

Transcript for the August 22, 2021 podcast: [A Writer's Ear](#).

*[Edited for clarity and because we keep repeating our pet phrases.]*

JT: Hello, everybody. It is Sunday, Sunday, Sunday, August 22. I said it right.

CC: August 22nd 2021, right now.

JT: I did the right month this time. Across from the table is CC.

CC: And across from me is JT.

JT: And this is our half hour amatuer hour. We do not have production values because, well, nobody listens, so yay. Why invest the time and money?

CC: Well and we're just having fun and we were just having fun.

JT: Anyway, this is our weekly couples counseling. [CC laughs] I mean, this is our weekly podcast for writers and low cost couples counseling. I just got on my Facebook [memories] (good morning, Capa) on my morning Facebook. Relations are therapist's way of making money.

CC: I can believe that families are tough.

JT: Tough, complex, very complex. So we are here today in beautiful Carson City, Nevada under the usual haze of smoke, again. We're always thinking of people that are under worse circumstances, especially those who may be evacuating from the southwest parts of Lake Tahoe and those areas.

CC: Yes, the fires are moving. It looks like a lot of Northern California is on fire in various places, so everyone try to stay safe.

JT: Before we dive into the subject matter, let's talk about are works in progress, I think we have reached a consensus that our current works in progress suck.

CC: Yes.

JT: Because they suck. What we're doing here to get you caught up here is a few weeks ago.

CC: Almost a month now.

JT: We started at a project where it's 6:30 every day or thereabouts, we write 30 minutes a day. We picked a couple of works in progress. You went to a novel that you've been working off and on for years. I picked a sequel, and I can tell you with no doubt about it: it sucks.

CC: Mine has gone off the rails and extreme fashion, but I think there are probably nuggets in there that can be polished up and put in the proper order, and maybe a book will come out of it at some point.

JT: So normal writing.

CC: Basically normal writing.

JT: But, hey, we're going. At least we're sitting down and we're writing every day since we started so we are actually getting somewhere. We don't know whether or not we're spinning our wheels in neutral, spinning in place, or we're revving the engine while in neutral. It's hard to say, but at least we're doing something.

CC: Well, we're flexing on writing muscles. A little repetition every day helps to build those muscles.

JT: And that is the actually the best advice if anybody asks. What is the best thing a writer can do and that is write every day. Just write.

CC: Write and read.

JT: Exercise the tools of your craft, no matter how bad it feels. Anything else on our minds?

CC: I think we're kind of in a place where, I don't know, where everything is just kind of there because it's getting to be late summer. Because of the smoke in the weather. It thankfully has cooled off a little bit, so the smoke is still horrible, but it's not like mordor where we're walking up. It was very nasty for awhile, and the smoke continues to be nasty but at least the temperatures are pleasant.

JT: We were also in a holding pattern for another reason, All of our local relations were exposed to COVID. Everybody had to get the tests and we couldn't travel to see them. We couldn't really interact with them because we were just waiting, waiting, waiting on the tests to come back. Fortunately, the good news is everybody is COVID free for now.

CC: For the moment.

JT: For the moment. Everybody goes back to their routines tomorrow, as far as I know. We of course take this moment to say in our podcast: wear your masks, get your shots.

CC: There's especially for the kids under 12 who can't get them yet and they're the ones that are at risk at the moment going back to school.

JT: Please protect our grandkids. Get your shots.

CC: Yes.

JT: That's another thing we mentioned probably every week. You know, this is couples counseling, have we pissed each other off this week?

CC: No, I think if anything, the environment has made us a little irritable. We're trying not to take it out on each other. Fortunately, we have a large house that we can spread out and not see each other for a while.

JT: Yeah, and that's important sometimes just to take a step back. If I feel like I'm being triggered, I take a step back, just gather the thoughts because no relationship is perfect. We do get on each others nerves/

CC: We've been in very close quarters for well over a year now, even though we have gone back to the office, but there's still a lot of being stuck in the house for various reasons. That's another reason the masks are coming in. Right now, I was double masked in the office the other day because it was so bad inside our building.

JT: If you wanna google Carson City NV and air quality, you'll see that. I'm not trying to single out Carson City, and I'm not trying to single out our woes, but we're feeling it first hand. Again, keeping perspective, this is far from the worst thing that we've got a problem with and it's an important thing, but hundreds of thousands of people are on the road evacuating right now.

CC: We don't mean to make light of anybody else in this situation. We're just putting our perspective on it.

JT: We can go ahead and segue into today's subject. Last week, the podcast was titled "[A Writer's Voice](#)," so I guess I should label this podcast "[A Writer's Ear](#)." We started the process of getting me a second cochlear implant. We met with audiologists (hi, Dawna) and we met with the doctor and his able assistant. Hello Doctor...

CC: Doctor Diaz.

JT: Doctor Diaz and his friendly assistant, Hermione.

CC: (laughs) No, don't go there.

JT: She had lots of energy.

CC: She did have a lot of energy but that's because she's young and we're old.

JT: Yeah, 8:00 o'clock in the morning, and she's okay. If you're listening, Hermione, I'm sorry. This is a writers' podcast, so I want to talk about how deafness has affected my writing. Quick background. I was not born deaf. It came upon me over the last few decades. When I joined the Air Force, my hearing was absolutely perfect. I think somewhere I still have the record of my hearing test and it's just perfect, then things went downhill from there due to a combination of factors. Genetics. Deafness runs in the family. Ear infections.

CC: Probably exposure to noise

JT: Exposure to noise over time. One audiologist suspects those teeny tiny bones in our ears, the smallest bones in our body. They vibrate and stimulate the cochlear, and it translates those vibrations into electrical signals which our brains interpret as noise. What the audiologist suspects happened is a calcification in those bones. They basically stopped moving. This is proven by the fact when they do bone conduction tests where they place the stimuli headphone with it on the bone behind the ear. They send noise through that and I can hear that just fine. Since the cochlea is still alive, three or four years ago, we went to good people at UC Davis and had one cochlear implant done. They drill a little hole in my extremely thick skull, plant wires on the cochlear. They hook those up to an implant. I put a processor on top of that implant through my skull.

CC: Then basically a magnet in your head.

JT: I don't know if there are magnets in my head.

CC: My assumption was that the magnet was in your head because that's why you can't have an MRI.

JT: I was just showing CC my processor. We should actually do a visual [show] so we can provide this. The difference between before and after the cochlear implant is basically night and day.

CC: Very much so.

JT: The difference between zero and one hundred. It's not perfect. I still pick up probably 75% of the conversation, but before, it was worse.

CC: From the spouses point of view, from somebody who was very close to you at the time and was watching this happen over time, the hearing loss was accompanied by almost like an inversion. You are inverting into yourself since communicating...having the world communicate with you was very difficult. It was easier to just be inside your shell and not interact with people around you. That was also about the time when the Internet and social media really started to grow, so there was a lot more of an online persona for you because it was easier to communicate that way. The difference after the surgery is that I have seen your personality coming back to what it was very similar to when we were first married.

JT: I'm sorry.

CC: [laughs] It was a difficult process for a spouse or significant other or people close to you because there's nothing we can do to help. It was like I was a crutch or whatever, but trying to be as helpful as possible, so there was definitely a lot of emotional and psychological stuff going on along with the hearing loss.

JT: This is a good point. I'm probably butchering this quotation. My apologies to Helen Keller who is the very famous blind and deaf person. "Blindness disconnects you from things and deafness disconnects you from people." It is common to see in my research cited to find older folks who do not acknowledge their deafness will retreat and become very self involved itself. They view their lives more inward.

CC: I think you're not getting as much of the external stimuli.

JT: Right. It's so much easier to focus on what's going on in your head instead of what's going on outside of it. I was trying to point to is for the elderly that [deafness] becomes especially traumatic because they are already dealing with the issues of getting older. The medical issues and, for some, those who may have dementia or just some sort of disconnect, Being deaf makes things that much worse. Here's a shout out to those caregivers, relatives, families, and health professionals who have to deal with helping those folks. It's probably a humongous chore.

CC: Not so much, or maybe the caregivers have a very difficult life because they realize that they are doing something important for their loved one, but it's still a drain on emotional energy and physical energy. I don't know if they consider it a chore, but it's draining.

JT: You have the background on my deafness. You have the background on my cochlear implant. How did being deaf affect my writing? I have a pet phrase which I think I'm going to save for the future of a future podcast, but what I do want to say is that I found myself having to go back into my writing and put in the "sense stimulation." "He heard, she heard, they heard" and "he saw, she saw, they saw."

CC: The five senses.

JT: Yes. I was noticing a lot of my writing was dialogue based, which is not a bad thing. There have been many successful writers where their work is dialogue paced. But, and I'm just speaking for one writer, there has to be some sort of dimension of senses in a book in order for it to capture the readers' imagination. We know one very famous writer who wrote for TV and movies and we love his dialogue because he writes fantastic dialogue. He's an idiot in real life.

CC: It was amazing. It was really groundbreaking for its time.

JT: I was just watching his most recent series before he got kicked off it, and again the dialogue is really amazing. I had to watch the series like two or three times in order to pick up all the clues. This is not to minimize dialogue in a book, but again in my opinion, there has to be some sort of sensory dimension to move the plot along.

CC: As long as we're careful on how to do that, and I think we also need to be careful that we don't just say, "He saw, she saw." It has to be a little bit more descriptive, but that's for another podcast.

JT: Writers have a vast and large tool set, and that's both a gift and the problem. The problem is there's too many tools for some writers, and sometimes they go crazy trying to use all of them. It's also a gift because you get to pick and choose which ones you want to use and to improve your book. Common experience is something that we all feel. What is the first thing we almost always talk about when we meet a stranger? "It's hot out, isn't it?"

CC: Lately, it's been. "Hey isn't that smoke terrible?"

JT: Everywhere we go, we reach out for common experience. When we first meet a stranger, or a new coworker, or something like that. Using the five senses is also a universal construct that's part of our toolkit. I felt when I was writing when I was deaf, I had to go back into my books and put in those sensory stimulations.

CC: You are a very prolific people watcher. I notice that sometimes when you're not involved in the current moment, like waiting in line or something, it's very common for you to be looking around at people and kind of taking in what they're doing and how they're interacting, Since you were having difficulties hearing people, did that draw you more to their mannerisms like hand gestures or how their eyes didn't meet or something?

JT: I never thought of it that way but that's true. I should say that's a habit I picked up from when I was young. I read a lot of Sherlock Holmes. Right from the get go when he meets Doctor Watson, he outlines everything about somebody or something from very quick observation. I thought that was so cool. Then being deaf, and I have to pick up all sorts of mannerisms [to understand the conversation]. I got by for years on context. Depending on the conversation, depending on the situation, depending on the gestures and eyes and everything, I was very good at context.

JT: I had an audiologist who said I was a very good guesser. I could pick up the conversation and what was being said from the context of the conversation just by observing and watching visual clues. When somebody just walked in my office at work and said something completely out of the blue, it would take me a second to get caught up. I think that the folks who worked with me in the office to send me emails and instant messages first to provide the context before talking with me wisely. I got my own context for very long time

CC: That was kind of where my point was coming from. You were looking for the visual to replace the aural that I think maybe in your writing that came across more then the "he said, she said."

JT: Yeah, true. I wanna save my pet phrase for the future podcast because I think it's effective and may help folks. Once we go down that rabbit hole, that'll easily eat up thirty minutes.

CC: Yeah, we're good.

JT: If you are a writer, or if you are considering a hearing device such as cochlear implant and you have questions, please feel free to write to me because one thing I found is the cochlear

implant community loves to share information. I'm a part of that community so if you have questions, please let me know.

JT: I should mention the deaf community is a complex community. Or I should say culture, a very complex community. People may not realize that they are, in my view, divided between cochlear implants getting them and not getting them because they feel that deafness is a complex rich culture with its own history. There are those who do not believe that parents should give children a cochlear implant. I have a personal opinion on that. but before I say that, I should point out that you know cultures in the eye of the beholder, and they are not wrong when they're saying that there is a lot to the deaf culture. There's a feeling of community and family and so forth that is lost when somebody gets a cochlear implant.

JT: My feeling is that if someone can medically and economically take a cochlear implant, they should absolutely get it. There are so many things holding us back, you know, there are so many things that we struggle with on a day to day basis. If you're comfortable with your deafness, if you are accommodated. if you are enriched by your deafness, then that's one thing. On the other hand, I think children should be given every chance they can to succeed and I understand why deaf folks are divided on the cochlear implant.

JT: I understand. It doesn't mean that I accept it, and I accept the fact that everybody should take every opportunity they can to improve their own abilities in the world. I may receive push back, but that's my opinion. I do not agree with the deaf cultures despising cochlear implants. I admit that may be because I was born with perfect hearing. I had perfect hearing and I want my perfect hearing back because I know how life is with and without it. Some folks never had it, and they are as happy as I am.

CC: Yes, some of that does come down to language, too. When we were first married, we took a class in American Sign Language. It was very interesting. We went to the Iowa School for the Deaf. Again, it's just a fascinating culture, and there are a couple of ASL hand gestures that we still use (most commonly, "I love you"), I think language partially comes into the implant issue because there are people who sign beautifully and with finger spelling or using a American Sign Language. There are a lot of people who don't know sign language. In your case, the audiologist asked if you could lip read because she had one of those awesome masks with the clear section. They have accommodations and feel that they don't need that external device to help them hear, and they're working perfectly well. It's like telling someone who's very fluent in their native language that they have to learn English. You're pushing something on someone even though they have a perfectly good cultural language of their own. This is a very personal choice

JT. Well, I am just giving you my opinion, for what it's worth. That and two cents will get you two cents.

CC: Not even a cup of coffee.

JT: We'll go ahead and round things up because, as usual, we seem to have sucked up another thirty minutes without even trying. Is there anything else that's on your mind, very quickly that we can spare for a couple of minutes?

CC: Going back to our "it's 6:30 somewhere" writing sessions. I have to say that even though I feel like the writing is not what I would like it to be right now, I do feel like a part of myself is coming back. As someone who has been writing for years, my mind is always working on story ideas, but not putting it down on the page was actually painful. This has been a good experience and I'm hoping that it will stick. I mean I know for a fact that it is currently not even close to publishing because I'm just randomly writing scenes out of context. Reading is reading, and writing is writing, so if I don't feel like writing that particular night, I write a random scene with the characters and figure out you know where it'll go in the story later.

JT: Okay, we're about out of time, so I will do the plugs. This podcast, other podcasts, our blogs, and our pictures, and all can be found on our website at [carsonhime.com](http://carsonhime.com). We are looking for your feedback. Go ahead and let us know. Feedback makes us better at what we're doing. Maybe someday we'll invest in production values. Probably not.

CC: Who knows? Maybe if we get more of a following. From what I've heard from the people who listen, it's good enough.

JT: We're going to go ahead and end this week's couples counseling. Across from the table over there is CC.

CC: And across from me is JT.

JT: You'll have a lovely weekend. Take care of yourselves and, you know, stay safe and healthy. Love y'all. Stay out of trouble. Bye.