

Episode 2 Script

Klunespeak

Kirt: Episode two, which we are calling Klunespeak. (Tj laughter)

Kirt: [00:04:47] were there any words or phrases that have surprised you that they became. Popular?

TJ: [00:04:56] Uh, yes. Let's say for example, truth corn. I didn't know. I didn't, I mean, what the fuck? It's, it's corn that makes you tell the truth. It's the stupidest thing in the world. And yet everybody's like, ha ha ha, this is brilliant, and I'm like, Whoa

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Angela: Um, if you say something is true, it's #truthcorn.

Mia: I use truth corn all the time, and it's just one of those things that, um, obviously it comes from. The Lightning Struck Heart

Skeever: I might've just said truth corn

Skeever: hashtag truth corn

Tanya: truthcorn, truthcorn is always, you know, always comes up.

Kirt: Hashtag truth corn. You say that out loud, I bet you have to answer some questions.

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Theme music

Kirt: This is The Klunatics Podcast. I'm Kirt Graves. After learning how the Klunatics group was created in our last episode, I think it's important that we offer a guide for any new TJ Klune readers who might be joining us. Let's be honest, if you're new, you won't have any idea what we're talking about if we don't give you some vocabulary lessons and a primer on the culture of the Klunatics. I wanted to dive right into exploring what that group has become, so I started by asking this question: 'What are the characteristics of a Klunatic?' Here's Mia, one of the Klunatic admins.

Mia: [00:09:30] it's a very hard question because I don't think there is any one single characteristic that would define a Klunatic

I think for me it is people who believe in found families who are really open to new ideas and concepts,

I don't think you could define a Klunatic. Some of them are crazy. Some of them drive me nuts,

some are such quiet, incredible achievers.

some of the Klunatics have the biggest hearts of anybody I've ever met in my life.

They're funny, they're irreverent, they embrace all sorts of ridiculous ideas and concepts and characters and, and um, ~~they~~ just the, the capacity to love others and to listen. They're just a really special bunch of people.

Michael HTBAMS Epilogue: "We've found a group of like minded people from all walks of life. We support each other. We help each other. There are professionals and blue-collar workers, stay-at-home moms or dads and people with doctorates in quantum physics."

Kirt: That's narrator Michael Lesley reading from TJ Klune's *How to be a Movie Star*. It turns out that everyone I talked to found it very difficult to define a Klunatic.

Skeever: [00:00:04] My name is Jane and I am a proud Klunatic.

Kirt: Jane is a top contributor to the Klunatics Facebook page and she has some expertise in this area that we'll dive into a little later.

Skeever: you and I are sitting here on two different parts of the world, and really the only thing that's brought us together is we've read some of the same books.

Kirt: And so in order to even begin to start to explore Tj's work and fanbase, in order to introduce new Klunatics to this group of weird, wonderful people, I think we have to start with language. I figured out pretty quickly that this group has it's own vernacular and a singular culture that's grown up around it. What happens when a group of people embrace an author's language choices and start using them to communicate with one another?

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Skeever: if I want to describe someone as particularly handsome or beautiful or attractive, I always use dashing and immaculate

Jonny: A lot of the Klunespeak that has, um, filtered in would be phrases like, uh, sweat balls or, um, I always put an S on the, on God's like, Godsdammit. Or why God's, why.

Angela: You know, you don't love something forever, you love it 5eva. Um, if you're in a hug, you're going to hug for seven minutes in an alley cause that's how long a hug should last if you mean it. And if you want it to be a little awkward and uncomfortable.

Angela: you're gonna hear the word "dude" a lot

Michael HTBANP Chap 4: “Dude,” Josy breathed

Lisa: whenever Mia says, dude, I get the giggles inside like so bad.

Lisa: [00:00:57] when I changed my phone, and there were certain words that, you know, Klunatics and other words, that we write a lot in the group and my phone didn't predict them. I was so frustrated. It's like, why can my phone not remember these great words, come on?

Jonny: [00:01:33] anytime I press the letter K sending a text message, it automatically fills in Klunatic. I don't need the L, it's just just the K and that pops up

Tanya: They are all hashtags, packpackpack, Klunatic5eva, Klunaticsrule,

Skeever: I hadn't really got into the habit of hashtagging anything until I read TJ's work and now I hashtag because I find it hilarious.

Michael HTBANP Chap 3: Hashtags were involved of course

Angela: if I type in hashtag "h", it's going to come up hashtag heart boner, and if my new phone doesn't do that fast enough, I'm annoyed.

Elaine: It has probably ruined autocorrect on everybody's phones forever.

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Kirt: And at first, a lot of the language that I saw being used by the Klunatics I wasn't familiar with because I haven't had a chance to get to those books yet. Instead, I know a lot of these words because Klunatics use them all the time.

Jonny: Tyson, my husband actually will often text me code orange banana

Kirt: This is Klunatic and podcast producer Jon Steiger.

Jonny: and I'm always like, what? And then I respond. And it's never, it's never a code orange banana, but he likes to text that one to me. Um, something else that I often,

Kirt: [00:00:42] I don't know what code orange banana means. What is that?

Jonny: [00:00:46] Oh, well, I, I, I think you're gonna have to listen to Why We Fight to get that, Kirt, I don't wanna I don't want to spoil that book for you. But it's sort of an okay. I will, I will. Um, it's sort of an emergency call. It's a non-emergency emergency, sort of, there's a crisis, but it doesn't really involve an emergency. I just need to call and tell you or talk to you about what's going on because it's clearly a code orange banana.

Kirt: [00:01:11] Got it.

Jonny: [00:01:11] Does that make sense?

Kirt: [00:01:12] Yes. And you managed not to spoil any of the plot of the book.

Michael HTBAMS Chapter 3: "So many hidden meanings," Tigress whispered reverently.

Tanya: [00:03:50] Oh—Today is going to be an okay day.

Kirt: This is top Klunatic contributor Tanya Hess, from St. Paul, Minnesota.

Tanya: You know, Gustavo is my man and it's the best advice. You know, it may not be a great day. It's just going to be an okay day and that's all right. It's okay. You go through.

Kirt: [00:04:12] I've always had such a hard time telling if that is a good phrase or a bad phrase.

Tanya: [00:04:20] To me, it's a good phrase.

just saying, you know what? It's okay. It's going to be okay.

I don't want to say you're forced to put on a positive face.

You just kind of feel that way and; it's not going to be the best day every day, but that's okay. And as long as you just start doing what you need to do, that's okay.

Kirt: [00:05:04] I used to have a coworker who. I didn't get along with for a lot of reasons, but she was one of those people who like at the bottom of her email, had make it a great day.

Like she never said, have a good day. It was always like, make it a great day. Like you got to control all the circumstances in your life that made something a positive day or not. It was like, I was like, lady.

Tanya: [00:05:29] No,

Kirt: [00:05:29] I was like, yes, I can control my reactions to things, but I can't stop you from being an idiot and I can't stop other people from making my life hard and I can't stop the snow from falling and I can't make, I can't stop the car from running out of gas or like, there's things that I have no control over so that I, I like that perspective on, today is going to be an okay day, but it not every day it has to be like, today is going to be a great day. It's like, no, today can just be a day.

Yeah.

Stop putting som-

Tanya: [00:06:02] And that's ok.

Kirt: [00:06:02] Stop putting so much pressure on today. Today has a lot to deal with.

Tanya: [00:06:06] Yes, yes, exactly.

Michael HTBAMS Chapter 17: "I told myself I was going to have an okay day. And I did."

Michael HTBAMS Chapter 17: "Be good to each other and we'll all have okay days."*

Kirt: As I talked to people for this episode, something that I heard over and over again was that this language taken from Tj's work has become a kind of emotional shorthand that helps Klunatics make connections with one another:

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Skeever: If we just look at what the shared language in the group is, then I think the shared language is TJ's language. Really. It's his turn of phrase, it's his idiom, it's those inside jokes that we all use as a bit of a short hand to make connections with each other.

And that's what I think is interesting about watching the group dynamics is we do, we build that shared language that we are lifting from TJ's narratives.

Tanya: I think I've seen that, like the shortcut language change. And you know, people know what, what it means when you say hashtag truthcorn, people know. What packpackpack means. That's kind of evolved, which has been fun, you know, or you can, you know, post a meme about seagulls and people know what that means

Elaine: Group members are constantly saying things like, Oh, mothercracker or, oh sweat balls, that sort of thing. It's just become part of the way they communicate, the way they speak in everyday life, and it's quite awesome.

Mia: It is the culture of people who love books and who love words, and; it's a particular love of the type of writing and language that TJ uses and the culture around those words has created these lexicons and these, this Klunatic speak

Mia: So Klunatic culture comes down to being a culture of people who love the same writer, who love the art of words and who have taken on, some of these words as, their everyday speak and it's changed language for people.

Angela: [00:00:00] There are certain phrases that Klunatics have picked up and embraced wholeheartedly that we see over and over. And it's become kind of a, a shorthand for us and emotional shorthand, um, that we see across the Klunatics group and also in friend groups that have grown out of the Klunatics.

Mia: [00:07:33] And the thing is though, is we don't even consciously think about what we, we're saying anymore. It's become so part of our own culture and our own language that we don't recognize it unless somebody goes, huh, what are you talking about?

But when you spend so much time talking to other Klunatics, they're not picking up that stuff. So they're just like, Oh yeah, I understand what this is:

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Michael HTBAMS Chapter 3: “We all know why you’re here. You’re here, in this place of literature and knowledge, to bear witness to the man. The myth. The legend. He who writes stories that fuel the imagination.

Kirt: When I interviewed Tj for this episode, he was working on writing the fifth book of the Verania series and gearing up to promote the release of *The House in the Cerulean Sea* for Tor, and one of the first things that I asked him about was whether he inserts specific words knowingly during his writing process. Is it his genius brain using language as a marketing tool to make every spoken interaction with a Klunatic ALSO an opportunity to sell a book?

TJ: [00:00:31] No, I don't think any of that.

Kirt: Well, OK.

TJ: I don't, I don't think about any of that at all because if I did, I would, I would get too distracted with myself trying to be way more clever than I actually am. And that's, that's not something that I can do. If, if, when I'm writing, I'm solely focused on writing. I'm not thinking about how that might play into somebody's vernacular.

I am solely focused on what I'm writing. I'm not necessarily thinking about, um, an outside perspective or what these words could, could become in part of, of a culture. It's, it's not something that I considered because it's, it's already difficult enough as it is to, for me to be completely entrenched in a book.

And I need to have that focus on there because my mind. Runs at a billion miles per hour. And so if I'm trying to take all that other stuff into consideration, I'll never get anything done. So I am solely focused on my work and nothing more. I don't really necessarily think about what somebody is going to think about a specific thing.

Kirt: [00:01:31] Um, so there are some phrases that you use regularly in your work. So is that unintentional as well?

TJ: [00:01:38] No. I like, okay. That it really depends upon what I'm writing. For, for a series, like say for example, the Green Creek series, there is a connective tissue in the language in all four of those books, and that is intentional because I wanted to show how these, this group of people are so connected.

In their, their families and in their lives and in their minds that, that they will start to what friend groups do you talk like each other? You mimic each other and, and you say some of the same things. There are certain words or phrases that mean something different to your particular group than it might mean to somebody else.

And I, I wanted that to just show. Aside from the closeness of the family, just, it obviously will take on a little bit of a, of a mystical edge to it too, just given the nature of the books. But the, the, the important

point for me is that it has a connective tissue because although the safer they get, again, the Green Creek series, these books are, are narrated by different characters for each book, but they're all part of the same family.

And I would think that they would all end up at some point, at least start to sound like each other at least a little bit while still maintaining their own personalities.

Kirt: [00:02:55] So within a world, there is some intentional use of shared language.

TJ: [00:02:59] Yes.

Kirt: But producers Angela and Mia say that it's more than that.

Angela: [00:03:32] I think some of them are insular to the series, but there are . I don't want to say there are similarities in characters because that's not correct. It's more like. There are specific types of characters who give us specific kinds of language.

Kirt: [00:03:58] Expand upon that.

Angela: [00:03:59] Sure. So in the Bear, Otter, and the Kid series, we have Bear and Bear is a little dramatic and a little over the top, and he talks a lot and he's gonna say some ridiculous stuff. And then we can move to, um, the obvious choice, we can move to Sam in the Verania series, he's going to be dramatic. He's going to be over the top. He's going to say some ridiculous stuff. We're going to look at Paul and same thing. And these characters, vastly different characters, but they all have that common trait that we see, and so we'll see that kind of high octane behavior. From those three. And they might not say the same things, but it said in the same spirit,

Kirt: [00:04:46] the language is heightened.

Angela: [00:04:47] It's heightened

Kirt: [00:04:48] speaks like I'm hearing a lot of speaking in hyperbole.

Angela: [00:04:51] Right, right. Um, so even though this specific phrase may be for this specific series or character, it all starts to feel universal because even though some of these worlds don't touch. In thematically, they touch emotionally, they touch.

Mia: [00:04:10] there are phrases that he uses all the time, you know, motes of dust, which first appeared in Wolfson, actually appears in pretty much every book he's written since then. And it's obviously become something, you know, that visual, the idea of, dust in the sunlight or dust in the moonlight, it's become; that thing that he uses all the time.

I think that's the secret sometimes to his language. And what he does is he does have certain phrases or certain ways of, putting things that have become part of, Klune speak that we don't even think about.

Kirt: [00:12:46] can you talk a little bit about the recurrence of colors and stars across the Kluniverse?

Mia: [00:13:01] Yes. All the stars, all the colors. I think anybody who's read, even one book of TJ's will pick up that he has favorite colors or favorite phrases, favourite ideas that he goes back and reflects upon in books in each book and with the stars.

You know, obviously the stars are really prevalent in the Tales of Verania because we had the star dragon. And last night I was, as I was walking home from the gig that I was at, I was looking up at the stars. And you know, they're always there, stars are a constant in our life.

And I think, in TJ's books, the stars are used as that constant. They're mentioned, in, Into this River, obviously they're used in Wolfsong and, the Green Creek series. It's, something that's really constant; the wishing upon the stars or the looking at the stars while you're thinking.

And then we can move on to colors. Green is obviously a very dominant color in TJ's books.

green and blue are used a lot.

There are things like, um, crooked grins, a lot of his characters, in every book, you have a character with a crooked grin. You'll have somebody with, you know, the wrinkles at the eyes.

Michael HTBANP Chapter 3: "his mouth twitching slightly upward, his eyes crinkled at the corners into these little lines"

Mia: and he uses color a lot to define a scene. So, you know, Elizabeth is blue. And then when she's happy, she's green.

When you think about The Immemorial series, So that series is very dark and because it's, you know, it's a post apocalyptic series, then the colors are dark. The blues that he mentions in there are a dark blue. And even if we look at Into this River, you know, blue is quite literal and Into this River, you know, Calliel is, he's got blue wings and blue was used a lot throughout that.

And I think more than any other author that I've personally read, the greens, the blues, the golds; very much define who he is as a writer because of the way that he uses those colors to define, characterize. And almost set the scenes up and the characters.

Kirt: So we have language that's used within a series to show character connections, and types of language that connect one series to another, and specific, repeated phrases that TJ uses over and over in different books, and the Klunatics pull from all of it, adopt it, and use these words and phrases and ideas to foster a sense of community with one another.

Skeever: [00:02:32] Well, I think it's interesting because culture is something that's often intrinsic. It's an accident of birth. It's an accident of geography and culture is often regionalized, but I think the Klunatic culture is building a community culture. So it's a bit, um, it's a bit organic and new. It's like a subculture, which I think is fascinating.

Kirt: As I alluded to earlier, Jane (or Skeever Jane as you may know her in the Klunatic group) is a bit of an expert on language. She is a bilingual highschool teacher with a master's of education in second

language acquisition. At the moment she's working on her PhD, investigating why students in her state of Queensland, Australia are not continuing with languages.

Skeever: And it's a heavily online culture. And also a heavily introverted culture in a lot of ways, which is I think is really sort of interesting and intriguing as to how we sort of, I mean, you and I are sitting here on two different parts of the world, and really the only thing that's brought us together is we've read some of the same books.

And we're building narrative around that, relationships around that, common dialogue. We have a bit of a shorthand, you know, if I say truth corn to you, we know exactly why that's funny and what that is. And so I think it's a, it's interesting in that it's dynamic, it's new, and the fact that it's largely online based in a lot of ways, or, um.

Uh, it's both low, low tech and high tech in terms of at the low tech end, it's about the paperback book, but on the high tech end, it's about us creating a global network around that. So I think it's kind of fascinating and it's a new kind of culture too.

Skeever: There's a, there's something about the culture of the group, about that shared language that we have that really resonates with me. And I think it's, a lot of it's down to TJs the breadth of his writing. You know, he's writing in a number of genres. Uh, I mean, to read *The Lightning Struck Heart*. I was like, Oh, there's my high fantasy.

Um, you know, he's, in terms of his writing, it's very dimensional. It's, it covers many worlds. And so I think it includes a lot more readers than other authors would do. Some authors that are, you know, write one thing and stick with that. So I think that. The reason the group is so unique is because TJ is writing is quite unique.

There's not many authors that embrace that many genre, uh, effectively. Definitely.

Um. But there's something about the Klunatics that it does feel like there's a conversation for everyone.

Um, whereas in other groups, it seems to be that there might be two or three people that get together. It doesn't have this sort of global intensity that I see around TJs work. And what the catalyst is for that I don't know, um, why it's ended up like that, why people are making lifelong friendships, uh, I can't explain, but I think it's immensely heartwarming.

Kirt: And it turns out that using these easy references to reach out and have interactions with other Klunatics isn't just reserved for specific words or phrases. Yes, fans pull language and culture from TJ's work, the Kluniverse, as it were, but also the Klunatics is its own entity, and it has it's own obsessions. Like unicorns...

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Sita: was like sort of surprised that so many people would kind of embrace this idea, really. Of just coming together and talking books and posting a lot of pictures about unicorns and, yeah.

Angela: I don't know if TJ hit this book right before the unicorn exploded onto the national scene in the way that it did. If he's a, a prophet or of the unicorn, or if he, if he saw it coming and was like, all right, let's do this.

But, Jiminy Crickets, has this group embraced the unicorn. And to a lesser extent, the dragon. But you know, there are just certain underpinnings to this group

Mia: a colleague of mine, Reg, who's the blokiest bloke who ever bloked used to go, you're relistening to that gay unicorn book again, aren't you?

And I'd be like, yep.

Michael HTBAMS Chapter 17: "Is that person dressed like a unicorn?" Josy asked. "Where have I seen that before?" Sure enough, a man was walking down the street in rainbow tights, a white tail hanging from the back, and a horn sticking out of his head. Quincy frowned. "That looks like the character from one of my books. Weird."

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Kirt: Being forbidden to enjoy movies made by a certain explosion-loving director...

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Angela: Then there are things that we've kind of embraced as a culture, where in group you'll see it more as. You know, don't let TJ hear you say that, you know, Gus hates Michael Bay, and then that translates over into our community.

Michael HTBAMS Chapter 4: "For all he knew, he'd be on shift at Applebee's and a producer would see him and say that...who believed Mr. Bay was a soulless husk of a human being and potentially a mass murderer.

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Kirt: And then there are the ducks. The mysterious banning of ducks.

Mia: I'm just gonna say it: fucking ducks. What if I. Never saw another duck post again in my life, in the group, I'd be very happy.

Tj: there are certain things that apparently. People posted in that group now that that are not allowed to be posted about. And so I get every now and then I'll get an alert on my phone that says, key word used in the Klunatic group that, and I'm like, Oh, what does this mean?

And it's about like ducks or stuff and I have no idea what's going on with that. So I just said, okay, you know what? There's a reason I don't need to know and I'm going to trust the people that are in charge and let them deal with it.

Kirt: [00:03:57] All will be made clear if you listen to the podcast,

Tj: [00:04:00] Oh dear god, I don't want to know if I want to know what's going on in there.

Kirt: [00:04:04] The duck story has been explored.

Mia: And the reason I say that is because there was a post that happened to be about ducks and the fact that they have spiral penises and it went mad,

Skeever: [00:13:05] Um.. I love animals. Um, I'm all about something educational. And there's a beautiful YouTube series called True facts, and it's true facts about animals. It's narrated by a guy called Ze Frank and he, um, puts on these amazing voices, and he narrates about these animals lives, almost like they're in a neighborhood and he gives them names. It's Bob and Sheila and Jerry stop doing that. And uh, so I really enjoy them. And one came up about ducks. It was one of the very first ones I found. And it was hilarious about these feathery perverts and how awful they are and what they do to each other and what a horrendous species the duck is.

Um, so I shared it in the group and it was early days. We had, we weren't, um, it was still a relatively small group and it is truly hilarious. It's five minutes of just, uh, the horror show that is the duck as a species.

Mia:and people really just embraced the stupid idea of ducks and everything suddenly became ducks.

Skeever: And then people started sharing duck memes and, and it got duckier,

Mia: And so we had to put a blanket ban on duck posts, which seems ridiculous, but, but there are things like that that sometimes just go too, too far.

Skeever: And so they went, that's it. No more duck posting at all.

Mia: [00:20:15] and we do explain every now and then, and then people are like what?, and then of course the people who love the duck thing jump in and they're all like, no, no, blah. We want to have the ducks. And then it's like, no. We're shutting it down again.

Skeever: and so most people have only come in to the point where they're like, why? Why? What's the issue with ducks? I'm like, look, I just love nature. Okay.

Kirt: [00:14:44] So ducks is not even a TJ Klune thing, it's a just a Klunatic thing.

Skeever: [00:14:50] Now. Well, yes. But I declare it is now canon because Josey mentions in How to Be a Movie Star, getting stoned and chasing ducks. So technically now TJ has mentioned ducks, so they are canon.

Michael HTBAMS Chapter 17: "Josy hoped he hadn't wandered off to find a pond with ducks in it. He'd done that once in Los Angeles, and it hadn't turned out well for anyone involved. The police hadn't been amused when they'd arrived."

Skeever: I don't believe the admin will buy into that, but I stand by my duck stance.

Mia: [00:16:45] No ducks allowed, please. For the love of God,

Kirt: [00:15:15] We now know that ducks exist in the TJ Klune shared universe.

Skeever: [00:15:20] They do a very minor, minor role, but it was a salve to my, my wounds.

Mia: actually when, when I met TJ last year, when I was over in the US he was like, what the fucks with the ducks?

TJ: [00:04:08] Yeah. I casually asked about it when we were at a Klunatic gathering and I was told, you don't want to know. And so I said, okay. And then I left it.

Kirt: [00:04:21] That almost makes it sound more mysterious and weird than it really is.

TJ: [00:04:24] Ok. Well, now in my head, I've already built it up to be this hugely traumatic incident that I don't want any part of.

So, but the true story, I'll probably be much less than that, so I'll feel better.

Kirt: **I think the duck thing, and all the obsessions, really, have to do with finding your people and being a part of the joke, you're inside the inside joke, so it's very easy to understand the excitement and motivation that lead to getting carried away. It speaks to the middle schooler in me, the middle schooler that exists inside of all of us that never goes away, that feeling of 'I'm a part of something!'**

Mia: [00:16:58] ~~Okay~~—No fucking ducks.

Kirt: **Okay, I get it. No ducks. How about puns? This is producer Jonny, again:**

Jonny: [00:02:50] My favorite posts on the page are probably gonna be the puns.

I'm a big pun fan, so if there's dad puns or any puns that relate to anything that's going to get an automatic love for me.

Michael HTBAMS Chapter 17: Is your name Chapstick? Because you're da balm.

Kirt: **You remember admin Elaine from our last episode? She had this to say about the relevance of puns within Klunatic culture:**

Elaine: [00:06:46]—a good pun, it's funny, and elegant in a way, and really very intellectually satisfying.

So, you know, that's. That's one thing. It's just a, it's a beautiful mentally satisfying thing. And also, humor is just really good for brightening up someone's day. So when I see someone who's, you know, not feeling very good or is going through a tough time, I just, I just want to make them smile for a moment.

Michael HTBAMS Chap 3: He was snapped out of his daydream of a cat wearing a sheriff's uniform riding it's horse in a dusty western town ("You think you can come and rob my bank? You've got to be kitten me!")

Elaine: Even if it's like a face palmy sort of smile. And so . If telling a terrible joke or making a dreadful pun will get that then, then I'll do it. And I guess, why do I think word play is important? Well, the thing about puns is, apart from their entertainment value, they, really make you think, so to get a pun you, you have to be able to see, you know, sort of every possible meaning that could be implied by the punny keyword. So you have to understand context and how to pun alters the meaning and appreciating a pun sort of implies being able to appreciate one or more alternate scenarios. And to me, I sort of think that's really only about a step away from being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes.

So, you know, a pun mean to me means humor, um, intelligence and a sort of emotional depth, so why do I think that's important. Well, aren't, aren't all these things the things that make life good.

Kirt: And those last things that admin Elaine said about puns requiring intelligence and emotional depth and the capacity for empathy struck me really hard because it highlighted something else that kept showing up in interviews, and it's a theme that we'll see over and over again as we explore more of TJ's books and his fanbase in upcoming episodes: inclusivity. Both Jane and Tanya see it as being imperative to Klunatic culture.

Skeever: [00:05:02] another consistent theme or pattern is that of inclusivity, which I think is extremely important, as well as a, a big underlying well of kindness in the group. I've never seen a group that reaches out to people, uh, who are struggling, who checks in on each other like this.

Tanya: [00:07:11] Inclusiveness. Um, Klunatic culture is, um, amazing.

Michael HTBAMS Chap 3: He decided right then and there that he needed to be friends.

Tanya: [00:11:20] I love that everyone is there right away to say, Hey, it's okay. How can I help? You know what, what can we do? What do you need? Do you just need to vent? Do you, do you need help? It's the, it's there. There's no question. I love that.

Michael HTBAMS Chapter 3: Josy knew that positive reinforcement was always something he liked, so he said quite loudly, "I think you're doing amazing and that you're a good person!"

Tanya: It's, it's a space where your allowed to come in and share your greatest highs, your greatest lows. Um, if you have a problem, you can come in and vent to the group places where you, if you don't feel safe talking on your own Facebook page or talking with your friends or family, you can come say, Hey, you know, I'm going through a rough time. Um, and everybody will listen.

Michael HTBAMS Chap 3: it'd hit Josy out of nowhere, the realization that he'd built a family on his own.

Tanya: Everybody will, will offer encouragement. Um, it's, it's a place where you can share your battles and share your victories and everybody's excited for you. Um, Klunatic culture is, is family. I don't know

what else to say about it, except it's a safe place where people can be who they are, without judgment and without fear.

Michael HTBAMS Chap 3: They were happy when he was happy, and when he wasn't, they would do everything they could to fix it, knowing he would do the same for them.

Tanya: And that's a great thing because a lot of people don't have that in their real life. And I mean, not to say that this isn't real life, but I think, you know, they may not have a safe space where they can say the things that they, that they need to or they want to. Um, and of course, we, we can gush over TJ and TJ and the books that bring us closer together.

Michael HTBAMS Chap 3: They loved him for all the things he was and not all the things he wasn't.

Tanya: Things that speak to us, things that bring us together. It's just a joyful place.

Michael HTBAMS Chapter 17: "We get these people in our lives. People who change the way we see things. They are so bright, just like the sun. And all you want to do is stay in their light, because it makes everything warm. They make everything better."

Kirt: Which goes back to what the admins said in our last episode. This is Lisa.

Lisa: [00:03:38] we have to be inclusive. It's a, it's supposed to be a safe space.

Michael HTBAMS Chap 4: He's built a great community where we can all talk about what it's like for us.

Michael HTBAMS Chap 4: It's weird, but he says that it's okay to be weird. And that makes me feel better. I don't have to justify myself to anyone here. For a little while, I feel like I can breathe."

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Elaine: Oh, sweat balls

Skeever: Epic and awesome

Mia: Mothercracker

Tanya: Sweet molasses

Michael HTBAMS Chapter 3: Cool, cool, cool.

Angela: Oh my god, what the hell?

Jonny: Code Orange Banana

Kirt: really that's what you're going with

Skeever: Capitalized, now it's true

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Kirt: Listening to the Klunatics use Klunespeak got me thinking about the implications of them using it in their everyday lives with people that haven't read or listened to Tj's work.

Kirt: [00:11:25] It makes me think about the potential to, for words like that, to be used almost to evangelize T J's work that, you know, if we're walking around saying weird shit like that hashtag truth corn, and somebody goes, excuse me, what?

Well, there's your opening.

Skeever: [00:11:42] You have to read this great book.

Kirt: [00:11:45] Yeah. You know, so it's, it's interesting how language can be used to do that as well. Um. It makes me think of like I grew up Catholic and so there's a whole vernacular that sometimes you can tell when somebody says a certain thing and it's like, Oh, same team.

I got what you meant. Even though it's totally different from the situation we're in. But like I get what you, I get what you mean cause you said that.

Kirt: [00:12:31] Yeah. Someday we'll all just be spreading the gospel of TJ Klune.

Skeever: [00:12:36] Hey, I'm all for it.

Kirt: [00:08:55] Do you ever find yourself using the Klunatic lexicon outside of your chats?

Has that entered your real life and when that's happened, what has the reaction been?

Angela: [00:09:08] I think most often it bleeds off at home, and my family's aware. That said, I have been known to pimp TJ Klune's books in my operatory as a dental hygienist, and I will take literally any opportunity I can to open that conversation.

Like, don't get me wrong. I'm going to teach you about your teeth. I'm going to do my job. You're going to know everything you need to know about oral hygiene before you walk out of my door.

Kirt: [00:09:39] But when you've got their mouth open, you say, do you floss a daily?

And they go, Oh huh. And like you say, you're a lying liar who lies, right?

And they're like, well, that's a humorous way of saying that,

Angela: So often. Okay, in an hour I will do my job. I will give them all the information they need to know for their health. I will get their life story and they will leave with an appointment card for their six month appointment and a list of TJ Klune books that they should probably read.

That's the truth. And so if it sneaks in outside of it, I will tell people if they say, what are you saying?

what are you talking about, Angela? I will tell them what I am talking about. I will tell them exactly what I'm talking about.

Kirt: [00:11:23] So the lexicon is also a way for you to evangelize the work?

Angela: [00:11:26] Yes.

Kirt: [00:11:27] I will be very curious when I talked to TJ to ask him if that is a strategy,

Angela: [00:11:34] Right! Klunatic world domination.

Kirt: [00:11:56] It would be very smart. It's good marketing.

Angela: [00:11:59] Well,

Kirt: [00:11:59] To have a whole army of people out in the world,

Angela: [00:12:03] speaking KluneSpeak

Kirt: [00:12:04] speaking your

Angela: [00:12:05] our language

Kirt: [00:12:06] your weird little words.

Angela: [00:12:08] Well, and, but they're engaging. They're, they're funny as hell.

Kirt: Well, one thing that had come up in conversation that I was wondering about is like the way that people now use this, these crazy things like hashtag truthcorn and best friends 5eva.

I mean, there are people out in the world using this language and there are people like, they're putting it on their clothing.

Like, that's marketing.

Like, that's

TJ: [00:03:31] It is marketing. I mean,

Kirt: [00:03:32] somebody at some point

TJ: [00:03:32] not even on their clothing, they're putting it on their bodies, and that, that, that blows my mind. Um,

Kirt: [00:03:37] But you didn't plan that?

TJ: No, not at all. How could I, I would never think of anything like that. Like I, it's not something that I go into thinking, Oh, I bet people are gonna talk about this all the freaking time. That's not how I work. I can't, I can't have that focus because if I do, you'll be able to tell in my work that, I'm trying way too

damn hard. Like for example, right now I'm, I'm writing, uh, the Tales from Verania book five and to be honest, I'm like 45,000 words into it and maybe 40,000 of those words are utter crap.

Because it's I, I'm rusty getting back into this world and I know it and I can feel I'm rusty. And there is a point where I reached last week that I thought, man, you are trying too hard. You are trying too hard to make this how it used to be with the other books. You need to dial it back. You need to stop.

You need to focus and do what you're trying to do. And that's why I can't, I can't think about about how, what this might do to language outside of what I'm focusing on, I can't, I can't have that because if I do, it's going to show that I'm trying way too hard and people are going to be able to tell, and that's not something that I want.

Kirt: I think that the importance of Klunespeak goes back to something that Tj said at the start of this episode:

Tj: I wanted to show how these, this group of people are so connected.

Kirt: Maybe part of the secret to the fast bonds made by Klunatics has to do with them already speaking the same language. That being able to easily communicate with one another using a kind of emotional shorthand, while embracing the themes of inclusivity and acceptance in Tj's books, all within the safe Share Space of the Klunatics Facebook group, is a formula for creating the found family that they call packpackpack.

So for those of you who are new to the Kluniverse, maybe those of you who just read The House in the Cerulean Sea and are looking for more, consider this your official invitation to join the Klunatics on Facebook. You'll be hard-pressed to find a more welcoming, loving group of people. And I have it on good authority that you'll become fluent in Klunespeak in no time.

Angela: [00:07:34] there's a reason why when people move to a new land or a new country or a new community, they would gravitate to the people who spoke their language.

You know, it's good to be understood. And it, that feels like home. And so to come into this as a new member and to, even if you just recognize one from the one book that you've read, Oh my gosh, yes, these people know what I'm talking about. And then, and then it draws you in, it pulls you in.

Michael HTBAMS Chapt 3: "Whoa," Josy said in awe. "I didn't know there were books like that."

Angela: [00:14:34] I'm excited to see what new language is embraced and added to our world as he continues.

Jonny: [00:01:58] the spectrum of the Kluniverse is just, I, I mean, it's, that's why we call it a Kluniverse because it's never ending and constantly expanding like the universe.

Michael HTBAMS Epilogue: "Sounds like a cult,"

Michael HTBAMS Epilogue: It's remarkable. And if it's a cult, then hand me the Kool-Aid.

Kirt: I think we're going to spend the rest of our episodes exploring all of this: repeated language and themes, the ever-expanding Kluniverse, and what it means to be a Klunatic. Which brings us back to our original question:

Kirt: [00:05:36] Um, how would you describe a Klunatic? What are the characteristics of a typical Klunatic, if such a thing exists?

Lisa: [00:05:43] I would say naughty and gentle. Yeah.

Kirt: [00:05:51] Aw!

Lisa: [00:05:51] Naughty and gentle. Yeah.

Kirt: [00:05:54] That's really sweet actually. And a little salty. I like it.

Elaine: [00:15:36] you know, we're talking about people who can reference specific incidents in TJ's books, and we've adopted a lot of sort of TJ phrases. There's definitely a common sort of sense of humor, awkwardness, book loves in the group. And the thing about just the whole Klunatic being able to quote and referencing things from the book, none of it is, you know, like none of it feels artificial.

It's just, it's just how it is. And I think that might be one of the signs of TJ's genius related. That's the thing that he comes up with like. Mothercracker and sweet molasses. They're, they're so unique, but at the same time, they feel very natural. They just roll off the tongue. You sort of feel like things like this must always have been because they feel so right.

Kirt: Here's producer Sita.

Sita: [00:07:47] Mmm. It's hard to kind of give a set list because one of the great things about the group is everyone is so different and everyone else kind of embraces each other's differences and like maybe that's what being a Klunatic is. It's like accepting people just how they are, how they come and, yeah. Maybe that's the defining characteristic.

Kirt: To me, that sounds like #TruthCorn.

//End music and credits.//