

Episode 10: Cuz My Dumb Brain (A Spoilerific Q&A with TJ Klune)

Kirt: Welcome to the Klunatics Podcast. I'm Kirt Graves. This week, I'm joined by TJ Klune to answer some of your questions. Thanks to everyone who sent in questions for TJ. Obviously, we couldn't get to every single one, but we did get through a lot of them. I also want to warn you upfront that this episode is super spoilery. If you haven't read most of TJ's books, do not listen to this episode. If you've read most of them but there are still a few you'd prefer not to know anything about, check your podcast player for the Chapter Titles and skip those you don't want to hear. If your podcast player doesn't show those Chapters or allow you to automatically skip those sections, check the episode description for time stamps so you can skip them manually. That's all I have to say. Let's just get to TJ.

TJ: Yeah. Somebody told me, somebody like tweeted at me something about a specific action in like Bear, Otter, and the Kid. And I was like, I have no idea what the fuck you're talking about, man, that was so long ago.

Kirt: I look

TJ: Don't make me do that.

Kirt: I look forward to many of these questions being answered with "I don't fucking remember".

TJ: That'll be me being honest, so that's totally good. Alright, let's do this, let's see how far we get.

Kirt: Okay, so Katrina asks: So we know Ox smells like candy canes and pine cones and epic and awesome, but does he also smell like that to everyone else in the pack?

TJ: No, that is specific to Joe and actually I do touch base on that a little bit in Brothersong and you'll hear what other people or what, what the scents are for other people and what they do in that regard, what that means.

Kirt: Awesome. Sam asks: The song Sanctuary by Inertia is on the Heartsong playlist. And I'm gonna mess up this artist's name, I'm sure. But that song is actually a cover of Utada Hikaru from the video game Kingdom Hearts. Are you a fan by any chance? And if you are, your favourite character.

TJ: I certainly am. And, um, I've played every single one, including the ridiculous side stories that, that, that are, that have the dumbest names, like Dream Drop Distance and 328 over 5 and stuff like that.

And, um, I randomly found that cover and I was like, holy freaking balls. So that's why I put it on the list. And who's my favorite character in that game? Uh, this is going to be dumb. Probably Goofy. I just love him.

Kirt: Cool. I don't understand any of what's being said right now.

TJ: You don't play kingdom hearts?

Kirt: I'm not a video game person at all.

TJ: Oh man. You're fired.

Kirt: Sorry. Wait, really?

TJ: No, no. I like you too much.

Kirt: Uh, Christie asks: Will it ever be revealed why Thomas holds humans in such high regard?

TJ: Yes.

Kirt: And is there more to the story of Ox's lineage?

TJ: No, because I get tired. I mean, I've already done the whole Chosen One line or my take on that with the Tales from Verania series and with Ox I don't want him to be a Chosen One. I want, I like the idea of there being something great about him because he's so ordinary that he doesn't need to be, have a destiny.

He doesn't need to have a fate. That being said. I also wanted to give Ox's role a bit more definition. So in Brothersong, there will be, I won't come out and flat out say what he is, but there are hints as to what he could be.

Kirt: Hm. Excellent. Um, Angelica asks: Who can cook in the Bennett pack other than Elizabeth?

TJ: Jessie. And Robbie tries to cook, but it, it's basically like the car and everything gets lit on fire. And I like to think that, uh, Ox does too, because he had to share the responsibilities with his mom. Before I killed her off.

Kirt: Yup. Nicely done.

Okay. Jade asks, this is a long one. Um.

TJ: Okay.

Kirt: As the pack is in the midst of fighting Richard Collins the first time, Thomas almost entrust his alpha power to Ox, but then Joe arrives to take it as originally planned. If Ox had taken it, would he have been alpha of all or would that be Joe's birthright regardless?

TJ: Ooh, that is a hardcore question, and it's something that I've thought about a lot. I think that would have come more with the birthrights. I think that the Bennett name is the thing that carries the most weight. It's not necessarily about that specific alpha power, but more a lineage. And I don't know that Ox would have wanted that regardless.

And that is, weirdly enough, it's going to sound like Brothersong is the longest book in the world. But that actually comes up in Brothersong too. So, keep in mind that a lot of these questions that people probably have, I've thought about for ages, and the reason I've kept

them hidden until Brothersong is because this is the first time that we get to actually hear from a Bennett as opposed to an outsider.

And while the book is about Carter, and is about Gavin, all the Bennett brothers and Thomas have very large role to play as does Ox.

And that's all I'll say.

Kirt: Okay. Yeah. How strange that you would wrap up all of these strings in the last book.

TJ: In the final book, I know it's the weirdest thing. I don't know how that happens.

It's like, well, here's the finale. I guess I better answer these questions now.

Kirt: Um, Jess asks: I love how you didn't let just one point of view of a single character go through the whole series. How do you do that? Do you do any mental prep or detailed plot for each character's personality before writing the next book?

TJ: I do. And, and I, it really depends upon what kind of a book I'm writing. If there is going to be a major outline with stuff like with Bear, Otter, and the Kid and, and I, hell I'll even say the first Tales from Verania book or, or the How to Be series. There's just not a whole shitload of planning done in that.

Um, cause I, I like the idea of just going and seeing where it takes me. And Wol song was probably one of the books that I did the most planning for to start out with. Cause remember that book wasn't even supposed to be supernatural, paranormal anything. And then once I decided to go that direction, cause my dumb brain, I had to change a whole lot.

And then when I actually knew I was going to be continuing it, and, and before I sat down to write Ravensong, I plotted out the last three books, all told, and I actually stuck with it for the most part. Um, but yeah, I want to make sure that, that what I love, what I love about myself, what I love about, um, um.

These kinds of stories is that if you removed all the names and dialogue tags, I think you still should be able to tell who's talking. And these, cause each character has their very own distinct personality. And, um, I want to make sure that shines through.

And that's why I had so much trouble in writing, um, Ravensong on the outset was because I kept trying to make it too much like Wolfsong. And that book was one of the hardest I had to write because I was trying to replicate what I've done before and that just wasn't working.

So once I realized the problem I was having and, and sat down and figured out what I need to do to fix it, Gordo's voice became a whole hell of a lot clearer, which led the way for being able to be, to do Robbie and then Carter.

Kirt: Um, can we just assume that the answer to most of these questions starts with, "cuz my dumb brain?"

TJ: Yes. Cause that is pretty much how my life works.

Kirt: Maybe that's what we'll call this episode

TJ: "My dumb brain".

Kirt: "Cuz my dumb brain".

TJ: That's a good idea.

Kirt: "Cuz my dumb brain". Last question about, Oh no, that's a lie, uh, two more questions.

TJ: I was gonna say, Jesus.

Kirt: Anne asks: You've said that you think Green Creek would make a great screen adaptation, and she agrees. Have you thought about who you would cast as the main characters?

TJ: No. Nobody famous. I want the idea. Cause what I love about these people is that, is that while the Bennetts are the royalty of this world, the a lot of it comes from outsiders looking in on them. And, and with that, I wouldn't want, maybe you could get, get away with having somebody like Thomas be a higher profile actor because he's not going to be in it all the way through.

But I like the idea of a bunch of unknowns being cast as the roles. People that you wouldn't get distracted by their fame being in the role. Because you know, you go, you go see a Brad Pitt movie, no matter what, your mind is always like, that's Brad Pitt. You know, you can't, you can't get away no matter who he is, no matter what role he's playing.

And he's a great actor, but he's always going to be Brad Pitt. And I would love, uh, you know, if Brad Pitt was like, Hey, I want to do Green Creek, I'd be like, "fuck yes, you can play all the characters, it's totally fine". But I really like the idea of, of being a bunch of unknowns because, um, I think that they would be, I think that that would make it so much better than they would be hungry for it. So.

Kirt: Yeah. Uh, Brad Pitt can be Thomas cause that's basically a cameo. He dies right away.

TJ: Yeah, he does. Spoiler alert. But um.

Kirt: Oh yeah, this episode, full of spoilers.

TJ: Okay, good. As long as we say that,

Kirt: It will be made very clear. This is spoilerific.

TJ: What I like about Thomas, and this is total tangent sidebar, is how, is how he was killed off halfway, not even halfway through, like a third of the way through the first book. Yet he's had this presence still through the entire series. None more so than he'll be in Brothersong. I think Brothersong he actually has more page time than any of the other books, just because I, I, I love that character and I love how, um, how many mistakes he's made.

Cause I hate the idea of perfection in characters. And while he did seem infallible to Ox, that was because that's how Ox saw him. And then you got the flip side of that with Gordo and Gordo saw him as a monster. And then you had Robbie who didn't know him at all. And yet there was still a connection there because of Kelly.

And then Brothersong you have Carter who was a daddy's boy, and you're going to see that, um, that element of their relationship shine through.

Kirt: Sweet, flashbacks, my favorite.

TJ: Yes. Oh, I can't wait for you to read this book, man. You're going to be cursing my name for some of the shit I'm going to make you do. So delighted by it.

Kirt: Okay, so this is really the last question about Green Creek.

TJ: Okay.

Kirt: From Melanie: What would happen if Gordo and Mark ever went over to Abby to rent a movie from our favorite video store owner, Gus?

TJ: Gus would kick them out immediately because I'm assuming that, um, Gordo would be there to rent a Michael Bay movie and Gus would kick them out of the store right away and Mark would be super embarrassed and he would make Gordo leave and apologize as they leave, while Gordo was slinging threats over his shoulder.

And Casey is sitting there staring amused.

Kirt: Interesting.

TJ: Yes.

Kirt: See, I didn't peg Gordo is a Michael Bay fan, but I guess.

TJ: I think he likes stupid action movie s.

Kirt: Yeah. Okay.

TJ: Let's admit it. There's some times you just want to watch a stupid action movie. It shouldn't be Michael Bay, for anybody listening Michael Bay is the devil, and you should feel embarrassed if you like any of his movies, except for The Rock, which is slightly passable.

But if your favorite movie is any one of the Transformers, do yourself a favor and, um, walk into the ocean. Thank you.

Kirt: Okay. Moving on to the How to Be series. Jane asks: In How to Be a Movie Star Josie references getting stoned and chasing, Oh fuck.

And getting, getting stoned and chasing ducks in a park. Does this make ducks canon? Asking for a friend.

TJ: What? Does this make ducks canon?

Kirt: Yeah.

TJ: Oh, does this have to do with whatever people won't tell me happens in the group that that word is banned. You are not going to get me in trouble with Sita. Do not because she is a delightful person that I am terrified of.

So no, I will not be answering that question and shame on you for even trying to make me do that.

Kirt: Yes. We did explore that in the podcast about Klunespeak. Episode two.

TJ: I just, I don't even, I don't even want to know.

Kirt: If. It's there, it's.

TJ: I don't even want to know because I saw how, how Mia and Sita and all the other admins were like, we're banning this word, and any time that word is. Now anytime that, cause they made me a mod of my own group, who would've thought, but anytime somebody writes the word duck, I get an alert on my phone that says, "Hey. Somebody is using this word in your group, you need to look at this." And I'm like, what the fuck is going on? What did you sickos do?

Kirt: Uh, moving on. Krista. Krista asks: Did you laugh maniacally when you decided to end How to Be a Normal Person and How to Be a Movie Star on cliffhangers?

TJ: Uh, yes, uh, especially the sequel, because I knew everybody was going to be wanting to know what that meant and what, I know the answer. I know what the We Three Queens are, but, um, and as I've said previously, I will let people know on the 50th anniversary of How to Be a Normal Person.

But yes, I did. And, um, I knew right away, I absolutely knew that, um, when I started How to Be a Movie Star it was going to end pretty much kind of the same way.

Kirt: Can you put it in your will just in case you bite it before then?

TJ: No.

Kirt: Okay.

TJ: Remember when we used to do time capsules, like when we were kids at schools? And you put stuff in a time capsule? Maybe I'll do that.

Kirt: Okay.

TJ: And then, then everybody can dig it up. Cause 50th anniversary. I'm going to be long dead by then.

Kirt: I mean, no, I don't think so. You shouldn't be.

Not with

TJ: I'll be in my eighties.

Kirt: Yeah. People live into their nineties. People live to be like a hundred and something.

TJ: But once all of this, my face and my body, start to like slough off. Like I'm that guy in Indiana Jones with his face melting at when he's the Ark of the Covenant and it just all like starts melting down. Then, um. I'll probably just deal with it then.

Kirt: Okay. But that's, that's, that's what plastic surgery is for. Famous authors.

TJ: I'm scared of needles, so I can't do stuff like that.

Kirt: They put you to sleep, get over it.

TJ: How did this devolve into you telling me to get plastic surgery? That's so rude.

Kirt: I don't know.

It's a Friday morning. It's been a long week.

TJ: This is going so well.

Kirt: This is going great. Shut up. It's going great.

TJ: Let's see how many times I could say, you're fired during this episode.

Kirt: Oh, from this gig, the one I get, the one I don't get paid for?

TJ: Right, exactly.

Kirt: Um, okay, last question for the How to Be series. Stephanie asks: Would you ever write a book from Casey's point of view?

TJ: No. I'm done with that series.

Um, I like, like people who've been wanting me to do a Xander and Serge, but I just, I mean, the only reason I did the sequel, even though for years I said I never would, is because I wanted to write a demisexual character, and I hadn't even planned on going back to that universe until I realized, hell, I already had a demi character on saying "I'm demi" on screen or on page.

And I, um, just said, what the fuck. I might as well just do it cause I love, I love, I love that world so, so much, but I just don't see the need to do any more with it. It, it, I said what I needed to say in those books, and I think I've been very fortunate in that a lot of people seem to enjoy them as much as I do.

So I think I'm good to let things lay at this point. I'm, I'm kind of getting to the point now where I'm you know, in the past few years I've closed off a lot of series. I've ended a, I've ended a lot of series, and it's not because I'm getting bored with what I'm doing, but I'm, I'm getting ready to look ahead as to what's next and what I want to do next.

And with, with. You know, I was about to say I want to get away from writing series, but then I just realized in two months I'm launching another trilogy. And after that, I plan on doing more wolf stuff. So, uh.

Kirt: And at least a fifth book in the Verania series.

TJ: Oh, God! This is so dumb.

Kirt: So.

TJ: So, I'm a liar and a fat mouth, but whatever

Kirt: Because your dumb brain.

TJ: I don't want to do anymore.

I don't want to do anymore How to Be books cause I, I just, I think those two books are good as they are. I don't think there needs to be any more.

Kirt: Um. We did get a question about Olive Juice from Thea, it starts with a lot of just gushing about how great you are, which I'm going to skip over. What made you decide to focus on the plight of missing black girls and women that are generally ignored by the media?

TJ: It comes with the idea. Look, I'm a cis white dude, so I go through life with a privilege that I sometimes don't understand or don't even realize, and it kind of goes to, let's, let's use Cerulean, the House in the Cerulean Sea, for example. I, the, the genesis of that book. I had the idea in my head about what I wanted to do with, with magical children and discrimination and whatnot.

So it was I, but I couldn't quite figure out how I wanted that to all go together. So I started to research orphanages in the 19th and the 20th centuries, which led me to. The Sixties Scoop, which was the practice in Canada for when the government in the fifties through the 1980s took indigenous children from their homes and placed them into government sanctioned facilities to want to foster them out to white middle class families, uh, all over the world.

And I'd never heard about that. Granted, Canada is not my country, but you think that such a life altering, changing event would be something that we'd all know. And of course, the indigenous people of Canada know all about it, but me with my racial blinders on, I just never knew about something like that.

And the same thing happened with the, with me wanting to write about Olive Juice, because I knew I was going to be writing a story, again spoilers, about a woman that goes missing. And I was looking up statistics on missing women and I came across the fact that that there is the well known thing of missing white woman syndrome where.

You know, white, middle to upper class women who go missing get the majority of media, whereas the, the epidemic of, of missing people of color gets nowhere near as much as the

attention. I mean, you go through a supermarket and you'll look at people magazine, you'll see a pretty smiling white, blonde girl who's missing.

And I don't want people to think that those people should get any less attention because they don't. It's, it's still someone's missing loved one. It's still someone who has a mother, a father, sister, brother, friends, a partner, whatever who is gone missing. And that is still something that needs to be to be discussed.

Kirt: That's such a garbage reaction to any time somebody saying, we want equal rights for people of color.

TJ: Right, exactly.

Kirt: Like, no, we don't want to take it away from somebody else. We want to elevate somebody else up to the same level.

TJ: Right, exactly. It's it. You're exactly right. It's not about taking away. It's about giving other people the same courtesy and the same, the same attention because frankly, that's not what happens at all. And it's not just our country, it's the world over. I mean, there, there's the missing and murdered indigenous women of Canada.

There's the Highway of Tears in Canada where many, many indigenous women have either been murdered and their murders remain unsolved, or they've disappeared and their disappearance has remained unsolved.

And so when I was starting to write about, um, or when I was getting ready to do Olive Juice, the fact that I was not, I had never heard of missing white woman syndrome before. And it's one of those things, again, you have racial blinders on cause you don't think about that. But when you actually hear it and it's in front of you, you're thinking, of course.

Of course that's the way it is. Of course that's the way it is. And it sucks. And so when I wrote that book or that, that novella, it came from a place of me wanting to tell this specific story, but at the same time, I have to be careful because it's going to, it could, if I'm not careful, it could read like, "Oh, this white guy just found out about something that many other people know and look, now he's trying to be a white savior coming in" and, and that's not what I had in, in, at all in mind with that.

Which is why when I did do the research for that book I went to, uh, support groups with, with permission to, to support groups for missing people. And, um, but the, the biggest and most devastating help for that book was when I was put in touch with a, a woman, a black woman whose daughter had disappeared, uh, back in the nineties, I believe.

And I was able to hear from her directly about what that did to her and what that was like as being a person of color dealing with white police who really didn't give her the time of day. And eventually that case was solved her, her, her daughter's body ended up being found and the man who went, the man responsible went to jail where he died of illness a few years later.

So she got justice in the end. But. I mean, you can't, you can't ever give someone like that closure. You can't. And, and they, they, if they fight it, it has to be on their own. And I will never, ever forget her or her daughter or, uh, the story that I was able to tell with that book because I just, it felt like the right thing to do and it felt like the right thing that I should be doing.

But I did that knowing that I have a privilege to tell that type of story and an audience to hear that type of story, which is why it, that book took me a week and a half to write that novella. It took me a week and a half to write, but I maybe did four or five months of research leading up to that and it would not have been any good at all had I not done that.

That's something that I think a lot of people don't understand, is that when you're writing about something like that, if you have never had that happen to you, you can never understand what that does to you. Even even, no matter how much research you did, I can say, I can appreciate what those families have gone through, but me, myself, I've never had that happen to anyone I know and love, so I can never understand what it must feel like.

And then again, coming with the fact that I'm a white dude, I can never understand what it means to be a person of color going through something like that where you see white girls being splashed all over the media when they're, when they're, when they go missing. But you can't get even five seconds of airtime for your own missing loved one that I can't imagine that kind of pain and outrage that must cause.

Kirt: Do you know, did that woman ever read your book?

TJ: I sent it to her and I, um, uh, I gave, I gifted her a copy, but she didn't want to read it. And I totally, totally don't blame her in the slightest at all. I said, it's there if you want to see it. It's all thanks to you that I was able to tell the story. But she, um, she said that she was moving on to a place of peace.

And I remember the last conversation cause I talked with her over a period of a few weeks, um, and through email, through phone, through text. And the last, the last, and I have still have it saved on my phone. The last conversation I had with her, um, was after I'd finished the book. And she told me her last text to me was, "thank you for telling the story and now I'm going to go walk my dogs".

And that was a good ending for, as good an ending as I could have hoped for her for her. So.

Kirt: Uh, Thea in her question also just wanted to shout out All the King's Men duet by Kennedy Ryan, uh, where she gives a voice to all the missing indigenous girls and women, so.

TJ: And if you want more information on what happens with, with missing and murdered indigenous women, there's a podcast called Missing and Murdered, um, that that's done by, uh, the CBC broadcasting and the host is Connie Walker, I believe that's her name. And she is an indigenous woman, and her reporting is top notch. Absolutely top notch.

There's two seasons and the second season. The first season, obviously too, is very important. But the second season has to do with, um, the Sixties Scoop and a woman being

taken from her home, a child being taken from her home and the journey of the family to find out what happened. And it's devastating, but Oh, so important.

So please listen to that.

Kirt: Yeah. As usual, Olive Juice has been a barrel of laughs.

TJ: Yes.

Kirt: Let's move on to the Tales from Verania, shall we?

TJ: Hooray.

Kirt: Therese asks: Was a Morgan Randall's apprentice when he locked Myrin in the dark realm?

TJ: Yes.

Kirt: Will asks: Do you think one day you'd consider doing a large hardcover anthology of the Tales from Verania series?

TJ: No, because these, since these are now self-published, since I was took the rights back from the publisher whose name I can't mention. Um, I self-publish and people don't, I get this question a lot about various books. People don't understand how extraordinarily expensive that would be. Like I would not see a profit off of that and no matter, even if I sold a shit ton of them, I would not see a profit off that.

And it just, it's not. It doesn't financially make sense, especially since, um, especially for a book. I mean, Lightning Struck Heart is what, 2015? I don't, I don't need, I don't need to do that. I think the covers and the paperback versions that have, they are now look very nice. So I'm hoping people will just use those.

Kirt: When it becomes a hit HBO series, let somebody else do that. Let somebody else pay for it.

TJ: Right. Exactly.

Kirt: Now, uh, Shira has a couple of questions about Tales from Verania. Sam gathered all the dragons and learned to enhance his own powers through them. Why was this not used in any sort of way in the final boss battle against Myrin.

TJ: Because I wanted Sam to be able to stand on his own. I wanted Sam to too. He had the strength of the dragons in him. That's why he disappeared for the, close to a year, what he did. He was able to learn from all of them, and though they played a part in the final battle, I needed Sam to to really stand on his own and make a decision about whether or not he would use all this power for good and, or not.

And there is a part in that battle with Myrin where Sam almost basically commits genocide and kills every single wants to kill every single dark wizard there in the castle. And originally in the first draft of that last book he did that he killed every single dark wizard, and then beta

readers and editors was like, "This is a little dark even for, you know, even for you, I don't, I don't know. Would Sam really do this?"

I was like, well, hell yeah, he would. These people have screwed up his life. Let's kill them all. And then I was like, nah, he wouldn't do that. So I changed it to the ending that it has now.

But I will say this, Sam, there are repercussions from what Sam did there. And those come out to play, come to tr, he has to come to terms with what's inside of him. And he does that through his friendship with Justin in the next book. And I am very, the main relationship is obviously between Justin and the man whose name I will not mention right now.

But, um, the, the biggest secondary relationship is going to be between Justin and Sam. And what the repercussions of what Sam did were and are, and if Sam is actually doing okay for what he had to do.

Kirt: Shira also asked: Will you ever write a prequel about Myrin and Randall?

TJ: I will not. This is the same reason why I won't ever do a prequel.

Uh, okay. Let me figure out how to phrase this. It's why I won't do a Thomas, Young Thomas and Elizabeth in that pack with Abel and all that, because those end in tragedy. And I don't want to write a series that ends in tragedy and tragic things can happen, but we all know what would happen to Thomas. We know where he ends up.

And, um, the same would happen with, with Myrin and Morgan and Randall, you know, where they end up. A lot of their story was told over the last three books of that series, and I just don't want to go write a prequel with them. Where I know how it's going to end badly. I just don't want to do that. So, um, no, I don't want to do that.

Kirt: Susan asks about *The Bones Beneath My Skin*, that she's, she's done a lot of research on this and realized that you never mention any days of the week and she wondered if that was intentional and why.

TJ: I have no idea. I don't mention any days of the week in the entirety of *The Bones Beneath My Skin*? Huh. I don't know. I can't tell you why.

Kirt: So clearly it wasn't intentional.

TJ: Right. It was not. I don't know if that would have added anything if I'm thinking about it, but you know, this happened on a Tuesday. This happened on a Wednesday. I think that, that the time of that book is pretty clear. So I don't know that I would have needed to do that.

Kirt: Yeah. Uh, we had a couple of questions about *House in the Cerulean Sea*, um. From Richard: Of all the possible titles that could have been emblematic of the story and spirit of the book, how did you guys come to *The House in the Cerulean Sea*?

TJ: That wasn't the original title of the book. And I actually fought against that title of the book, um. That the original title of the book was from Linus', uh, mousepad "don't you wish

you were here?" And I loved that because I had this idea in my head of the cover looking like a postcard and with the, with the house in the cerulean sea in the background and whatnot. And, but Tor said that that wasn't, um, fantasy enough. And that they didn't want to ask a question on a cover, which I get that they make sense in a certain way.

Um, so they went through the book and we all went through and they found the line, um, uh, "the house in the cerulean sea", which is one of the very last lines uttered in the book. And, um, they said, "what about this?" And I said, "sure, why the hell not?" You know, I was at that point, I was like, I don't know if I can say no to you guys because you've given me a lot of money to do this and I don't know my rights.

So, um. I was, I'm totally fine. I liked the, I like the title because I think that it adds to the cover as well. Um, how that ended up, but let's take that one step further with the, my next book from them that comes out in March of next year, *Under the Whispering Door*. Um, that wasn't the original title.

The original title of that book was *The Tremendous Death of Wallace Price*, and I loved that title. I thought that was very cool and I was very happy with it. And then Tor was like "it's not fantasy enough". And I said, "what? What do you mean?" I was actually kind of upset that they wanted to change that one.

And they came up with "*Under the Whispering Door*" and I did not like it. And I told them that. And then they said, well, sit on it for a little bit and we'll see if we can come up with anything else. And so I did sit on it for a little bit and it grew on me because I know things about the story that that title hints at that make sense for it.

I mean, cause you have the idea of, you know, you're not standing at the whispering door, you're standing under the whispering door, which is a major plot point for what goes on in this book. So I was totally fine with that. However, my third book with them that I've already written, *In the Lives of Puppets*, I told them I will fight tooth and nail to keep that title because it's a direct quote from Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio*.

And I, that book, which the book is used as inspiration, and so I want to keep that title. So flash forward like a year and year and a half from now, it's titled something different and I'll be on this podcast going, "yeah, I totally wanted to change it to. It sounds great."

Kirt: "After I sat on it for a little while, I really started to like that new title."

TJ: I thought about it and I realized that the people who pay me are right.

Kirt: Um. Thea, uh, asks: Sal in *Cerulean Sea* is my favorite of the kids. Was I imagining the message that young black boys, even if they are large in size, are not to be feared as they are just kids like anyone else?

TJ: Correct. Because you have, I mean, hell, all you need to do is turn on the news now to see, to see black men, young black men being reported for just existing. The police being called on them for just being alive.

And I was very conscious of that fact because they are, they are seen as, for some reason, certain people see them as intimidating, and as something to be feared, which was the whole idea of Cerulean Sea to begin with, that these people were discriminated against because they others were scared of them.

And so I wanted, Sal to, to have, uh, that presence. But I wanted to use it against the people that have that prejudice. And which was why he is a big dude. He's a big teenager, but he's so shy and reserved and soft. And then when he gets to read his poem for the first time in front of the class, that shows you just how deep he is.

How much of a, uh, a wonderfully thoughtful and yet still scared man or a boy that he is. And I think that that when I wrote that poem, that was the first time that I realized how, how tremendous of a character he could be and how brave and how amazing he was. He doesn't speak as much as the other kids.

I think, you know, barring the Wyvern Theodore, he has the least amount of lines, but everything that, I tried to make, everything he said seem weighted and profound, not because I was trying to go follow any kind of ridiculous tropes, um, that, that often follow magical, uh, people of color. They, they, they're used like that, but I wanted to make sure that he had a presence about him that could be, that he could be seen without having to say much at all.

I think that's what I'm trying to say. Yes.

Kirt: Yeah. Um. We got a question about the Seafare Chronicles, which I didn't even realize were called that.

TJ: That was the former publisher that we do not discuss needing to put a series title to that, and I hate it, but what can I do?

Kirt: So the Bear, Otter, and the Kid series.

TJ: Yes.

Kirt: Lisa asks: in The Art of Breathing, when Ty is on his way back to school, he stops in Gerard, Pennsylvania. That is her hometown where she grew up. Have you ever been there, or is that just a random town you picked off a map?

TJ: That is a random town that I picked off a map because that is what I sometimes do with, with stories like that.

I always try to find little small towns that I've never heard of before. Like the in, in Heartsong, there's the town of, the town in Kentucky towards the end. In, um, The Bones Beneath My Skin, there's a town that they ended up towards the very end.

And what's so funny is any time I put these little small towns in books it never fails that I hear from someone who goes, "You put my small town in a book". And I say, "Oh, okay shit. Did I make fun of it? Cause if I did, I'm sorry, that's not what I meant to do". But no, I love

being able to like in, in, um, well I think it was in, yeah, The Bones Beneath My Skin they go to Bird in Hand, Pennsylvania.

And there's a town in Pennsylvania called Bird hyphen, or dash, in dash Hand, Pennsylvania, and I just, I find that fascinating. There's, of course, I would know this, there's Wikipedia lists with odd town names. My favorite in which is why I used it in Blasphemy is Truth or Consequences, New Mexico.

I just think that is a, I've actually been there and it is, it is a, a, no offense if anybody's listening to this from Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, I'm sorry. Because that's a very, it's a very. Desert town and I would know that seeing as how I lived in a desert town for 15 years.

Kirt: Um, I grew up in a town called Sheboygan, which is like, that's a fun name. You should use that.

TJ: That is a boy. And I've heard of that one. I like to say that, Sheboygan.

Kirt: Um, we got a couple of questions about Burn that I'm just going to kind of combine into one.

So Mary and Will, I'm combining your questions. Um, so. We know that Burn two will never happen.

TJ: Yes.

Kirt: And you mentioned.

TJ: I still, I get questions about that all the time still, and I'm just like, sorry. It's just I've moved on.

Kirt: Yeah. Uh, but you mentioned that parts were taken for Verania, so with time now passed, what will you tell us about the plot for Burn two just to put it to rest?

TJ: Oh, this is probably gonna piss people off because cause they're going to be like, well, now you have to write it. Um, Seven, the, the love interest in Burn, um, was, how do I put this? Cause it's not, I didn't, I didn't plot it out entirely because I just, it died because of the whole, the handling of that book and, and, and what.

It was essentially going to be going with a multi-verse, kind of a theory. Seven was, there's also a Six and a Five and a Four and a Three and a Two and a One. And there was this whole entire other universes and the, the tree God at the end was basically the crux of all these universes. And he was bored and tired with everything.

So he was just going to destroy absolutely everything. And which is why the, the ending of that book happened at it as it did, and I had this huge whole big plan. It was going to be, you know, like almost like a metaphysical X-Men kind of a thing. But I was, I should not have written that book when I did.

I was not ready to write that size of a book with that many characters. And I. When I got halfway through writing *Burn*, I realized I probably was in over my head a little bit, but I soldiered on as best I could. And look, I know people still want to read more of that and they'd be, but I honestly, if there's a book of mine that I like the least, it's that one.

Because I, I just don't like how it turned out and it's not something that I've had any desire or spark to go back to whatsoever. And I know that that's going to upset a few people, but you know, that's just how I am, and I'm my own harshest critic, I know that, but it's just not, it's not something I'm interested in doing anymore.

And honestly, I think I took what I learned from that. And basically put that into like the *Green Creek* series with a large cast of characters, everybody with their own big distinct personalities. And the idea of this found family coming together like that.

And I kind of, I took elements from what I planned on doing with *Burn* sequels and put those into *Verania* because I wanted to use them still. So it's just one of those things that happens, you know, you, you hope for the best and sometimes it doesn't work out.

And you can either get pissed and, and, and dwell on it, or you can say, "Hey, I didn't do as well as I'd hoped. I've learned from it, and now I'm going to move on and try to do things better."

Kirt: There you go. I, that sounds perfectly reasonable to me.

TJ: Yeah. But it's not perfectly reasonable to the people who paid 6.99 to read a book that ended in a cliffhanger, that'll never be resolved.

I get that and I've apologized for it. I apologize for that many, many times, but at the same time. Get over it. That book came out in 2012.

Kirt: Yeah, it's time, guys. It's time.

TJ: That was my second book and I just released my 25th so you have plenty of other things to read.

Kirt: And thanks to these questions you can now let's, we've put it to rest.

TJ: You know what, write, write what you think would have happened. Write, do your fan fiction. I'm totally fine with that. I'm totally okay with that.

Kirt: Love it. Um, uh, okay. So the rest of the questions are really not about anything specific, so they're just questions.

So Christie writes: Your readers obsess over your books. Do you spend any time thinking about them like we do? Like have you made a choice in a published work storyline wise or character arc wise that you wish you had done differently or would like to see play out more? Or are you able to literally close the book and let it go.

TJ: Well see, we just came off that. *Burn* is a good example of how I wish I could have done things differently, to see it played out differently. Um, *Bear*, *Otter*, and *the Kid*, I wish I had

done a couple of things differently in that just because I. I'm so sick of, and this is why I don't really touch on homophobia anymore because it's so, it's so boring.

Everybody knows homophobia is stupid. And I hate the fact that I decided to make that part of my first book. But you know, I was a different person back then. And, and, um, I, I've never gone back to look at, Into This River I Drown except for, um, when I started writing, uh, Bones Beneath My Skin, knowing that I was going to have one of the characters in that show up in, in Bones.

Um, and I only looked through parts of that just because that book, that book almost killed me to write. It was so, so difficult to write. And so I've never really gone back to that. The only time I ever really go back to books is like, like for example, right now when I, since I just finished Tales from Verania book five.

I had to go because I couldn't remember what color hair Justin had. I couldn't remember. Um, uh, if I had done certain things for specific characters that I'm trying to be vague about, so I have to go back and look through certain parts. But it's like, it's like when I have, when I hear my books, like for you, when you read my books, when you're doing the narration, I can listen to parts of it, but I can't listen to the whole thing because it weirds me out just because.

Just because I don't feel comfortable hearing somebody read my own words to me. Like I would love to be able to listen to all of Green Creek. I would love to be able to listen to Michael doing the Tales from Verania. I just can't. I absolutely can't. And the one of the worst thing that's ever happened to me was I was clicking through, I don't remember which book it was.

No, I take that back. It was the third book that the, uh, what was it. The Consumption of Magic, where I got pissed off at people who said my books needed more sex and wrote that 10,000 word sex scene in that book. So I was clicking through the assets that the former publisher had sent to me, and I was like, okay, let's just see what Michael did here.

And I clicked on and it was right in the middle of that, that sex scene, and I'm gross for writing what I wrote in that. I'm fucking gross. And I was, like I could feel the blood draining from my face and like my hand was shaking as I was trying to turn it off. And I, but I couldn't find the right button to turn it off.

And Michael was just in my ear going, yeah, and they're fucking so hard. I was like, why did I do this? So.

Kirt: Oh, TJ, that seems so tame compared to some of what I've read.

TJ: I know. It absolutely is. But stuff like that just really weirds me out. But I, I, the only reason I go back to former books is if I, um, need to remember something that I'd done before for another book in a series or another book set in the same universe, because you have to understand by the time you get the book in your hands, let's use Cerulean for an example.

By the time you get, you got Cerulean in your hands. I have obviously written that book, then written subsequent drafts of the book and then send it to my beta readers who sent it back to me, who then I had to go read it again and again. Then I send it into the publisher and then they'll send me a the first round edits and I will have to read through it like three or four times, and then I send it back and then they sent it back with the next edits.

I read through it again and then they send it to like sensitivity readers or proofreaders, I have to read through it again. I am so sick of my own story by the time the book comes out that I never want to read it again. So it, it just happens, but it's, it's doesn't last very long. It's a period where, where finally I get to start hearing what people think, and that's when I'm like, okay, good.

I, you know, I'm happy with it. And then I get to talk about the books, which is great, but there is a, there is a period of a few months where, right when the edits finish, that I never want to touch that story again, ever. I'd never want to hear about it again. I don't care if it's good. I don't care if it sucks, never send it to me again.

Kirt: I get that. I don't like hearing the stuff I do either.

But that's why

TJ: Like how many times do you listen to, to like the scenes that you do, cause you have to go back and listen to them, right.

Kirt: Not anymore. Now I pay somebody else to do it.

TJ: Oh yay.

Kirt: Yeah.

TJ: You get, you get, you're so involved in the story and you know all the ins and outs and the intricacies that you just get you get sick of it, and if you had to keep on going, probably you'd change the ending where everybody just drives off a cliff.

Kirt: Well, and I don't get to change the ending, but I know like every choice I make, I'd be like, Oh, I could do that differently, or I could do that better. Maybe

emphasize

TJ: a little bit

Kirt: What was that?

TJ: Like, wait, let me ask you this.

When you did Heartsong, were there things that you'd wish you had changed that you're done in Wolfsong.

Kirt: Oh God, yeah. If I, if that book wasn't 18 hours long, I would have rerecorded it by now.

TJ: Yeah.

Kirt: Just because it is still the most popular thing I've ever done, and that's mortifying.

TJ: Yeah, well, obviously it's the most popular thing you've ever done for a reason, cause it's very, very good.

But you see, you understand like how I am, like I'm like, this sucks. I don't want to get this anymore. I totally get that. Yeah.

Kirt: In fact, producers of this podcast have wanted to use more quotes from that book like in the podcast, and I keep cutting them cause I'm like, Nope, I don't like the way it sounds.

TJ: Yeah. No, you get it. And I think, I think probably a lot of people listening even with that explanation, still won't understand that and that's okay. You don't have to understand that, but just know that artists get sick of their art. It just happens. Not always, and it doesn't usually last forever, but it gets to the point where we get tired of ourselves and the story we're trying to tell.

Kirt: Yeah. Yeah. Um, Jane asks: With your signing to Tor, it seems like a lot of your writing goals have been met. What goals have you set now for your writing and what do you still want to see happen?

TJ: Here's the thing. Yeah, that's a big, that's a big deal. And it's awesome and amazing, and it's the time of my life and I'm so thankful for where I am, but my goal is to, I'm a good writer.

I'm good. I can do that. I wouldn't be where I am if I wasn't good, but I want to get better with everything that I do. I want to get better. Even if it's being stupid in a, like a Tales from Verania book or writing something extraordinarily serious. I want to be a better writer. So I am always trying to challenge myself in new ways to to.

Figure out different ways to tell the story, which is why I am all over the place when it comes to what I write, in what genres I write, and contemporary, science fiction, fantasy, happy stories, sad stories, stories that feel like your intestines are being ripped out through your butthole. All of that kind of stuff.

I want to do it because I want to try. As many things as possible in the goal of one, not being bored with what I'm writing and two, to become a better writer. Even if you took away the name off of my books and the titles and cut and you just gave a, gave somebody a story, I'd like to think that people can pick out.

Yeah. This, this is the bones of a TJ Klune book. You can tell certain things that are in here, this, this makes this a TJ Klune book, but at the same time. If you were to tell somebody, give somebody, say The Lightning Struck Heart or Tell Me it's Real, and then also give them Murmuration or Olive Juice, those are completely on opposite ends of the spectrum and I do that because I have to, if I were to write the same thing over and over, God bless the authors that can do that, stick in the same genre, same subgenre, and write the same thing over and over just a little bit differently.

Then more power to them. I would get bored out of my frickin skull and everybody would be able to tell that I wasn't liking what I was writing. Cause if you don't like what you're writing, then it's not going to be any good. But you can't be so in love with your writing that you think that it can't be changed because that's the whole point of, of writing is that you grow and that's what I want to do.

I want to continue to grow. I don't ever, ever have the goal in mind of thinking I'll be the greatest writer the world has ever seen cause that's not what I want and one that's implausible and two, it's unattainable. It's not something that I want. I just want to become a better writer.

Kirt: Allie had some very nice things to say about you on that front.

TJ: I haven't listened to that part, the episode of the podcast yet cause I was super worried.

Kirt: I'll be honest, I don't know that that portion made it into the episode. She, she and I talked a lot about your humor and so that, that was what that episode was about. And so that's what made it in. But just in, in our conversation, she made a point of saying that like, you're great to work with and that the fact that you're good at what you do but you want to get better is not true of all people.

TJ: She is. She has been a, a boon to my writing career. I have never ever had a better editor than I have in her because one, not only does she get my sense of humor, which, you know, humor is subjective, but my sense of humor can be a little bit more subjective than most, but she gets that.

Kirt: She keeps saying quirky.

TJ: Yes. That is, that is, that is a nice way of

Kirt: That is

TJ: what I'm saying.

Kirt: your official marketing word.

TJ: Yes.

Kirt: Quirky.

TJ: I know, and now Tor is using that. Right. Okay. But it's, um, she, she understands what I'm trying to do and not just what I've done in the past, but what I'm trying to do in the future, and I'm very lucky to have someone like that on my side.

Kirt: Uh, Susan asks: You write children so well. What is your experience with kids that you're able to write their behaviors and inquisitive, inquisitive nature so well?

TJ: I do not like children. I am not a, a fan of children and no offense to pretty much anybody in the world because I just, I'm not big on kids.

It's just, you know, not something, you know, some people are drawn to Parenthood. I am not. But I am fascinated by the fact that they are tiny humans. They are tiny, tiny humans with brains that are growing every single day. And the wonder that they have about the world, you know. Many children, you know, unfortunately, there's going to be kids that are, that are in terrible situations, but many children haven't learned cynicism.

And I love, I love wonder. I love innocence. And you know, they don't know yet. At least I hope they don't know yet that the world has teeth and it'll bite you when you least expect it. And so I enjoy writing them and, um, including them whether they be. Just normal, regular kid or if they be precocious, whatever.

It's totally cool. But I'm very careful with with how many children I include in books and stuff like that, because I know when I read books sometimes I'm like, ah, there's kids in this? Jesus Christ. But then of course, I go and write *The House in the Cerulean Sea*, which has like six children, all with different personalities.

And it's, um, I don't know. It's, I'm very, it's, it's almost an oxymoron with my belief about children and how am I write them. So it's just, I'm not a, I'm not a child person, but I think that they add, at least the ones that I've included in mine, I hope they add something to the story.

Kirt: Well, and you were one.

TJ: I was one, I was a very loud, very effete, very obnoxious child. And, um, and it's funny that I'm talking like this when I have my young adult debut coming out in like two months where it's all about teenagers. And I don't know, I just, um, I guess I just don't make sense sometimes even to myself.

Kirt: Yeah. Um, I think we've answered this before, but I just, I want to acknowledge that Einat and Megan both submitted questions just about like what inspires you to write.

And so we've talked about that in, in that you want to write a lot of different things and sometimes it's a specific issue that inspires you. Is there anything you haven't said about your inspiration that you would want to share.

TJ: I think that that is probably a question that the writers get the most. Where, where'd you get the inspiration from this story? Or what inspires you to write? And, you know, for me at least, it's, it's just the everyday, you know, cause there's, there's, there's some, there's something to me, there's something magical in the mundane.

And you know, I liked the idea of, of an every man kind of character being called upon to do something extraordinary. And, um, I don't know. I guess I just look around me at the wider world and wish for better things. So I write what I hope those better things will be.

Kirt: That's great. Um, I'm going to kind of combine a couple of questions from Chelsea here cause they all kind of revolve around the change that you've had from moving from a independent publisher to an independent publishing yourself and now with a larger

publisher, uh, how is that different when the timeline has been stretched out pretty significantly? And

TJ: It's more wonderful.

Kirt: And so many people now get like advanced reader copies of the books. So there's people who know more, uh, you know, how is that different from independent publishing, and do you like it?

TJ: I love it so much more. Yes, the wait can be, can be terrible because, let's put it this way, when you finish a book chances are if we're in traditional publishing, that book won't get into a reader's hands for sale for about two years. And I'm totally okay with that because with, with my former publisher who, once again, I cannot name her legal reasons, they are, um, Bear, Otter, and the Kid, I sent it to them in March, it came out in August.

And that timeline is bonkers. That is bonkers, but that's how they did it. And it wasn't towards until the very end where they decided to to push books out a year or more to actually fall in line with how most publishers should work and that extra time can only be made to make the book better, whether it be through editing, whether it be through promotion, whether it be through any, any little detail that that readers might not think of.

But I, I can never ever go back to the way it used to be. Like, for example, with with the Tales from Verania book, I just finished. I, if I wanted to, I could turn around tomorrow and sit down and start rewriting the next draft, and then I could send it to my beta readers and then I could send it to the editor, and I could have that book out by November.

But I don't want to because I want to give it time to actually do what needs to be done to make it better, which is why that book is not going to come out until the end of 2021 and it'll give me enough time to be able to a, take a break from it, because I've just spent the last five months writing this book and I'm too close to it now.

So if I take a break from it and come back to it, say in a month or two months, I'll be able to see everything that's not good. And I will be able to hopefully fix that and then have my beta readers tell me even more that's not good and fix that and then have my editor tell me what's not good and fix that and it, um, the more time you have with a story, even if you start to hate it by the end, like I often do, the better because there's, it only gives it more time to grow and become the story you want it to be.

First drafts are never good. Never, and anybody that tells you otherwise is either a liar or fooling themselves. This first draft is like 180,000 words and it's a mess. It is an absolute mess. There's plot lines that I've started, plot threads that I've never followed up on stuff that I'm going to take out, extra crap that doesn't even need to be in there, cameos that have no place in the story, but I wanted to put them in there just because I thought, Oh, readers would like to see this character again, but it's pointless. They don't add anything to stories. I'm just going to go back and take it out.

And that's just first drafts are meant to be, to get from point A to point B, the beginning, the middle, and then the end. Once you get there, you can actually go back and actually start telling the story that you want to tell.

Kirt: Um, Paula asks: If you were to recommend a scifi or fantasy book to someone, what would it be?

TJ: Boy's Life by Robert McCammon. It's one of my favorite books of all time. It's more magical realism than say, scifi fantasy direct, but it is one of my favorite books of all time, and it's one of the few books that I've read that's an adult that's geared towards adult, but the, the protagonist is a child and it is, it is.

God, that book, I love it to bits and it follows a kid in a small town who's trying to solve a mystery of a murder and, and all this stuff that happens around him in this town. And it's just, it's delightful. And I recommend that everybody read it.

Kirt: Um, Mia asks, I wonder who Mia is.

TJ: Yeah.

Kirt: I'm actually interested in how TJ comes up with the names for his characters and places.

TJ: Huh. Well, sometimes I'll know right away what a character is supposed to be named, or a place is going to be called and whatnot. Um. Verania was initially called Arcadia, but then another queer scifi book had just come out that had that same name in it. And plus Arcadia is pretty much ubiquitous for a fantasy location.

So I got rid of that and changed it to Verania and, um, the Verania, because I like saying the word vernacular and I just kind of wanted to do a play on that word. So I've made it Verania. Um, and, but all the other characters, I, sometimes I know their names right away. Sometimes I don't. Like with Prince Justin's book, that I, that I just finished, the love interest, other main character in that book.

Even when he was introduced, I put like XXX cause I didn't know what I was going to call him yet. I had no idea what this, this, him, himbo douche bro's name was going to be. And till I found the right name that is so douche bro himbo perfect that I just put it like that.

It, it's weird like, like I'll get little flashes or sometimes if I'm having huge troubles I'll just go, like, and Google popular names in the, when this person was, with the year this person was born and just go through like lists of like the top 100 names and find names that, um, that I may not have used before. That's one of the things too, when you've read, you've written as many books as I have. You kind of have to be careful if you're naming characters, but cause for fuck sake, how many Roberts have I had in, I've had like three or four that I know of.

And um.

Kirt: But that's believable. There's, Robert's a really common name that's believable.

TJ: But I ha, I have Robert Livingstone, I had Robert in the, um, the Tell Me it's Real series that, that was a love interest for daddy and I had, I think I had a third Robert somewhere, and by the time I realized that, I was like, what the fuck is going on?

I'm never using that name ever again.

Kirt: I don't want to assume anything, but there's Robbie in Green Creek series.

TJ: Yeah. And somebody, somebody said, Oh, I bet that Robbie is, is, is also Robert's son because their names are so similar. I was like, God damn it. Why didn't I think of that? But no. It's, it's

Kirt: It's just a common name.

TJ: It is. It is. And I, I, I hate, I hate the trend in queer romance where people whose names are like Slade and Blaze and, and all these ridiculous names that just have too many Ys or Zs or X's in them. I'm like, people are not named that. Just name your character, Chris, just name your character, Steve or Tom or Tommy, it's fine.

And then of course, I named a character Ox and it's just.

Kirt: Yeah, I was gonna say, I don't know that you have a lot of friends who are having kids right now because they are naming them ridiculous things and even if it's a common name, they want to give it a unique spelling. Sorry I am, I'm straight up making fun of straight people right now.

Sorry, straight people.

TJ: You see the straight white people with their, with their, their baby reveals and it's all

Kirt: With three Hs.

TJ: It's spelled with three Ys.

No, I don't. I don't do that. I'm not a Midwesterner straight white woman.

Kirt: Um, so close though. So close.

TJ: So close. So close.

Kirt: Um, who is your author crush? Leo asks.

TJ: Hmm. Stephen King, probably. Just because I've, I've loved him forever. Even his, even the books I don't like are still books that I'll reread just because I love Stephen King so much.

Um, Patricia Nell Warren. Uh, W.A. Hoffman just because I just finished reading, yet again, her four book Raised by Wolves, queer pirate series. And I went to her website to find out what she's been doing lately. And her website is now defunct. And I'm super sad because she needs to be writing more books and I really, really wish she would.

So on the ever off chance that you're listening to this, Ms. Hoffman, please write more books. And um. Who else? Uh, pre, pre 2000s Dean Koontz. Like, Dean Koontz after 2000 or maybe like 2005, I don't know what happened, man, but he just completely changed how he wrote and it just got awful.

But if you go back and read Intensity, have you ever read that book by Dean Koontz? Intensity? There's, it's basically a woman trying to flee from a man who was trying to murder her. And that's basically the entire book. It has very little dialogue, but it is such a tremendous thriller. And I wish he would go back to doing stuff like that because it's just his latest books have all just been not good for me.

Oh. And never, ever. Everybody needs to read Patricia Nell Warren and I will always sing her praises forever.

Kirt: Yeah. Um. Susan asks: Has TJ ever submitted a unique Wikipedia entry and or edited one?

TJ: I have no comment.

Kirt: Ooh, okay.

TJ: Yes. I will not discuss in my, everybody knows I love Wikipedia. So yes, it's probably fair to say that I have done stuff, but I will not say what articles or to whom. And I will not ever want myself on Wikipedia ever, ever.

Because I know there's too many of you out there that would try to fuck with it.

Screw all of you guys.

Kirt: Um, you mentioned in an Instagram live event that you were enjoying the television series, Black Sails. What is it about the series that you enjoy?

TJ: The fact that it's so queer, it was so positively queer. The main, here's the thing. So I'm just, you know, spoilers for this. So if you haven't seen it yet, skip ahead a little bit.

Um, but you're, you're, there's Captain Flint. It's basically, this is a prequel to the book Treasure Island. And Captain Flint. You spend the first season and a half thinking that his entire revenge thing is because of a woman who, um, who, uh, that he had an affair with and that he had to flee because he had an affair from her powerful husband, but then it, and midway through season two and flips it on the head showing that it wasn't the woman.

He was actually in love with the husband and they were having an affair. And apparently the, I wasn't watching this when it was live, but the fan boys apparently lost their shit. You had these men watching it going, yeah, pirates and all these women are naked and making out with each other. Cause there's a bunch of queer women in this show too.

And yeah, it's super hot when all the women are on top of each other and blah, blah, blah. And then they have a. Two, two, three, four, five second kiss between the two main

characters and they lost their shit. So much so that the actor playing the love interest was told that he was going to have this big, huge arc for the rest of the series.

But they wrote him out of the show and he was in the first five episodes leading up to the reveal of season two and then he didn't appear again until the very last episode. And it was because he know I, none of the creators would say it, but he came out himself and said he knew it was because of the backlash that show received by making Captain Flint the main character queer.

And that fucking pissed me off, but they didn't necessarily, it doesn't negate the fact that that character was still queer. Canonically queer. And I loved that because I loved the W.A. Hoffman series *Raised by Wolves* having to deal with gay pirates. And while the show did run out of steam towards the end, and I still had a good time watching it.

Kirt: Great.

There was a follow up question. Um, also, are you aware that *Black Sails* is executive produced by an American filmmaker known for directing and producing budget high concept action films characterized by fast cutting stylistic visuals and extensive use of special effects, including frequent depictions of explosions by the name of Michael Bay.

TJ: Go fudge yourself, whoever wrote that in, because you can go. Yes, yes, I am aware. And my friend who told me to watch that show knows of my hatred of him. And she said, just fast forward through the credits, the credit sequence is too long, and it takes forever to get to that point. And now in the advent of streaming, I can just click, you know, skip, skip the credits.

So quite by accident, I got to the end of season two. I hadn't gotten to season, I hadn't bought season three yet, so it doesn't skip ahead to the next episode. So I was watching and all of a sudden it said like executive produced by Michael Bay, and I said, there better be a different fucking Michael Bay. I swear to fucking God.

So I went online and Nope, it's fucking Michael Bay. And I texted her, I said, "You son of a bitch. That's why you told me to skip over it". She's like, "Yes, but gay pirates. Yay!" And I said, "Fuck you". But I finished watching it. And Michael Bay did not write it, and he did not direct any episodes, so I'm okay.

Kirt: Yeah. Well, you can fire me one more time because I wrote that question.

TJ: Ah, you son of a bitch.

Kirt: Uh, so cause we're actually, we're out of questions. That was all of them. You did them all.

TJ: Hooray.

Kirt: Nicely done.

TJ: Thank you everybody for sending in questions except for that last one, screw you, Kirt. Um, but I really appreciate it and I'm glad that that everybody submitted those.

Kirt: Me too.

So thank you so much for taking the time. I know this will be one of our most popular episodes. Cause whenever you pop up, people are like, Oh my God, I'll listen to it four times.

TJ: I don't know why, but that's totally cool. Um, but thank you for that. I know I am very, very fortunate in that I get to do what I love most and to have all these people come with me along on the ride.

And I, um, will not forget most of you when I make it big time. Um, I probably will become more emotionally distant, probably even cold. And, um, I, I will, you know, if you see me on the street or for walking by each other, I won't say hi to you, but I will give you a tiny little half smile to let you know that I think I remember your name and then I'll move on and forget.

Kirt: That's all we can really ask, right?

TJ: It's hard out there for a pimp. Wow. That was. That was the whitest thing I could have said right then. Awesome.

Kirt: Just the way you said it was super white.

TJ: Hardcore

Kirt: Right?