on my desk two arcs that I'm just . . . I'm waiting for a break to be able to tear into. One is called THE APOLOGY by a writer named Jimin Han. She's Korean American. And this is coming out from Little Brown in June of 2023. And the other is, well, this is actually kind of similar. It's a novel called THE EVENING HERO by Marie Myung-Ok Lee. And she's also a Korean American writer. The interesting thing about Marie is that she grew up in Hibbing, Minnesota, which is across the border from Fargo, North Dakota. And you know, we . . . we have this sort of similar upbringing, growing up in very white upper Midwestern communities, very cold, very snowy, always getting the question like, how did your family end up here? Which sort of exacerbates that sense of feeling like we didn't belong, even though these places were our homes. So Marie's novel—I'm not sure what year it comes out—is sort of loosely based on her father's life as a doctor in northern Minnesota. And I'm looking forward to both. And that one comes out from Simon and Schuster.

[00:39:23] **Joce** Oh my gosh, these sound amazing. They're going right on the TBR, even though the first one comes out in 2023. But at the pace that the last two years have moved, I'm sure 2023 will be here relatively quickly.

[00:39:34] **Jung** No, I know. It went by so slowly. And then yet it's gone in the blink. I'm not exactly sure how time even . . . even works anymore.

[00:39:43] **Joce** What is time?

[00:39:44] **Jung** Yeah, exactly, exactly. We stayed indoors for like a year. Like.

[00:39:48] **Joce** We really.

[00:39:50] **Jung** Exactly.

[00:39:52] **Joce** Oh my gosh. Well, thank you so much, Jung, for coming on the Reading Women podcast. I really appreciate it. And again, congratulations on the, I guess, now upcoming release of O BEAUTIFUL.

[00:40:02] **Jung** Thank you so much, Joce. I really appreciate it. And I love the Reading Women. And I'm so grateful. The Reading Women have been a part of my writing career since SHELTER came out. And I've always just been so grateful for your interest and support. So thank you.

[00:40:20] **Joce** Gosh, yes, of course. Anytime. Thank you so much.

[00:40:22] **Jung** Thank you.

[00:40:24] **Joce** And that's our show. I'd like to thank Jung Yun for talking with me about O BEAUTIFUL, which is out now from St. Martin's Press. You can find her at jungyun.com and on both Twitter and Instagram (@jungyun71). Many thanks to our patrons, whose support makes this podcast possible. This episode was produced by me, Joce, and edited by Kendra Winchester. Our music is by Miki Saito with Isaac Greene. You can find us on Twitter and Instagram (@thereadingwomen). Thank you so much for listening.