

Interview Kira Jane Buxton

[00:00:09] **Kendra** Hello I'm Kendra Winchester here with Autumn Privett and this is Reading Women, a podcast inviting you to reclaim half the bookshelf by discussing books written by or about women. And today we're talking to Kira Jane Buxton about her book, HOLLOW KINGDOM, which is out now from Grand Central Publishing.

[00:00:25] **Autumn** And you can find a complete transcript of this episode as well as a list of all the books mentioned today, by following the link in our show notes. And don't forget to subscribe and review wherever you get your podcasts.

[00:00:38] **Kendra** You know, if there was ever such a thing as love at first sight with a book I think this might be it.

[00:00:43] **Autumn** Definitely. We talk about this later but the cover is beautiful, the description is bizarre to put it mildly, and if you've seen any of the promotional photos on Instagram they're packed with Cheetos, which makes a lot of sense if you've read the book. It is just a lot of fun.

[00:01:01] **Kendra** Yeah, and I really love Liberty Hardy's discussion of this book on All the Books podcast where she talks about how it's blurbed as THE SECRET LIFE OF PETS meets THE WALKING DEAD and how it's basically like the epitome of the perfect Liberty Hardy book. So if you love quirky books about animals, this is your sweet spot.

[00:01:20] **Autumn** And you definitely should go to Kira's website and look at her author photo, if you're a pet lover because it'll just make your year probably.

[00:01:31] **Kendra** It is adorable. So a little bit about the author, Kira Jane Buxton's writing has appeared in The New York Times, New Yorker.com, McSweeney's, The Rumpus, Huffington Post, and more. She calls the tropical utopia of Seattle home and spends her time with the three cats, a dog, two crows, a charm of hummingbirds, and a husband. I love how she has her priorities.

[00:01:52] **Autumn** Yes, definitely! So here is our conversation with Kira about HOLLOW KINGDOM.

[00:02:01] **Kendra** Well, welcome Kira to the podcast. We're so excited to have you on.

[00:02:06] **Kira** Oh, my goodness, thank you so much for having me. I've been looking forward to this tremendously.

[00:02:11] **Autumn** We were so excited to discover your book at Book Expo this year. As soon as I saw the cover I was like I have to know what that book is. And then as soon as I read the description I was like I have to get my hands on this. So we're excited to finally have read it and get to talk to you about it.

[00:02:31] **Kira** Oh, I'm so excited. Yeah. You know I'm very fortunate that the cover is so beautiful. Jared Taylor did the cover and he's actually, he lived in New York from Seattle. And he just recently moved back here. So he just really gets that whole Seattle sort of the skyline on the cover and the markings on the crow are rain falling onto the skyline which is so perfect.

[00:02:54] **Autumn** I didn't notice that.

[00:02:54] **Kira** Yeah, isn't it crazy. It's one of those things that it's hard to pick up on and so you really like stare at it like maybe I have, maybe only I have.

[00:03:06] **Kira** But yeah it's an eye-catching one, yeah.

[00:03:08] **Kendra** Definitely. I remember, I think it was our first day and we're like when is this ARC dropping because the cover was so captivating. And then we took it back to our hotel room and I think we took them in our carry ons because we're like we can't mail this back to ourselves. We need this immediately.

[00:03:24] **Kira** I love that!

[00:03:25] **Kendra** It's such a gorgeous cover so yes. Many congratulations to your designer. I'm just I feel like you could frame it and then put on your wall.

[00:03:34] **Kira** Yes. I mean it is it's that pretty. It's gorgeous. He only did one other iteration. The first one he sent was very dark. There was a lot of sort of blood splatter everywhere and it was very, very red and the crow was sort of very ominous looking. It looked a bit serial killer-ish to me.

[00:03:57] **Kendra** Only if you're a Cheeto.

[00:03:58] **Kira** Yes, but only if you're a Cheeto. But, thankfully, you know we sort of said well . . . it was still beautiful, it just didn't quite fit with some of the more sort of lyrical elements of the book or the sort of the nature writing that I think there's a little of in the book. And so he went away and came back with this cover and just completely nailed it. Amazing. Yeah.

[00:04:20] **Kendra** We've seen so many like fan art pieces and there was that gorgeous cake you just posted recently. So before we get ahead of ourselves, for our listeners who aren't familiar with HOLLOW KINGDOM could you describe it for them.

[00:04:34] **Kira** Absolutely yeah. It's a little bit of a challenge but I'll try. I've been describing it as a humorous, literary, dystopian novel with some horror elements and a lot of nature writing in it. It's really, it's the story of S.T., who is this sort of domesticated, snarky American Crow who's been raised by a human, an electrician named Big Jim who lives in the Ribena neighborhood of Seattle. And S.T. sort of doesn't really associate with being a crow. He really sort of firmly believes in his little heart that he's human and he loves our species and he's sort of been raised on this steady diet of TV. You know a lot of pop culture like Bravo TV and he loves National Geographic and he loves the Discovery Channel and of course he loves the greatest food that man has invented the Cheeto. And so S.T. lives in this home with Big Jim, the human, and Big Jim's bloodhound, Dennis, and he's quite happy living this sort of airy anthropocentric existence. And then one day something happens to Big Jim. His eyeball falls out of his head and that's when S.T. sorta thinks, something's a little off here and he goes out to try and find a cure for Big Jim. He gets him some beer and various medications that he thinks might work. And then when he realizes the problem is not something he can fix and it's a little bit more widespread, S.T. and Dennis have to sort of go out into the natural world, which is a world that S.T.'s never believed in, to try and find a cure and to ultimately try and save humanity. So it's a little unusual.

[00:06:22] **Autumn** Oh, but it's like the best kind of unusual. Which made us wonder, where did the inspiration for this book come from?

[00:06:31] **Kira** It's so funny because you know, I thought about it a lot recently. I think if somebody had told me four years ago, I wrote it three years ago and if somebody told me four years ago that I'd be writing this book, this crazy wild book from the perspective of a crow who tries to save the world, I wouldn't have believed it. But when I look back I think well, there's so many things in my life and things I've been inspired by that have sort of culminated in this. I grew up abroad. I grew up in Asia and the Middle East and I grew up . . . my parents were big animal lovers and big into rescuing. We always rescued things wherever we went and people would sort of hand us animals and go here deal with this. And when we lived in Dubai, we used to get camels that used to come into the yard and you know I was very enamored by the camels. They would come into the yard and I'd be like these are my camels, you know. And my mom, my poor long-suffering mom was like no these are not our camels. And once a one eyed goat that came into our yard, also in Dubai, and I was like, look at him he's perfect this is my goat. And she's like no this is not your goat and no he's not perfect. And so there's always been the animal thing, and also you know I was lucky I went to some really good schools that sort of instilled a conservation ethic sort of in me very early on. I used to do these projects about you know tourism in the Thousand Islands and the impact of it environmentally or I would do great big projects on sea turtles or wolves and so ultimately all of that . . . my first job was at a zoo. I was a volunteer and I used to run around have these great animal encounters.

[00:08:06] **Kira** And then when we moved to Seattle, you know many, many years later, my husband and I, we moved to Seattle because of the trees. And we saw them and fell in love with them and it was this sort of how do we live around these beautiful evergreens? Douglas firs and the Western Red Cedars and just absolutely love these trees. And we moved here and then I started to have crow encounters. I'd always been fascinated by them. I had this one encounter where I was walking my dog and this poor crow was sort of lying in the street and his wing was sort of almost backwards, it was really, really broken. And up in the trees all around were probably around 60 crows, 60 of its family members. And they were all just, I mean it was deafening, they were screaming. And I thought, "Oh no, I've got to do something!" So I got a little box and I went up to this crow, and I thought, "Oh no, I'm going to get dive bombed, like this is gonna be 100% my Tippi Hedren moment. You know like it's gonna be very Hitchcockian. Instead of dive bomb bombing me they sort of all went silent and watched me. And I looked at this little crow and this little crow looked at me and I just I knew the crow understood that I was there to help. And so I did manage to get the crow to a wildlife rehabilitation center and very sadly the crow didn't make it, which is terrible. But after that, my relationship with the crows really changed. Everywhere I went they were sort of following me and I started chatting to them and I started reading all about them. So I was sort of fascinated by how intelligent they are and sort of being able to experience it and see empirical evidence of that. And then I moved to a different part of town and ended up befriending two wild crows who have basically become like family members to me. They visit me every day and they leave me little gifts and it's very, very special. So all of those things I think kind of led to the writing of this crazy, wild book.

[00:10:04] **Autumn** That's the best story ever.

[00:10:07] **Kendra** It really is.

[00:10:09] **Autumn** I'm not even kidding.

[00:10:12] **Kira** If I could rewrite, it if I could rewrite that story I would have it so that the crow lived, the little crow. I think about it.

[00:10:18] **Autumn** Yes!!

[00:10:20] **Kira** Yeah, I think about that. But my buddies, they are a lot of fun. I do spend a lot of time with them. They're very different. A lot of people ask me like, how can you tell the difference between two crows? And my two are a mated pair. And it did take me a while to figure out who was male and female. I got it wrong initially. It wasn't until the mating, their first nesting season, that I knew who was female because she was busy with the nest. And then the male, Dart, would sort of sheepishly come by and be like she's busy, what are you doing? And then their personalities are so different. Dart, the male, is sort of this very beautiful, regal crow and he's a little bit more aloof and absolutely stunning. He looks like a fighter jet from the side just gorgeous, beautiful feathers. And then T., she's the female, and I joke a lot but she's like me she's kind of clumsy. She has a little bit of a wonky wing that must've broken at some point and healed a little funny. And she's just funny, she's full of sass, she drools when she eats, and she's got a real sense of humor. She loves to hide up on the roof and then like jump out at me. That's a big thing she loves or you know show off things she's stolen from various places. It's a lot of fun. I have way too much fun with those two.

[00:11:36] **Kendra** Autumn and I both love animals and I feel like you get that obsession where you read about all the things as a kid. Mine was cats as a kid and I could tell you every single breed ever. I think animals are just really special in that way that you . . . people who love animals know. And then you try to spend your life explaining to people who don't love animals, why animals are so important.

[00:12:03] **Kira** Yes. Yes, it's so true. It seems also, it's interesting, I love that you love cats. That's a funny one because it's sometimes difficult to convert people. Like I'm always trying to . . . like someone will say, "I like everything but not cats" and then I'll have to you know, I'll either invite them over and force my . . . I have a very cuddly cat and I'll just force the cat on them and it works, it can happen. I also think that people who understand or love animals are in general, I mean maybe this is a generalization, but they tend to be more empathetic towards, I don't know in general maybe. I think there's something about loving other species that really opens us up you know and makes it so that we don't focus so much on our own species you know.

[00:12:51] **Autumn** So as we've talked about a little bit, this is definitely a quirky book. It's narrated by animals. It's from this crow's point of view. It's, as you mentioned, it covers like lots of different genres and different topics. So what was the publishing journey like? Like how did HOLLOW KINGDOM end up finding a home at Grand Central Publishing?

[00:13:14] **Kira** Yeah, it's, you know honestly, it's the whole process with this book has been this tremendous joy. It really has. But it's not my first novel and I always really think it's so important to say that. This is my first published novel but it's not the first novel I've written. There are three novels and a memoir that I have written before this that didn't find a home. And I think for good reason. Like there was some very strange things going on, especially with the first book—which was a lot of fun, and would be unsurprising to you that there is a rhino in it and there's a tiger and there's actually a bloodhound in it. So apparently I'm a little obsessed with bloodhounds. But I had come very close to landing an

agent with one of the novels. And I sort of went back and forth with this really wonderful agent, for I think it was maybe close to over a period of maybe close to two years where it was sort of like me tweaking and bringing it back and changing it. And I hired some great editors and I worked with them but ultimately what happened was I actually over edited it and I couldn't see it anymore. And it was so heartbreaking to have this book that I'd spend a lot of time on and put a lot of love into and other people had helped me with it. And I would open up the document to look at it and I couldn't see it. It was just like a nebulous sort of blur of letters.

[00:14:39] **Kira** So I fell into a little bit of a funk over that. I felt very sorry for myself. I sort of, you know, did a lot of rolling around on the floor and drinking wine out of a salad bowl. And ultimately my poor, long-suffering husband said, "You know, why don't you go and write the thing about the crows?" So it took me a while to figure out that premise and once I had, I was kind of off to the races. Once I realized like, OK well what if a crow is telling our story about you know our species? What if a crow is talking about our extinction? And once I had that piece, I really wrote that first chapter really very, very quickly and ended up writing the whole book chapter by chapter and reading each chapter to my husband. Then the whole thing took a little under, I think it was about 3 1/2 or just under 4 months. So I really, in a way, binge wrote this novel. Joyously. Happy, happy frenzy. And I gave it, I sort of read a sample chapter to my writing group. One of my dear, dear writer friends said to me, "You know I think you really have something here and you should share it with an editor." So I gave it to a local author whose name is Waverly Fitzgerald. She's fabulous. And I was very nervous to give it to her. She said, "Pitch it to me." So I pitched and she said, "Wow! That's weird." And I said, "Yes, this is weird." And she said "Well, send me a few chapters." And then there was kind of a silence while I waited. And she e-mailed me back and she said, "Well, I think we need to meet in person." And I was so nervous, I thought, "Oh no, I'm going to . . . somehow I would be in the doghouse for writing this. I'm going to be like excommunicated from the Seattle writing community." And I saw her and she said, "You know I think this is so unusual."

[00:16:23] **Kira** And she said, "I think one of two things is going to happen. Either one, no one's going to touch it because it's so weird or two, this might be a big deal." And she said, "I think you need to send it to agents and no sooner rather than later so you don't go through that big heartbreaking process that you just did with the other book." So, I started to query and then I started to get this amazing response where you know agents loved it and either felt like they weren't quite sure how to sell it but would cheer me on, or you know ultimately, really wanted it. And so I ended up flying out to New York to meet some really wonderful agents and I was so lucky as to get offered representation from Bill Clegg, at The Clegg Agency. Then that whole process of him selling it to Grand Central, and they've just been the most amazing to work with. So I just feel like the luckiest, really the luckiest person on earth.

[00:17:22] **Kendra** I think about what your writer friend said to you, like this is either going to be like really weird and no one will touch it or it will be huge. And I feel like that's something special about this book. It does have that kind of quirky nature to it. And I feel . . . you have a blurb that says it's like THE SECRET LIFE OF PETS meets THE WALKING DEAD.

[00:17:44] **Kira** Yes.

[00:17:45] **Kendra** Which is perfection.

[00:17:47] **Kira** Yes, that was Karen Joy Fowler who said that. The the inimitable Karen Joy Fowler, who is a genius. And I was so happy that she loved it. But she came up with that. And another favorite description that, it was an editor who was reading it too, said to me on the phone he said, "It's like Kipling if he were really, really high," and somebody else said Animal Farm on acid. So there's definitely some kind of a theme here. It's definitely unusual. But there also, I think you know, sort of more of a . . . you know some of the chapters, because it's not just narrated by S.T., there's also these sort of interstitial chapters that are narrated by other animals around the world to give us sort of global view of what's happening in this sort of near dystopian future. And that was because you know partly I wanted to get into the minds of as many animals as possible, which I'm sure you can relate to as animal lovers. But also because I, you know, it gave me some room to sort of experiment with fiction as well. Experiment and some of it you know sort of almost poetry. Nobody told me that I couldn't have a funny literary novel with horror elements and other elements. Nobody said that I couldn't. And I had, I think because I had gone through the rejection already, it was like well . . . and also this also came on the heels of . . . I was acting acting in L.A. for 10 years and really nothing came of that. I call myself a failed actress. So I had you know I'd racked up a lot of rejection over a long period of time and sort of got to the point where it was like, "Well I don't have anything to lose. Why don't I just really enjoy myself and really enjoy the writing process and explore the things I want to?" You know?

[00:19:42] **Kendra** And I definitely feel like you harness that love for animals. And you know since it's narrated by an animal, it's narrated by a crow named S.T. . . . There aren't many books, especially adult books, narrated by animals. I think I could think of so many books for children narrated by animals. But I feel like oftentimes adult fiction thinks that, "Oh, that's too childish or whatever it doesn't work." But with your book I feel like it really works. As someone who loved books by like Walter Farley, you know writing about this amazing horse or the story of a grizzly or a snapping turtle moving from Canada to the Mississippi Delta. I love those stories narrated and from the perspective of animals. So since you are writing for adults, were there any particular challenges that you found while writing from S.T.'s perspective and from the perspective of all these other animals?

[00:20:38] **Kira** That's such a good question. I feel the same way you do. I feel like that's something I missed from my childhood is you know being able to explore the experience of another. I think in storytelling it used to be more that way. I think you know it's our storytelling has changed so it's mostly just this very you know human experience. And I feel like, I'll read a book and if I'm reading a murder mystery and there's a dog in the scene, I always I want to know, I know the dog knows what happened and I want to know. And I just feel that once I finally found a way to write about crows and very directly from the perspective of one, I think the main challenge was in not going too overboard with real world animal facts because I had a tremendous time researching for the novel. You know it's grounded in a lot of real animal behavior. I mean I got so excited about a lot of it it was very tempting not to say how many teeth an animal had because it was so cool or it just not go too overboard with it. S.T. was not difficult to write from his perspective because I think you know in spending a lot of time with my crows . . .

[00:21:59] **Kira** My crow T., my friend crow . . . She really did inspire a lot of his sort of antics, antics and behaviors. Things I got to see up close, but I did find challenges with some of the other characters in particular the polar bear. There's a chapter narrated by a polar bear and I think when I came . . . I knew wanted to do a polar bear but they're . . the polar bear as the poster child for climate change and I didn't want it to be glib or trite or heavy handed. I wanted it to really feel authentic to what a polar bear might experience.

And you know I didn't want it to be didactic or depressing or too heavy. So that was tricky. And then there were some that were just real surprises to me. I had actually been trying to voice a hummingbird when the Angus, this Highland cow, exploded onto the page—a very narcissistic Highland cow. So there were surprises along the way too. But mostly, I would say that mostly it was just a pure joy to explore with absolute freedom and less of a challenge.

[00:23:10] **Autumn** And I think all the different animal voices and you mentioned a cow and a polar bear . . . there's dogs and cats and sparrows and I don't know, there's all kinds of animals in this book and you mentioned climate change too. And that's one of the things about this book that really struck me was like you know I think we see a lot of like post apocalyptic or similar kind of books that talk about it from the human perspective. But seeing it from the animal perspective really does change it because of their relationship to the earth and how connected they are to the earth. Which I thought was a really interesting way to approach it and very thought provoking way to approach it. Were there any guidelines you had, any thought about how the animals experience the world or how their voices express themselves or what did that look like?

[00:24:02] **Kira** No guidelines at all. Zero. Mostly me. You know, honestly, I think a lot of it was about reverence and wanting to get it right and wanting it to feel as authentically like each character as I have been so lucky as to experience in my lifetime. You know I mentioned that my first job was at a zoo. I was 12 and I was a volunteer. And I had this little job where I'm supposed to pick out, they'd give you these buckets of meal worms and I had to pick out the beetles that had gone through this metamorphosis. And the worms were to feed the babies in the nursery, all the baby animals. Well, I did for about two days. I was really good and I did the meal worm job but then you know I was like 12. So I just decided like no, I'm going to go adventure. And so I did and I sort of met these wonderful keepers and befriended them and showed them that I could be responsible. And so I had these really incredible animal encounters and so I mean I hand fed a Sumatran rhino. We used to hand feed the hippos, which was incredible. You know lob whole watermelon and corn husks into their mouths and then they crush them. It's just brilliant. I held snakes and I held a cobra once, all of these experiences. So I've been around them and I think to be around animals and to really experience them and to be raised like I was with this idea that they're not lesser beings, you know, we share the planet with them. And I think we forget that sometimes. I think it's easy to forget, because we are caught up in this sort of very human you know anthropocentric world we've created. You know we're online where we're as connected, in a cyber way . . .

[00:25:47] **Kira** You know, we were more connected than we've ever been and I think in some ways we're more disconnected from nature than we've ever been. And I think to be around animals kind of breaks that spell and reminds us that we're really part of this wonderful, wonderful world of nature. You know we're not, it's not nature and us, we are part of it. So when I had these experiences, and you know basically my whole life has just been finding excuses to be around animals. I've always felt like I could experience each one having a personality and having emotional complexity. I mean you know, you shared with me that you have cats and a Corgi. I mean, goodness, I'm sure you could tell me a million things about their personalities and what they're like and you know what human you know that they're most like, or who would play them in a movie or their particular moods and . . . my dog certainly has the most feelings of any being I've ever met. It's a very emotively flex animal. So I just sometimes I feel like that's something that gets overlooked. You know when we start caring. We see and experience the complexity of an animal then I

think we can start caring more about them and be moved to, emotionally moved to help them.

[00:27:09] **Kendra** I really appreciate what you're talking about because you meet animals. And you know, growing up in rural Appalachia, it was very much like you were part of this ecosystem and you had removed like the top dog as it were, like you were at the top of the food chain. And so you had to be respectful of the rest of the food chain as well—learning deer tracks and animal tracks and your impact on the environment was very much part of that. So Autumn and I were talking about this book and a lot about how the end message, which I won't talk about too much because of spoilers, and how it seemed to us that the story is a lot about those kind of relationships—animal/animal relationships, animal/human relationships and human/earth relationships. You know everyone has something to give and everyone has something to learn. So what advice do you think that S.T. would give to us about how to better relate to the world around us and and be really good citizens of the Earth that we're on right now?

[00:28:13] **Kira** S.T. is a work in progress so I wonder if he would get distracted from that message and veer off on something else. But I think ultimately, you know perhaps not in the beginning of the novel, but later in the novel, I think S.T. would talk about certainly exactly what you were just saying, the interconnectedness of life and all of life and respecting what's around us. And realizing too that one that even I think that once I read a . . . there a good op-ed in The New York Times. It was about feeling this panic about what's happening with the environment and you know the IPCC report you know where we stand to lose a million species and this . . . And I remember when that report came out I was really paralyzed. I felt very depressed and you know and the facts are so important but they're not motivating necessarily. I think of that. Remember that Sarah McLaughlin, ASPCA I think it is, the commercial? It's become kind of very iconic but it's it's hard, it's hard to look at, and it's hard to watch. So in writing this I was trying to find ways with some levity to shine a light on the issues. You know using humor to handle the idea of an apocalypse just to make us think you know from the safety of where we are now looking through fiction to imagine it and think about what we could be moved to do to help. And I think in terms of relating to the environment around us you know this op-ed was talking about the fact that she was saying that she's doing good things for the birds in her yard. You know she's planted a pollinator yard and she's doing this and all of this counts is what basically this op-ed is talking about. That even a small act is a step in the right direction.

[00:30:06] **Kira** I found that to be true for myself and I've started spending a lot of time with the birds in my yard and I encourage other people to do that. I have hummingbirds that I now hand feed and I have a couple of Juncos, I have Earl the squirrel who comes by, Stellar's Jays, and the crows. And I'm watching these behaviors and when we start thinking of them as as family and caring about them and learning their behaviors, that sort of can be extended outward. Whereas it's so hard to relate to the plight of a polar bear. When we start caring about the environment and doing good things for the environment around us, that can sort of end up being you know extended out I think. But I think it can start at home and that might be something S.T. would be a proponent of, is being kind to the animals around and planting a pollinator yard something I cannot recommend highly enough. I now have several types of bees that come to the yard and the hummingbirds come. It's been a real real treat to watch that flourish.

[00:31:11] **Autumn** I'm sure that we could talk about animals and your book for the rest of the day but we definitely don't want to give away the ending so we're going to pause here to not give any spoilers and just encourage everyone to go and pick up a copy of

HOLLOW KINGDOM. But we always like to ask our guests on the podcast what books by women authors do you like to recommend to other people or have you been reading recently?

[00:31:39] **Kira** I love that, I love that. I think I can attribute having this book published to being inspired by women authors. I love, oh goodness, I love . . . Let's see . . . Mary Oliver the poet, the late Mary Oliver. I keep her poems by my bed and read them at night. Which is something I . . . it's a tip I stole from Barbara Kingsolver, who's another writer I admire so greatly. But I heard her talk about the fact that she keeps poetry by her bedside and reads it at nighttime which I just think is so, so wonderful. I'm annoyed I didn't think of it first. I love Oyinkan Braithwaite. I just was very lucky to get to be in conversation with her here in Seattle and she's brilliant and I love her book, MY SISTER THE SERIAL KILLER.

[00:32:35] **Kira** So she sort of recently is someone I have come to absolutely adore. I read a lot of funny writers like Sloane Crosley. I love Tina Fey and Amy Poehler and Mindy Kaling. I love funny books so I always go to them for humor but also read, goodness, recent favorites. CIRCE by Madeline Miller. Oh my goodness, Madeline Miller is the best. There's so many. There's a book that I think inspired me that I read a long time ago and it's called DOGS AND MEN by Mary Ansell who was the wife of J.M. Barrie who wrote Peter Pan. And it was written in 1924 and I think it's out of print and I think it's very hard to get a copy. When I last looked it up, it had one rating I think on Amazon and that was from me. But it's a wonderful book because it is the story of the dogs that . . . she starts out talking about how she was never a dog lover and then sort of ultimately because of living with, and it's all a large breed dogs, first I think it's a Newfoundland, the one that inspired Nana in Peter Pan. And so it's a very beautiful enchanting book that's very evocative of I think its time, the 20s. It was pretty fascinating to me. Yeah. Goodness. I'm inspired by so many writers. I've also been so lucky. I think you know when I lived in L.A. it was difficult to . . . I think because of the way the acting industry is, it was tricky to connect with other women and since I've moved to Seattle the writing community is very different. There's so many brilliant local authors that have been so supportive. Goodness. Laurie Frankel, who's brilliant. And also Jennie Shortridge and Elizabeth George and I've been so lucky as to sort of be, in some ways supported and mentored by these brilliant authors.

[00:34:30] **Kendra** Well, there are so many there and I love when people write memoirs that include animals like H IS FOR HAWK.

[00:34:38] **Kira** Oh yes, Helen Macdonald. She's so brilliant. Yes.

[00:34:43] **Kendra** Yes, in nature writing, which I'm sure we could get into this huge discussion of the need for more nature writing in the United States. Well, before we let you go. We wanted to ask you if there anything you're working on now that you would like to share with our listeners.

[00:34:58] **Kira** Oh, goodness. I've been doing little humor pieces here and there which I always do on the side as a kind of . . . I just love to do it. So I write shorter pieces. So I'm sort of working on that and I am working on another book. It's all very top secret. I'm not allowed to discuss it. Which feels very important and special but I am working on something else and yeah, I'm about to head out to California on tour tomorrow so that's my next exciting adventure.

[00:35:32] **Autumn** We will definitely link to your tour so that where our listeners can stop by and see you in person and hear more about the book. Thank you so much, Kira, for

coming and talking to us about HOLLOW KINGDOM. We loved reading it and loved getting to talk to you about it.

[00:35:47] **Kira** Oh my goodness, this was such a pleasure for me. Thank you. Thank you so much. I had a blast.

[00:35:54] **Kendra** We'd like to thank Kira Jane Buxton for talking to us about her debut novel HOLLOW KINGDOM which is out now from Grand Central Publishing. You can find Kira on her Web site (KiraJaneBuxton.com) and on Instagram (@kirajaneWrites) and of course all of her information will be linked in our show notes.

[00:36:11] **Autumn** We'd also like to say a special thank you to our Patrons who support makes this podcast possible. You can find Reading Women at (readingwomenpodcast.com) and on Instagram and Twitter (@thereadingwomen). You can find Kendra (@kdwinchester) and me (@autumnprivett). Thank you all so much for listening and we'll talk to you soon.