



J.T. Ellison, the acclaimed author behind numerous bestselling thrillers and fantasy novels, continues to captivate readers with her compelling storytelling.

*J.T. Ellison, bestselling author, blends crime, suspense, and fantasy in her novels. Her diverse background and disciplined approach create compelling stories that captivate readers worldwide.*

## Master of Suspense and Storytelling

# J.T. ELLISON

## EXPLORING CRIME, FANTASY, AND COLLABORATION WITH A LITERARY POWERHOUSE

AS TOLD TO BEN ALAN

**J**.T. Ellison is a literary force to be reckoned with. As a New York Times and USA Today bestselling author, she has penned over 30 critically acclaimed novels that span the thrilling spectrum of crime, suspense, and psychological tension. Her standalone works, such as “A Very Bad Thing” and “It’s One of Us,” alongside her gripping series featuring Lt. Taylor Jackson and Dr. Samantha Owens, have captivated readers worldwide. Not only has she co-authored the “A Brit in the FBI” series with Catherine Coulter, but she has also ventured into the realm of urban fantasy under the pen name Joss Walker, creating the enchanting Jayne Thorne, CIA Librarian series.

Ellison’s journey to literary stardom is as compelling as her novels. From her early days in the foothills of Colorado to her high-stakes career in Washington, D.C., and eventually to her life in Nashville, her diverse experiences have profoundly shaped her storytelling. Her fascination with forensics and crime, coupled with her disciplined approach honed in the political arena, has given rise to a body of work that is both meticulously crafted and deeply engaging.

Beyond her writing, Ellison is an Emmy® Award-winning co-host of the television series “A Word on Words,” where she delves into the minds of fellow authors, exploring the intricacies of their craft. Her passion for literature extends to publishing, with her independent house, Two Tales Press, showcasing a variety of short stories and novellas.

In this exclusive interview for Reader’s House Magazine, J.T. Ellison opens up about her transition from politics to writing, the allure of dark themes, the dynamics of co-authoring, and the creative freedoms of fantasy. She also shares insights into her literary television show and the diverse settings that color her novels. Join us as we delve into the mind of one of today’s most versatile and prolific authors.

**Your journey to becoming a bestselling author is both fascinating and unconventional, involving a significant career change from politics to writing. What was the most challenging part of making that transition, and how did your previous experiences shape your writing?**

It was one of necessity—we’d moved to Nashville and I couldn’t find a job! A librarian turned me on to John Sandford, and it was like a lightning bolt—I decided to write an incredibly heroic female lead who was a half cop, half rockstar, the guardian angel of

**J.T. Ellison’s masterful storytelling and versatile writing make her a standout author in both thriller and fantasy genres.**

Nashville—my very own Athena. Taylor Jackson was born.

The political world taught me one very important trait: discipline. Congress (and your boss) don’t take kindly to missing your white paper deadlines. I learned how to budget my time and take the work seriously, and I applied that to the creative side.

**Your novels often explore dark and thrilling themes. What draws you to write about crime, suspense, and psychological tension, and how do you balance these elements with character development to keep readers engaged?**

I am fascinated by how terrible people can be to one another, and I like to see justice served in some way. Too often, cases go unsolved and families are torn apart. When

I write thrillers, I’m always imagining what’s happening on the other side of the door. If it’s a procedural, my character knocks on the doors. If it’s suspense, the character’s door is knocked upon. It gives me a deeper perspective on the emotional frailty of the characters.

**In addition to your standalone thrillers, you’ve co-authored a successful series with Catherine Coulter. How does the collaboration process work for you, and what are the unique challenges and rewards of co-writing compared to working solo?**

Cowriting is a lot of fun and can also be hugely challenging. You know the saying “two heads are better than one.” If I ever got stuck, help was a phone call or a plane ride away. Catherine and I worked well together because we had the same work ethic, which is absolutely vital to the co-writing process. You can’t put two writers together who don’t see the process of writing the same way. But it was the brainstorming, the wild twists we came up with, that was the most fun—creativity blossoms when there are two minds on a story.

**Your alter ego, Joss Walker, writes contemporary fantasy. How do you switch between writing in the thriller genre and fantasy, and what creative freedoms does the fantasy genre offer you that thrillers might not?**

Fantasy is my one true love right now, mostly because if you get into a bind...magic! The brilliant Raymond Chandler has a straightforward solution: “When in doubt, have a man come through a door with a gun in his hand.” In fantasy, the ability to conjure a solution is a blast. I also love worldbuilding with no fetters on the imagination. You are only limited by how big of a canvas you can conceive. It helps me breathe fresh air into my crime fiction.

**You’re an Emmy® award-winning co-host of the literary TV show A Word on Words. How has hosting this show influenced your own writing and perspective on literature, and what**

**has been your most memorable moment on the show?**

I’ve gotten to read more broadly, which never hurts. Experiencing new genres, cultures, diverse voices, and other authors’ life experiences is as beneficial as traveling for me. Meeting these incredible artists, seeing their creative process, and discovering the spark of their ideas has been incredibly fun.

There have been many special moments over the past ten seasons, but I have to say, going to jail with Margaret Atwood has to be number one. The producers literally put us in a jail cell and locked the door for the taping. She was such a good sport.

**Your personal background, from growing up in rural Colorado to working in high-stakes political environments, is quite diverse. How do these contrasting experiences influence the settings and characters in your novels, and do you have a particular favorite setting you’ve written about?**

At heart, I am a country mouse, though I enjoy the bustling big city, and my settings reflect that. Nashville is the connective tissue through all of my work, but I’ve also written books set in Colorado and DC because they are so easily accessible to me. I travel quite a bit to broaden my horizons, too. The UK, France, and Italy are favorites; all have featured heavily in my stories. I have a research trip to Scotland this fall, and I can’t wait. There’s something special about the UK; stories tug at my legs as I walk the paths. Its own source of magic.

Thank you for having me! This was fun!



A Very Bad Thing is a masterful thriller, brimming with suspense, intricate plot twists, and unforgettable characters. An absolute must-read!