



Trent Dalton

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CHERYL AKLE: Do you dream of writing a novel? Or do you just like listening to authors talk. I'm Cheryl Akle from the Better reading *Stories Behind the Story* podcast.

This new podcast springs from many requests we've had from listeners to do more episodes on how to write. We've produced a six-part series where we discuss the craft of writing with some of Australia's top authors and industry professionals. Welcome to *Better Reading On Writing*.

Ben Okri

Ben Okri: I came to writing through very indirect means, really. It wasn't really the first thing I wanted to do as a kid. Uhm, if I were to list the things I wanted to do first, I might be a little bit, uhm embarrassed by my presence here? I wanted to be a scientist.

Cheryl : No, no I like science actually, yeah

Ben Okri: I wanted to be a, a pirate, a bandit, that is.

Cheryl: oh yeah, maybe not.

Ben: I (laughs) wanted to be a uhm, a composer? There weren't instruments in the house apart from a cranky old guitar and uhm, I wanted to paint.

Cheryl: Okay, so take the pirate aside...

Ben: No, we have to put the pirate right in the centre.

Cheryl: But I think music, arts and books fall into the same category don't they?

Ben: But so does banditry. (Laughs)

(Both chuckles)

Cheryl: Maybe I don't know enough of that.

Ben: No but I just simply mean the impulse to create is also slightly connected to a very mild, and benign outlaw element because impulse to create is an impulse to not deviate from the world but to nudge the world towards something new; a sense of adventure about reality, a sense of possibility about reality.

Sax Sound effect

Cheryl: That was the Freedom Artist author Ben Okri talking to me about his impulse to create. Is a desire to create something that all writers share? Is writing a calling, something you're born to do? What does it mean to be a writer?

Trent Dalton

CHERYL: Today we are launching a new series with those questions and more and to help us answer them is someone who absolutely needs no introduction but I'll give him one anyway. Trent Dalton, author of the phenomenally successful novel *Boy Swallows Universe*. Welcome.

TRENT: Cheryl, what an honour to be here. Thank you so much for having me.

CHERYL: Oh I'm thrilled to bits actually. I'm really, really excited for our listeners too. To be able to hear, you know straight from the horse's mouth so to speak. Uhm you've been a writer for a very long time but you've only been a writer of fiction for a very short time.

TRENT: so true so true

CHERYL: okay, so the conversation is the desire to create. What is it? What is that, can you explain that?

TRENT: It's a beat it's a, something in my soul, it's something that makes my legs move. It's something that makes my brain tick over. It's something that keeps me distracted when my wife in the kitchen we're making spaghetti bolognese and she's telling me about her day job and I should be listening to every word that beautiful woman says but I'm not because I'm in my head, thinking of the next sentence I'm gonna create the next morning for a story I'm writing and its-

CHERYL: It's all consuming isn't it?

TRENT: It's completely all consuming, I'm in the back of my head right now as I even talk to you Cheryl. I'm thinking about a journey about two girls across Australia that I'm writing as we speak and they are constantly with me. They're in my heart and they're in my head these characters and Eli Bell and August Bell, you know these are very real kind of people in my head that I think about. I wonder how they're

going. It's that level of intensity about, that need to go to those places, those story telling places. So it's absolutely, you know I mean, for me it's the most important thing we ever did. Jack and Jill went up the hill, what happens next? Were the only creatures so far that we know of in the universe that can tell you what happens next.

CHERYL: Tell me, yeah it is. It's really remarkable and storytelling is so part of our everyday life, but its people like you who formalize it. So you've been writing for a long time so let's call journalism short form for the purpose of this and I know you write long form.

TRENT: Yeah.

CHERYL: But talk to me about growing up, did you know you were going to be a writer? Did you know that that was what was in you?

TRENT: Yeah, yeah I... this is so ridiculous once... once upon a time by waterfall, I told my wife, I was about 20, I said I think I'm... this sounds so ridiculous to talk and tell you this now... I said I think I'm special. Like I said it in the sense of , I just think I'm, I'm tapped into something that I can't explain, is what I meant by that. She never ceases to let me live that comment down and she's always like, I'm doing the dishes and she goes, I know you're special but can you please just, you know unload the dishwasher. But what I was getting at was there are things that I keep seeing that are deeper than the life that apparently everybody else sees and so as, I don't know I just felt this need even as a kid, to express that and... but Cheryl, the difference between me, I don't feel like I was born with gifts. I was a person who was made... like things happened you know. Things happened to me, like you know, my brothers and I, you know my mom fell in love with a bloody drug dealer and, and my brothers and I crept into his room and we opened up a cupboard and we found a secret door, a secret passage to a secret room in which there was a red telephone and it was, you know I became a writer then, you know what I mean? And then the man I loved, you know, he went to prison for ten years. I became a writer again in that time.

CHERYL: But like me, I've seen a lot in my life as well. And like your brothers they've seen a lot in, you know they were seeing, what you're seeing but what made you the writer?

TRENT: Ah, great, great question. Yeah, I mean you know, my older brothers were the warriors who were kind of... I look at it in that kind ancient Greek history kind of way. There were always the people documenting and there are the warriors on the battlefield and that was my older brothers and I was always, just the reporter, you know. And that was the weirdest thing and I don't know whether that's because I'm the youngest of four boys and that was my role. It was almost like, Trent you will be the storyteller, remember this kid so take every last detail of these things that are happening because maybe one day they'll be important. And so this is where I'm at right now talking to you Cheryl. This is where it gets all weird about what's happened with this book that I've done, like I'm starting to really think like, I'm serious here, that I think all that I was meant to do was write *Boy Swallows Universe*. I'm wondering, I'm genuinely wondering if maybe that's what I was here to do and maybe all those things, this is how weird its getting it's like I'm starting to go, maybe those things were just a lead up and that's why they were the gifts. As horrific as some of that stuff was, maybe that was gifts that were given to me because I was just put on this earth to write that 470 page book... because people come up to me and tell me what it means to them and that it meant something to someone with bone cancer in Perth lying on a hospital bed whose writing me a handwritten letter saying, "This means something to me.".. And someone comes

up and says, that book you wrote is my mum, that's my father, that's my uncle and yeah all these really deep things and-

CHERYL: Because you write from the heart

TRENT: Ah, well that's what I have to do. I started to realize too. I've just only discovered these things...

CHERYL: But I think even your journalism, everything you do you put yourself into, don't you think? I mean you write what you know really.

TRENT: Oh, in the truest sense of that absolutely. Like write what you feel, you know. It's like I feel it so can I write it in a way that makes the reader feel it as well. Like literally in my journalism, this is gonna sound a bit wanky but sometimes I cry. I cry on the freakin' keyboard and that's when I know, stop, your work here is done. You know because if I'm moving myself and I've heard that story, you know I've went to the living room, that person told me their story for four hours, I transcribed it for another twenty-four hours that's how long it took to hear that again and transcribe it all. And then I've written it for two days, and now I'm crying still from that same story that I've consumed almost three times. That's powerful and that you know, that's just feeling and heart and soul. And I mean if there's one thing I say about writing it's just heart and soul man. Just-

CHERYL: I just want to ask you the transition from journalism to writing fiction because you didn't start doing that. You were prodded, weren't you?

TRENT: I was, I was. I was. It's funny it's like I needed, I needed permission. Isn't that weird? Like why did I need permission? I needed this beautiful woman Catherine Milne to fly up to Brisbane and go 'Hey, I've read something, I've read a couple of your sentences.' You know literally like that, that fine. Like it was that specific that she was, she picked out a paragraph, you know in a *Weekend Australian Magazine*, story I write and she said from this I think you have more to offer. You know isn't that amazing and I was sort of I needed someone like her who works with these amazing people to say, you could be one of them as well. You know?

CHERYL: And did you have any anxiety about writing a book? I mean what, you just, she left and you thought what? Where do I go from here?

TRENT: Yeah, I mean I have anxiety about putting my left shoe on before my right shoe. You know it's like, I have anxiety about coming here today and talking to you. I have anxiety-

CHERYL: So do I.

TRENT: I mean it's like, it's like a legacy of the things I wrote about in *Boys Swallows Universe*, it's this sense that you're not quite worthy of anything you're doing so imagine the sense that you feel of giving a four hundred and seventy page book that is largely autobiographical so, you know, who wants to read it? You know, that was my thing it was like. But I just swept that all aside initially to just get to that last the first goal being, full stop on page four hundred and seventy. So if I can get to that, with no distraction, I mean just do not ever let the genie out of the bottle. Don't tell anyone side from Catherine Milne what you're doing. Maybe tell your wife, cause you have to explain to her what you're going being eight and ten at night but just keep that genie in the bottle, keep that magic in the bottle and then just get through that. And if you can get through that, deal with the anxiety later. And I felt ill Cheryl, I felt sick you know like physically and I was doing press and like book tours and stuff in Sydney when that book came out and

weird things were happening to me I swear to God. I was having, like I got this pneumonia and I got like... and I wasn't sleeping and I just think these were physical manifestations of the strange places my brain was at with that book because I was terrified of that story going out of the wider world. But you know what I'm such an idiot because I underestimated novel readers. You know, you do that at your peril because I thought people were gonna judge and I thought readers were going to have a shot at people I love. I'm talking about my mom, talking about this man I love, this guy who is basically Lyle in my book, I'm talking about my bros, these people who are... my old man! My old man is so in that book. And I thought people were gonna stand up at book events and go like how can you love these people. You know what I'm such a goose because novel readers have learned not to be that judgmental. They've learned not to be, give knee jerk reactions, because they read novels. Because these amazing writers have taught them not to do that. Geraldine Brooks taught them not to do that, Hemmingway taught them not to do that. You know what I mean? It's like these people they read so far past-

CHERYL: They have empathy, that's the word.

TRENT: Stop you're giving me chills. Empathy is the word.

CHERYL: Empathy is the word.

TRENT: And you know I'm just gonna bloody write that word in capital letters and stick it above my writing desk. That's it.

CHERYL: Absolutely.

JR. Lonie

CHERYL: ... the career part of a writer when you start calling yourself a writer. I think that writers struggle with that you know is it when you first publish your work is it when you, I mean when is it?

JR LONIE: Yeah you never believe, you never believe you really are one.

CHERYL: So when you're travelling and you've got to fill up that occupation card right at the airport, what do you write?

JR LONIE: I do now put writer.

CHERYL: Yes.

JR LONIE: When I was at the film and television school I could lie... or not lie. I wasn't lying but I put teacher.

CHERYL: Yes

JR LONIE: But now I just put writer, because that's what I am, for heaven's sakes.

CHERYL: But it does take a while for that to come out doesn't it?

JR LONIE: Oh yes, yes. You think you're a fraud, for a very long time and how much money do you have to earn a year to call yourself one you know one dollar, a thousand dollars or something.

CHERYL: What do you think the turning point is? What would you say, when is it that you become a writer?

JR LONIE: Look I was a writer much earlier than I thought I was one because that's what I did, all the time. I didn't do other things so you know, for heaven's sakes, even though you might've been earning a lot of money, you're still earning money but what else did you do?

CHERYL: Yeah.

JR LONIE: The house work?

Typewriter sound effect

CHERYL; Alright we've just listened to J.R. Lonie, Trent and he's the author of his fabulous fiction book called *The Woman from Saint Germain*. He told me how it was years before he had the confidence to call himself a writer despite having an extensive career as one. Now it is a difficult career to choose and I'm just going to read this quote from Earnest Hemmingway which I'm sure you know. "There's nothing to writing, all you do is sit down at a typewriter and open a vein."

TRENT: Ah I love that so much. I love that so much and you know of course that guy, genius could encapsulate it in a sentence. It's what I did, Cheryl. I swear to God.

CHERYL: You literally did that?

TRENT: I did it, I mean it was. I made pact with myself. I had my journalism day job, was going into the living rooms of wonderful Australians and I would ask them, do you mind telling me every deep dark secret you have in your soul right? And they would, you know, they would tell me their secrets over 4-hour conversations and I've made a pact with myself that if I was going to tell my story I would honour each and every ones of those people who did that, who honoured me with their story. I would give them back 150% of myself. I will freakin' open up that vein and I really did that. I would go down to my rumpus room between 8-10 at night, you know do what actually think about how darn lucky I am. And it's a genuine fact, I mean I'm so lucky and I would think about alternatives. And I've got two daughters twelve and ten, and I would think about the road in which they're not in my world. And I know that sounds really sort of, it sounds like a perilous thing to do but it was, it was so empowering... because it would just fill me with just all this heart and emotion. It was electricity I swear to God you start thinking about that, you go as deep to your core as you get, because often you know kids are pretty good at getting to that place and I would think of that and then I would sit down and electricity would run through my head, my heart and then it would come out my fingertips. I swear to God. And then it was just right and that you know that book feels like that. It doesn't read like Hemmingway, it is just a full on, no restraint, you know no holds barred kind of soul cough. And it was opening the vein. It so important and I can smell it when a writer has done that and I love it and I'm just so grateful because I'm with them every step of the way it's like mate, you wanna go there I'm with you, I'm with you.

CHERYL: So the date of publication. I mean this is as we've heard in that quite, at what point did you think you've gone from a journalist to a novelist?

TRENT: Ah, that's a great question.

CHERYL: When did you reach that?

TRENT: Ah that's a great question I mean I didn't think... I remember sitting in the Better Reading offices just going, this is all wonderful but look, you know, I don't think anyone's really gonna read this book. And I've seen these hard copies coming out... and all I wanted to do Cheryl, I wanted to see one physical copy that I could drive over to a place called Redcliffe on the north side of Brisbane. And I would knock on my mom's door, and I'd go, hey mom here it is. This is my tribute to you. This is, this is in four hundred and seventy pages me saying this is why I love you mom. You know because you survived. You're the greatest survivor I've ever met. That's all I wanted, right? That's all I wanted. And I wasn't a writer then. I didn't call myself a writer. I was still a journo... Journos are inherently doubtful of their own abilities, like inherently. I don't know whether it's the newsroom that makes you feel that way. I don't know whether its editors that make you feel that. Or it's the permanent contest you know... what I mean like always battling as a journo. You're just always trying to better yourself and you're always doubting this kind of internal thing. I'm saying, am I right? Do I belong here? You know what, like I think it was only... I gotta say it was only and I'm loathe to even mention it but it took so much. I mean there were heads of fiction, I'm talking great writers, I mean I'm talking the most amazing people emailing and saying that book is worthy mate, like get it across your silly head... but it took so long and I swear to God I had.... I had to hug Richard Flanagan onstage at the ABIA awards to believe. I swear to God and think I only just believe now that it's just might be worthy as a contribution to Australian literature. Like I think only now, like literally now maybe sitting here right with you right now Cheryl. Like that is how much I've analyzed it and gone I'm okay with this now maybe its-

CHERYL: I think it's going to be Australian classic but I wanna know so you know how when you're flying into Australia or out of Australia whatever you have to write your occupation what are you writing instead?

TRENT: Ahh man. It's so funny you say that like I mean you talking on the bottom of mine, you know you have email like sign off thing, for so long I got ragged by my fellow journos because I put writer. I put writer on the bottom of that right? It says Trent Dalton writer, *The Weekend Australian Magazine*. The reason I put that is because I doubt myself as a journo, right? Cause I sit near people like Hedley Thomas you know, *The Teacher's Pet*. I sit near people like crime journalist who just nuggity, just you know just really gritty, dirt under the fingernails type of journos. I'm not really that. I'm some of these nuanced kind of... I'll talk to someone for 6 hours and we will bleed together and I'll craft that into a 4000 word piece that has peaks and troughs and has a natural storytelling craft and all sort of interesting... It's like a literary non-fiction journalist kind of hybrid thing that I think I've been doing for 20 years. So I could never call myself a journo right? But everyone goes... and they called me like I lived in a sheltered workshop, they call me like *Oh the writer, oh the writer*. Like these bureau chiefs. they get an email from me, they get *Oh the writers got his copy-*

CHERYL: I could imagine that

TRENT: You know, yeah and it's like its cool because it always keeps your head the right size and it's really important. But now it's like, What am I? You know? I've gotta like some bunch of stuff like there's like things I've got these physical thing that went places right?

CHERYL: Well can I just say that, what you've sold a hundred thousand copies. You've sold rights to just about every region in the world? You've won the...What have you won? The New South Wales Premiers Award.

TRENT: Stop, stop. No, no, no..

CHERYL: You know, ABIA book of the year award, you've sold TV rights, and you've sold theatre rights...TRENT: Yeah, I did that right? That was me, that was me. That was all me.

CHERYL: Yeah, that was all you. So I could, I'd say you could comfortably use the word author, writer or whatever it is you want to.

TRENT: Why is that? Why is that? But it's my past Cheryl. Everything in my book is the reason why it's like you read my book you'll understand why I still feel the rug's gonna be pulled out from underneath me. And now I'm gonna wake up in my kitchen, I'd go nah you're just dreaming kid.

CHERYL: That was all a dream.

TRENT It was all a dream.

CHERYL: Well, I'm really glad that you're here in my dreams.

CHERYL: Oh man, well sweet dreams they are.

Felicity McLean

FELICITY MCLEAN: The hours that I found were best for me for writing a novel is 5 am till 7 am.

CHERYL: Yeah wow

FELICITY: Yeah I'm not naturally a morning person so that was that took some work. So-

CHERYL: Wow.

FELICITY: So I'd get up and write, work on the novel for two hours every morning and I knew-

CHERYL: By hook or by crook?

FELICITY: By hook or by crook, that's right yeah.

CHERYL: Wow.

Trent Dalton

CHERYL: That was Felicity McLean talking about how she woke at sunrise to write the *The Van Apfel Girls Are Gone*. I'd often hear people tell me they'd like to write a book but they don't have time but authors don't have extra time. You don't have extra time. You have a family, you have two young children and you had full time job.

TRENT: Ah I mean, I tell you one thing about I forget the storytelling involved. Just the one thing I'm proud of is that I dug in on that it was a really tough period and I would say to my wife look Fi, I think this could be something. All the time but you are, you're also devoting it's such a self-indulgent thing to do to write a novel it's so-

CHERYL: But also disciplined as well.

TRENT: You've gotta be so disciplined. That's the thing and I'm like you know look at me I'm a bag of junk you know it's like, you know, but when it came time I swear to God Cheryl, between that eight and ten I'm so disciplined-

CHERYL: In the rumpus room?

TRENT: In the rumpus room. Just surrounded by Dora the Explorer and you know, Harry Potter paraphernalia.

CHERYL: See, this is what I like about that. It's that people think they need a writer's room or den or whatever. You just did it.

TRENT: Mate, you've got two hours you've got 8 till 10 and if you don't, mate you don't write fifteen hundred words in that eight till ten, you're wasting your time. You know what I mean? And I would write until I fell asleep. I know my physical capabilities, I can't write anything worth anything after 10pm. My best hours, I mean my best hours journalistically, would always coffee in the hand 9am until about two. And I'd do that in journalism as well. I'll do a lot of my interviewing from like two till five. But writing you just want that fresh, snappy... I'm total Murakami on that kind of... I need to jog, I love jogging and just getting the brain. I'd do a lot great thinking jogging you know like 10k run and just come up with... you crack story, you'll crack your narrative in those moment and that's been really helpful. But the writing of Boy Swallows Universe there was such urgency to it because of that window. That's all I had. Put the kids to bed, you know. And that window, it closes, the older your kids get too, because they stay up longer right? And you're nagging them to get to bed and suddenly what used to take twenty minutes takes half an hour, forty minutes, an hour. So I don't even have that window two years on right now. So that time I would have in that rumpus room was sacred and I would just smash it and I wasn't too critical on myself. It's why the book also reads like its ambitious and it takes people, you know, it asks a lot of the reader because you're stepping into my head at 9:45 on a Wednesday night, where I've put the kids to bed, we've had spag bol for dinner, maybe I've had a red and I'm just letting rip. I'll put the shoes on, the Dunlop Volleys of this boy called Eli Bell that I created and I said mate you're braver than me, you're stronger than me, you're tougher than me. Can you walk through this head of mine because in the dusty dark corridors right at the back, there's some stuff I need to open up. And it wasn't me who did that Cheryl, it was Eli Bell you know and it was amazing. I'd go back up to bed at ten thirty and my wife she'd go, "How was it?" you know? "Did you go alright?"

CHERYL: Were they good to you?

TRENT: Exactly. Oh, stop it! Were they good to you? That's a beautiful, yeah. It's almost like were you okay with what you found tonight? And are you gonna sleep tonight? Because sometimes you're going to a place in your memory of, you know, I don't know, your mom going through the hardest night of her life. You know, and that stuffs real-

CHERYL: And that's hard.

TRENT: It's like I was thirty-eight, and I'm forty now, I was thirty-eight and I might've not thought of those things for thirty years, you know and so I'm so grateful for that boy Eli Bell for taking me back there Cheryl-

CHERYL: You know, I think too it's in the time of your life, like could you have written this book ten years ago? No way?

TRENT: No, no way. I'm-

CHERYL: No way?

TRENT: It's so funny. I'm so glad I'm that I went and had two kids. I took my time. I spent 20 years knocking on the doors and gently walking into the living rooms. I'm telling you of maybe be a thousand Australians that I've told these stories and I had to do that and then I had to sort out my own head so I wasn't too... I wasn't too angry, I wasn't too fearful, I wasn't too loving it was just, I was just in the right space at thirty-eight years old. And at forty maybe I'd be even different now you know what I mean? It's-

CHERYL: Oh, I think-

TRENT: It was in the exact right spot.

CHERYL: Without a doubt your next book will be different. That's just the way it is.

TRENT: Oh, it totally is.

CHERYL: Yeah.

TRENT: And it already is and I'm sort of halfway through it. It's like, yeah man. It's like so different but it's so soulful and vein opening and kind of but in so many different ways but it was just like... and I feel ready to do that now. The timing of that is right because I couldn't have done that without writing *Boy Swallows Universe*. Because, you know I did not necessarily want to want to go for *Boy Swallows Universe* first but I needed to get that out. You know, just get that out so I can just live and just sort of do all this other stuff.

CHERYL: So tell me, is it still in the rumpus room two hours at night?

TRENT: Absolutely, absolutely. You know, there is my old man's old stonefish, in a jar of formaldehyde up to my right, and this crazy mood wall I've put together that is a visual narrative of this book I'm writing, and all the kids toys are just around me. Yeah, everything's just should be.

CHERYL: Do you think one day you'll get yourself a writer's studio? Would you be entitled to one do you think?

TRENT: That's the thing. That's what I keep talking to my wife about. I wonder what Stephen King does? I wonder what Cormac McCarthy... I wonder how he does it. And it's just like... I know for a fact though I think Stephen King, I've read some of his great stuff on writing and his talks about those early days you know? He's raising a kid and he's just punching out the words, it's just workman-like, you know and I love that because everyone starts at those places.

CHERYL: Absolutely. Okay so what do you think are the three things you've done that helped you carve out a successful career?

TRENT: Ah well...

CHERYL: A successful writing career, sorry.

TRENT: Yeah, yeah. Okay, number 1... I mean this is life, this is life. This is anything but writing in particular... enthusiasm. Be the most enthusiastic person in the room. It will take you so far. I think it's important to get your uni stuff, important to read a lot of books, you know. If you're enthusiastic about the very street that is in front of your house, if you're enthusiastic about that stranger who's walking into your life, that you don't know anything about, or enthusiastic about that meeting... that will take you so far. If you're enthusiastic about the first job you have, you'll be the one who is recognized over the person who has three PhDs, like that in the newsroom for one thing... like editors, you know, bureau chiefs go for the kid who's most enthusiastic.

CHERYL: And most passionate I think.

TRENT: Passion. Passion that's what-

CHERYL: Passion. Yeah, okay.

TRENT: Passion, absolutely.

CHERYL: Two?

TRENT: Two, for me writing-wise, the heart writes the book and the head edits it. Don't get your head involved until you've hit the full stop on page four hundred and seventy. Don't ever get that stupid head involved 'cause that's the thing that will question and doubt. Let the heart write it. Just let it write, just let it, and get it down mate and just like put it out. Get it out of you and get it onto the page and have something to work with, you know. Then let that doubting, that sort of questioning head, that brain, that stick in the mud brain of yours, let that do its thing later. But let that beautiful flowering blooming thing called your heart, let that thing take over cause that's the fun bit. That's the fun bit, yeah.

CHERYL: Yup. And three?

TRENT: Three, realize that story is everywhere. Story is everywhere and story is the most important thing you have in your life, so realize that all these amazing restaurants in the city you live in... they were built so you could sit down and tell more story. All that amazing furniture, all that expensive furniture you buy, it was only built so you could sit down and tell more story. You know, the best moment of your day is the moment when you sit down with your kid and she tells you a story. Don't be afraid to put your story into a story you know? I was so foolishly afraid of doing that and I kind of just, I spent so long, Cheryl, writing things for other people. I'd write a lot of screenplays, I'd write a lot of things that other people went, "Here's an idea Trent, go and work your butt off for nothing doing this for a couple of years". And the weird thing is when I wrote something that was my story, my thing to say about my little blip on the radar of life, that's the things that people responded to. And that was a massive lesson for me. A massive lesson, it was just like, you spoke something, you know? I just wanted to tell something that is true to me, you know? And yeah, so speak your truth even if it is in literary fiction. It's your truth.

CHERYL: Trent Dalton, always an absolute pleasure, you really, you have, I mean for me I'm so lucky because I get to hear your story every time I see you and I enjoyed that so much. I really, really do.

TRENT: I'm getting a little bit teary here careful ...I'm a highly emotional man so don't get me started.

CHERYL: But it is true. I mean I have the best job in the world because I get to hear your story.

TRENT: Well I just I honestly, Cheryl what you're doing here with Better Reading, you guys you know, made a kid's dream come. Honestly, early early really early with *Boy Swallows Universe* so thank you so much. To you and the whole community Better Reading are just incredible, thank you.

CHERYL: Thank you.

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