

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
J.T. ELLISON



The sentence that inspired HER DARK LIES

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Hello GentleReader,

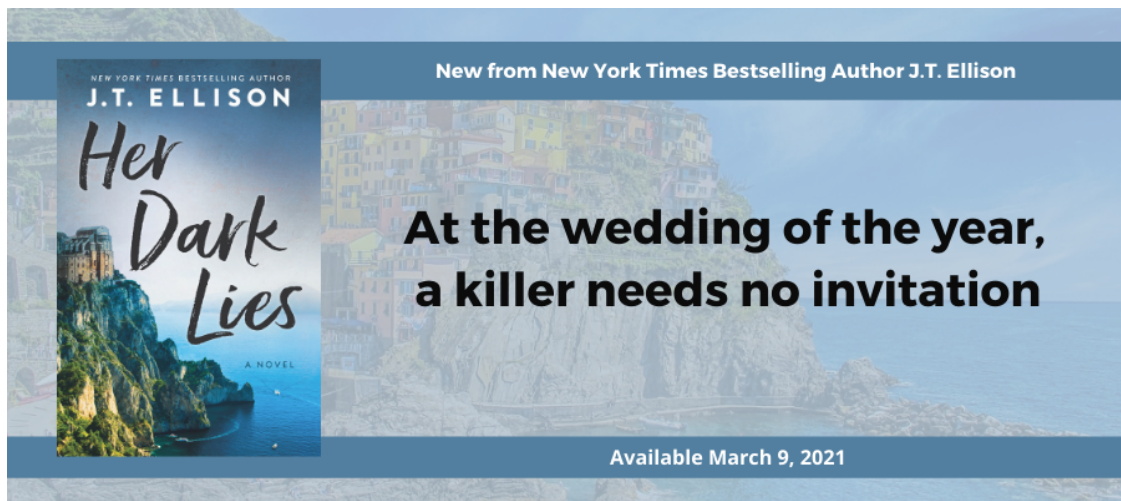
A north wind doth blow here today, scattering the remaining leaves that have built up in the crevices of the yard, blocking gutters, blanketing the grass, mulching trees. We've been unseasonably warm, and I've been waiting for this day. Every year, a wind comes in November that shakes the last of the leaves from the trees and grass and blows them away to their forever resting place. The wailing wind creeps around the house, lurking in the chimneys and swirling around the windows and when it can't get in, moves along, eddying reds and golds in its wake.

When I was growing up, the Chinooks used to both delight and terrify me. When you live deep in the woods, that howling force of air sweeping down the mountains reminds you just how powerless you are against Mother Nature. As I write this, as the same howls echo around the new house, the sound brings me back to the nights I would lie in the bed, sheets clutched to my chin, listening to the winds, and the answering cries of the wolves.

It's remarkable how nature knows exactly when to stir this breeze to prepare herself for the cold dark months ahead. I take such comfort from days like this, when the season's cycle is complete and I know exactly what's to come. I actually like the early darkness. It's very settling. It must be the woods in me.

This season also signifies the lead up to the release of HER DARK LIES in March. I have several events lined up, including a doozy of a good time ahead next week on the incredible new show FRIENDS AND FICTION, which started as a small Facebook get together among several writer friends and has exploded into THE place to meet and talk with your favorite writers. [I'll be there Wednesday November 18](#) alongside my dear friend Hank Phillip chatting with another dear friend, Patti Callahan Henry, and the rest of the Friends and Fiction crew. Don't miss it!

☐ HER DARK LIES — on sale March 9, 2021



Every book I write has a line. A lodestone. A single sentence that encapsulates the story. Not a logline for PR and marketing, but something in the narrative that reveals the soul of the characters. I revisit this line again and again when I'm writing, making sure everything I do fits with the tone and tenor of the idea.

LIE TO ME: "They thought having a baby would fix everything."

GOOD GIRLS LIE: "There are truths, and there are lies, and then there is everything in between, which is where you and I will meet."

HER DARK LIES: "She goes over the wall with a thunder-drowned scream, the rocks below her final companion."

In contrast to the narrative hook, the logline for HER DARK LIES is: *What would have happened if Rebecca hadn't really died?*

That was the thought I had when I first conceived this story, but the thunder-drowned scream – that was the line that made the story come to life.

As you've probably surmised, HER DARK LIES is available for [pre-order](#) and [adding to Goodreads shelves](#) and all the things. I am getting very excited for March!

☐ What I'm Reading and Watching



[THE INVISIBLE LIFE OF ADDIE LARUE](#) by V.E. Schwab

This book. This glorious, amazing book. I read the first chapter, set the book gentle in my lap, and tried to wrap my head around the perfection of it. Then I texted a friend who was also reading it and said I might as well quit writing. It's one of THOSE...Many congratulations to my friend V.E. Schwab on the triumph that is Addie LaRue. Brava, lady.

[WORLD OF WONDERS](#) by Aimee Nezhukumatathil

What a wonderful, lyrical, fresh breath of air book! I can't tell you how much I enjoyed this. I read it in one sitting, curled in my office chair, a sleeping kitten on my hip, soaking myself in Aimee's glorious prose like I was sitting in a gentle spring rain shower. It was so refreshing to hear about parts of our world I wasn't aware of, parts I knew of but didn't know enough, and hints of the love and care we can have for one another if we spend more time being present in our world. Get this one. Trust me!

[DRUMS OF AUTUMN](#) by Diana Gabaldon

Another installment in the OUTLANDER series for me on audiobook. It's so fun to experience my favorite books in audio. I discover something new about the story, the dialogue, the narration, every time and it makes me a better writer.

[REVIVING THE HAWTHORN SISTERS](#) by Emily Carpenter

I've loved everything I've ever read by Emily Carpenter, and this one is no different. Lush, evocative, gorgeously written, and compulsively readable. I mean, what more could you ask?

[THE QUEEN'S GAMBIT](#) on Netflix

There's a reason why this has a 100% rating on Rotten Tomatoes. It's simply incredible, a word-of-mouth sensation of brilliance, madness, addiction, and longing so intense it makes my heart hurt at times. I'm looking forward to reading [the book](#), too.

□ Writers On Writing

I discuss the craft of writing with my friends Ariel Lawhon and Patti Callahan Henry all the time, and we thought we'd bring some of these conversations to you. We've been soliciting questions from our readers, and this month's topic is a great one:

[How do you go about creating your Villain / Bad Guy / Opponent?](#)

JT Ellison: Normally, I tap into an idea: what scares me the most? Then I use that to give my shadow hero a goal. Every story is different, and I firmly believe your main character is only as good as her opponent. The dance between the two is vital for the story to sing. In my series books, my villains tend to be larger than life, with mad scientists or evil geniuses, but in the standalones, it's much more an opponent who is thwarting my main character by systemically ruining their life. For those stories to work, I need it to be someone with depth. I interview the villain. I find out all their flaws, all their motivations, what they will kill to hide or achieve. The WHY behind a villain is as important as what evil deeds they perpetrate in the story. If I understand them from the inside out, I can make them betray or terrify at will.

Patti Callahan Henry: I need to know what my character really wants, what their deep-down desire is that is driving them forward. I need to know what they will give up almost anything to have. And then...I create the person that is trying to keep them from that very desire. Sometimes we get caught up in thinking that "villain" means a terrible person, a cliché of Darth Vader, but for those of us who don't write thrillers, the villain might take on another name: the person who is keeping my main character from getting what they want. They could be evil as the title villain suggests, or they could merely be the controlling mother who keeps her daughter from becoming who she is meant to be. So in short, my villain is an outgrowth of my main character's desires.

Ariel Lawhon: How do I create a villain (Opponent)? By giving them a competing desire to my Hero. For example, if I'm writing a murder mystery and my Hero wants to solve the murder, my Opponent wants to stop her from doing so. (But why does he want to stop her? Excellent question. We'll explore that throughout the story.) If I'm writing a thriller, perhaps my Hero and my Opponent are both trying to steal the same famous painting. (Who will get to it first? Ah, conflict!) In a love story, I might have two different women in love with the same man. (One the reader roots for and one they hate.) The point is that the Hero and the Opponent want the same thing but go about it in very different ways. And the process of HOW they reach for their desire reveals what kind of people they are and what lengths they will go to along the way. As the story progresses, those very different approaches are in direct contrast with one another and create the foundation for a complex story. But everything begins with the Hero and the Opponent. The relationship between those two is the most important in the entire book.

See why I like to talk writing with these brilliant women? Sign up for their newsletters here for more insights...and send along your craft questions!

ARIEL LAWHON

PATTI CALLAHAN HENRY



We needed something warm and cozy on this chilly fall day, so I tried my hand at a new recipe, lobster mac & cheese. Oh, my friends, can I just say – YUM!!! And even better, there are no changes necessary to make it GF other than swapping out the pasta! To make it even easier and more cost-effective, Costco has large frozen bags of langoustines that make this recipe easy as pie. 30 minutes, start to finish. Heavenly!

BRING ON THE LOBSTAH!!

You can find all of my recipes [here](#). And if you want some wine to go with the meals, [The Wine Vixen](#) has you covered.

A reminder: Everyone who opens the newsletter is automatically entered to win a **\$30 gift card** to the bookstore of your choice. It's my way of saying thanks for being here. Congrats to last month's winner: Darlene!

That's all for now! Enjoy the cooler weather, send me your craft questions, take a walk in the last of the leaves, and I'll see you next month.

peace and hugs,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Wilson".



PS: Do you get my blog posts in your inbox? Sign up for as it releases (usually once or twice a week), as a weekly digest, or by RSS feed. You should also join my Facebook book group, **the Literati**.

DAILY

WEEKLY

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Are you still here?

Here's a kitten for your troubles.



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