

# Libro.fm Podcast

## Episode 15 - Interview with TJ Klune

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**Karen Farmer:**

Hi, I'm Karen. Welcome to the Libro.fm Podcast, where we talk to authors, narrators, booksellers and more.

**Craig Silva:**

And I'm Craig. On today's episode, we had the absolute pleasure of chatting with author TJ Klune, author of over 20 books, including *The House in the Cerulean Sea*, *Under the Whispering Door*, and most recently, *In the Lives of Puppets*, which comes out at the end of this month on April 25th.

**Karen Farmer:**

I am so excited for the release day for this podcast. We've been dying for you all to hear this episode. We had such a good time meeting TJ. And trust me the lightning round questions at the end, including Instagram story time, are very much worth sticking around for. He had some fantastic answers to those questions.

**Craig Silva:**

Yes, this episode was super fun. I agree, the lightning round is quickly becoming one of my favorite segments of this podcast. I feel like we talked about very silly stuff, including him showing us his three-foot scissors and how excited he was about those, but we also got into some serious stuff too. And not to throw someone under the bus, but I believe tears were shed.

**Karen Farmer:**

I don't know what you're talking about. Was it you? I've never cried on this podcast, ever.

**Craig Silva:**

Oh, this is a lot of lies this early in the podcast, Karen. So I'm going to play a clip from TJ's newest book, so you can hear a little bit of that before the interview starts. Just a reminder that you can use the promo code Libro Podcast, and you can get two books when you sign up for a membership.

**Karen Farmer:**

If you're not subscribed to the podcast yet, we would love it if you did so. And if you are subscribed, please give it a rating if you're so inclined. And with that, we will get into the clip.

**Narrator: Daniel Henning:**

"In an old and lonely forest, far away from almost everything sat, a curious dwelling. At the base of a grove of massive trees was a small square building made of brick, overtaken by ivy and moss. Who it belonged to was anyone's guess, but from the looks of it, it had been abandoned long ago. It wasn't until a man named Giovanni Lawson, who wasn't actually a man at all, came across it while making his way through the forest, that it was remembered with any purpose. He stood in front of his strange find listening, as the birds sang in the branches high above."

"'What's this?' He asked. 'Where did you come from?' He went inside, passing carefully through the door, hanging off its hinges. The windows were shattered. Grass and weeds grew up through the warped wooden floor. The roof had partially collapsed, and the sun shone through on a pile of leaves that almost reached the ceiling. At the top of the leaf pile, a golden flower had bloomed, stretching toward the sunlight, streaming through the exposed rafters. 'It's perfect.' He said aloud, although he was very much alone. 'Yes, this will do just fine. How strange. How wonderful.'"

**Karen Farmer:**

Welcome to the podcast TJ! Craig and I are so happy that you're here with us today. Thank you for sitting down on a Friday morning to talk to us.

Narrator: Daniel Henning:

Yes, thank you so much for having me. I greatly appreciate being here.

**Craig Silva:**

How's your week been going so far here?

**TJ Klune:**

It has been very quiet. The past couple of weeks, I have taken a step away from all writing, all editing, emails and stuff. And it's just for me to recharge, because I love everything that's happened in the last few years. But at the same time, I'm like, "Okay, I also need time for me to not be public." I love going out into the world and talking to people, especially after not doing it in the pandemic, but sometimes I'm like, "Okay, I'm an introvert for a reason. I need to be at home in my house where I feel safe and protected."

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah.

**Karen Farmer:**

Yep.

**Craig Silva:**

Well, sorry to ruin your rest and relaxation immediately.

**TJ Klune:**

That's okay. When I do stuff like this, I always have to psych myself up for it beforehand. Even though I'm an old hat at all of this stuff now, I'm like, "Okay, I got to make sure I don't say anything stupid. I got to make sure that everybody understands my words." So yeah, it's cool.

**Craig Silva:**

Luckily for me, I also edit the podcast. So I just edit out all the stupid stuff I said. It's great. It's good to have that power.

**TJ Klune:**

Well, maybe not all of it. I mean, that's part of my charm as I can be stupid sometimes.

**Karen Farmer:**

Yeah. Well TJ, I'm sure almost all of our listeners are very familiar with your work, but to kick things off, we'd love for you to introduce yourself. Anything that you would like people to know about who you are.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah. I am TJ Klune. I am the author of many books. At the last count, I think it was 30 plus now. I've been going since 2011. And in 2016, I decided, "Hey, what the hell. Let me quit the safety and security of my full-time insurance job that I'd been at for a decade, that had a salary and benefits, to go into the wide wonderful world of writing as my job." And I made that decision when I got the biggest compliment, that also is an insult in my life from my boss at the insurance company where I worked, when he told me one day, "You are very good at insurance." And if someone tells you that, even with respect to the job you're doing, it is soul crushing.

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah.

**TJ Klune:**

This is what my life is? I'm supposed to be good at insurance? I mean, somebody has to be, I guess. But man, when I heard that, I was like, "Wow. Wow, okay. This is what it feels like to be stabbed in the imagination."

**Craig Silva:**

That person probably thought they were being so nice and it was like your death nail.

**TJ Klune:**

He was. It was a compliment, and I managed to stutter through, "Oh, oh, thank you." But in my head I'm thinking, "No. No."

**Craig Silva:**

Have you ever talked to this person post doing writing full-time, to let them know that that was the catalyst?

**TJ Klune:**

No. But I will say that I found out from some former coworkers that there was a bet going on, how long I'd last before I come back to the job. And that was seven years ago.

**Karen Farmer:**

Awesome.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah, my last day was February of 2016, and I haven't looked back since.

**Craig Silva:**

Nice.

**Karen Farmer:**

Congratulations.

**Craig Silva:**

Thank you.

**Karen Farmer:**

And all of your fans, aka us on this call, we're very glad that you stepped away. We're like, "Write us more things TJ"

**Craig Silva:**

I like books more than insurance, for sure.

**TJ Klune:**

Right. And then I did my whole indie thing, like I'd been doing for a little while. And in 2017 and '18, I wanted to do something a little bit different. The world, as you guys might imagine, was in a very weird place during that time, politically, economically, socially. And I thought, "Okay, I want to write a book that reminds people that there's still good in the world, that there's still kindness and hope." And that book turned into *The House In The Cerulean Sea*. And that book sold to McMillan and Tor. And then they also bought my young adult trilogy, *The Extraordinaries*, and I haven't looked back since. This is me being able to do what I love every single day, and I am so eternally grateful for it.

**Craig Silva:**

I love that trilogy. Thank you for writing it.

**TJ Klune:**

Yay. Yeah, me too. I love The Extraordinaries, man. I love them.

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah. Yeah. So congratulations on the new book coming out April 25th.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah, it's getting close.

**Craig Silva:**

How are you feeling now that we're getting so close to the release date?

**TJ Klune:**

So anytime a book comes out, it always feels like the first time. It's scary, it's wonderful, it's exciting, but this one is even more so, I think. It's scary, because this is a book that isn't *The House in the Cerulean Sea*. This is a book that is not *Under the Whispering Door*, my last novel that came out. This book, those books have been rightly described as cozy fantasies. And *In the Lives of Puppets*, I wanted to merge my lighter writing and my darker writing, because I don't always write happy, fluffy queer people finding love and success and hope and joy. And I am also known to write some pretty hardcore, darker works. And I wanted to find a way to combine those two sides of my writing in *In the Lives of Puppets*.

So when *In the Lives of Puppets* opens, it's like the ending of *Under the Whispering Door* or *House in the Cerulean Sea*. You have these people who are already happy, who are already safe, who are already whole, who already have a home, and then I take that away from them. And that's the catalyst of this adventure that I give you the cozy, but then I tell you that, "You know what? Sometimes that's not enough. Sometimes you have to go out into the world to fight for your future."

**Karen Farmer:**

That's so beautiful. I love that you said that too, because when Craig and I started reading this, we were very grateful to get an advanced copy to prepare for this. And we started immediately and we're like, "This is different. This is so different. I love it. This is great. I wasn't expecting this." Pretty much yeah, right off the bat.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah. I knew going into this book that this, *In the Lives of Puppets* itself is a queer re-imagining, retelling of Carla Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. But instead of puppetry, it involves machines and androids and artificial intelligence. And at the same time, I wanted to pull from so many different parts of the science fiction and fantasy genre. This is me essentially lifting my favorite things of this genre and mashing it into one book. This is *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. This is Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*. This is one of the most traumatizing animated movies ever made, *Brave Little Toaster*. And if

you've seen that movie, *The Brave Little Toaster*, you know that it looks like this cute, happy little animated film, but it traumatized an entire generation of children.

**Karen Farmer:**

Yes. Yes it did.

**TJ Klune:**

To me, at least because of the character Lampy. And Lampy is a lamp with a light bulb that keeps him alive. And guess what? Sorry to spoil like a 30-year old animated film. At one point in the movie, that light bulb breaks, and it looks like Lampy dies, and you're like, "Holy crap."

I kept thinking about all the different things about science fiction and fantasy that bring me joy. And yes, there's happiness, and yes, there's triumph, and yes, there's success. But even in the original *The Adventures of Pinocchio* by Collodi, it is dark. It is a dark fairytale, as so many fairy tales actually are. We are so used to the Disney-fied version of these fairy tales, where everybody gets to be happy and everything is wonderful.

So, many of us know that *The Little Mermaid* was written by Hans Christian Andersen as a queer love letter to a man that he could never be with. *The Adventures Of Pinocchio*, the original version of that story had Pinocchio getting murdered and hung from a tree. His editor came in, Collodi's editor and said, "You're writing this story for children, so you probably shouldn't kill off the child character." So he changed it. He changed it to the ending that we know of this story now. And I find that fascinating that there's this duality that we want to shine off the rough edges, shine off the darkness so we can only present the happiness, when sometimes darkness is necessary to show the lengths that we go to protect the ones that we love.

**Craig Silva:**

Thank you. I didn't know what else to say. I was just taking that all in. Thank you for sharing that. I obviously completely agree, and it became immediately clear that this was not the other ones. Obviously, it was very much your writing style, but I was like, "Oh, this isn't just for kids." *The Cerulean Sea* was like, I mean, every adult I know also enjoyed that book, but it was a book you could totally read with your kids. This one became inherently clear that I was like, "Oh, this isn't exactly like that." The robots were kind of swearing a little bit and it's a little bit more adult, and I'm absolutely loving it.

**TJ Klune:**

Well, what I thought about that is, *House in the Cerulean Sea* came out in 2020. I wrote *Under the Whispering Door*, *House in the Cerulean Sea* and *In the Lives of Puppets* almost back to back to back. So, *In the Lives of Puppets* has been done since 2019, 2020 and it's just coming out now. But these stories are connected, not by universe or characters or world, but in ideas of theme. And with *House in the Cerulean Sea*, we had kindness to others. In *Under the Whispering Door*, we had kindness to yourself, which I think is so much harder to do. And then, *In the Lives of Puppets*, we have kindness to people who actively might not deserve it, who have done something so terrible that

forgiveness might even be out of the question. And I thought about the growth of my readers, aging.

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah.

**TJ Klune:**

So younger readers who may have started *In the House in the Cerulean Sea* in 2020, have now read *Under the Whispering Door* in 2021. And now these readers are older in 2023. And I'm hoping that they can grow with that and accept this kind of book too, because I want that growth in my writing and I want that growth in my readership.

**Karen Farmer:**

Yep.

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah, I love one series do that. I grew up on certain series that the first book was much more childish, and then as the series went on, it kind of grew with me, and that was always something I loved. So you actually just kind of answered one of my questions that I was going to ask way later. So I'm just going to get into it now for a second, and I'm a little sad. I had this idea when we were talking and we were looking at all the covers, and I was looking at *Cerulean* and *Whispering* and *Puppets* next to each other, and I was like, "They kind of look like a set. I wonder if they take place in the TJ Klune-verse." And then I think you just said that they don't, which I'm a little-

**TJ Klune:**

Well, it's weird because there are hints in *Under the Whispering Door* about *The House in the Cerulean Sea*. There are a couple of Easter eggs for eagle-eyed viewers in *In the Lives of Puppets*. And that's something that I've always done with my writing, it's just for my readers, my long-term readers to see, "Oh, that's what that ... Oh, okay, this and this and this." But if any of the stories were connected, I think it would be the first two, *Cerulean Sea* and *Under the Whispering Door*, because in my head, all I want to see is Chauncey alive and well, crossing Paths with somebody like Wallace.

**Craig Silva:**

Yes.

**TJ Klune:**

What would that look like? But *In the Lives Of Puppets* is, even if it would be set in the same universe, it would make me sad to think that that's the same universe, because this is technically a post-apocalyptic book.

**Craig Silva:**

That's what we were saying too, is that, is this the post-apocalyptic end of the *Cerulean Sea*? And that was a little sad too.

**TJ Klune:**

Do you know how many readers would literally want to come find me, if I was like, "Oh, okay. Well I'm just going to kill off Lucy now. That's cool."

**Craig Silva:**

Linus Baker is dead now, sorry.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah, he's dead. No, everything that you love. The island, it's a wasteland. Nothing is good. No, I couldn't do that. I couldn't do that. I love the idea that maybe these worlds are not in the same world, but maybe they're not so far away from each other.

**Karen Farmer:**

Yeah.

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah.

**Karen Farmer:**

Speaking of the book covers as well, they're so fascinating to me because your books are so character-driven, and there're just so many beautiful, colorful, exciting, creative people in them. People I guess is a bit of a misnomer. Robots, all manner of individuals. And the covers are so place-oriented, and they have that dream-like quality to me. I was so excited when I finally saw the cover of *In The Lives Of Puppets*, and I'm like, "That's how I pictured their home, up in the trees in a-"

**TJ Klune:**

Chris Sickels, who did *Cerulean Sea*, *Under the Whispering Door*, *Puppets*, he's also done all four of the upcoming re-releases of the Green Creek Series that comes out, starts this summer. He is a singular talent that I am absolutely blown away by. I have never met somebody who does art like he does. I mean, everything you see on my covers for those books is hand-built 3D sets.

**Karen Farmer:**

Oh wow.

**TJ Klune:**

I have the tea shop for *Under the Whispering Door* sitting in my living room.

**Karen Farmer:**



Oh my gosh.

**TJ Klune:**

Because he sent that to me. And when you press a little button on the side, the top floor where the door is lights up.

**Craig Silva:**

Oh my God.

**TJ Klune:**

[inaudible 00:17:25] on the inside. He builds all of these things by hand, and then photographs them for the covers.

**Karen Farmer:**

That's incredible.

**TJ Klune:**

If you go to my Instagram, I have posted a couple of fly-throughs that he does of the sets.

**Karen Farmer:**

Wow.

**Craig Silva:**

Cool.

**Karen Farmer:**

That show how the books are made. But with those books, to get to your question, the house, the tea shop and the tree houses, I wanted those all on the cover, because those are characters unto themselves. If you'll notice, in this group of books, we never have a character on the cover, because I wanted the setting to be a character. *Cerulean Sea*, the island, the house that is the setting for the novel, and it feels like a real lived in character. *For Under the Whispering Door*, 95% of the book takes place inside this one singular location, the tea shop.

So it had to feel real, lived in. It had to feel huge, even though it was a small tea shop. With *In the Lives of Puppets*, there's the tree house, there's the ground house. My favorite detail about the *In the Lives of Puppets* cover is the chair tipped over outside in the front, because it hints at something happened. Was this before Gio arrived as the novel opens? Or is this after? Did something happen after? And I love that the mystery that that opens with.

That's so wonderful to have more context for. And you were very successful at making these places loved characters, because I felt a complete sense of loss and despair

when ... You already said this, so I'm not spoiling anything, but when home is taken away in *In the Lives of Puppets*, I think audibly, I was gasping out. I'm like, "No."

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah. I'm not going to spoil how and what happens, 'cause it's the catalyst for their great grand journey that they go on. But it felt important not only in context with this story, but in context with my previous stories too, with *House in the Cerulean Sea* and *Under the Whispering Door*, because those places, the house, the tea shop were places of safety, were places of warmth. What does that look like when that's gone? What do you do? You start again from the beginning, and that's what they do in this book.

**Craig Silva:**

So good.

**TJ Klune:**

Thank you.

**Craig Silva:**

If you keep seeing me look to my left, I'm looking at the covers as you're speaking, and they're so good. I love them.

**TJ Klune:**

And they are. Chris Sickels, Red Nose Studios, look them up on Instagram. You should see all of his artwork. He is phenomenal, and I will continue working with him for as long as he'll have me.

**Craig Silva:**

That's awesome. I can't wait to see those, the models. And also, I think you posted some animations of the Green Creek things and it was so beautiful. I sent it to Karen yesterday. I was like, "You have to see this."

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, they're so good.

**Craig Silva:**

So pivoting away from artwork, I wanted to talk about audiobooks, which surprise.

**Karen Farmer:**

Surprise.

**Craig Silva:**

This is the Libro.fm Podcast.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah.

**Craig Silva:**

So one thing I loved about *Cerulean Sea* is when I was reading and listening to it the first time around, everyone I knew was also kind of doing that at the same time. And we were all listening to it and talking about how good the audiobook was. The narrator, Daniel Henning just did so many voices and it was just so immersive and enjoyable. I actually almost enjoyed it better than just reading it in my own head.

**TJ Klune:**

Absolutely.

**Craig Silva:**

And I was curious how involved in that kind of process were you, in terms of how the characters were going to be voiced, 'cause it was very strong.

**TJ Klune:**

He was very theatrical.

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah, yeah.

**TJ Klune:**

So, Daniel has a significant theater background. He is an actor. He's a director. He has been on television. He's been in movies. He's been all over the place, and what I love is that he also audio narrates textbooks and I just find that absolutely fascinating, or rather he used to. I don't know if he does so many anymore, but I can just find that fascinating. So I, coming up to tour, kind of felt like going from the minors to the majors. You get called up. Oh, look at me, a queer person making a baseball reference. Yes. Take that toxic masculinity. All right. Sorry.

I was out of my depth. I did not know what I could or could not do. I did not know if I had any say in anything at all. So when it came time to do the narration, I was like, "Can I suggest narrators?" Or am I going to be like, "Yeah, TJ shut up. Just go be your little writer person." And thankfully, Macmillan Audio reached out to me first and said, "Hey, we want to start thinking about audio for *Cerulean*. I have this guy and I think you would be perfect for this. We haven't sent out any auditions, because I want you to hear him." And it was Daniel Henning and I listened to his audition, and his Chauncey voice immediately sold me. It was Chauncey. Chauncey's my favorite character in that book.

**Karen Farmer:**

Me too.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah. Well, see? And it sold me at that moment in time. How I work with my narrators, speaking of Michael Lesley, who does my Extraordinaries series, I've worked with him for years. Kirt Graves, who did *Under the Whispering Door*, who did the Green Creek Series, who is doing the re-release of *The Bones Beneath My Skin*, that Tor is putting out too, I've worked with him for years. I know them. I don't give any feedback. I say, "I trust you. Go out and do whatever you want with these characters."

With Daniel, I didn't have that trust, because I have never worked with him before. So I made a decision. I said, "Okay, are you going to spoon-feed him everything that you want? Or are you going to trust him like you've done with the other narrators?" So I said, "Okay, do what you want to do with the book. These are my characters, but they're also becoming yours, because you are the one giving voice to them." I did not give him any feedback on what he did on it.

**Craig Silva:**

Wow.

**Karen Farmer:**

That's amazing.

**TJ Klune:**

He is also doing the narration for *In the Lives of Puppets*. Now, there were auditions for that between my narrators.

**Karen Farmer:**

Interesting.

**TJ Klune:**

The reason that Daniel was picked was because of his voice for Nurse Ratched. He nailed that. He sounded exactly how I pictured her in my head. And for those not in the know, Nurse Ratched is a sociopathic nursing machine that acts as one half of Victor, the main character's conscience. She's basically the Jiminy Cricket or the talking Cricket of this book. And she is a kindhearted sociopath who loves murder and death and destruction, but also loves her people, her group, her family. And it was that voice that he did that I was like, "Sold. Done."

**Karen Farmer:**

Awesome.

**TJ Klune:**

It was perfect for me. And sometimes it's that easy to have somebody click like that, because Nurse Ratched and Rambo aren't just side characters. They are on almost every single page. They are main characters in this book along with Victor and Hap and Giovanni. And so they need to feel real, but not to the point of sounding like too much, because again, you could imagine a character like Nurse Ratched being voiced poorly,

and then having you to listen to that through the entire book. Or Rambo, if you go a little bit too twee for him, that could become insufferable when you're listening to the entire book. But thankfully, Daniel is just a master what he does. He's just a remarkable, remarkable performer and human being.

**Karen Farmer:**

Oh, I cannot wait to listen to this. And I will say TJ, I have been doing a Nurse Ratched voice, like the last week as I've been reading this book.

**Craig Silva:**

Are you trying to audition right now, Karen?

**Karen Farmer:**

I've had-

**Craig Silva:**

It's too late. It's too late.

**TJ Klune:**

Let's hear your Nurse Ratched voice, go.

**Karen Farmer:**

Let the drilling sequence commence.

**TJ Klune:**

That was pretty good. That was pretty good.

**Karen Farmer:**

I'm no Daniel, but-

**TJ Klune:**

I don't listen to the whole book because it kind of weirds me out to hear my own writing being read back to me. But I actually just received the files for *In the Lives of Puppets* audio, and I listened to certain sections and I'm just so giddy at what is coming for this book.

**Karen Farmer:**

That's really interesting.

**Craig Silva:**

I also got the link to the files and I listened to a little bit-

**TJ Klune:**

Did you?

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah, I know. They sent it to us a little early, I think, to prep for this. I think we got it like yesterday and I listened to a little bit too, and I was like, "Oh my God, I can't wait to listen to this."

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah, it's so good. It's so good.

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah, it's really good.

**Karen Farmer:**

You're not the first author that said that to us, that listening to the audiobook of their novel is a pretty intense moment. And we've talked to a couple of people who have said, "I haven't listened to it at all and I don't plan to." What is it about that, hearing it read back to you that makes you want to listen in pieces?

**TJ Klune:**

So this is by no means trying to say that I am famous in any way, shape or form. So please don't take this example as me trying to say that. But I liken it to the fact when actors say they can't watch themselves in film or TV. They can't watch their own movies, their own TV show, because all they do is start picking out all the mistakes. They start picking at it. They start trying to say, "I wish I'd done this. I wish I'd done that. Oh, why did I write it like this?" That is part of it, but also, there's just something very surreal about hearing somebody else reading my own thoughts back to me. And it's very strange to hear that.

To go one step further, some of my books are decidedly adult. Like the Green Creek Series that's coming out, they have sex scenes. And I don't know if you've ever had to edit your own sex scenes. I don't know if you've had to listen to a narrator, record the filth that you wrote and then have to say, "Okay, this is [inaudible 00:27:58]." Because A, I'm asexual, so it does nothing for me. And B, I'm sitting there going, "I'm disgusting. What is this? Why did I write that? Who taught me these words?"

**Karen Farmer:**

Oh my God.

**TJ Klune:**

So it's kind of like that. *Wolfsong*, the first book in the Green Creek Series, my tour wanted to do just a refresh edit to look through it. And one of the edits was on a sex scene in that book, and was talking about, "Well, I don't think this character's appendage would be here." And I'm like, "Oh God, kill me. Kill me now please."

**Karen Farmer:**

Worst conference call ever.

**TJ Klune:**

"It's so bad." And everybody's being super professional, because that's what it is. It's just writing and it's just words, but I am covered in flop sweat and wanting to sink lower in my seat to try to escape. So that's kind of a reason I can't listen to my own stuff read back to me, because it's like somebody's in my head reading my mind.

**Karen Farmer:**

Thank you for sharing that. I've always wondered about that, and it makes perfect sense. It's just like, "Somebody tell me when it's over."

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah, that's exactly what I do. And now I'm so happy to be, because when I was indie published or self-publishing, I have to review all of that stuff. So coming up with Tor and Macmillan, there's people that are paid to do that and I don't have to worry about it. That's totally fine with me.

**Craig Silva:**

Quick audio follow-up, before we move to the next question. Have you ever considered narrating anything yourself, any of your own books? I'll take that as a no.

**TJ Klune:**

No, man. No. Uh-huh. So I have ADHD, and I tend to talk really fast. And I just know that the audio engineer, that would be the one overseeing my recording sessions, would just be quit. He would quit. I would force that person whose lifelong dream was to record audiobooks, and I would [inaudible 00:30:03].

**Craig Silva:**

He'd go into insurance.

**TJ Klune:**

He would. He would go into insurance. I would drive him into the arms of that lizard again and it would just ... God, it's terrifying. It's terrifying. No, I would never read one of my own audiobooks or one of my own books because no shame to anybody who does, but that just feels like to me, "Look, here's more of me. Don't you love me?" There's a difference I think, between memoirs and recording your own memoir, because I think if I ever wrote a memoir, that would be weird to have somebody else read it. But when you're writing fiction and then an author reads their own fiction, I'm like ... I like having the separation. I write, that's my job. I'm a writer. Kudos to people who wear many hats. I just can't do that. I just [inaudible 00:30:59] doing it.

**Karen Farmer:**

Well, speaking of wearing many hats, you kind of mentioned this at the beginning. This is a question, as a fellow introvert. I see that you have your first ever UK tour coming up for *In the Lives of Puppets*. How are you feeling about that? What do you think that journey's going to be like?

**TJ Klune:**

Well, I have been to the UK for book stuff before. In 2016, we went there all over the UK for three weeks on a book trip/road trip. And I've also been to Germany and Amsterdam doing book stuff there, that it was all very indie stuff. It was, here's a small convention of queer readers who are coming to read books. This is the first big thing in the UK that's an actual tour, and I'm excited about stuff like that. I love doing stuff like that, but it's also something that I have to psych myself up for. I have to put on my public face.

I'm not saying that my persona outwardly and in my home life is different. I have to be more than I normally am. So it's kind of why I'm not working these past couple of weeks. I've just kind of been taking it easy, because I'm kind of psyching myself up. Because in April and May, I'm going to be traveling all over the world for book stuff. And I am so grateful at the opportunities for stuff like that. And at the same time I'm like, "But I'm not a people person. Why do these people want to come and see me blab?"

**Craig Silva:**

In addition to that tour and all that, what is, as someone that's not a writer, the process of the past few months getting ready for a release date? What goes into that? What's been on your docket of things to do, to get ready for the book to come out?

**TJ Klune:**

A lot of marketing stuff. I've written a of blog posts that have yet to go up. I have all these Instagram posts that I need to do. I have playlists that I need to write for each book, because I love doing that. I love attaching music to the books. I mean *House in the Cerulean Sea* and *In the Lives of Puppets* are very musical, because there's music in the books. But I have to go through and make sure that everything that I need to get done is done by a certain date, because if I don't get it done by then, it won't get done because I won't have time to do anything anymore. It's a lot of busy work that is necessary, in order to be able to promote your book. A lot of people think being an author is just that writing. No, it's so much more. There's marketing, there's editing. There is being social, there is being online. There's all that kind of stuff, and it can be very taxing if you're not prepared for it. But thankfully, I've found a system that works for me.

**Karen Farmer:**

Awesome.

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah. Our next question is, I feel like a lot of your characters, and I'll just use the three books that we've been talking about most, the three most recent ones, have this real kind of humble wisdom to them. They talk about these big weighty concepts, like love



and life and acceptance and all these things, but in very easy to digest, simple ways. Not simple and I don't mean that in a demeaning way, but in a very easy to understand way.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah. So before you finish your question, let me tell you a quick side story.

**Craig Silva:**

Sure.

**TJ Klune:**

Once I was doing a benefit in Seattle for this big hoity-toity book thing. I was so out of place, you have no idea, 'cause these are all rich people. Rich authors that are very literary. And one author came up to me and he had brought a friend, a colleague or something and he goes, "I wanted to introduce you to TJ Klune. He's very popular. He has a workman-like prose." [inaudible 00:35:15]. Do you want to damn me with faint praise or you just want to backhand me in addition to the backhanded compliment.

**Craig Silva:**

Seriously.

**Karen Farmer:**

Wow.

**TJ Klune:**

So when I hear, and I'm not saying that your question was going that direction, but I'm saying, "Yes."

**Craig Silva:**

God, I hope not.

**TJ Klune:**

No, no, no. What I think is funny is that people think that big ideas have to use big words. And you have to basically be a human thesaurus in order to be able to get your point across. What the hell man? That's how it works. That's not how it works.

**Karen Farmer:**

Exactly.

**TJ Klune:**

When I'm writing, if I'm writing in concepts, simplifying them, it's not because I don't trust my readers to be able to grasp these concepts. I'm trying to make sure that these books are accessible to everyone. And I want to have big, weighty ideas, but you can't just

thrust somebody into that big weighty idea. You need to work up to it by grounding it in reality, even in the face of the fantastical. I'm so sorry I interrupted your question. It just brought my-

**Craig Silva:**

No. Honestly, I mean-

**TJ Klune:**

The phrase workman's like prose has always stuck with me there, because I'm like, "You know what? I'm going to take that as a compliment from this point on."

**Karen Farmer:**

Yes.

**Craig Silva:**

I think you kind of just answered the question a little bit anyway, honestly. What I was going to say was just that, you say these big weighty things in kind of simple ways that are digestible and accessible to everyone, even whether they're young readers or people that just don't read the big philosophical books. I'm just-

**TJ Klune:**

Or people who read English as a second language.

**Craig Silva:**

Totally.

**TJ Klune:**

Or third or fourth language. I have so many international readers. Thankfully, they're starting to get their own translated versions into their ... I mean, *House in the Cerulean Sea* has been translated into over 30 languages so far. But what I love about this, I get emails from international readers who don't have their translated version quite yet, and they want to read this book. So when they read it, they may not be able to get every single little thing, because English isn't their first language. But they're able to understand the big huge ideas that I'm going for, because I'm trying to make it as accessible as possible because I know there are younger readers. I know there are older readers. I know I have readers of every single age, and I just want to make sure that A, I'm not being condescending. I'm not talking down to people, but I'm also making sure that I'm not whitewashing my own ideas. I'm not trying to dilute myself in order to get the point across.

**Karen Farmer:**

Yeah.

**TJ Klune:**

I don't think that big, huge universal ideas need to be ensconced in language that is inaccessible. I think it needs to be accessible to all, because the pursuit of knowledge is an extraordinary privilege. And I think that we need to make that as accessible for as many people as possible.

**Karen Farmer:**

Yep. I have spent a lot of time in the poetry world, and I've experienced so much of what you're talking about, in terms of people thinking that accessible is too simple. Or thinking that it has to be completely tangled, and you have to spend hours thinking about it to unwind it. And yeah, I've come across that conversation a lot as well.

**TJ Klune:**

Well see, it gets to the point, I love the idea that books can just be books to the people who want them to be books. To other people, they can mean more, but not everything in a book has to have meaning. Every decision I make or placement I put the characters, I mean, there is people debating Nelson's chair in *Under the Whispering Door*, what that's supposed to symbolize. I'm like, "It's just a freaking chair. He's just sitting in a chair. That's all it is." You can read into anything I've written how it was, but sometimes, things are simple just because they're simple. That's all it is.

**Karen Farmer:**

Well, the last question we wanted to ask you, before we move on to our lightning round, [inaudible 00:39:07] which we will tell you about shortly. One of my favorite things about your work, of which there are many, but I just love your celebration of otherness. And I've heard you talk about this on other interviews and podcasts as well, in terms of making sure that otherness, queerness, et cetera, is represented as fully as possible, and not just how these things are commonly understood in the day-to-day. And you talked about the journey as well across your books, in terms of love of others, love of self, forgiveness as an act of love. Can you talk a little bit more just about the journey of how you celebrated otherness in your works, and why this is so important to you as a writer?

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah. So when I was a kid, I was born and raised in rural Oregon in the '90s. Or I was born in the '80s, but I came of age in the '90s. So you can imagine how that would be. I was born in a time when AIDS and HIV was decimating my community. I grew up in a time when Reagan ignored the cries from the queer community for help. I came of age and understood my own queerness in a time when Don't Ask, Don't Tell passed by Clinton. And when you're a kid with undiagnosed ADHD, when you're a queer kid who's understanding what it means to be, it creates this sense of otherness in you, because it makes you feel like you can't relate to your peers. And building those kinds of connections, especially when you're young, is important because it helps with your growth. It helps with your socialization. It helps with your empathy.

I remember being in sixth grade and sitting in music class, and I sat with my legs crossed. My one knee on top of my other knee, my foot hanging down. And I looked

over, I remember, and the music teacher was making fun of me for how I was sitting, because it was effeminate, because I was in effeminate kid. I was effeminate as a child, and that was the first time I think I'd really seen out-and-out bigotry in that kind of form. Granted, I got to experience a whole lot more after that of bigoted people and lives. My own family made fun of me for reading. My own family made fun of me for writing. My own family hated the fact that I was queer. My own family wouldn't take me to go to a doctor to get diagnosed with ADHD that I so clearly had.

So when I talk about otherness, when I write about otherness as something to be celebrated rather than denigrated, it's coming from a very personal place. I know how it feels to be 13, 14, 15 years old and feel like everyone is attacking you for simply existing. I find it very chilling that we are now in 2023 and the rise of anti LGBTQ, specifically the rise of anti-trans legislation that this country is seeing and passing, not only for gender-affirming care for minors under the care of their parents and their doctors, but now there's legislation that's trying to work its way through that would prohibit trans care for anyone, for anyone of all ages. We are right now in the midst of a war against otherness, against people like us, people like me who want to see their stories told.

What do you say to a trans kid in a school in Florida? It gets better? That's stupid because it gets better, implies that something will happen in the future that will get your life better. Why can't it get better now? Why can't we celebrate you now? And that's what I want to do with my books. I want to show these people, everyone out there that no matter who you are, no matter if you feel othered or different, no matter if you're queer or trans or non-binary, no matter if you're intersex or neurodiverse or whatever, you are important. You are valid. And no one should be able to take that away from you. No one, ever. And the fact that people are trying, it says a lot more about them than it does our community.

You'd be surprised at this, I often get people who tell me, they don't want to hear me be political. Guess what? I'm a queer person in 2023 in the United States. My entire life is political, not because I've made it political, but because politicians have made my life political. So what does that mean for me? Well, that means, since you have made my life political, I am going to use my voice. I'm going to talk about these things, and I'm going to make sure everyone damn well knows who hears me speak that these Draconian and frankly cruel measures that are passing in the United States right now ...I think about 50 years ago in the 1970s, when Anita Bryant came forth and said, "In the state of Florida, homosexuals are indoctrinating our children. We need to start the Save Our Children Campaign." And this was in the '70s. She did the exact same thing. She said, "Teachers were indoctrinating students. That books were turning children queer."

What does history view her as now? As a bigot, as a ridiculous person who was speaking basically gibberish. And yet, here we are in 2023 with people doing the same thing she was doing in the '70s. So it makes me think, "What are we going to think about these people in 5, 10, 15 years?" I already know what I think about them now, but what is the world going to think about them? And I don't think people think about that. I don't think that they think about the future, 'cause I can guarantee you one thing. In the future, 10, 15, 20, 30, 40, 50 years from now, we're going to look back at this time and realize that this is a time that the queer community became more powerful than they

have ever been. Because, want to know what our agenda is? The gay agenda? The gay agenda is us being able to live free and happily like everybody else.

**Karen Farmer:**

Thank you so much for sharing all of that. And truly thank you for creating this space in these worlds for others like us and all of your readers. And we're lucky to have you, TJ, and to have your words.

**TJ Klune:**

Thank you. I'm lucky to have all of you. So, the feeling is mutual.

**Karen Farmer:**

Awesome. Well, I know we don't have a ton of time left. So Craig, should we move on to our lightning round?

**Craig Silva:**

Coming off of that, we're about to ask you a bunch of silly questions now.

**Karen Farmer:**

Very silly.

**Craig Silva:**

Yes. Well lightening-

**Karen Farmer:**

That's good. That's a good way to end these things though.

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah. Yeah. So we've been doing this for the past four or five episodes, where we kind of end by asking just kind of rapid fire silly questions. You don't need to think about them. So Karen, if you would like to ask the first one.

**Karen Farmer:**

Yes. TJ, my first question for you, if you could hang out with one character from your latest book, who would you choose and why?

**TJ Klune:**

Rambo. Because Rambo is basically a vacuum cleaner that is going to make a lot of people cry, and he has the heart and soul of golden retriever.

**Craig Silva:**

Yes. That was the only correct answer to that question.

**TJ Klune:**

Yes. I want to give guys a little hint on that too. Each of the characters in *In the Lives of Puppets* is based on a musical performance. Rambo, can you guess what Rambos might be? I'll tell you. For example, the Coachman is based on Gerard Way from *My Chemical Romance*.

**Karen Farmer:**

Oh my gosh.

**TJ Klune:**

The Coachman is Gerrard Way from the *Black Parade*.

**Craig Silva:**

The *Black Parade*!

**TJ Klune:**

Right.

**Craig Silva:**

Yes.

**TJ Klune:**

The Blue Fairy is based on Annie Lennox and *Sweet Dreams Are Made of This*.

**Craig Silva:**

I will say this in the least spoiler-y way possible. The place the Blue Fairy is in, is so visual and beautiful. And this needs to be a movie or something, 'cause I need to see this.

**TJ Klune:**

Well, I hope that I get to announce something very soon. So that's-

**Craig Silva:**

Oh. What is your most favorite and least favorite household chore?

**TJ Klune:**

Oh my God. Favorite is cleaning kitchen grout. Oh God.

**Karen Farmer:**

Me too.

**TJ Klune:**

I love it. I love getting down with my little brush and my little spray. It's like-

**Craig Silva:**

That's literally what Karen said before this call.

**TJ Klune:**

It's like this little toothbrush thing that you can get and you turn it on and you clean the grout. And the whole thing smells horrible, because you're getting dirt cleaning up the grout. But when you're done and it dries, you're like, "Holy crap. I'm like Michelangelo. What is this? Look at my work on this stone."

**Craig Silva:**

The Sistine Chapel.

**TJ Klune:**

"What is this? Did I carve the David statue out of this?" And my least favorite chore as always is mopping. I hate mopping, and I have to do that when we get done talking today and I'm so annoyed.

**Karen Farmer:**

Oh, no.

**Craig Silva:**

And you have to kind of go backwards, so you don't step over the part you just cleaned. It's a whole ... Yeah.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah, for real. And I'm like, "Oh, okay. Oh, oops. I accidentally stepped in the part that I already mopped. Now my sock is wet and everything sucks."

**Karen Farmer:**

What is the most memorable trip you've ever taken?

**TJ Klune:**

To see the ... Oh, God. I told you I went to Amsterdam.

**Craig Silva:**

Mm-hmm.

**TJ Klune:**

We went to the floating flower garden market there, and that was supposed to be the coolest thing in the world, until I saw the History of Torture Museum right next to it. And then I went into the History of Torture Museum, because that sounded amazing. And then I didn't know that it was an interactive History of Torture Museum, where they want audience participation.

**Karen Farmer:**

Oh, no. Oh, no. Oh, no.

**TJ Klune:**

Oh, yeah. That was my favorite.

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah. I went to one of those too on a trip to Europe, and it was very strange. It was a wax figures all in various forms of torture. Luckily, I did not have to participate.

**TJ Klune:**

This one had all the instruments of torture and everything, and you got to get locked into certain things. And so I, being an introvert, always tried to hide behind everybody else, but they found me.

**Karen Farmer:**

Yep, they always do.

**TJ Klune:**

They found me, yeah.

**Karen Farmer:**

They always do.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah.

**Karen Farmer:**

They always do.

**Craig Silva:**

So your house is on fire. You have to leave immediately. What are the one or two things you grab on your way out? And living beings do not count.

**TJ Klune:**

Oh, two things that I grab. I'm not very stuff oriented. Oh shit, as I say that, then I'm going to say my PlayStation 5 and my signed first edition copy of *The Front Runner* by Patricia Nell Warren.

**Craig Silva:**

Nice.

**TJ Klune:**



Which I was actually able to get to know Ms. Warren before she passed, and she is just ... That was the first queer book I read as a kid. And granted it was traumatizing because of how it ends. And if you don't know, I won't spoil it here. But it's something I cherish, because she was a wonderful woman and just gave me some of the best writing advice.

**Karen Farmer:**

Cool. This one is ridiculous. I'm sorry.

**TJ Klune:**

Go. Go, go, go.

**Karen Farmer:**

If you pivoted to become a DJ, what would your DJ name be?

**TJ Klune:**

I go by TJ. My real name is Travis John Klune. When I was a kid, my family used to call me ... You can't use this against me. My family used to call me Traviolli. So it would be DJ Traviolli.

**Karen Farmer:**

I love that so much.

**Craig Silva:**

Perfect.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah, thought so.

**Karen Farmer:**

That's wonderful.

**Craig Silva:**

All right. Last lightning round question. What three words would your best friend use to describe you?

**TJ Klune:**

Possibly chaotic evil.

**Craig Silva:**

This is very similar to Hap.

**Karen Farmer:**

To Hap, yes.

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah.

**TJ Klune:**

Yes it is. I appear to be very gentle and I can be funny and I can be conversational, but I can also be vindictive and my brain is chaotic evil. That's just what it is. My brain is always moving at a billion miles per hour, so why not put that out into my real life too?

**Karen Farmer:**

I love it. Okay, our last ridiculous moment for you. We've been doing something called Instagram story time, where we look at your Instagram, we find a picture that is compelling and then ask you to tell us what happened.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah. Go.

**Karen Farmer:**

The picture we found, you are holding a giant pair of scissors and you look so happy.

**TJ Klune:**

Oh my God. Hold on, hold on, hold on, hold on.

**Craig Silva:**

For listeners, I think TJ's getting the ... Yes.

**Karen Farmer:**

Yes. The scissors are here.

**TJ Klune:**

So I was asked to brand open, that sounds weird, Barnes & Noble that opened up in about a 30 minutes north of where I live. And I told them, "If I'm going to do this, there needs to be a gigantic scissors, so I can cut the ribbon. And so they got the gigantic scissors, so I cut the ribbon. And then I told them as I was leaving, "I'm taking these scissors." And they said, "Okay." So I got to keep the giant scissors, because when I was a kid, I always wanted a pair of giant scissors, because you always saw in the news, grand opening or they're doing this or this. And everybody got to look so cool with giant scissors. And so for the first time in my life, I got to look cool with giant scissors. And if you thought that I was going to let that moment go to waste and not take the giant scissors home with me, you are out of your damn mind.

Now the real question that you should be asking me right now is, have I used these giant scissors to cut things? Yes, yes I have. I have. I've used these in unnecessary

ways. Ways that if I'd gotten smaller, normal size scissors would've made the job that much quicker. But because I have a pair of giant oversized scissors that requires me to use them, I tried to use them to prune the hedges too, but that didn't work very well. So now these hang in my writing office. So whenever I'm feeling sad, I can look over and be like, "You know what? You were once important enough [inaudible 00:53:45]."

**Karen Farmer:**

To hold the scissors.

**TJ Klune:**

To hold a pair of giant scissors to open a Barnes & Noble.

**Karen Farmer:**

I am crying, laughing.

**TJ Klune:**

Yes. People will ask me on my deathbed, what my greatest achievement in my writing career would be. And I will point with a shaking hand, "These scissors over there. Have I told you that story before?" "Yes, grandpa, you've told that every day since you got them." "Well, it was about when I was 37."

**Craig Silva:**

I think the PS5 just went down in the ranking to grab on the way out the door.

**TJ Klune:**

Oh no, it would. Had I remembered that my gigantic scissors were sitting right there, I would say, "Screw the PS5, man. This is the only thing I need to make me happy." Think, if I went to a desert island, what would be more important? A PS5 or a giant pair of scissors?

**Karen Farmer:**

The giant scissors. Yes.

**Craig Silva:**

The scissors. Yeah, definitely.

**TJ Klune:**

Thank you.

**Karen Farmer:**

Useful in multiple ways.

**TJ Klune:**

Right, right. Trust me, I have used them in multiple ways. Nobody take that wrong. That sounded like it could have come out wrong.

**Karen Farmer:**

Awesome. Well, very last question for you, TJ before we let you go. Our listeners always want to know, what are you reading and enjoying right now?

**TJ Klune:**

I am reading a book that is not out yet. It is by one of favorite authors that I get the chance to do her stop on in the states as she's coming over here. And that is *Some Desperate Glory* by Emily Tesh. And if you don't know Emily Tesh's prior ... This is her actual first full length novel, but she is known for writing two queer Novellas, *Silver In The Wood* and *Drowned Country*, which are some of the best atmospheric writing I have ever read. They are extraordinary. This is something completely different. Those are steeped in folklore and whatnot. This is a space adventure and this is remarkable. It is such a good book. I'm only about a third of the way through, but I'm so excited for Emily and this book to come out.

**Craig Silva:**

Well, one of our favorite parts of this podcast is getting great recommendations, and our to-be-read list is ever-growing. So thank you.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah.

**Craig Silva:**

Thank you for spending so much time with us. I know you have a million things going on. You have lots of work getting to do.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah. No, I'm going to go mop the floors right now.

**Craig Silva:**

True.

**TJ Klune:**

So thanks for that.

**Craig Silva:**

You have things to be going to cut.

**TJ Klune:**

Yeah.

**Craig Silva:**

So yeah.

**TJ Klune:**

I just thought of so many things I could cut today.

**Craig Silva:**

Watch out neighbors. Well, thank you so much for spending the time with us. This has been so fun. And congratulations again and we hope the tour goes great and everything.

**TJ Klune:**

Thank you. And remember everybody, *In the Lives of Puppets*, April 25th. And I will make you cry over a Roomba vacuum cleaner, and I do not feel bad about that in the slightest.

**Craig Silva:**

Well, on that note, thanks again and we'll talk to you soon.

**Karen Farmer:**

Thank you, TJ.

**TJ Klune:**

Thank you.

**Karen Farmer:**

Bye.

**TJ Klune:**

Bye.

**Karen Farmer:**

All right. Thank you so much for listening, everyone. We hope you enjoyed all of the wisdom and hilarity that TJ had to share with us. One of the things that I teased at the beginning was that we realized after recording, we didn't get the answer to a very important question from TJ Craig, would you like to tell the tale of the information we received?

**Craig Silva:**

Oh, sure. Sure, sure. So as TJ mentioned, each of the characters kind of has a song associated with them. Not in the book, but in his brain, I guess. And we forgot to ask who Rambo the vacuum cleaner robot was, what his song was. And TJ very graciously sent it to us and it was *Baby Shark*.

**Karen Farmer:**

It was.

**Craig Silva:**

Which then was in my head for the following three days after receiving that email. So thanks TJ. Appreciate it.

**Karen Farmer:**

When he sent us the email to give us this information, it included the video of *Baby Shark*.

**Craig Silva:**

Yes.

**Karen Farmer:**

And our agreement was that if he provided us with this information, we had to watch the entire song.

**Craig Silva:**

Did you watch the entire song?

**Karen Farmer:**

I did, because it was our agreement with TJ.

**Craig Silva:**

Oh, I broke that agreement.

**Karen Farmer:**

TJ's going to hear this.

**Craig Silva:**

I watched five seconds of it.

**Karen Farmer:**

Oh ,no. Oh, no. You're in trouble.

**Craig Silva:**

Now you're going to be the favorite.

**Karen Farmer:**

Excellent.

**Craig Silva:**

This was your plan all along to call me out on the podcast.

**Karen Farmer:**

Well Craig, before we sign off, I would love to hear what you're reading right now.

**Craig Silva:**

A book that I just finished and was obsessed with was *The Stolen Heir* by Holly Black, which is book four in The Folk Of The Air series. Which if you're into elves and trolls and nonsense, then this is the book for you. Loved it, loved it, loved it.

**Karen Farmer:**

Awesome.

**Craig Silva:**

Have you read any of those?

**Karen Farmer:**

I haven't, but I'm going to now because you've spoken very highly of them.

**Craig Silva:**

It's fun.

**Karen Farmer:**

Sold.

**Craig Silva:**

You get to meet Cardan and Jude. You're in for such a treat.

**Karen Farmer:**

I'm into it. I'll do it.

**Craig Silva:**

Yes. What are you reading right now? My brain stopped working there for a second.

**Karen Farmer:**

Are you okay?

**Craig Silva:**

We need to stop recording these at the end of the day, when my brain is fried.

**Karen Farmer:**

Right now, I am reading *Homebodies* by Tembe Denton-Hurst, and very much enjoying it. I am reading this via audiobook, and it's about a Black woman in New York who is a

high-powered writer in the media. She's a beauty writer. She is replaced at her job, and it kind of sets her life into a reckoning with what she does for her career, what art is to her, what her relationships mean to her, even where she lives, and I'm just really enjoying the writing. The narrator, Marcella Cox is fantastic. Highly recommend.

**Craig Silva:**

I also read that and liked it a lot as well. So good.

**Karen Farmer:**

Did you listen to the audiobook?

**Craig Silva:**

I did, yeah. The audio was so good. Really good, really good.

**Karen Farmer:**

I can't get-

**Craig Silva:**

How far into it are you?

**Karen Farmer:**

I'm about halfway, I would say.

**Craig Silva:**

Nice. Do you have any favorite characters?

**Karen Farmer:**

I love the main character, Mickey.

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah.

**Karen Farmer:**

A lot. I also love her girlfriend, Lex. I'm very much enjoying her and their relationship, and watching how they kind of support each other in times of at-home crisis. It has been very reminiscent of the pandemic and all of those things. So, love it.

**Craig Silva:**

Yeah. How excited are you for our next episode?

**Karen Farmer:**

Very. I don't know that I am the one to speak to that though, because I think this is one of your favorite authors that we got to interview.



**Craig Silva:**

Yes. I think we teased this at the end of the last episode that we were going to be recording with V.E. Schwab, and now we have done that. So that was really fun for me.

**Karen Farmer:**

So now you believe it's real. It actually happened.

**Craig Silva:**

Yes. Yes. Up until the moment of recording, I was like, "It'll probably fall through." But it didn't, and it was awesome.

**Karen Farmer:**

Yes. So that is coming soon to all of you, as is.

**Craig Silva:**

Yes.

**Karen Farmer:**

The next book in the Darker Shades of Magic series.

**Craig Silva:**

Yes, so exciting. And by soon, in six months and it's killing me.

**Karen Farmer:**

It'll be here before you know it.

**Craig Silva:**

I like that I asked for an arc of it before the podcast, and the publisher was like, "Come on. We're not giving you that."

**Karen Farmer:**

Worth the try.

**Craig Silva:**

So the podcast does not have enough sway for that just yet. Yeah.

**Karen Farmer:**

Well, thanks so much for joining us again, everyone. We'll see you next time with our V.E. Schwab interview, and as always, thanks for listening.