

Interview with K-Ming Chang

[00:00:09] **Kendra** Hello, I'm Kendra Winchester. And this is Reading Women, a podcast inviting you to reclaim half the bookshelf by discussing books written by or about women. Today, I'm talking to K-Ming Chang, the author of *BESTIARY*, which is out now from One World. For full transcript of this episode, check out the show notes over on readingwomenpodcast.com. And make sure you're subscribed so you don't miss a single episode.

[00:00:35] **Kendra** So today starts a series of episodes that we are doing in partnership with the Miami Book Fair. We are talking to some of the 5 Under 35 nominees from this year's National Book Award season. And I'm so excited to talk to our first author today, K-Ming Chang. So a little bit about the Miami Book Fair before we get started. . . . So the Miami Book Fair is doing a virtual book fair this season due to COVID, like many bookish events have been this year. All of the events will be including a list of more than 200 authors and moderators from, you know, authors of a wide range of backgrounds who write in all kinds of different types of literature and genres. And I am so excited to watch this event. And they will be recorded. And then you can just watch them at what time works best for you, which I love. It's like Netflix, but like a book fair, which is fabulous. I will be doing an event with Lily King about her novel *WRITERS AND LOVERS*, and I'm very excited to talk to her about that. Okay. So that's the Miami Book Fair. On to today's interview. . . .

[00:01:46] **Kendra** So K-Ming Chang has been doing so well with her debut novel, *BESTIARY*, which is what we're talking about today. She has been nominated for the first novel prize from the Center for Fiction, along with so many stellar books. It's a great year for debut novelists for sure. And like we mentioned earlier, she was one of the Five Under Thirty-Five nominees from the National Book Foundation. And so it's very well deserved. Her book, *BESTIARY*, is about three generations of Taiwanese women and the storytelling that they tell each other and themselves over the course of time. It is a very playful and almost experimental novel in its structure and how it tells the story within its pages. So K-Ming Chang is a Lambda Literary Award finalist. And I've already mentioned her other honors, like being a National Book Foundation Five Under Thirty-Five honoree and being longlisted for the Center for Fiction first novel prize for her debut novel, *BESTIARY*. She has a chapbook coming out next year, which is a retelling of *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*. So keep an eye out for that. And she is currently working on a collection of short stories. All right. So without further ado, here is my conversation with K-Ming Chang.

[00:03:04] **Kendra** Well, welcome to the podcast, K-Ming. I'm so excited to have you here.

[00:03:17] **K-Ming** Thank you so much for inviting me. I'm so excited to get the chance to speak to you.

[00:03:22] **Kendra** Oh, I am very excited as well. I just finished your book a day or two ago, and the audiobook is amazing, as we were talking about before I hit the record button. But I want to check in with you because you've had a lot going on. You've had several different nominations, including a National Book Award Five Under Thirty-Five honoree. That's just amazing. So congrats.

[00:03:48] **K-Ming** Oh, thank you. I'm still kind of in shock about all of those things. I'm like, oh, it feels like a dream. But yeah, no, thank you.

[00:03:58] **Kendra** Well, your book—all well deserved. Your book is fantastic in what it does and how playful it is. How long were you working on BESTIARY before it came out into the world?

[00:04:11] **K-Ming** Yeah, I mean, it's really interesting because I always tell people I wrote it really fast. Like, I almost have no memory of drafting it because the drafting process was only a few months. But the editorial process was like another couple of years. So for me, it was very much about like dismantling what I had. So I think probably taking it all in total would be about two and a half years. But the editorial process was definitely like the bulk of the entire process. Yeah.

[00:04:43] **Kendra** And this started out sort of as like a collection originally, didn't it?

[00:04:48] **K-Ming** Yeah! It first began as an essay collection, actually. I was inspired a lot by Maxine Hong Kingston's work and the way that she blends, you know, elements of fabulousism and also like fiction and nonfiction and mythmaking and fables. And I really have loved that all my life. So in my mind, I was like, oh, it's going to be . . . like, I'm not going to think too much about cohesion or order. I was thinking about CHINA MEN by Maxine Hong Kingston. And then it kind of evolved, draft after draft, into something with a little bit more of a through line. But that was kind of like the root of my process. Yeah.

[00:05:31] **Kendra** Well, that's such a fascinating process. And when I open the book, and there . . . you have of Maxine Hong Kingston quote in the beginning that says, "There's a lot of detailed doubt here," which is fantastic. Sachi and I did a deep dive into Maxine Hong Kingston earlier this year. And having just come off that research fairly recently, when I was reading your book, I was like, this definitely reminds me of Maxine Hong Kingston, especially in THE WOMAN WARRIOR, where she does play on storytelling and women of different generations telling their stories.

[00:06:07] **K-Ming** Yeah, yeah, for sure. I mean, NO NAME WOMAN is definitely something I return to all the time. And even the first line of the book, "Do not tell anyone what I'm about to tell you," which is just it's so incredible and so iconic. I feel like that feels like the first line of my own kind of storytelling. Impulse is always this, I don't know, this desire to not be complicit in some way. Or to think about, like, the silences that have been inherited. Yeah. And to kind of, I don't know, create an almost speculative family history. I think all those impulses were definitely really inspired by her.

[00:06:53] **Kendra** In an interview that I saw, Maxine Hong Kingston talked about her mom telling her the story and that inspired her work a lot, is that story telling within her family. And I believe your mom told you a story that also inspired this book. Can you talk a little bit about that and what form that took for you when you were starting to work on this project?

[00:07:14] **K-Ming** Oh, yeah, for sure. I mean, I . . . my mom is a huge storyteller. Many people in my family are. There's such a strong, oral storytelling tradition. It feels, yeah, in some ways, kind of like my greatest inheritance is this . . . are all of these stories that were being woven around me when I was a kid. And I just . . . I kind of didn't realize it. I was always tuning in and tuning out. I would catch the beginning of something or the end of something and be like, wait, what just happened there? It's always such a kind of theatrical production too, to tell these stories, which I've always loved. It's this like fully embodied experience. So, yeah, the story that I would kind of force my mom to tell me over and over again—which she was very like done with—was the Hu Gu Po story, the story of the Tiger Spirit, who. . . . It's kind of like a little Red Riding Hood story in that the Tiger Spirit kind of

disguises herself as a benevolent grandmother and then ends up eating the children's toes.

[00:08:10] **K-Ming** But what I realized about all of those stories is that they were also kind of a way of transmitting family history, but told slant, told in a way that's more kind of indirect. And there were so many undercurrents in the stories that she told me that I only kind of realized when I was older. And it also was kind of seeing the context of my family. I was like, oh, it makes so much sense that these are the stories that we choose to tell or to subvert or to twist. It was so revealing . . . so much about what it means to be a good mother, a good woman . . . like all of these things, yeah, that have been kind of really subverted in my family. And that really inspired me, the idea of telling a history slant, like through myth and fable.

[00:08:57] **Kendra** I love what you said about the stories that we choose to tell. And I think in families, it's always so intimate because you're telling these stories to kind of figure out who you are. And you take those from your parents, and then you make them your own, or you subvert them or turn them upside down. And all of those things definitely happen in this book.

[00:09:21] **K-Ming** Oh, yeah, for sure. No, I definitely when I was writing them, my first impulse was like, oh, I'm just kind of going to record what I remember hearing. And then as I started to do that, I realized that it was actually going to be this really messy process, full of different interruptions and interventions in this story. And that's part of where the footnotes and things like that came about. I was as interested in kind of, yeah, storytelling about storytelling. Being a little bit meta with it. And wrestling what it means to . . . wrestling with what it means to tell a story as much as the story itself. So it was really . . . it was really fun process too.

[00:10:04] **Kendra** And definitely, especially over time in the book, as you hear the different women tell these stories. And then you might get to the same story with a different member, a different generation. And they have a totally different perspective on what that story looks like and what it is. And they each kind of twist them to try to define themselves and who they are and why they've made the decisions that they've made.

[00:10:30] **K-Ming** Yeah. No, completely. I yeah. I mean, another book that I—I remember when I was reading it, I was like, oh this is what I've been looking for. It's CAMELO by Sandra Cisneros. And in that book, it's so playful with the structure too. But there will be family stories. And then the grandmother's voice will just enter, and it'll be in full text. It's the grandmother speaking like, hey, you're telling it wrong. Or there will be all these footnotes that are kind of like Wikipedia footnotes, but you know that they're not really objective or impartial. They're actually laced with all these other meanings too. And I just love that idea of the narrative being hijacked a bit too, between different people, different generations, and kind of all the different voices that we contain within ourselves. Like, at least that's how it is for me too. Like, I can definitely hear, oh, this is what my mom said. This is what, you know, this person would say. And so it, yeah, it always feels kind of like a collective process, even when it's really solitary.

[00:11:30] **Kendra** I love that as the differing stories because it's sort of like familial memory. And I remember reading Fatima Farheen Mirza's book, A PLACE FOR US. And I won't give any spoilers, but at the end, someone comes in and gives their perspective on all of this information that you have been told and retold over and over. And it kind of blows your mind. And I felt like there's a moment in this book, at the end, where Mother is talking.

And you're kind of like, oh, this is what happened. And it felt very similar, but in a very unique way to you and your style of storytelling yourself.

[00:12:11] **K-Ming** Yeah, I mean, I thought there were times when I was like, oh, maybe it's too meta and it's too much like stories about stories. But I had to learn to, yeah, to embrace that because I realized like it's as much about the context around the stories and this desire like, yeah, this grappling with, oh, is it possible—like the daughter asked—is this possible to tell a story without sodes, which she realizes completely . . . it is completely impossible because it is so embodied. But yeah, I'm so glad that it resonated.

[00:12:44] **Kendra** And one of the things I really liked about this book is how . . . descriptive isn't quite the right word, it's how descriptive you are in the kinds of word choices that you make. And it was really interesting because, as a disabled person, I'm very aware of my body very early on in my life. And a lot of people, that's kind of a journey for them to kind of figure that out. But this book kind of slams you in the face where it's almost telling you the story with what the bodies are doing. And that's kind of the little signpost that you give. And there's some grotesque element to it and a lot going on with that. And I kind of just want you to expound on your writing style and the word choices that you make and how that kind of developed in your writing.

[00:13:32] **K-Ming** Yeah, I mean, I love this question because I . . . when I was writing, I didn't realize how bodily the language was. I really had no kind of consciousness about it. And then it was only later when it was being read that people were like, wow, it's really . . . it's really bodily. There are a lot of, like, fluids happening. It's very kind of like guided by the body. And yeah, it was something I didn't consciously realize was a part of my style. But I think yeah, I think there's some . . . yeah, there's a kind of embodiedness that I'm obsessed with and language being very, very bodily. And I guess this impulse for the characters too . . . they don't necessarily want to sterilize anything or sanitize anything, that there is a kind of shamelessness with their bodies too and this openness and intimacy with which they talk about their bodies. And I think that is, again, like a sign of their their intimacy. And also, it's just like I think I grew up with a family that was also very transparent about bodies and completely casual about bodily functions and excrement and urine and things like that. And so that kind of penetrated part of my consciousness as well, is this casualness of referring to these things. Yeah. And I also think that they don't have, you know, the privilege of necessarily being very distant from all of these bodily functions, given their their work too—like the mother working at the chicken farm and her job literally being to like, you know, scrape poop off of floors and things like that. And the land too, having having a body, I think is part of the Indigenous tradition of storytelling for them. So those all kind of became entwined in my mind.

[00:15:22] **Kendra** And it definitely lends itself to the fabulist elements. Because you're so descriptive, it's kind of there's this also parallel fabulism of like the girl grows a tiger tail. These daughters are thrown in a river. And they're pulled out, and they're fish. And they have to be fed until they're human again. And like all of these different things. I remember I was listening to this at the gym, and I was paying really close attention because I didn't know what would change or what would happen next. Like fingernails could turn into butterflies. Like there are no rules. But then you have those grotesque elements that balance that out. And I feel like if you put this on paper, like described it, it might not work in your mind. But when you see it on the paper, well, I guess when you read it, it does. It just . . . like . . . they work together in tandem. And I think that's such skill to be able to work with those two things that could easily have just spiraled somewhere, you know. But you have such control over them. And you kind of make it look a little bit effortless.

[00:16:27] **K-Ming** Oh, wow. I'm so happy to hear that because I wanted it to feel grounded and also have a kind of more . . . have these playful elements as well. But for that not to feel kind of too ethereal. I'm really surprised also to hear the effortless because I think. . . . I mean originally when I was drafting it, I didn't really . . . I didn't have that much like pressure on myself. And so I kind of . . . I allowed myself to play with the language and be in that space. But I think later when I zoomed back and looked at it, I had all these anxieties about like, oh, is this literary? Like, what is this? What is this genre? Am I doing it right? Like, am I . . . do I have a plot? Like all of these things really, I don't know, made me so self-conscious. And so I was always kind of wrestling and battling with myself about like, oh, is this allowed? Is this . . . is this fiction? What's going on? Yeah. But I'm so happy that the original spirit that I put into the book came through too, in that sense of that anything could happen. Also survived my my whole self-conscious tearing apart of the manuscript at certain points too. So that makes me really happy to hear.

[00:17:42] **Kendra** Yeah. And I can only imagine the amount of editing because they say, you know, the more easy it looks, the harder the writer had to work, you know.

[00:17:51] **K-Ming** Oh yeah. Yeah, definitely. The editorial process was really intense. But it needed to happen definitely because. . . . Because it was written as a collection initially, every single chapter had its own arc. And the way it is now, it still is a little bit like that in that there are these little micro stories within the stories. But yeah, definitely the tail was initially just a blip. It was initially, you know, one chapter and that was it. So everything came out in the editorial process, which I'm very happy about too. The holes also came out in a very, very late draft. So definitely in the end, I was like, oh, it's all worth it.

[00:18:31] **Kendra** Yeah, definitely. And one of the big things that I was very interested, like I wanted to keep turning pages to find out what would happen next. And I really appreciate, like, the meta quality that you're very conscious that this is a story that you were being told as well as the stories within the stories. And they kind of. . . . It's like a hall of mirrors. And you're just turning around like, what is going on? Does it matter? Like, you know. I like how there are no answers in the book as well. It's not like you are saying some sort of definitive moral. It's more like, here are a bunch of different things you could take away from this. It depends on who you believe. And it's like . . . I feel like, in that way, it was like a choose your own adventure, but not really. If that makes sense.

[00:19:18] **K-Ming** Oh, I love that. I love that because I love choose your own adventure. And I was definitely thinking about that too. Like I . . . there was a point where the manuscript did have a very definite end. I don't want to give any major spoilers. But basically the character was like, this is what the tail means, and this is what I'm going to do with it. And it's very, very certain. It was very close ended. And it was like that for a long time. And it was only when I realized, like I was, you know, laying in bed at night, staring at the ceiling, like, wait, something feels a little bit wrong, like something feels off. And it definitely was. . . . Yeah, it was that sense of like, oh, I shouldn't necessarily—because so much of the storytelling is playing with the idea of a moral and kind of subverting the expectation of a moral—I was like, oh, I can't end it like this with this very clear cut, kind of clean, "oh, this is what this means. The end." Yeah. And so I was like, okay, I have to learn to kind of leave those doors open and trust the language and the reader as well.

[00:20:24] **Kendra** Another thing I really wanted to look at is the feelings. There's so many feelings. I have in all caps in my notes, FEELINGS. There's so many feelings in the book. And I think that definitely comes from almost the . . . I wouldn't say conflicting desires. But

they're often not exactly aligned desires of the different women in the family that are telling these stories. So I thought we could land there for a few minutes and talk about what these women want. That sounds like a like a movie title feature or something.

[00:21:00] **K-Ming** Yeah. "What These Women Want." Yeah.

[00:21:02] **Kendra** But they all want very different things. But at the same time, you can also see a through line of like they're all looking for themselves, and their own independence, and what they've had to do to kind of be at peace with themselves, and if they've actually achieved that. . . . There are so many different things at play here, which is really fun to follow through. And it's very thought provoking.

[00:21:26] **K-Ming** Yeah no, for sure. I . . . Yeah. It's really interesting, I think, for the daughter generation, her desire to kind of intervene in the past generations. It's almost like she's on some kind of time-travel rescue mission. Or, in her ideal mind, it would be some kind of time-travel rescue mission. And I think for her, it's about wondering what possibilities are there for her future. Like, what would it mean to kind of diverge in a way from her lineage and also at the same time feel rooted in it? Again with kind of those conflicting desires of not wanting to necessarily repeat the patterns of marriage and leaving home in this way, in this very violent way, but at the same time, like, oh, what else is there? Like, what else is possible? And also how to root herself more deeply in the lineage. So, again, a bit conflicting.

[00:22:21] **K-Ming** Yeah, I think I was really interested. . . . I think the grandmother, she has the most elusive of the voices. It was such a surprise to write her voice in her letters because I had no idea why she was writing or what she wanted or what her motivations were when I was writing them. And it was really interesting to realize that, in some ways, it's like she doesn't want to be known or understood in a very straightforward way. And that, you know, she says that she isn't writing out of remorse or out of apology or in some kind of passive way. But at the same time, the fact that she's writing them feels like this desire to reach out. So, again, it's like her actions and her voice sometimes conflict with each other in really interesting ways. I was like, you know what? She can be a bit of an enigma through the whole book. Like, I think that's what she really wants in a lot of ways, to be a bit slippery and hard to grasp. I think that, for her, that's a form of safety or feels comfortable. Yeah. And then the mother's generation, I don't know. Her voice to me felt the most urgent. It was one of the first voices that came to me. And this desire to flee home and kind of create her own island of a family but, at the same time, remaining tethered to her father—it's again like this simultaneous desire to sever and, like, tether oneself. I think that it recurs through the generations.

[00:23:56] **Kendra** I'm not sure if I'm supposed to have favorites, but the grandmother's letters are my favorite.

[00:24:03] **K-Ming** I'm so glad.

[00:24:05] **Kendra** She, like you said, is just so slippery. And she is very obviously an unreliable narrator, not to mention the fantastical elements that are happening, like her daughters turning into fishes. There was just something about it, how she almost seemed to revise her own stories while she was telling them. And I love the footnotes of the translations, which was really fun to see. And there's just so much about her that I found fascinating and how, like, she's almost like the antagonist in the story, but not really. But there really isn't a protagonist either in the story, so you know. I just loved how she was all

of these things all at once. So this is just me starting a one-woman fangirl club for the grandmother.

[00:24:58] **K-Ming** No, that makes me so happy because I was a little bit worried. I was like, oh, is she coming across as too villainous? Like, just kind of senselessly doing things? And yeah, I was definitely afraid of that. So it makes me really happy to hear that, like, she's really complicated in this really interesting way. I think for me, the most interesting thing about writing those letters that I kept returning to is that moment when she goes back and decides to save the daughters after she's thrown them into the water. Like that, to me, that was something that I obsessed over constantly. That felt like a huge turning point in the book is. . . . It wasn't the act itself so much as wanting to go back and undo that act. And I think that is part of what you were saying of how she's revising her own story as she says it. That moment of revision where she decides to undo what she's done is so fascinating to me and was something I kept returning to. I was like, oh, what does it mean to commit this act of violence but then go back? Like, what does that mean? And that, yeah, that definitely felt to me like one of the defining moments for her. Yeah.

[00:26:14] **Kendra** Another one of the generations, the daughter, was also very interesting to read because I didn't know much about the book going into it. I tried to avoid reading descriptions or whatever just because I don't want any spoilers. And so I wasn't sure if the book was queer going into it. But then I was like, wait, T Kira blurbed this book. So I was like, I don't know what that means. What's going to happen? And then this very, very natural kind of relationship happens with the daughter and another girl who's kind of involved in finding the letters and different things. And it was kind of . . . almost was the most natural thing, almost like the fantastical elements that happen in the story. And their very intimate scenes are full of body imagery and that intimacy that happens with that. So I want to talk to you a little bit about that and what that was like for you writing those moments between the two girls.

[00:27:11] **K-Ming** Yeah. I mean, this is my one of my favorite things to talk about because I think writing their relationship was. . . . It felt like such a refuge and a joy to be writing. Like, when I was writing their parts, I had no awareness of anything else because it was so . . . it was so magical and so interesting to be in that space. And I think what's interesting is that initially Daughter and Ben—their sections were . . . it was actually really short. It was like one chapter. She was a brief character who just showed up and left. And my editor, Victory Matsui, was like, oh, this feels like a longer relationship; it doesn't feel over for them.

[00:27:48] **K-Ming** And I was saying that it was so hard for me to imagine a future for them because I was so used to writing stories about two women in some kind of romantic relationship or some kind of obsessive relationship that ended abruptly. And it was always about looking back and seeing that moment of severance and parting. And this was the first time that I embarked on creating a longer relationship and thinking about what it means for them to have a future, which was in a way imagining my own future, which was terrifying. And I was like, oh wow. So I'm transforming and learning as I'm writing it, not just on a craft level, but like on a person level and what my imagination is capable of doing. But yeah, I think writing their moments, it was . . . it felt like fantasy and also very embodied at the same time. And I loved that. And I was like, oh, so much of writing queerness for me my whole life has been about fantasy, has been about imagination and centering desire. So it was so playful and, I think, reparative too to write their scenes together.

[00:28:59] **Kendra** And I think when you line Daughter and Ben's story up with, you know, the mother's story and grandmother's story and how those two generations chose a man because they felt like they had to, in a lot of ways, to escape situations and the fact that their choices, whatever they might have turned out, did make this possible for Daughter was really meaningful in the text to be able to see that. Like, this chain had been broken that had happened almost recurring throughout these women's, you know, generations throughout time.

[00:29:38] **K-Ming** Yeah, completely. I . . . Daughter, too, in kind of constructing or seeking out her queer lineage—you know, the gay pirates story and the lesbian river story—I think was also a form of . . . well, I mean, part speculation, part what's being told to her . . . and thinking about an origin myth that's queer and a creation myth that's queer and what that would look like for her family, kind of in contrast then to the choices that the mother and grandmother felt that they had to make. Yeah, in order to feel like, oh, I am safe. Or I have mobility in the world. Yeah, I definitely think queerness is possibility and imagination. It's something I was really interested in. I was less interested in narrative that centered a conflict between them. I remember hearing that feedback too of like, oh, there's no conflict between them. I was like, there's a little bit of conflict, but I'm not really interested in writing their romance as something that's very conflicted. I was more interested in what does it mean for queerness to save you? Like, this is something that is saving her. And what would that look like?

[00:30:44] **Kendra** I really love that. And I found her looking for queerness in her family tree really fascinating because in the stories that we tell ourselves, there's often a scrubbing of queer narratives, even though they've always existed. It's like trying to survive these generations of storytelling is sometimes a difficult thing. But then, rediscovering them or trying to find yourself in the past is definitely that process of narrative, which was . . . I'd never really seen that process as much on a page before in this distinct way of familial storytelling in that way. So I really appreciated those flashes back for her to try to figure out kind of her own identity. And when she didn't find it in some of the stories her grandmother and different things were telling, per say, she was able to find a way, if that makes sense.

[00:31:42] **K-Ming** Yeah, I just . . . I was thinking about like, oh, what does it mean for this character to not feel lonely? Like, to not feel like I'm some kind of offshoot of this family. But actually her queerness is something that returns her to those origin myths. So it actually centers her rather than marginalizes her, which I was really interested in, even if it isn't necessarily "realistic." Like, that's what I was interested in imagining. Yeah.

[00:32:15] **Kendra** So I feel like we are all kind of in the space of this awkward . . . just . . . I don't even know how to describe 2020, just the "hellscape" maybe. But a lot of us are using books as refuge or rereading our favorites. So what are the books that you have been enjoying reading that have given you that space to just breathe for a moment during this year?

[00:32:42] **K-Ming** Wow. Yeah. Thank you for this question. I love talking about books that I'm reading. I actually just started a book that is coming out in June 2021. Also a One World author. It's called GHOST FOREST by Pik-Shuen Fung. I've just started it. It's written in vignettes, and there's so much space on the page. And the language is so intentional. It just feels like every word has been grown from a seed or something. Like, it just . . . it feels . . . every sentence is so beautiful and hard won. So I'm reading that, and

I'm really excited for it to come out. I know it was sent to T Kira Madden as well. So maybe, maybe blurbs.

[00:33:31] **K-Ming** Another book that I read earlier in the year, but I started rereading is *THE BLACK CATHEDRAL* by Marcial Gala, which is one of the wildest books that I've ever read. It's also written in vignettes. But there is like a chorus of voices. They're almost like little monologues that drive the story forward. But it's just. . . . It's incredible. And it has that feeling of I have no idea what's going to happen on the next page, in the next sentence. Like everything could change. Yeah. I think being disoriented. . . . I'm disoriented in life. So I'm like, might as well be disoriented in reading. Might as well be disoriented in books.

[00:34:11] **K-Ming** So another big reread is *REVENGE OF THE MOONCAKE VIXEN*, which I reread constantly and kind of reread in pieces. Like, I think a lot of books I'm turning to—also *THE WHITE BOOK* by Han Kang—is like a book that I can pick up, and then I flip to a page, and I read that page. And it feels almost like, I don't know, a prayer. Yeah. I think those are the the books I'm returning to, fractured realities because I'm in a fractured state.

[00:34:41] **Kendra** All right. Well, we are here talking because of the Miami Book Fair that is happening in November. So aside from that, which we've already mentioned at the top of the show, what's next on the agenda for you?

[00:34:54] **K-Ming** Oh, quite a lot. But it's all very . . . like . . . I have a . . . I'm like a really obsessive planner. And so I'm constantly in my planner, writing down things. But I always forget to, like, convert in time zones. So I'm always like, Oh no! Like, last minute. But yeah, I mean, it's exciting. I have a couple events coming up, like one with the Boston Library, one with an author who I really love, Jessica J. Lee, whose book *TWO TREES MAKE A FOREST* is another book that I've read this year repeatedly about Taiwanese diaspora literature, which is exciting. Yeah. I'm working now on a little chapbook that's a retelling of *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*. But it's queer, and it's Taiwanese. So I've been doing a lot of rereading of *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* as well.

[00:35:48] **Kendra** All of the angst.

[00:35:49] **K-Ming** Oh, so much drama. I'm like, this book is made for me. It's all of the drama, all of the intense emotions and declarations of love and hate, which I love.

[00:36:04] **Kendra** Well, thank you so much for coming on the show and talking about your book with me. It's been really delightful.

[00:36:10] **K-Ming** Thank you so much for your questions and your beautiful insight into the book. It's always so amazing to have conversations. I feel like it makes me understand and appreciate my work more, which is such a gift. So thank you so much.

[00:36:29] **Kendra** I'd like to thank K-Ming Chang for talking with me about her debut novel, *BESTIARY*, which is out now from One World. You can find her on her website, kmingchang.com and on social media (@kmingchang). Of course, all of her information will be linked in the show notes. I'd like to say a special thank you to our patrons, whose support make this podcast possible. You can find Reading Women at readingwomenpodcast.com and on Instagram and Twitter (@thereadingwomen). You can find me (@kdwinchester). Thanks so much for listening.

