

You are the World's Greatest Author: Interview with Chuck Tingle

TAL

Hello everyone and welcome to another bonus episode of Regarding Dracula. Today we are talking with the world's greatest author, Chuck Tingle, who has written some really incredible horror and erotica books, and I'm super excited to dive in. Chuck, do you want to introduce yourself and talk a little bit about your work?

CHUCK

Yes. Hello, I am Chuck Tingle. I am the writer of traditionally published queer horror novels. So far, that would be, as far as the traditionally published ones, *Camp Damascus*, *Barrier Gaze*, and now *Lucky Day* coming out this summer. And then many, many self-published erotica shorts featuring anything from unicorns to dinosaurs to big feet to living objects or the physical manifestation of ideas. So I would say a broad range.

TAL

I would agree. I think your writing output is massive and I would love to know what inspires you creatively, and what gives you the spark to just keep writing?

CHUCK

Oh, you know, it sounds very unromantic, although I think that it is. Personally, it's romantic to me. It is kind of utilitarian in the sense that I just kind of write, in the sense that birds fly and sharks swim. You know, there's this comment, the big kind of divide is, do you create art for yourself or for your audience? And there's kind of no right or wrong answer to that. And I think that I have stumbled upon some strange third thing, which is, I just kind of do it. It's like eating or breathing. It's the natural state of my body to create things. And some might think, oh, Chuck, that takes away all the romance and the drama. And I actually just, I find it kind of powerful. I think it's...I think there's a lot of power in coming at things from a unique way like that.

TAL

When you sit down to write, do you like, have an idea going in, or do you sit down to write and an idea sort of blooms from that? Like, how's the order?

CHUCK

Oh, you know, it depends on, you know, like I said at the beginning—I have my queer horror novels and my self-published erotica and both of those have a different process. I would say it starts...I have what I call my morning trot, which is about an hour walk. It's like a hike up into the hills of Los Angeles. [Tal laughs.] And that's where I think of a lot of ideas. And I have my notes app on my phone. So especially for erotica, I will generally have, if I hear something or think of a concept, I just have the pages and pages of erotica, “Tingler” ideas. But if I set out to write a horror novel, that process is similar in that I do it on the morning walk, but I like to think of kind of concepts, which some would call “high concept”, which is basically like a pretty simple, almost a punchline of a concept, sometimes using irony, that is like a one-sentence pitch in film. They use this to talk about things that could get sold on idea alone, not just the actor or the director. A great example is something like *Liar Liar*, which is a very silly thing to reference all these years later, but that is high concept in the sense of it's a lawyer who cannot lie. That is kind of the epitome of it. There's this irony, there's this thing. And so I have a bunch of kind of high concept things rolling around that I think, oh, that's kind of a fun, interesting hook, but that's not enough for me. I like to write with meaning first. Not necessarily plot or character, but what is my gift to the reader? What am I trying to say? What's the point of all this? Generally, that's a pretty emotional thing. So something that's moving me at the moment, something in the news, something like that, and then that will bubble up inside of me. And if I really feel big feelings about something that I wanna say, eventually, my big feelings of a message and what I care about and what I wanna say will tumble around in my head and crash into one of those high concept ideas. And I'll realize, oh, this idea is a really good vehicle for that point. And that is when I think, okay, now I've got something. And then I start to kind of figure out what that novel is going to be. And all of my horror novels have been developed in that specific way.

TAL

That's a super cool process.

CHUCK

Yes. Yeah. Well, you know, it is so mental. It's funny cause I am a big plotter in... it's funny terms, but in writing people say pantsers or plotters. Pantser meaning you fly by the seat of your pants. Plotter means you plot things. And I am very strongly plot, but I do it all in my head. I don't really write down the plot. So if I'm taking these morning walks and I come up with this novel idea that I wanna do, basically I start telling myself the story during my walks. And I would say after a few weeks of that, as it evolves, eventually, like when I know it's time to write it, is when I could sit down, like at a dinner table across from you and tell you the story from beginning to end; just kind of recite it like campfire style. And at that point, then I know that it's time to sit down and write it. But I do all that in my head actually.

TAL

You're kind of like a secret plotter.

CHUCK

Yes, I don't want anyone to steal my notes. [*Tal laughs.*] The safest place is to not write them down at all.

TAL

Oh God, especially in the age of AI, it's true.

CHUCK

Yes.

TAL

Do you have, like, one favorite story that you've written or a piece that you're really proud of?

CHUCK

I would say it is only fair to divide those between my erotica and my horror novels. I think as far as erotica goes, I really like...there's a, you know, my Tingleers are...I think they're all political. You know, a lot of buckers see them and think that I'm kind of joking and things. And I am very sincere about it. It's okay to laugh at them or with them rather, you know, whatever you wanna do. That's the beauty of art. Anyone can react. But personally, when I trot into them, you know, it is a sincere expression. And I think a lot of buckers don't realize how political it is in the statement that I'm trying to make about, you know, queerness, about acceptance. There was many years ago, conservatives used to say, oh, "we don't want gay marriage because what's next? Someone's gonna marry two unicorns and Bigfoot?" And my thought was always, what would be wrong with that? That sounds like paradise.

[*Tal laughs.*]

What a wonderful...so the conservative, like, hell is basically what the Tingleverse is supposed to be, revealing that actually that is not a dystopia at all, it's a utopia. And you know, some of them are more directly political where I'm...there's a news item of the day and then I'm just saying, okay, "what's my take on that?" And some of them are more existential and my favorite things to write are the existential ones.

And I think the first major existential Tingle was something called *Reamed By My Reaction to the Title of This Book*, which I have always loved just the idea of physically manifesting the reader into a story and having the love interest be their reaction to the story. And so that was like the first big existential one. So it will always hold a big place in my heart. And then as far as my horror novels, I am fortunate enough that every time I put out a new book, I always think it's the best thing I've ever written.

So, *Lucky Day* is the new one, and I like just, the cover was announced today. It's beautiful. And so that one, I just, every time it comes out, I think, how am I gonna top this? I can't write anything better than this. So that's a very good feeling to have, because I know that the next book that comes out, I'll think the same thing.

TAL

Speaking of, like we just talked a little bit about your Tingle. You're known for taking what people might see as extremely silly premises, extremely seriously. And as you just said, sincerely.

CHUCK

Yes.

TAL

What's your process for world building? Like for something, say, Harriet Porber or... Literally anything else where you have living objects.

CHUCK

Yes, well, I think honestly, there's a few things. One is that it's kind of my natural state. I am autistic, I talk about that a lot. And a lot of, I think, you know, that's not a monolith. It is a spectrum. And that's why it's called the autism spectrum. But for me, specifically, a lot of the ways that manifests is in that there's a lot of things that I think others think are outrageous that really don't faze me. I'm pretty much not fazed by anything, especially when it comes to art. I just kind of "let it rip". So I think that a lot of the ideas that I come up with, I think like, I guess the emotion I would describe is when I think of something like a Tingle idea that I really like, it's not necessarily, oh, that's. funny, it's more like, oh, that's cute. I think cute is the right term or like joyful. Like there's a certain whimsy to it where there's a hint of humor, but to me it's just more like, oh, what a sweet thing. And so those are the kinds of ideas that I hunt down. And I think that where the autism comes in is like, I really, once I have the premise, I take it really...you could say seriously, but I would say logically or scientifically.

And so I think that makes for a lot of good world building because the secret to world building is just extrapolating on the things that you've done. I think a lot of maybe even more neurotypical writers might come up with a fantastical presentpresence. But I'm not even using that word right? A fantastical premise! Oh my gosh, I need to get...I need to get more sleep. I, that was the third try on a very simple word.

But they think of something like that and they kind of take it there and then they say, and the rest is magic. And because I have such a scientific and like logic-striving brain through my autism, I can't do that. So I have these, very kind of fantastical premises. And then the rest of my brain kicks in and thinks, well, how does that work? And then once you start chasing that rabbit hole, you'll create a world like in Harriet Porber, that's how the world building happens.

TAL

I love the idea of applying science to whimsy.

CHUCK

Yes. I think all my horror novels function in that way too. I have realized very recently that horror is, you know, in the broad idea of speculative fiction or however you wanna say it...but horror, science fiction and fantasy always kind of trot together. And I think that within horror, you can kind of be, you know, horror fantasy or horror science fiction. And the difference, if we wanna get into art analysis, that I would draw there is, is what you're creating or the thing, an unexplainable mystery like a ghost or something that...that you never really delve into why that's happening. It's just magic. That would be like a horror fantasy.

And I think most horror falls into that category. You don't really need to explain, you know, why the werewolf is the way it is or why the vampire is the way that it is. My interest, and I think my perspective that I just laid out, affects my horror writing because all of it ends up kind of being horror sci-fi because I always explain what's going on. Even if it's a sort of, speculative explanation, I'm at least

trying to pull apart, like, how does this fit into the real world? It's almost the twist that always comes in my books. And to me, it's just logical, but everyone, especially with something like *Camp Damascus*, my first book is about demons, but you realize halfway through that it's kind of explaining the demons as animals, as just another species, and it's like a science explanation for them. So I think that has...it's been the style for me that has accidentally developed, if that makes sense.

TAL

I think it makes perfect sense. Are there other ways where erotica and horror intersect for you?

CHUCK

Oh yes, absolutely. I see erotica, horror, and comedy actually as all the same thing. I call them the malign trinity of genre, but they are seeking reactions of the body. They're almost like genres with side missions; where comedy, you have laughter, erotica, you have arousal, and horror, you have fear. So along with sort of the three-act structure or however many beats of your story, depending on whose method you're going with, you also have to be striking these points. You have to be making people aroused. You have to be getting laughs. And that kind of makes it harder to write, although I also think it makes it a little easier that, technically, you can have two missions. Like you can have a comedy that the story's not very good and if everyone laughs, then it's a classic. Same with erotica or horror. I try to do both, but I really love dabbling in these genres because, you know, I think there's this sort of historical, puritanical idea that our body is bad, that it is wrong. You see this with a lot of, you know, religious subtext is that we have to... disobey the cravings of our body, and that's the only way to be divine, kind of. And I reject that, and I reject that as an intellectual idea as well, that only art that is kind of the mind, so to speak, is good art. I do not see the distinction between high and low brow, and I think the best art is a little bit of both. And so that kind of falls into that category as well.

TAL

I feel like... This also comes across in the queer themes of your writing, especially today, it feels like certain governments are telling queer people, women, what to do with their body, and how they should feel about it.

CHUCK

Oh, absolutely. Yes, yes, it is a government thing. I mean, once you realize that the oppression of kind of like creativity, but also, bodies, women's bodies, you know, queer bodies...it's all the same thing. It is, there is, it's in religion, it's in government, it's everywhere. It's even in, like, art critique, where we are saying, no, it can't be your primal brain. And I...this is big quotes, cause I don't even really think it's divided that way, but it's sort of like the intelligents, or the smart, the intellectuals, the powers that be will always try to say that art of the body is wrong and that your body is wrong, honestly. And so I am very proud to, everywhere that I can, reject that and say, no, I'm writing erotica and I want it to be, and it is serious, you know? It may be funny sometimes, but it is sincere. Yes, I'm writing queer horror, but it is sincere. And it's honestly taken me a decade before people even accept that because they really subconsciously are not liberal or conservative, whatever. It is really hard for buckaroos to untether that thing that has been oppressing them so long that these quote, low brow bodily art forms are, you know, are bad and not worthy of critique or time.

TAL

Yeah. And you just mentioned sort of being proud of yourself for including that in the writing. And I think, as a whole, the queer community should also be proud of you. I think your writing is inspirational for that and many other reasons.

CHUCK

Oh, that's so sweet. Thank you. Very kind.

TAL

It's taken 10 years or so for people to kind of come around on that. But I think the work you do and the work of other queer artists is so integral for existing as queer people, for telling the government to fuck off, for lack of a better word.

CHUCK

Yes. No, I agree. It is, I think for any marginalized group, there is a sort of thing, there is a focus on like, praxis and what is actually, you know, what is actually doing the work, a sort of like an anti-slacktivist sort of thing, which I understand and I appreciate, and it is a discussion worth having. But what I, I get afraid sometimes, and the reason why I personally try not to gatekeep people's protest or their method of resistance. I think that they're all fine. I don't really even believe in slacktivism. I don't think it's a real thing. I think anything helps and the reason for that is because we don't really know how much our art or these things, or a little post or whatever little thing can do is actually building into something else. We just cannot know and I think that one of the biggest changes for anything to get more rights or anything that happens when the culture changes. It's not necessarily like a law that gets passed or something else. It's the cultural consciousness through these small things like supporting art, supporting queer art. That is actually what makes these big changes. And it kind of seems like nothing at the time.

They say, oh, you wrote a song. Okay, well, did you donate \$10,000 to this cause or whatever? And I just would caution buckers to think, you know, both those are important and changing the culture itself has a lot of power.

TAL

Do you have any advice for queer buckaroos in this day and age?

CHUCK

Yes, I mean, okay. I mean, what my advice would be has severely changed in the past week. It's, you know, I'm-

TAL

Shocking.

CHUCK

Yes, I mean- You know, and the other thing is too, it's like it has changed and at the same time, it's not like, you know, the previous administration was exactly doing everything that they could. So I will say that I honestly think summing it up in just one kind of pithy piece of advice is not necessarily the way to do it, but in that, I kind of have a pithy piece of advice, which is to understand the broadness of what moving forward on this timeline is going to take, and to not look for any one piece of advice, I guess, other than to not look for one piece of advice. I honestly think it is like a...it is a cultural thing. There are issues of safety, kind of depending on what state you live in. It is so complex, that really what it's about is, like, finding the resources that you can, doing what you can to resist. And, you know, I guess ultimately another thing is I'm saying that is like, I think the less gatekeeping of that we can do, the better. And that includes internal gatekeeping. Like don't gatekeep yourself if you think, "oh, I wanna help in this way, but, you know, I don't know, I'm scared" or these things or "will anyone like my art because I wanna talk about this thing". Just don't gatekeep yourself. And if other people are coming at it from an angle that seems kind of, oh, what is this? You know, let them explore that. I think honestly, it's gonna be a team effort with a broad variety of approaches.

TAL

I'm gonna switch to lighter topics now. I feel like we hit all the heavy stuff right out of the gate.

CHUCK

That's great. I love going deep. This is just-

TAL

Great.

CHUCK

Yeah, no, this is my favorite kind of trap.

TAL

Excellent. So completely off topic to what we were just talking about. What's your favorite horror movie? Like if there's one favorite.

CHUCK

Oh, wow. You know, it's interesting. My answer for this is very boring, but it is- It's just true. I'm not gonna lie. I'm not gonna make something up. I watch, like if there's a horror movie coming out, I'm watching it. I'm going to see it. I, most of my writing, I read very little, which you're not supposed to admit, but I don't care because that's just the way I try. I watch so many movies, especially horror films. And a lot of my books are plotted after film. So I really, you know, I love film. And yet my answer for favorite horror movie is honestly probably *Scream*, the first *Scream*. I know it's, you know, it's very middle of the road, I think, but I love it. And I think it's culturally very important. Most of all, it's just kind of personal to me because of like when I saw it, the memories of it, the way it affected me. I just, it's definitely my number one.

TAL

I think that's a fine answer.

CHUCK

Thank you. Every time so I feel like I need to like defend it [*Tal laughs*] so much, but I, you know, I just, that's the one.

TAL

I feel like I'm the exact opposite of you where I read a lot, but I watch very few movies.

CHUCK

Honestly, that's probably better, maybe for your brain. I think there's something good about going through the words on the page. I wish that I read more. But I

just, you know, I actually...funny enough, I do think it is part of my autism is, you know, there are some, obviously, some autistic people that just devour books. But for me, what happens is if I'm reading a book, my brain starts to move on to other things, like a sentence will have an interesting rhythm and it'll just start repeating. And I'll get four pages past and think, I did not hear, or like mentally hear or connect with or understand a single word for the last four pages. And then I have to go back and it takes me forever.

So audio books have been really, really good for me. I read those way more. I love my Libby app. And then I read a lot more now that I am in publishing, especially traditional publishing, because I do blurbs for my buds. So if there's, like, an author I know, I'll read their book. So I read way more now than I ever have in my life.

TAL

I'm also a big fan of the Libby app.

CHUCK

Oh, it's great.

TAL

Promo for the Libby app. This episode's not sponsored.

CHUCK

Well, I will say you can list, like as a young Buckaroo, the books that I read in my young life, probably like, I don't know, five to ten, not many. I just did not read one of them, *Dracula*. That is one of the books that I did read.

TAL

Who was your favorite character in *Dracula*?

CHUCK

Oh my gosh. I honestly can't even, here's the other thing. I can't remember it. I barely remember it. I mean, much like my *Scream* answer, I feel like, I mean, the Buckaroo himself is probably the one. Look, I barely even...I read it. This is what I'm talking about. I probably read the first paragraph and then zoned out. One thing I do remember, I do remember like, loving it, like being like this, like I was like, I loved it, which is especially for, you know, I'm always, this is, I guess, a little bit ignorant of me, but whenever I read like an old book, like one of the classics, and it captivates me with the pace and the timing and the tone, like a modern book, I'm always blown away by that for, I'm just like, wow, they really, they got the story beats down as if, as if those didn't exist back then. But I remember reading *Dracula* and thinking, wow, okay. I get it. This is a, yeah, wow. We got a lot of action in here.

TAL

I'm always like a little annoyed when I read a classic book and it's really good. Cause I'm like, oh, it's a classic for a reason, I guess. Okay, English teachers, you were right.

CHUCK

Yes. No, I get that. Well, some, some of them too, you read and you think, okay. There is another reason than pure reading enjoyment that this became the cultural touchstone that it is. That does happen every once in a while too. But *Dracula*, I've personally not one of those books for me. I think it is really like, there's something there.

TAL

If you were in Jonathan Harker's situation, trapped in a castle with Dracula and three beautiful mysterious vampiric women, are you getting out of that castle alive? What do you think, like, the situation you would end up in would be?

CHUCK

Oh my gosh. You have just tapped into my innate bisexuality by describing just a sort of a reality show style trapped in a castle with a handsome buckaroo and

three beautiful women. You know, honestly, I am a...bit of a homebody. I'd be trying to get out of there. I would be, I don't even, honestly, I wouldn't even get in the...I'd see the cast, I'd go, you know what? I used to be, like, I would, I think night number one, it'd be like late, everybody would be going to bed and I'd be thinking, yeah, you know, I'm kind of homesick. I'm gonna like, I'll leave a note and I'm gonna go home. I'm gonna sleep in my own bed.

TAL

That's an introverted mood right there.

CHUCK

Yeah, it's funny because I'm really not introverted, but when it comes to like the wee hours of the morning, I just, I have that thing where I think, it'd be pretty nice to be in my own bed.

TAL

Okay, we're switching topics again.

CHUCK

I love it, jump around.

TAL

All over the place. What advice would you give to aspiring writers?

CHUCK

Everyone is supposed to...in writing classes, they tell you like, do you lead with, like who's in the driver's seat? Is it your character or is it the plot? And you're actually, you're supposed to say character in modern writing, that's what your English teacher is gonna give you an A plus for. I say neither. I lead with the idea, the message. I consider myself a message-based writer. And I say that not to say like, oh, how cool am I to reject these ideas. The reason I talk about this a lot in interviews is because you're not supposed to say that. It's not cool. It's not intellectual. You're just, we've been told not to do that in every writing class. And

I just want buckaroos to know that like, there is no correct path, not just for writing, but for creation. And if you look at my career, especially, there's like three or four things like that, including the way that I got my traditional publishing deal, which are just kind of, your English teacher would tell you is dead wrong. And I'm pretty dang successful. So I would say, you know, if you're looking at the trail, if you wanna trot up the path that is well-worn, that most buckaroos go winding up the hill, that's okay. There's a reason why it's so well-worn and there's a lot of good advice there. But if you look up that hill and you see the underbrush and there's this trail, it's not even a deer trail, it's just you think, I'm gonna go that way, through the weeds, do it. Because you only live once. And the idea that that's not going to be successful, I think is crouched in the idea that, honestly, if you want a career as an artist, you're fighting an uphill battle anyway. If you think, wow, I'll never make a living doing that, you probably might not make a living doing it the traditional way either. It's very hard to be an artist. So you might as well do it the way that feels right to you, that touches your soul, that proves love to you. Because here's the thing, if that way works, then you're never gonna feel like you work a day in your life. You're just gonna create, you're gonna change things, you're going to literally move this timeline in a direction in a very broad way because you set out on that path, so you might as well do it.

TAL

Is there a story behind Buckaroo as sort of just like a catch-all term for people? Because I love that, and it's made its way into my own vernacular. And I would love to know, like, is there a story or did it just kind of, like, happen?

CHUCK

That, you know, that's very interesting. There is so much, like when I first started posting and writing my books, I've always been interested in the art being more than just kind of the text on the page, or the music in the record, or the film and the camera. Like, I think it is everything. It is a mixed media project between a creator and an audience and the actual physical art to me is a very small part of that, maybe like a third. Everything else is where the real art lies. And so when I

started to post online and create this, there were a lot of ideas that I had, some to hide my privacy, a lot of them to keep me anonymous, but a lot of them were kind of metaphors for something that meant a lot to me. So it gave me a chance to talk about these big feelings in a metaphorical way. The example I use is that if I posted on Twitter at the time that I pet a cat today, maybe I pet a dog, but it is like still, this is a very honest, real expression of who I am, and sometimes it's very strongly metaphorical. When it comes to the language of buckaroos, what's really funny is that was not a conscious choice at all, but I think like most art, sometimes the art knows before you do. There are things that I created as metaphors or different names for people or things that privately I can say over the years, I've realized five years later, oh, I called it that because of this, and I didn't know it. Or something that hasn't even happened yet, which gets a little spiritual, but there will be things that I didn't know that then came out in the art, and I thought, oh, well, I named that five years ago. You know, it's a very powerful thing.

buckaroos was not one of, you know, it just kind of was, I do actually use that word quite a bit in my daily life, actually. But what I like about it is that because I focus so much and care so much about, like, gender and gender expression and the freedom of gender expression, trans issues, I love that it's a non-binary term. That's actually, I did not think of that at all. And it's kind of one of those things where it's like the art I think knows before I do. And so it just kind of...it worked out really well.

TAL

You touched on this a little bit in the previous question. I'd love to know if having a level of anonymity and writing under a pseudonym makes creating easier. And if so, how?

CHUCK

Yes, I mean. Yeah, originally that's why I wanted to do this. Well, there's a couple of reasons. One is I am known a little bit, maybe a lot, who knows, but I'm known enough that there are buckaroos who would know who, you know, I've been a

creative my whole life. I've never had, like, a traditional job. So from a young age, I've had a career in art, I guess is what I will say. What art form I...I try to keep vague and all that, but it's enough that other folks could know me from that. And so I knew I wanted this to kind of be like a separate expression, a lot because I find symbolism to be very powerful. And it really is, you know, buckaroos will come up to me at live events and they'll whisper something in my ear. And then they'll say, I've never told any other living person that, you know, and will have a good cry and stuff. And the reason they feel like they can do that is because I am wearing a mask. It's similar to, in therapy sometimes, buckaroos will use two puppets talking to each other to kind of say how they really feel. And I believe it's Oscar Wilde who said, if you want a man to speak the truth, give him a mask. So there is a power there that I really wanted to tap into. And then also...funny enough...I...my autism, even though I was diagnosed in my early twenties...not something that I talk about very often. And I'm also very neuro-typically passing. If or when I am ever revealed, I know there will be some probably non-autistic buckaroos who will, will see me and say things like, oh, well he doesn't look autistic, which, you know, any autistic buckaroos know that one. And so, you know, I think that there was that because I just didn't talk about my autism that much, and this is a way for me to explore. And as a bisexual too, in a hetero-presenting relationship, I don't talk about my sexuality. I was not necessarily out because I was closeted. I just was not out because I never had to talk about it. It's like, it just wasn't really a part of my life. So being anonymous was a great way for me to explore those things. I mean, also, you know, I consider myself non-dysphoric trans and that's another one, was there are all these things where, like, everything about me looks like a sort of cis-hetero-neurotypical buckaroo. And so, I don't know, having that space to be open about that was very good for my health. I would say it saved my life. And yeah, so being anonymous in that way was helpful. And then to wrap it up, the very obvious thing that most folks don't think about is, you know, because I'm so political and, you know, MAGA-buckaroos send me death threats every-I get death threats all the dang time. So the fact that no, like, Trump supporters can, can find my address and like swap me or things like that, pretty helpful.

TAL

I believe that. As someone that was targeted by good old Ben Shapiro a couple of years ago. I feel that really hard.

CHUCK

Yes. Oh my gosh. Well, I am so sorry. I have other creator...the amount of times that my creator buds who have a large audience will say, gosh, I wish I would have worn a mask from the start like you did. A lot of my buds who get targeted in situations like that will come to me for advice. And I always say, listen, you have to take my advice really with a grain of salt and I'm gonna try to be empathetic, but I don't feel...I don't feel that. Like there's been plenty of times where some big account or something has sent everyone after me. And like I said, I get all these death threats. I don't feel it. I don't care. It doesn't hurt me. It doesn't bother me. Because the symbol of me takes all of it. It's like this armor where it's like, if I have a thousand comments in a day from these MAGA basement dwellers, literally I don't even think about it. And my other friends who are writers or authors or musicians who have these things, like big audiences, they'll talk to me, we'll go to lunch and they'll say, "I can't think", this is really ruining my day because there's all this after me. So the mask has been really helpful in that actually.

TAL

I'm jealous a little bit.

CHUCK

Well, you know, you know, you felt it, you know? There's a...it's a- weird feeling too because it is all online. So there's part of you in your head that's like, why am I, why do I care? Like what is happening here? But you do, like it's that disconnection of our primal brain with our higher brain or whatever. Like you're gonna feel it, you know?

TAL

This might be similar to the question I just asked, maybe a little lighter. How does it make you feel to see your work shared online as a meme or like more broadly, people being like, oh, look at this silly little thing. Like, how does that make you feel as an artist?

CHUCK

I love it. I, well, okay, I should preface this by saying that I love all of it, bad or good. I actually love it. And this is me, again, I am privileged to say this because of my mask. I actually love it when all the goofs come after me too. I really do. Like, I mean, that is, why else am I? I'm here to create art. And when I see the timeline tilting on its axis because of something that I made...its axis, it is delightful. The one thing that I think bothers me, and it's not necessarily because it's my art, it's like a cultural critique almost. The words you use were like, this is silly, this is fun, this is funny. I love that. If someone does that, it warms my heart. It's a beautiful thing. There is a thing culturally that I think has really infected sort of a generation that has been raised in like online message boards of irony and not only irony of not being able to just like something, it has to be shrouded in a sort of like, I hate it. It has to be like, I'm sharing this because I'm, because I like, oh my gosh, kill it with fire type things, or like, I hate this. And it's like, these are jokes that I get.

And like, sure, it's funny in certain contexts and everything, but I think with my work, I start to notice that there's kind of this entire generation that's been a bit irony poisoned where they can love my books. They can have them in. in hardcover and when they post about it online, it is always through this sheen of like, oh, I love this awful writer, Chuck Tingle. He's the worst and I love him so much. And I honestly, you know, it's fine. I'm not here to critique anyone and the way that they express themselves. Like everyone can do that. It's okay. But it is the one thing that I see and it almost just kind of like, it makes me sad because I think, gosh, "you don't have to do that. Like you can be proud." There is "no so bad, it's good". It's just good. It's, if you like it, it's good. And so I wish that some buckers could tap into that more, kind of for their sake. I think that there's so

much vividness and color and hue in this timeline and in the world that you're missing out on if you have to veil everything in irony.

TAL

When I was in, I wanna say like middle or high school, I started watching Vlogbrothers on YouTube and their whole thing was like, oh, we're nerds. And they ended up defining being a nerd as being unironically enthusiastic about stuff. And part of me is so glad to have had that influence.

CHUCK

Oh, that's beautiful. Yes, 100%. In fact, to go back to one of your questions about like what can... can we do as queer people or as any marginalized group is like, if there's something that you love, you don't have to pretend that you don't. You don't have to, you can be enthusiastic about existence. There is so much dark, terrible stuff happening to find the things that move you and then hide them. Like, you know, you don't have to do that.

TAL

This sparks a new question I have for you. What art moves you? Like, is there any artist or, I don't know, other creations of art that you just wanna share right now?

CHUCK

Oh gosh, everything. I would be a terrible film critic because every single movie that I see, even if it's, you know, if others don't like it, I just, I always find something to like about it. It's very hard for me to not like a piece of art. Honestly, the only thing that, kind of...that will like turn me off and make me not like a piece of art is if I feel like it's not respecting my time that I gave it. If I feel like someone is like if something is boring, especially for the sake of like, well, fuck you for audience. Like, you know, you can't, you know, that is....that bothers me. And even sometimes when it is like that. I will still think, okay, well, at least it's interesting. Like it's okay that they did. I mean, I don't know if any listeners saw the film Skinamarink, which is like three hours and it's very like nothing happens. That was my favorite movie of the year. I loved, I just, and that is like

the opposite of what I'm talking—you know? So I am open to something that tests my patience. It's more like. the feeling of the artist not caring.

TAL

Yeah.

CHUCK

You can kind of feel it through. And so everything else I kind of love. As far as influences, none of them are writers, but I can name my five influences. And I think anyone who likes my stuff should check them out. I call them the two Andys, the two Davids and Jordan. It would be Andy Warhol, Andy Kaufman. Andy Kaufman, probably being like my number one. And then David Byrne from the *Talking Heads*, actually David Byrne's probably my number one and David Lynch, RIP just passed. And then Jordan Peele is like the newest addition to that. And between those five creators, I think it's kind of a pretty good summary of, like, everything that I do and kind of stand for and create.

TAL

What does it take to be the world's greatest author? Feel free to interpret this question however you want.

CHUCK

Oh, well, you already are. Literally what it takes is just saying it, knowing it for yourself. It is not an external decision that the timeline forces on you. It is yourself. I think everyone listening to this, if you are a writer, heck, if you're not a writer, you already are the world's greatest author. I think the reason that I say that and that I am the world's greatest author is because I believe it and because I think a lot of folks will see that as me being arrogant and think, oh, Chuck thinks he's number one. I do think I'm number one, but I think that we are all number one. I think that we have been kind of crushed, especially if you think under kind of the grinding boots of capitalism, of this competitiveness, that there is only one number one medal. And I disagree with that. That's a competition that I didn't

agree to. I think we all get the number one medal. We are all the world's greatest author.

I am at the top of the mountain and there is plenty of room at the top. There's room for every single person listening to this. And that goes for all things. All you have to do is say that you are, and I believe that you are, because we define the timeline how we want. And there are obviously things that we bump up against, that will say, well, that's all well and good, but I gotta pay my rent kind of thing. We live in these systems and that is fine.

But when it comes to art and things like, what is the greatest art? Something that is utterly nebulous and by definition, cannot really truly be objectively decided, then you know what, take the reins, be the world's greatest artist. I think that we all are.

TAL

Aw. That's so wholesome.

CHUCK

Yes, I do have a wholesome streak.

TAL

I feel like we need more wholesome streaks in today's climate. We keep coming back to this. I feel like I need to say for posterity that we recorded this January 24th and it has been a week of governmental nonsense. And I know that's coming in through the questions I ask.

CHUCK

Well, you know what's gonna happen is like, if anyone jumps back to this a year from now, they're gonna just say something like, "Oh bless their hearts. They thought they had it rough when week one".

TAL

Yeah. Oh, they thought it was bad then.

CHUCK

Yes.

TAL

All right. I have one final question for you. Do you have any new or just, in general, releases you'd like to promote?

CHUCK

Yes, actually I, you know, so is my new horror novel. And I would just like this... *Lucky Day*. If you're interested in, you know, if you aren't aware of me and you've been listening to this and like you're interested in what I create, that book is coming out. And by the time this airs, it probably will not be out yet because pre-orders take a long time. And I would just say, please take a moment to pre-order the book.

I know there's a lot of industries, like video games have big problems with people not delivering pre-orders and things, but pre-ordering books is really effective. I mean, like literally down to bookstores have amounts of physical shelf space where they, like, know how many books they can fit and things like that. And if there's more pre-orders, the likelihood that you'll be on a shelf is high. There's like all this stuff. So it really directly...directly helps authors to not just wait until the book comes out, but to take a moment and to pre-order it.

And I feel like right now, especially this week, we are looking for ways to help. We've already kind of talked about it. And I think that finding queer, neurodivergent, outsider authors, of which I am all, but also like counterculture authors or figures, not just me, but anyone that you care about like that, supporting their art is a powerful thing to do. It's an important thing to do. And so... I think that doing that is a great way to do it. And hopefully, if you like what I have to say, consider ordering *Barrier Gaze*. I'm so sorry. That whole diatribe was on my new book, *Lucky Day*, and I'm so used to promoting *Barrier Gaze*. I just

said it. Although I will say, it really applies to *Barrier Gaze*, because *Barrier Gaze* is like, a very strongly, like, anti-capitalist, anti-AI. Like it's a pretty far left art critique type book and *Lucky Day* is a well, it's my bisexual erasure book, but it's also kind of my ACAB book. So it's like another, like, very far left. I mean, I don't want to talk about it too much until it comes out, but it's a very...it's a very political book in a similar way. But replace capitalism with something else and you'll see what *Lucky Day*'s about. So, hey, order them both, why not?

TAL

Yeah, and order *Camp Damascus* too.

CHUCK

Yeah, get the three.

TAL

Get everything.

CHUCK

Get yourself a little trilogy.

TAL

Yeah.

CHUCK

They actually, what's funny is they do reference each other. Like they're all in the same, they're definitely not sequels, but characters and like brands or different things show up between the books. So that is not a bad trilogy to get actually.

TAL

Is there any questions that you wish I asked that you just think you wanna talk about? No, is a fine answer.

CHUCK

No, well, I will say I loved your questions. I love going deep into, like, art theory stuff. And so this was, like, really wonderful. And I guess as a final thing I would like to say, creating art right now, just a compliment to you and to the podcast and like, creation right now, creating spaces where buckaroos can be safe and express themselves and to bring joy in these times. So important. So thank you for having me and for creating this and you know, and it goes to the listeners too. Like for you to be able to make this, you need listeners. Like there's so much that we are doing right now by creating cultures and creating spaces. And I just... want you to know how important that is. It's a really beautiful thing.