

# INTERVIEW WITH KIM DANA KUPPERMAN

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**AMY SCOTT:** I loved “Wings over Moscow.” Can you talk to us a little bit about how you came to write that essay, why did it jump out at you when it did, and how long did it take you to finally piece it all together?

**KDK:** Oh, that’s a three-minute answer for sure! Let’s see, I guess I’ll start with how I came to write it, because it’s one of those things—I have this problem, some might say, or a habit of once something is published, I have to rewrite it. And that’s probably going to hurt me one day. Hopefully I’ll only do that with short things. But “Wings over Moscow” started as a very short, a real lyric piece, more like a prose poem, called “Galia’s Kitchen,” and it was divided into segments, the same way the essay is now, and I think actually some of the segments’ names might have remained the same, but don’t quote me on that. But then what happened was I sent it in to *Quarter After Eight* as part of an entry into a contest that they had. I sent it with another piece, and both of those pieces won the contest, and I was asked if I could marry them together. So I thought, “Oh this will be fun, why not?” So I did that, and

the name of the *Quarter After Eight* entries became “Four Points.” Then I decided once that was published that I really wanted to take what had once been called “Galia’s Kitchen” and turn it into a longer essay because there were things in it that were important to me: the idea of traveling somewhere, back somewhere you’ve never been before, but feeling as if you’re going back home. That preoccupation became something I thought, “I really need to look at this.” So, I decided to look at it in more depth, and the more I looked at it the more it came out, and then I realized it was also about this odd relationship that the narrator has with her traveling companion. I went from there. That’s kind of how it came to be.



**EMILY MITARAI:** You have such an honest, sincere prose that creates great imagery for your readers. How do you remember the smallest of details from your experiences? Do you keep a detailed journal? And how do you find the balance between the things you recall and the facts you discover in research?

**KDK:** That’s a great question. I love these multiple-part

questions. And thank you for that lovely commentary, by the way. I'm blushing. It makes me feel very good to hear that; thank you for taking the time to read things and then come up with those great words like *honest* and *sincere*.

The details: I have a pretty sharp memory, and I'm learning that memory has a life of its own. I want to give you an example of what I mean by that, and it's in nothing you've read but something that I've written recently. I wrote a scene that had to do with my mother and my father and my grandfather. And in the scene, I have my grandfather giving me a five dollar bill. And that kind of summed up our relationship. I mean, he would give me a little bit of money and he'd think that's all he had to do as a grandfather. So I thought it was, you know, it just was something that kind of came up organically in the scene. And I'm sure you're all aware that a lot of times, especially in memoir, because we're writing under this idea of "creative nonfiction," we will invent scenes that speak to the characters' truth more than they speak to the actual truth of what happened, because, of course, when you're five or six or nine or ten or even twenty, you know, those things might escape you when you're now in your forties, as I am. So I wrote this scene and it seemed to work for me and it worked for my reader, who's been looking at my stuff. And then I went back over...my parent's had very protracted custody battles for me and that's what one whole section of this book is about: that custody battle. My father gave me the court transcripts a week before he died. I also went to the court records place in New York and procured some additional records. And this just blew my mind, I mean I don't know how else to say it, it really shocked me: When I looked through some of these records and some of the transcripts, there was a reference to me holding onto this money that my grandfather

had given me. And in fact, he *had* given me five dollars, and I swear to you, I never remembered that, exactly like that. But he had done that.

So I think that's a long-winded way of saying that I think memory actually has its own memory—it has its own life—and if you're coming to your work with real honesty, your memory will do things for you that you never suspected were possible. Like recall something you don't recall consciously, but obviously recall on some other level.

The other answer to your question is I do keep a journal, and I actually write things down. I used to be very conspicuously obsessive about my journal and write things down like what I ate and what the weather was like, who I spoke with, letters I received or wrote, things I read. I've lapsed in certain years, but I've found it most helpful to do because looking back on those notes can be extremely helpful sometimes. I'm much better at writing down my dreams because I find they capture a state of mind that I might have been in, and it's always instructive to look back on that.

And then how I balance real-life stuff with research? Usually I'll do too much research, then I'll throw it all in at first, and then, of course, I'll edit it out to get that balance because you don't want a reader to be overwhelmed by research. Conversely, you don't want them to be overwhelmed by your own experience out of context of place or time or a particular mood, whether that mood is political or social or religious or whatever.



**WAYNE BECK:** I've been a police officer for twenty-two years, and through my experience I really find it easy and pleasant to

follow your thought processes and to feel what you're feeling. At what point, if at all, do you consider how a reader may react and understand you?

**KDK:** I hope I'm considering that all the time, because without the reader what sense does it make that it's all navel-gazing. So the first reader is me. And I was given a fabulous gift when I was a younger person by my stepmother, who always instructed me to read aloud anything I wrote. So, of course, I could hear it, and I became my first audience. If it didn't sound right, or it sounded misconstrued, or it sounded convoluted, then I would change it. We're talking about me reading aloud the kinds of work that you're asked to do for school, where it's really important to make your argument—you know, the five-paragraph essay—you have to make your argument in a specific way and it has to flow together. That gave me very good training in paying attention to how thought processes are put together.

Then, I've worked for a long time, on and off, as an editor, so I really want to pay attention to how readers pick up on things and read other people's work in that way. That's given me a practice to look at my own work that way. And I will sometimes sit in front of a sentence for a half hour or more and say, "Okay, this sounds good, but what does it really mean? Do I need this here? Is it interrupting? It is adding? Is it interfering with the sense that things make?" And sometimes I'm good at that and sometimes I'm not. You call it "murdering your darlings." A friend of mine has a song that we wrote to the tune of "The Twelve Days of Christmas." I won't sing it for you, but basically you can list your darlings in that way. And our darlings we always say it's a "pterodactyl in a pear tree" because we're constantly calling birds like herons pterodactyls. So yes, murder your darlings. I think that's how you get the clarity.



**PAUL AYLWORTH:** How much time do you spend writing in a given week, and are you able to write on command or do you have to wait for the muse to come at you? I also wanted to know about your first experiences with publishing and how your writing has changed since you were first published.

**KDK:** Okay, well, the nuts and bolts. I'd like to spend a lot more time writing my own works than I do; that's a common complaint. I guess I find that when I took the job that I have, which is a full-time, nine-to-five kind of thing, and I went from being in grad school, where I had all kinds of time to write and read, to being on a schedule, I promised myself that I would write whenever I can, and that's exactly what I do. I feel really fortunate because I spend a lot of time writing in my head, so all the downtime that I get, or, I should say, the little amount of downtime that I get, where I'm maybe walking around, or driving, or even going grocery shopping, I'm usually—in the back of my mind or maybe even in the front of it—I'm considering things that I want to write or that I am writing, and I'm formulating paragraphs and sentences and that sort of thing. So then when I sit down to write, it comes out pretty much as if I had spent a lot more time actually writing it.

The process of revision for me is, I find, painful. The process of putting down the first draft is actually exhilarating. Then going back to rewrite: I'm very fast at that, so it's not that terrible, but I find it's just *icky* in that way of here are a lot of little things you have to take care of and do. And usually what it comes down to for me is punctuation and making sure that that's all perfect, although sometimes it isn't. I have a lot of rapidity doing that because I am an editor, and I do a lot of copy

editing and proofreading in my job, so I'm very familiar with the rules, although I couldn't quote one from the Chicago Manual of Style, but I could tell you where to look, more or less.

I have been able to write on command, because I also had training as a journalist and a grant writer, and I'm sure you must all know that that's meeting very specific deadlines and writing somewhat quickly. What it's always come down to, for me, is the first paragraph. If I can get that out, I'm pretty good for the rest of it. And that goes for any kind of journalism I've done, for any kind of grant writing I've done, and for all of the creative writing I've done. If you don't have a good opening, or at least if *I* don't have a good opening, I can't continue; I get stuck. So that's the place that matters most, and that's the place where I spend the most time thinking about, "How is this going to open? What's the best first line?" Sometimes I have a first line that's not the best first line. But if I can get started, that's what counts.

My first experience with publishing was over twenty-five years ago. I published an article in a newspaper in California, where I lived at the time. It was called "Journey Out of Silence," an extremely melodramatic title for a not very melodramatic article on women artists. It was really a personal essay about my own discovery and encounters with art by women, because I felt disgusted by the fact that museums, in their holdings, only show you about 20% of the art by women that they have, and the rest of it is stored in their basements. So, that knowledge and then being in my 20s and somewhat angry gave me a lot of fuel to write this article. And then I was hired by this newspaper, part of the editorial collective. I went on after that to work with another newspaper in the same area; it was at Santa Cruz where I was a student for a couple of years. Then I worked for another

newspaper in Maine and so forth. That gave me that experience of being able to write on command and writing quickly.

What's changed for me since that time? First of all, I'm twenty years older, so I have a lot more to write about, in a certain way, and a lot more perspective than I had then. Second of all, I'm much more focused in the kind of writing I want to be doing, which is creative nonfiction. I don't like that term, "creative nonfiction," but I'm using it to designate a category of writing that includes essays and memoirs and not journalism so much, but that is my background. I'm not as interested in journalism as I once was; I'm much more interested in the personal essay and in hybrid forms. I used to be quite interested in writing fiction, but I'm not doing that anymore, though I still dabble here and there in poetry. But it's a secret; I'm a closet poet.



**MARK ELIASON:** How do you know an essay is finished, or good enough to send off?

**KDK:** Unlike cooking, where I rely on my own taste buds to tell me if a dish is good, I often don't rely on myself to say that a piece of writing is finished or ready to send out. Instead, I rely on other readers. These include my partner, Dustin, who is an immensely talented essayist (as well as a creative writing teacher and a reader who delves deeply and accurately), and three good friends/colleagues from graduate school whose opinions are honest and whom I can trust. I don't ask them if something is ready to send out. Rather, I ask for feedback, which they provide. I then make edits according to their feedback. Dustin is my final reader.

**ME:** And what traits do you find in the endings you write?

**KDK:** I'm interpreting this question to mean, "What makes for a good ending?" That's a hard question to answer. Endings depend on the essay itself. For example, with "Relief," I ended with a reflection on some larger ideas (the actual meaning of the word *relief*, for example, and with a summary of images from parts of the essay that preceded the last section). "Wings over Moscow," however, ended at what seemed the right structural point—at the end of the trip. I also wanted to end that essay on a note that sounded more hopeful than despairing. Same thing with "Teeth in the Wind," whose structure is based on the old "It was a dark and stormy night." Not only did the storm have to end, so did my meditations on the destruction caused by the Chernobyl disaster. Bringing life back to a sense of normalcy; hence, the pancakes. It sounds stuffy and high-schoolish to say that an essay should end with a conclusion, but I think that's what happens for me. That is to say, I discover something—about myself, about an event I participated in, about others. And so I "conclude," which means "to close with." I like that idea of closing the door. It doesn't mean the reader (or the writer for that matter) can't open it again, it simply means the conversation has ended for now. I like my work to end like that, with the sense that if you, the reader, came back to the page at the same time as I came back to it, we might resume the narrative.



**KATHERINE OLSEN:** On a day-to-day basis, what subjects give you the most inspiration for writing?

**KDK:** Well, right now I feel quite inspired—this is a two part answer for your straight forward short question—I feel most inspired by instances of the wild that we encounter in non-wild settings. For example, I was in Boston this summer, at Mount Auburn cemetery in

Cambridge, in broad daylight on an excruciatingly hot day in July, and all of a sudden there was a coyote there. And I thought, this is amazing; I want to write about encountering that coyote, who took his time getting up and walking away from me and my two companions. So, that: that idea of wildness in the middle of an urban place, or a suburban place, really gets to me. I find it amazing that there are all these creatures around us who live with us, and maybe not even creatures so much as a storm will get me going; at least that seems to be my preoccupation right at this moment; that's the kind of thing that's really getting me interested in writing some different work now than what I've been doing.

The other thing I'm really attracted to is things that are kitschy and campy. I make a journey to New York at least once a month and ride up Route 78; off of Route 78 is the world's smallest village. We also have right here in Gettysburg the land of little horses. Stuff like that: the Crystal Caves. I'm really interested in investigating those places and finding out why they stick around for 20 or 30 years or more. There's a giant corn maze right near me, here in Pennsylvania. I find that so American. I've traveled a lot, and you don't see things quite like that. If you do, they're usually religious centers like grottos, or they're sanctuaries, or they're shrines that people make pilgrimages to. And that actually interests me just as much. But the idea of a very American shrine like that, that isn't a shrine but it's become holy in some way because people have given it this value. For example, the sign for the Land of Little Horses is: YOU'VE GOTTA SEE THE LAND OF LITTLE HORSES. And I love that; I love how I'm being commanded, that if I don't see this thing, I might have missed something really important. Maybe when I get there it won't be like that, but at any rate, that's kind

of what I'm thinking about recently that inspires me.



**EDÉN RASMUSSEN:** Hi, Kim, my name is Edén Rasmussen.

**KDK:** I'm sorry; I didn't catch your first name.

**ER:** Edén, like the Garden of Eden

**KDK:** Edén! What a beautiful name!

**ER:** Thank you. My question is: How do your family members and friends respond to what you write about them? Has it ever been hard for you to tell your perspective of someone else believing that if that person ever read your perspective it would bring them pain?

**KDK:** That's a very good question. My family members are, with the exception of one half-brother, all deceased. So I can't ask them how they feel. I'm sorry, I'm kind of chuckling, but in a way I think I've earned the right to chuckle about that because I've waited so long to write about my experiences of my family, which is...I've been looking for ways of describing my family that go beyond the adjective *dysfunctional*, because it's so overused in our culture. [Laughter] But I think *wounded* is another way of describing my family. And of course I never wanted to inflict more pain on this wounded family. So I didn't for many years, until, especially with my mother, when she passed away, it became clear to me that I would be able to write about it. With my friends, on the other hand, if it's a "good" portrait, they usually don't have any problems with it. In "Wings Over Moscow" I renamed the character Irina, because I didn't want to actually offend that person, and I didn't show her the essay. And besides that, she does not read English. So, I don't think

[Sentence drowned out by laughter]...So I felt safe in doing that.

I recently had two interesting things happen to me. The essay "Relief" was published with the name of the woman Laurie; we call each other cousins because we shared godmothers. My mother was her godmother; her mother was mine. So I sent her that piece when it came out, and she called me right away and she said—and I couldn't believe this—she said, "You have it exactly right! That's exactly how it happened!" I can't tell you how rare that is. When you write about something and someone else is involved in the memory, usually they'll say, "You didn't get it at all. That's not what happened; *this* is what happened." So I'm shocked that I had actually been able to write something that another person, the only other person who was there, could say, "That's exactly what happened." I really felt good about that.

Now with that same essay, which has now turned into a book—because I told you things get published, then I rewrite them—I was talking with a friend of mine who was with me after my mother died; she came to the apartment and I was telling her, "Yeah, you're going to be in this book" in that particular section because she came in and she removed the necklace from my mother's neck and gave it to me. And she said, "Well, I want you to write about..." Here I thought, "Okay, you're not going to tell me what to write about. That's not what's important to me." And what she remembered about my mother's suicide was that my mother left a very extensive letter; it was twenty-seven pages long, and it was completely mundane, like "pick up the dry cleaning," you know, it wasn't at all a missive from a mother to a daughter, by a mother who was going to exit the world to a daughter who would be left in that world. It was just filled with instructions, and that's what struck

my friend as being really incredible about the whole situation. And I agree, that's an incredible thing, but that's not what the focus of that particular section of the book is. And I'm not going to re-tailor it for someone else's memory; I don't think you can do that. And if someone has a problem being mentioned, I don't use last names so no one could really be readily identified, but if a person *did* have a problem with their first name being used, I would disguise it, and I've done that before. In fact, in the book, I can't disclose what one friend's real name is or the gender of the friend, but this friend comes up in different incarnations in the book, and I didn't make a composite character out of the friend, what I did was split the friend up into many different parts because it was important to me. So now I've completely kept the friend's identity secure.

I do have a potential problem in my book, which is, one of the characters is my half-brother, who is still alive, and he is a very wounded human being, who could probably not take what I've written about him in any good way, so it's very probable that I'll end up using a different name for him. There was a very interesting panel discussion at a conference in Iowa called NonficioNow, where nonfiction writers talked about writing about their family. And the range of solutions that people came up with was really interesting to me. One woman described her sister as her cousin. Other people simply shared the manuscripts with their families before they were published and got their reactions. Others just used pseudonyms, which probably is going to have to be one of my solutions.



**AFTON JOHNSON:** Did you write “Teeth in the Wind” with the object of pushing a thesis, for instance the one from Susan Griffin, that our private lives are tied to

public events?

**KDK:** That's a great question. I was so in love with Susan Griffin's book. In some ways “Teeth in the Wind” became a response to it because it was a book I was reading at the time. So I was extremely influenced by what she was saying about the private and the public and how our private lives do, in fact, constitute history on a whole other level than how we think of history. So, that's my answer; that's the short answer.

The long answer is that “Teeth in the Wind” went through so many different incarnations. There's one person who has read them all; he was my mentor in grad school, and I think he deserves a medal for reading all the different forms that it went through. Actually, at one point, I used my much more private/public experience of being in a relationship that was abusive and violent. There was this nuclear stuff happening on one hand, and on the other hand, there was this private, familial, or domestic explosion of anger, and I really couldn't make that work. Which was unfortunate because there's a part of me that's still rewriting “Teeth in the Wind.” That's something I'm going to do in the next several months or even in the next year. I had a whole vision for that essay that was book-length and that really looked much more at violence in the home versus the kind of violence that happens environmentally. There were things I couldn't wrap my arms around. I think it was too big for me at the time, and what I wound up doing was simplifying it. The main preoccupation when I finally decided to simplify it was about my own family's history and making the discovery that my grandmother didn't come from the place she always said she came from. That was so earth-shattering to me that I thought, “Oh, this will work right now. I'll do the rewrite another time, another lifetime maybe.”



**ELLE PAGE:** I have a question about “Teeth in the Wind” where you imagine Fanya’s possible conversation with the smitten young man. The Tao Te Ching states, “We shape clay into a pot but it is emptiness inside that holds whatever we want.” Do you agree with this

statement insofar as it pertains to imagination’s license in the non-fiction essay, for example, as it pertains to Fanya’s conversation?

**KDK:** Wow, what a great question. Can you read that quote again?

**SEP:** All right. The Tao Te Ching states, “We shape clay into a pot, but it is emptiness inside that holds whatever we want.”

**KDK:** Where did you come across that particular version of that quote?

**SEP:** I don’t know; I have a quote file.

[Laughter]

**KDK:** Because I love the Tao Te Ching; I think it’s a wonderful text, and I do agree with that. I think that imagination is an empty vessel, until, of course, we shape it. That conversation, for me, the imagined conversation, that’s a lifetime of thinking of this myth in my family. You know, family legends are so wonderful and full of potential and there’s more that goes with that, which is: My father gave to me a box full of photographs of my grandmother that were taken in Russia. And on the back of them, they were made into these thick cardboard cards, or some of them were made into actual postcards, and I think the practice back then was to exchange pictures as a token. It was kind of remarkable to me that my grandmother’s family actually

had the money to visit a photography studio and have these pictures taken. And I know, for example, that she went to Odessa because the Odessa photography studio has its address on some of the photographs. But on the backs of some of them were written notes, and some of them were very cryptic. For example, one of them was “Dear Fanya, I hope you are happy that you have gotten out of this unhappy house.” And then there’s something more, and it’s like, what a great story, but where does it go? what was happening? And I haven’t even gone into the backs of some of these photographs and some of the letters that were to other people; I don’t even know who they went from and to except that some were clearly addressed to my grandmother. So I’ve been walking around with this family legend for all of these years and then suddenly have all this information for the last fifteen years now, because I’ve had the photographs that long and the backs of these pictures, which I had translated by a speaker of Russian so I could know exactly what they said. Nobody had ever bothered to translate them.

There are a lot of silences in my family, so it’s easy to fill it in with imagined stories. And I think someone once said that writers weren’t listened to when they were children. I think that kind of answers that quote from the Tao Te Ching, that if you’re in a silence you’re going to fill it with something. You’re going to put something into it either because it’s too silent and it’s uncomfortable or because you’re not used to dealing with silence, which is actually a magical thing. The writer N. Scott Momaday has a lot to say about the place of silence in writing and that without silence words are nothing because they have nothing to push against. That goes very much to that idea of Taoism: Without light, you have no dark, and vice versa. I think it’s important to think about those silences and which stories we

tell ourselves and then readers from out of those silent places.



**SKYLER ANDERSON:** In “Teeth in the Wind,” you acknowledge the memory gaps we create sometimes when we’re writing, and you suggest the reasons why we may do that. In your writing what has been the best way to fill these gaps without jeopardizing your integrity and creating another James Frey/Oprah scandal?

**KDK:** [Laughter] Boy, poor James Frey. I guess we don’t want to talk about him right now. I feel like he was very victimized by television personalities and the publishing industry, but that’s as much as I’ll say. I’m not trying to write a novel from my experience; I’m trying to recapture things that happened in my family. I wish I could find a great quote I had about the difference between telling the reader you’re imagining something and simply imagining it without telling the reader. And of course, it would get really boring if every time we imagined something we said, “Oh and I imagined that this must have happened.” So I think setting your reader up for a narrator who is truthful is the first step, if that makes any sense. And how is a narrator perceived to be truthful? Well, they’re going to reveal something about themselves; that’s part of the first part. It doesn’t always have to be self-deprecating, as in the case of James Frey. I think he self-deprecated so that you sympathize with him. I think that’s a strategy that’s a little over-used, and it comes from a confessional tradition I’m not sure I quite trust. But on the other hand—I can’t answer your question now without talking about James Frey—I think that book has a lot of merit, and I think that it should have been edited very severely, like down to a third of its size. I think it was very well-written, and I actually liked the story he told, and it wouldn’t have bothered me, I suppose, that

he was making things up if there had been a disclaimer somewhere. That would have made it easier.

But I recently read Vivian Gornick’s *Fierce Attachments*. And in that book she talks about a series of walks that she takes with her mother, during which she and her mother have these elaborate conversations, and this provokes memories of her childhood. Well, Vivian Gornick disclosed that she never took these walks with her mother and they were just a narrative device. And the minute she did that, the great big debate on truth in nonfiction was opened up. And that’s where this term, “creative nonfiction” came in: that you can use creative ways of structuring your narrative in order to lend it an authoritative voice or an authorial one. I don’t mind that Vivian Gornick made up the walks with her mother. I totally understand that. Just like I don’t mind Annie Dillard’s cat in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. There’s a cat at the very beginning of the book that walks on her with its bloody paws, and she later admitted that there was never a cat, there were never any bloody paws. But it’s dramatic! And let’s face it, if we sat around and wrote our stories without any drama in them, they wouldn’t be interesting. If we told the story of our lives without allowing metaphors to evolve from that story, it would be uninteresting. Not only uninteresting, it wouldn’t be compelling, and who would want to read that, and why would it add to literature in any way? James Frey’s mistake was to have not been up front in the very beginning. The other piece is that he first tried to sell it as a work of fiction, and you can’t have it both ways, and that’s what’s important.

One example is a great book called *After Long Silence* by Helen Fremont. It’s a book about how she grew up in a Catholic household and her parents were really Jewish; they were

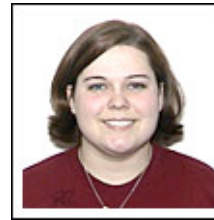
Holocaust survivors. I've read this book twice. The point is that in this book she tells you up front that she is recreating scenes. Her parents do not ever disclose to their family that they were Jews, that not only were they Holocaust survivors, but her father escaped from Stalin's camps in Siberia. Neither parent ever disclosed this information to the family, yet she discovers it with the help of her sister; she uncovers this enormous family secret and writes about it. She tells you how it was for them in those days, so she has her mother escaping from Poland disguised as an Italian soldier. She writes a beautiful scene of her mother getting her hair cut to disguise herself as a man so that she can ride on the train disguised as an Italian soldier. And, of course, no one's told her these stories, and she wasn't there, and there's no diary she's working from. So she has to imagine the whole thing, and she does, and it's extremely effective. But you know that she's done her homework; you know she's telling you the truth of the scene. And that's what's really important, that right there she's recaptured this scene and she's done it really well. And you would never have the same debacle that happened with James Frey, because she is very upfront about imagining all of this stuff.



**ALISON FAULKNER:** We're kind of addressing the creative aspect of nonfiction, so I thought it would be interesting if you could share with us which activities you find helpful when trying to refill your creative well.

**KDK:** I clean the house. [Laughter] That's how I operate. If things aren't in order... Writing is very messy, and I really mean it. I do. I clean the house and make sure the dishes are done and the bed is made and the laundry is folded, and the reason why I do those things is because writing is messy,

and if I don't allow myself to make a mess in the writing, I won't do it so well. I kind of have an obsessive personality. I think most writers actually do. Things have to be ordered in the physical world around me so that my mind can become disordered. It's just the way I work. Some people are opposite. You know, the disorder around them actually allows them to order their thoughts, but I'm not that way. So that's one of the things I do. And the other thing I do is walking. I find walking a great joy. It always inspires me to be outside and see flowers or grass, or if I'm in the city just to see people and overhear their conversations, that's exciting to me.



**MANDI BULECHOWSKY:** My question is a little more personal, I guess. If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?

[Laughter]

**KDK:** If I didn't have to sleep eight hours a night. If I could get by without sleep, if I could just be an insomniac without being unhealthy, that would be the thing I would choose because it would give me eight more hours in a day to devote to writing.



**PATRICK MADDEN:** Thank you very much.

**KDK:** You're welcome. So you all have to leave?

**PM:** They have other, less important classes to go to.

**KDK:** Thank you so much for this opportunity, and I wish all of you a very nice day. [Applause]