

Interview with Meron Hadero

[00:00:11] **Kendra** Hello, I'm Kendra Winchester. And this is Reading Women, a podcast inviting you to reclaim the bookshelf and read the world. Today, I'm talking to Meron Hadero about her short story, "Street Sweep," which recently won the 2021 AKO Caine Prize for African Writing. You can find a complete transcript of this conversation on our website, readingwomenpodcast.com. And don't forget to subscribe so you don't miss a single episode.

[00:00:39] **Kendra** Well, I'm very excited to bring this very much to one-of-a-kind conversation to you today. I don't think I have ever interviewed an author about a single short story. Also, we have a cool little surprise in store for you later. But first, to introduce how this interview came to be. So our most recent contributor to the Reading Women team, Didi, has been working incredibly hard on a series of Q&As with all the women shortlisted for this year's AKO Caine Prize. All of those will be linked down in the show notes. So you can go check out all those Q&As, which have links to the AKO Caine Prize website, where you can read all of their short stories. But Didi did an excellent job of doing the series, introducing the Caine Prize, and really introducing a lot of our listeners and readers to this amazing organization. So Didi and I worked together and produced some questions that she has for our guest today as well. So we're kind of going to be tag teaming with the magic of editing, which I think is really cool. I always love trying something new. And I really love how this is very much a group project. So today, I will be talking to Meron Hadero about her winning story, "Street Sweep," how it came to be, and Didi has a few questions. And then also we learn a little bit more about what the AKO Caine Prize for African writing is all about and the different things like that. We also learn what's next for Hadero and what she is going to be publishing in 2022. It's all very exciting.

[00:02:20] **Kendra** Before we jump into that conversation, a little bit about Meron Hadero. She is an Ethiopian American writer who came to the US when she was a young child. She is the winner of the 2020 Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Writing. And her short stories have been shortlisted for the 2019 Caine Prize for African Writing and, of course, won this year's prize. Her writing has also been in the New York Times Book Review, *THE DISPLACED: REFUGEE WRITERS ON REFUGEE LIVES*, and will also appear in a forthcoming anthology, *LETTER TO A STRANGER: ESSAYS TO ONES WHO HAUNT US*. She has all sorts of amazing praise and accolades from people all around the world, so I am very excited to share her work with you today. So without further ado, here is our conversation with Meron Hadero.

[00:03:13] **Kendra** Well, welcome, Meron, to the podcast. I am so excited to have you on and to chat about your short stories today.

[00:03:27] **Meron** Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited to be here. I really do appreciate it.

[00:03:32] **Kendra** So how are you holding up during year two of the chaos? That is the big topic right now.

[00:03:42] **Meron** It is. It has been quite a unique time. And I'll say—and this answers your question and kind of also reflects on other aspects, is I—this pandemic for me has really. . . I've really come to value writing in my life in a different way and in a deeper way. So when I think about what I will take away from this time on the other side of it. . . And that's really one of the things I'm. . . You know, I've had . . . there are stories that I've been

working on for quite some time. And the presence of writing in my life and being able to go back to these stories and to revisit the characters and to spend time in those other spaces and to imagine other lives and to interact with characters that you've developed over time and with great care has been something that I found very grounding and very . . . it just has come away as being something very significant to me.

[00:04:48] **Kendra** I'm always very . . . "impressed" isn't the right word, but just very happy—I guess it would be a better word—for writers who are able to use this time and to have that time. I know so many writers who have been able to finish projects they've been working on during this time. Or they were inspired in a new way. What are you, I guess, for you, what typically did your writing life look like before you had, I guess, the time where you were stuck in your house a lot of the time?

[00:05:18] **Merlon** Here's what kind of made this year singular for me is that my first book was accepted for publication.

[00:05:24] **Kendra** Congratulations.

[00:05:25] **Merlon** Thank you. Thank you. And that will be published in spring of 2022. So. And I've had stories—and it's a collection of stories—and it's called THE DOWN HOME FEEL FOR THESE DIFFICULT TIMES. And that's a title that has changed several times. And that's a title of one of the stories that was published in The Iowa Review. And so some of them have been published. But during the pandemic—knowing that this work that I've been grappling with and developing and really pouring my heart into over all this time would be able to connect with readers as a complete thing—it shifted how I interacted with it in a way, knowing that it was hopefully going to find . . . make it, you know, make it to readers and find an audience. And that made it go from something that was a more private pursuit to connect through literature with others. And so, you know, I would say that the thing that changed in this past year about the experience of writing and working on these stories for me was knowing that they were going to, you know, exist in the world as a complete whole and not just be with me and the page.

[00:06:52] **Kendra** Yeah. And I mean, during this time as well, you have had a lot going on in regards to your writing. And we are here today to talk to you about the AKO Caine Prize. And you won that this year. So congratulations.

[00:07:09] **Merlon** Thank you so much.

[00:07:11] **Kendra** Very excited for you. And you've been shortlisted for the prize before. I think you said in 2019. Is that right?

[00:07:16] **Merlon** Yes, that's right. Yes.

[00:07:17] **Kendra** So I guess for listeners who may not be familiar with the AKO Caine Prize—because I feel unfortunately most people who follow prizes followed novel prizes or full-length book prizes—so what is the AKO Caine Prize? And what has been your experience with it so far?

[00:07:36] **Merlon** So it is, as you said, it's a short story prize for a piece that is by an African writer. And what I really love about the prize. . . . And it's very interesting because in 2019, the prize, we went to London. And we met all of the other finalists. And we were able to, you know, in person, do readings and kind of interact with readers and answer

questions and have that kind of in-person experience. And this year, it was digital, which was actually really interesting because we were able to connect in different ways with different audiences. And I have . . . I've . . . I think both are really valuable for that process of not only getting to talk about a specific piece in such a detail that you really get to know better—you know, I feel like I've really gotten to know my short stories better through that process—but also to get to know your cohort. So really, it's . . . it is a prize, but it's also a process where . . . and you get to talk to readers who are interacting with it. There's so many ways that you can engage with different audiences. And I just think that that's really what's valuable. It kind of creates a feeling of celebration, really, of the short story.

[00:09:16] **Kendra** I really love that idea of celebration. And it's like a celebration around African writing and it creating a community and connecting you with other African writers that you may not have met otherwise.

[00:09:28] **Merlon** Absolutely. And I think that . . . I do hope one day that we'll all get to meet in person. That would be great. But their writing is just . . . It's brilliant writing. And I have been. . . I feel lucky to not only have connected with them, but to connect with that work. And I'm going to be a lifelong fan of all of their work.

[00:09:54] **Kendra** Well, Didi has been doing Q&As with the three women that were shortlisted for the 2021 AKO Caine Prize, and I will make sure to link the website to the prize and, of course, a page where you can find all of those Q&As. And you also can find the writers' short stories there and all sorts of resources. So listeners can go check that out. But because of scheduling conflicts, Didi wasn't able to record with us today, but she did send along questions. So her first question I have here. Are you ready?

[00:10:24] **Merlon** Yes.

[00:10:28] **Didi** Hello, Merlon. I just wanted to congratulate you on winning the AKO Caine Prize 2021. We're all really excited here at the Reading Women. And you are the first Ethiopian writer to win. How do you feel about that? How have things changed for you since winning the prize?

[00:10:49] **Merlon** Thank you so much, Didi. I really appreciate that. Such a huge honor. I don't know how else to put it. It's just such a huge honor for me. And I've been hearing from family, you know, here in the US and in Ethiopia. And they're just so incredibly excited. And it's just a . . . It's an opportunity to tell a story that's set in Addis Ababa, the capital. And I love that this story has found new readers and maybe introduced new readers to this region and and hopefully help to establish those kinds of bridges that writing can hopefully help build.

[00:11:40] **Didi** So, Merlon, how do you see yourself in the literary scene in Ethiopia and the world now that you've won the AKO Caine Prize 2021?

[00:11:49] **Merlon** So I . . . that's an interesting question. And, you know, for me, I think it's easier for me to look at what others have done for me and to say that I hope to model that as well. I think it must have been in 2015, I connected with Maaza Mengiste, who is an Ethiopian American writer. And I don't know if I even had a story published yet at that time, or maybe I had one. But she invited me to submit a story for ADDIS ABABA NOIR, which was published actually in 2020. She was a very early editor of my stories because she edited that piece. And the book that I'm putting out, it was . . . it won the Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Writing. And one of the judges is Dinaw Mengestu, another

Ethiopian American writer. And he, you know, it feels like another kind of connection in this kind of building of a literary network and that you hope will continue to build and that you hope will continue and that you hope you can be part of.

[00:13:04] **Kendra** So the story that won this year is called "The Street Sweep." And that was published in . . . is it a literary journal?

[00:13:14] **Meron** It was published in Zyzzyva which is based in San Francisco.

[00:13:20] **Kendra** So for our listeners who may not have read the story yet, could you give just a brief synopsis of what the story is about?

[00:13:29] **Meron** So the story takes place in one night. And it's set in Ethiopia. And there's a young man who's deciding what to wear to his new friend's farewell party. And he is hoping that through this party, he can turn his life around. So. . . . And so he . . . it's not just a party. He goes . . . he is hoping to save his home, which is at risk of being lost. And he thinks that he might be able, through this friendship that he's cultivated, to be able to secure a job and access to a new life. And then the story just goes from there, and we see what transpires. And I won't . . . I won't say anymore. I'll leave it there.

[00:14:29] **Kendra** It's always difficult not to give spoilers.

[00:14:35] **Meron** It is! It's so funny because it makes you, you know, it's. . . . I love being asked to describe a story because it does put you back in the position of a reader or the position when you're revising something, you know, when you try to look at a story from someone else's point of view. And I'm like, okay, what . . . how to describe it without kind of taking something away from the experience of reading it.

[00:14:59] **Kendra** I really enjoyed "The Street Sweep." I, because of my disability, I can't actually read print or text on a screen. So I had a friend read it to me. And she's an audiobook narrator by trade. And so she very kindly reads things for me sometimes. And I really loved listening because there are parts of it where you can hear in, like, their dialogue and the language that they're using and the descriptions you have. . . . And you also made a very complicated housing situation, for example, very easy for me as someone who's never been to Ethiopia and not familiar with these laws, you've made it very easy to understand and to impress upon the reader how important this moment was for our protagonist. And I was just. . . . It was just a delight. And you get sucked in very quickly, which I feel can sometimes be difficult for a short story because you have to do it very quickly to move on to, like, I guess the rest of the story since you have a small amount of space. But I felt that was done so beautifully.

[00:16:01] **Meron** Thank you. With the . . . with kind of . . . with setting up his situation and really creating that sense of urgency—because as I was saying before, and I'll say again because it's so important—is he is . . . he sets out on this kind of mission that he's told is impossible. And he does that because he is at risk of losing everything. And he really is on the precipice. But he's kind of, you know, but we're. . . . But at the same time, from the outside, if you're saying, well, he's just trying to get to a party; it doesn't seem like the party could define his life. But the situation that I try to set up, it's you know, it's . . . it's really about just powers that are bigger than Getu and his mother. And they're just at the at the mercy of these powers, so it seems. But he still has. . . . He doesn't allow himself to lose hope. And he finds his path to agency. Or he looks for his path to agency.

[00:17:11] **Didi** Getu is resourceful and tenacious in "The Street Sweep." Is his character a tribute to the people of Ethiopia? Is your writing speaking specifically to Ethiopians?

[00:17:24] **Meron** I . . . thank you for saying that. I have to say, I admire Getu and his resourcefulness and tenacity. And so I, I . . . it's something that I'm so pleased to hear is the reader experience as well. And I, I think Getu represents a . . . he does represent this kind of persistence of hope. And maybe. . . . And whether or not he represents something larger than that, I think is, you know, that's for an audience. I love raising questions in stories, but I don't want to. . . . I don't want to to answer them and take that away from a reader. But I'll say that he . . . the hope that he carries and that he represents is important. And that's something that I really hope is captured through . . . through those qualities that you mentioned.

[00:18:25] **Kendra** And I felt like as I was reading the story, that this was one of many people's stories. And I don't know. . . . I don't know how that was impressed upon me. I feel like often as a reader, I absorb things, and I don't even realize it. But it was like his story was just one amongst many people's stories that might be in a similar situation or that were very persistent in the face of adversity and had that hope. And I thought that was just something that—I don't know—it really made me very thoughtful after reading the story because I'm thinking, where did it . . . where did this . . . where did this come from? Where did this feeling come from? But I feel like that hope is definitely something that is in the forefront of the story.

[00:19:10] **Meron** That's so beautiful. I think it's. . . . I think it's so important. And I am really actually moved to hear you say that you left the story feeling that. I think about. . . . I think anyone who writes especially a short fiction where, you know, we're trying to do a lot very quickly. And it means so much to hear a reader say that they have left a story carrying a certain feeling or certain questions with them, that we've managed to make the story bigger than—you know—bigger than it is, and that we've managed to create something that feels lasting. And I'm especially glad to hear that you say that that lasting feeling is a hopefulness. And I always wonder, you know, for me, when I wrote the story and when I read the story, when I go back to read it again, it . . . you know, I hope that the second reading also kind of alters maybe somebody's understanding of the story. And, you know, I hope that this story kind of transforms at the end as well. But that question and that idea of what you weave especially a short piece of writing with, a short story with is really important. And it's . . . hearing that feedback is . . . is wonderful.

[00:20:44] **Kendra** The main character is so resourceful and resilient. But I don't know if it's just me and my perspective on characters. I always wonder, like what was this character's childhood look like? What was their future? You know, like, you kind of have that love of a character that you want to know those details. And for me, this definitely read as one point in the character's life. But there was going to be a future of some kind, just like there was a past of some kind. Not all short stories have characters that are so well rounded that you wonder those things, right? There are some . . . sometimes the story doesn't need as fleshed-out characters. But I felt like this was one point in this character's life and there could be so much more to this character story that we just didn't know yet as well.

[00:21:33] **Meron** Yeah, I definitely hope. . . . I'm glad to hear that as well. I think the way that I tried to write the ending—and I won't say too much—but there are dots that are placed . . . that can be connected. I don't know how to. . . . How do I talk about that without saying too much? Or you know, there. . . . I hope that it is. . . . I do hope that it's an ending

that opens a door, rather than kind of . . . that leaves the door open rather than closing at the end. And I think that with character—and I don't know if this is really answering your question directly—but for me in this story and in others, starting with character might lead to that kind of feeling, I wonder. But I definitely, you know, the story for me has to be grounded in who this character is . . . because he's taking on a task that is really . . . he shouldn't be discouraged. I mean, he's. . . . But yet, he's moving forward. And that means that he has to feel real even when pushing against the odds. And there. . . . I think grounding the story in the character is the way to do that. And, you know, hopefully it allows the reader to feel the presence of the character and to feel that the character kind of exists off the page as well.

[00:23:23] **Kendra** I really like what you said there about existing off the page as well because that's a perfect descriptor of kind of how I imagine him. You tackle so many big topics in this short story, which I imagine almost like you trying to fit an elephant through a mousehole of all of these big things boiled down to their essences. You can fit just as much information as you need into the story to communicate where you're going. For you with the process of writing the short story, where did the story begin for you?

[00:24:04] **Meron** So for me with this story and with the other stories that I'm working on, the idea of home is very central. And in my broader collection, all of the stories are about characters who are . . . they're immigrants. They're refugees. They're facing displacement. They're grappling. They're, you know, they're in the process of losing their homes or finding their homes or recreating their homes or fighting for their homes or. . . . So home is a really grounding theme. And what's really kind of fun about the short story form when you're looking at a concept is, you know, you can . . . it's like you can look at it from different angles. You can look at it, you know, at different times. You keep revisiting it literally over time, over years. But also stylistically, you can look at it and like flash fiction or an experimental piece or something like "The Street Sweep." And so that to me is really kind of the . . . it was the driver for Getu in terms of the narrative. It also compelled me to write the story. You know, I was thinking about, you know, this kind of looming threat and what someone, this young man Getu, could do to really take his life in his own hands and see if he could, you know, rewrite the ending of his own story.

[00:25:46] **Kendra** When you write a short story, do you normally write longer and then cut it down? Or do you . . . are you more of, um, what was . . . how was it in writing class? It was either like a sprinter or a plodder, I think, is how you learn about it in writing class. And so how does that work for you?

[00:26:06] **Meron** It really depends. I mean, I've. . . . It really depends. With . . . what I like about short stories is it is easier to—or you can, or I can—sometimes work out. . . . I can have it kind of exist in my mind before sitting down to write. I think that for me that's really something that is . . . that is pretty consistent. Like I like to really think about the story and. . . . But I'll say, like it has. . . . I've used the short story. And what I like about the short story is the kind of invitation to experiment and to use this tiny laboratory and see what process might work best for any given. . . . I have written short stories because I . . . to experiment with a certain technique. Or what if. . . ? You know. And I'm also working on a novel. And if you kind of start experimenting in ways that are disruptive in a novel, I mean, those ripples can really undo a lot. But a short story gives you the freedom to just try new things and to work out problems and to just keep learning and bring your questions there. So I haven't really found. . . . I mean, I've heard short stories that have taken a very long time. But as I've started to work them out in my head more, you know, I think that that kind

of aspect of it has changed. But what hasn't changed is what it offers that's unique, which is the space to. . . . It just offers us a very unique kind of freedom, in my opinion, for me.

[00:28:13] **Kendra** I always love hearing how writers create the stories that they tell. And my husband and I met as creative writing majors at university. And he was a plodder. And he would look almost at this wall of building blocks and slowly choose each one very carefully and would put them into place. And I was definitely more of the sprinter where I would write, you know, 2,000 words and keep, you know, 500 at most out of all of those words. And so our stories would always come out very differently. But you could see that, in a lot of ways, we were just taking different avenues to the end. And each story is different. Sometimes, you know, I'll work on an essay idea and will write that essay a gazillion times. And then eventually, it's the one that I want. So I really love hearing that about "The Street Sweep." Was this story different for you in writing it since you'd already been shortlisted for the AKO Caine Prize before. Was there anything in particular about creating the story that stood out to you in comparison to some of your other projects?

[00:29:30] **Meron** That's a really good question to kind of think about how . . . because you could . . . each story is unique. And its. . . . I don't think I've. . . . I'm not sure that I sit down and. . . . It's not like I sit down, and I have. . . . You know, I feel like the story will tell you what to do with it. What I can say that's consistent is that—and I wonder in hearing you talk about your process, I wonder if this is true, no matter . . . no matter what, whether you're a sprinter or a plodder—is that, you know, the revision process is always . . . is always really important. And that . . . that would be something that I would say is significant no matter what. But. And so I can't. . . . I don't want to say too much. But I'll say that a lot really to me rested on the ending. And not every story—I mean, endings are always important—but not every story kind of is weighted in the same way that this one felt to me that it was. And so in the story that I was shortlisted for in 2019. . . . So that story, I would say, it has a more consistent . . . even though the ending is important in that story as well, it will . . . I think that it would read . . . it, to me, it has like a reading that feels complete at the end. With this story, I do hope that it reads differently upon, you know, a second reading or that the ending might complicate what a reader's expectations were.

[00:31:19] **Kendra** Yeah, it's definitely more of an open-ended kind of ending that allows you to sit and ponder at the end, we'll say, without (again) giving spoilers. And I always love hearing the process of coming to that place and just learning more about how stories are made. And, for me, I really love what you said about the revision process because I always love once I have created building blocks, being able to rearrange them and tinker with them and then maybe throw out a bunch of blocks altogether. That, for me, is where most of the writing happens because it's just so painful for me to get a first draft of anything. And so I always feel . . . I feel for authors when they come on and talk about their process. And I'm like, oh, here's a cup of hot chocolate. I hope you're doing all right after going through and realizing you need to cut, like, half your story and rewrite it. Like, just deep breaths. Right? Or anything like that.

[00:32:24] **Meron** It is. It's really interesting to think of process. And I just wonder if there will ever be a time where I feel like it's just locked down, you know. Like, I feel like with every new story, it kind of gives you—and with short stories in particular for me—it gives me the chance to ask myself, you know, what would best serve this? Or what is the, you know, it's you start . . . you start fresh. And again, since I'm looking at kind of a singular theme, and I'm trying to approach it from different angles and with different characters in different settings and different times, like that almost forces me to keep trying something new. I hope with the collection that I'm working on, in general, that it will feel to a reader

like they're moving through an experience that is kind of unpredictable. And that is, you know, as they move between geographies, and characters are shifting, and expectations are shifting, and moods are shifting, that that will almost mirror in a way that feeling of starting over and the, you know, that kind of process of trying to kind of negotiate your space and to build, you know, to build a home and to build a sense of belonging and find community and, you know, all the things that go into these characters' lives. As I said, you know, they are immigrants and refugees or displaced or on the verge of displacement or grappling with that. And that kind of movement through the stories, I hope, you know, mirrors the kind of mosaic and kind of fractured experience of that process. But, you know, and I think that's something that the short story lets you do. And maybe this particular project kind of forced me to look at what processes might work best here or what might work best here. And I guess, I don't know, the next collection, how I'll answer that question or what it will feel like.

[00:34:51] **Kendra** Well, I feel like I could talk to you about process and all sorts of things for a very long time. But I don't want to keep you too long. So I want to chat with you about what's next because you've written a short story. And I know a lot of people would love to see a full-length work from you. So Didi has actually a question about that as well.

[00:35:11] **Didi** So in "The Street Sweep," which is a very full and well-balanced short story, will you be developing it into a novel?

[00:35:23] **Merón** That is such an interesting question. And it's one that I appreciate because really of some of what we talked about before. I don't plan to. But I love . . . I just love this question because I hope that it's something that now that the piece is published, that's out there, that a reader can imagine for themselves. You know, what will Getu's future hold? If I were to develop it into a novel, I have ideas of how that would go, just based on the ending. But it's not anything I'm working on. I am actually working on a novel at the moment. But, you know, my collection is going to be published in March. So it's . . . it really is my focus. It's my debut book. I've never published a book before. So I'm just going back to these stories, as we were talking about revision. It's a process that I don't even know sometimes. You know, I think I'll be done because there will be a deadline. And I'll probably read the book and think of something that I might want to change, you know, that could be changed in the future. But the . . . so for me, that's really the focus. But I, you know, I love to think that Getu's story continues on whether or not it's something that comes from me.

[00:37:01] **Kendra** Well, you just mentioned that you have a short story collection coming out. Do you have the details on when that's going to be available for listeners to go pick up next year?

[00:37:12] **Merón** I do. I am so excited. It's coming out . . . the publication date is March 15, 2022. I just . . . I absolutely can't believe it. I'm so excited for it. And it will . . . it will have "The Street Sweep" in it and the other shortlisted story from the Caine Prize, which is called "The Wall." And I have other stories in there that are set in Ethiopia and that are set across the US. Some of them are . . . Some of them have been published before. I have one story that is really dear to me as well. That's called "The Suitcase." And it was published in Best American Short Stories. And then Renee Elise Goldsberry of Hamilton read the story for Selected Shorts. And I was nearly in tears here, you know, kind of hearing how beautifully she had heard it, had interpreted it for the reading. But, you know, so and that . . . that Selected Shorts was aired . . . I think it was 2017. So it's . . . it's been a long process. And so it's very interesting to have the collection now coming out because it

really has been—even though we were talking before about whether you're a sprinter or a plodder for a specific story or a draft—you know, it's a slow process to bring everything together. And so it feels like a real culmination. And I'm just. . . . I couldn't be more excited for it, to have that work come together after so many years.

[00:39:01] **Kendra** And what publisher is putting that out?

[00:39:04] **Meron** It's Restless Books. So it won the Restless Books Prize for a New Immigrant Writing? As I mentioned, one of the judges was Dinaw Mengestu. I was just thrilled to see that he was part of the prize this year. And I am a big fan of his writing. So I submitted. And I was very excited to see that come through.

[00:39:29] **Kendra** Well, I'll be sure to link that prize down in the show note so listeners can go check that out as well.

[00:39:37] **Meron** Thank you.

[00:39:37] **Kendra** Well, my last question for you today. You've talked a lot about your writing. What writers would you recommend to our listeners?

[00:39:44] **Meron** Well, first, I absolutely recommend the other shortlisted writers from this year's Caine Prize. And as you mentioned, there were three women this year. And you, I think, Didi has their interviews as well. But Doreen Baingana and Iryn Tushabe are just brilliant Ugandan women who. . . . You know, read everyone's stories. But as we're as talking about the women who have been shortlisted for this year's Caine Prize, I highly recommend their work. Lesley Arimah won the Caine Prize in 2019. And **WHAT IT MEANS WHEN A MAN FALLS FROM THE SKY** is a beautiful collection. And it's. . . . it's so good. Talk about, like, what you hope a short story collection will do. . . . Or when you, you know, or with the kind of. . . . Or just how short stories can. . . . they just. . . . The short stories that stay with you. . . . I mean that whole collection is just beautiful. And then I guess this is kind of a short story list. Danielle Evans, I loved her new book, **THE OFFICE OF HISTORICAL CORRECTIONS**. And I mentioned Maaza Mengiste before. **THE SHADOW KING** is. . . . it was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, I believe.

[00:41:18] **Kendra** Well, thank you so much for coming on the show. I am so thrilled to talk to you about your short story. And I can't wait till your collection comes out next year.

[00:41:27] **Meron** Thank you so much. I'm very excited. And it's such a pleasure to be here. Thank you for having me on.

[00:41:35] **Kendra** And that's our show, I'd like to thank Meron Hadero for talking with me about her short story, "The Street Sweep." And you can find that on the AKO Caine Prize website, which will, of course, be linked in our show notes. Many thanks to Didi for working on this with me and working as a producer on the show for today's episode. Many thanks to our patrons, whose support makes this podcast possible. This episode was produced and edited by me, Kendra Winchester, with production assistance from Didi. (Again, thank you.) And our music is by Miki Saito with Isaac Greene. You can find us on Instagram and Twitter (@thereadingwomen). And thank you so much for listening.