We talk about our adult son, about being the autistic parent of a non-autistic child, about shaving Chad’s beard (hasn’t happened in decades, so there’s a price), nudity, and generally about what we want for our son’s future.

**Transcript**

K: So, lately I’ve been thinking about our amazing, beautiful, talented, wonderful, adorable, charming son. (laughs)

C: Yeah? That one? Not the other one?

K: Yeah, not the other one. We only have one son, but yes. He can be two different sons. He can be like, the exact-opposite-of-everything-I-said son, but right now, I am absolutely head over heels in love with our adult son. He recently turned 25, and I feel like a lot of what I’m in love with is the fact that he’s an adult.

C: Uh-huh.

K: Are you into it?

C: Into him being a quarter century? Yeah.

K: (laughs) So, he moved out when he was 20.

C: No, it hasn’t been that long.

K: Yeah, it has been.

C: No, he was like 21 or 22.

K: No, he was 20.

C: Was he?

K: Yes, because I remember the person he was dating.

C: Uh-huh.

K: And it was- I don’t want to go into any details because I don’t want to put anybody on blast.

C: Okay. It was when he was 20.

K: Yes. It was…

C: Okay.

K: It was significant. I’m doing vulgar hand gestures.

C: Yeah, you’re doing a vulgar hand gesture of a two and a zero.

K: (laughs) Of a one and a zero.

C: Well, he didn’t move out when he was ten.

K: (laughs) They know what vulgar hand gesture I’m doing.

C: Yeah. If you don’t, don’t worry about it.

K: Yeah. I’m doing the universal oomph oomph hand signal. The tchk tchk hand signal.

C: Oh, when he was trying to be a DJ.

K: Yeah, the rrrrr hand signal.

C: When he was trying to be a dj with some beats. Got it.

K: Exactly. No, it was back when he was salsa dancing regularly.

C: Yes.

K: And he stopped salsa dancing regularly when he was about 23? 24?

C: Yeah. It just got too expensive and…

K: Yeah, and I think he started regularly salsa dancing when he was 18, 19?

C: Yeah, maybe. Yeah.

K: But I’m really sure he moved out when he was 20.

C: Okay, I’ll take your word for it.

K: Before his 21st birthday. So, he’s been out of the house for… gosh, five years now.

C: Yeah.

K: And it’s been pretty sweet.

C: It has been.

K: (laughs) So, getting him from 12 to 25 was… challenging.

C: 13 years’ worth of work.

K: Yeah, but it was challenging doing it in Japan.

C: Yes.

K: So, some facts about our kid is that he graduated high school at 12, I think we might’ve said this before.

C: You’ve said that before, yeah.

K: And then graduated high school at- I mean graduated college. So, high school at 12, college at 16, and finding something to do to entertain and a way to keep him safe and engaged… was really challenging because he didn’t have any age-appropriate friends I think until- like friends that were actually the same age as him until the past two years.

C: Yeah.

K: Which I always told him would be the case.

C: Right.

K: Because he was so ahead of the curve. Which he hated.

C: Yeah. He had to wait until his contemporaries had graduated from college and had jobs and things, so.

K: Yeah. And he absolutely hated being exceptional.

C: Yeah, and then you and I went through that too.

K: Yeah.

C: I mean, when I was 15, I was a senior in high school. When you were 16, you got your GED and emancipated. So, both of us have our own… being accelerated.

K: And we talked about on the other cast about how I was gifted and got promoted up and how I didn’t like it. So, something that it’s interesting, lately I had like a batch of intakes, and every single one of them were gifted. Like, and had been through the gifted minors program in their respective countries. Like, every version of that.

C: Okay, you didn’t mean just gifted to be able to see you?

K: (laughs) They were fortunate- they were blessed by being able to find me. Yes, that’s exactly what I meant.

C: Thank you.

K: I gave everybody the gift of my presence, therefore they were gifted. Like, are you serious right now?

C: I’m always serious.

K: Oh my gosh.

C: People who listen regularly know that I’m always serious and never joke.

K: (laughs) You are too punny baby, just too punny. (laughs) Oh, come on, that’s worthy of a chuckle.

C: Hah hah hah.

K: There you go. Yeah, they’re all gifted. And so, I have this thing, this belief that I have. Because gifted kids, you get this pressure to live up to your potential, and our own kid struggles with this.

C: Yeah.

K: And I’ve told him his whole life, the only thing that you owe me for your giftedness or that you owe the world for your giftedness is to pursue your own happiness.

C: Right.

K: Find your dream. Find your happiness. And the pressure for gifted kids to like, be a CEO or be a Bill Gates or be an innovator, be an iconoclast, not everybody wants to do that. And not everybody’s meant to do that. When you start celebrating people just being good and decent, you know, and that’d be way more important than money.

C: And I think most people, like, they’re just terrible people or just good and decent when they grow up. Because I know on the other end of the… intelligence spectrum, like let’s pretend there’s a single one. That kids who are in special education for being gifted and kids who are in special education for intellectual disability or delay have that same sense of not quite fitting in.

K: Yeah.

C: But we don’t encounter them… as foreigners here in Japan because

K: Ah, but then there are some.

C: Right, but it’s not very often because the immigration requirements are so strict.

K: Yeah, for- so, speaking, we’re just speaking about Japan. But there are a lot of disabled foreigners here.

C: There are a lot of disabled foreigners here, but there are not a lot of people who are intellectually disabled foreigners because of the bar of needing

K: A college degree.

C: A college degree, yeah.

K: So, okay. I don’t want to go down that rabbit hole. I want to get back to our kid.

C: Yeah.

K: Because I’m like, I’m focused today.

C: I just didn’t want to make it sound like gifted people have their own special problems that nobody else in the world has.

K: Okay. So, right on. Yeah. But, I’m saying our kid-

C: You know I’m the inclusion police, so now we can go back to-

K: Yeah, you are the inclusion police, and I love it because you help me out. And I struggle sometimes with seeing ableism, and you’re really good at always seeing it. Well, not always, but almost always. I’m sure sometimes it slips by you too, but I’m working on it you know. I want to be inclusive. Anybody who follows us on twitter, and if you don’t you should because we’re awesome

C: Shame on you.

K: Right? Because our tweets are awesome. (laughs)

C: Not all of them, but most of them.

K: I think all our tweets are awesome.

C: Okay.

K: Sometimes, I’ll tweet something or I’ll- not so much my original tweets, I guess sometimes my original tweets because I struggled sometimes with being gender inclusive because when I was growing up, I was taught “sisterhood, sisterhood, sisterhood” and you know, “black girl magic” and “black women rule” and that you really have to have that gender pronoun in there, and that black women are something different, that we’re a subset of the black community. And I agree that technically that is true, but now I want to be inclusive of all my black siblings. I want to be inclusive of people who, you know, are non-binary, who are trans

C: Agender and intersex…

K: Yeah. And I’m working on that, and I’m working on evolving, you know? And developing a better understanding of the language of inclusion because that’s what’s in my heart.

C: Well, and I think this is the difference, to get back to what we were saying earlier about people becoming wonderful or people not becoming wonderful people, is whether or not they continue to work that.

K: Yeah. And so that’s what we’ve really instilled in Rasta is that he has to keep improving, so every year, in about- because his birthday is at the end of July, so every year at about March, I’m like “okay” like the past year, march 2019, I was like “okay, you’re getting ready to turn 25, that’s like official adulthood dude. That was the age I was when I had you, so now you are officially an adult, and if you had done, like, traditional education, that would’ve given you two years to launch after college” and just all of these age-related beliefs that I have.

C: Well, plus, you threw in your own stuff. That is unique Kisstopherisms. I can’t believe you didn’t mention it.

K: What?

C: One of the first things you said to him is “your pre-frontal cortex is finally fully formed.”

K: Yes, I did. And “there’s no more excuse for not having good”

C: Executive planning.

K: Yes. Long-term planning, executive function, higher emotional resilience. Your brain has fully developed. You are… fully ripened.

C: Yeah.

K: And ready- but his jaw is still changing and developing, so his face is still getting wider. So, you know, sometimes it can go a little bit longer than 25, but the rule of thumb is-

C: Well, and you know his nose and ears are going to keep growing his whole life. Just like everybody’s.

K: Yeah. So, his nose has changed a lot. He used to have my exact nose, and now he doesn’t. And I feel like I’m seeing the more masculine version of my face.

C: Mhmm.

K: Because he used to look dead on me, you know, I’d just pull his hair back and put my head above his and people would be like “oh my gosh, you guys look exactly alike.”

C: Well, and now he’s got a mustache and sideburns. So.

K: (laughs) Yes. Now he does officially have a mustache. Because for years and years, I’d tell him “your mustache is not thicker than mine” and that was like the bar “your mustache has to be thicker than mine” because we can’t set the bar of your mustache because you are mustachioed.

C: Yeah, you have to spell mine with the I O.

K: Yes, definitely. Because you have like the capital M Mustache.

C: Thank you.

K: Like, I’m the capital M Mom, Mother.

C: Thank you. When Movember comes around, everybody’s like “wow, you guys started early” nope.

K: (laughs)

C: This is year-round.

K: And you are not shaving.

C: No.

K: Because you’re supposed to change your facial hair. Yay, we support prostate health. We support prostate health, I just don’t support it with you shaving your face.

C: Yes.

K: I don’t care how much people are paying- well I don’t know, that’s not true. So, okay, here’s the thing. If you guys want Chad to shave, give us a million dollars.

C: Yeah. And you could do it collectively, you don’t have to do it individually.

K: Yeah. Because I feel like I’m reasonable. If people are willing to like get together, band together, and raise a million dollars for you to shave, dude. You have to shave.

C: Right.

K: Like, once the check clears. Once we get the money.

C: Let’s just be clear, this isn’t to charity. This is just give us the money.

K: Yeah, no. No charity. We’re keeping it.

C: (laughs)

K: Because I’m going to have to suffer the like, what, three weeks

C: Thank you, the trauma until it grows back.

K: Right. Three weeks.

C: Right?

K: That’s not cool. I have to three weeks- I’ve never seen your chin. Like, I don’t know what your jaw looks like. I don’t know what I’ve been getting into here. You’ve been throwing that out in the universe. I’m not going to save space here.

C: I might just have to move into a hotel until it grew back.

K: I don’t know. We might have to do something.

C: Could do skype or do video.

K: You could wear a face mask.

C: Mmm.

K: You could wear a face mask.

C: Yeah, but you could see it actually clinging to my chin instead of puffed up by my beard.

K: Yeah, but you don’t wear a face mask now.

C: No, I don’t.

K: So, I would flinch every time I saw you, and there might be shrieks.

C: Yeah.

K: Because I have, like, a really sensitive startle response. So (laughs) you could just- the way you walk into a room now makes me flinch and shriek.

C: And just imagine how pale the skin underneath is.

K: Oh my gosh. Yes, your face would be two-toned.

C: Yup.

K: Oh my gosh. It’s horrific. But, if people like, are willing to give us a million dollars for it, I feel like I could endure.

C: Mmmkay.

K: I could cope. I could dry my tears with you know, ten thousand yen bills. Ichi man en bills, which is about like a hundred dollar bill in the U.S.

C: We hadn’t discussed the numbers, but I guess I’m going cheap on the beard.

K: Yeah.

C: Okay.

K: No, because this podcast is going to be around forever.

C: Oh, good point. Yeah.

K: So, you don’t know. Like, the people might get together and be like “what we really want to do with our money is to fund raise for Chad to shave his face.”

C: Yup.

K: You don’t know what’s out there. You don’t know the energy that’s out there.

C: Yeah, I don’t. I don’t know.

K: And I’m always welcoming people to give me millions.

C: Yeah.

K: I welcome that energy. I don’t care if it makes me sound greedy. I welcome it. I’m putting it out there, I welcome it.

C: Okay.

K: (laughs) But back to our son. So, I’m really, really happy with the man he’s turned out to be. How do you feel about who he is as a man?

C: Yeah, I’m happy with it.

K: I really love that he is consent-based in all of his relationships. He gets consent. And people are like “ew, it’s not sexy if you ask may I kiss you” blah de blah blah, dude. Consent is the sexiest thing. In the world. Consent is as sexy as it gets.

C: Okay, if you can’t ask if you can kiss somebody in a sexy way, practice.

K: Thank you. Do you want this baby? (laughs) As an example of one way not to do it.

C: Right? But you could be just like looking at somebody and saying “I’m just looking at you, and I see how beautiful you are, and I just want to devour your lips. Can I go ahead and kiss you?”

K: Yup. Yup. That’s sexy.

C: See?

K: And anybody who doesn’t think consent is sexy, that’s a good conversation to have with them. Like, because, that’s not valuing self, right?

C: Right.

K: So, for me, my whole life, I’ve thought consent was sexy, but if you guys listen to the podcast, you know that I was raised in a sex-positive house where we talked about consent and all of that for the time that I was raised in my house. And then, in foster care, consent not so much was a big thing. So that juxtaposition of like… my mother’s home versus foster care.

C: Right.

K: That was a trip. But for me, I’ve always taken in and valued consent.

C: Yes.

K: And I’ve always really appreciated and I know you really appreciate consent. And, just… full disclosure, we’re part of the BDSM community, and consent’s a big part of that. And so I feel like you can get consent for non-consensual things, but you still have to get that initial consent.

C: Yeah, and you still have to make sure you have that ongoing.

K: Yeah. And so during play, sometimes consent, not consenting is part of play, but you’ve already consented for that to be the play.

C: Okay, but because this episode is about our son…

K: Right. (laughs)

C: If you want to get into the specifics of kink.

K: Yeah, like, ew, you can’t

C: We are not the podcast.

K: Ew, you can’t talk about our son right after I talked about kink. Yuck.

C: (laughs)

K: But I guess it’s okay because I guess moms are still kinky. Like, being a mom doesn’t take away your sexuality, doesn’t take away your kink.

C: No, it does not.

K: And our son is really open and beautiful and communicative and is comfortable with kink and comfortable talking about kink, and we have a very open relationship where there is nothing he can’t say to me.

C: Yeah.

K: Like, he can say anything, so we can talk about sex, we can talk about his bodily functions, and he knows that I am a human being. And he knows that I’m also a sexual being, and he knows that my body also has functions.

C: Yeah.

K: So, there’s not that… weirdness that some people have with like, not being like grossed out if they know their parents have sex.

C: Well, and I think that come on two fronts. I think there was both the we made a conscious decision to be open about sex with him so that he would never have shame about that and so that he would be safe.

K: In age appropriate ways.

C: In age appropriate ways, yes. But I think also when he was younger and you were having so many surgeries and things, that kind of took away a lot of the… mystique of it.

K: Mystique of what?

C: Of the body. Like, you’re talking about your body to not be taboo.

K: Oh yeah because I was literally cut in half. I was split down the middle, and it was open. And leaking.

C: Right. And so if you want to maintain that connection, he had to be able to ask you questions because some of the times was even before he was ten years old, so he didn’t have that like “I’m going to honor the privacy of my mommy”

K: Yeah, no.

C: He was just curious like “what’s going on?”

K: Yeah. Because his whole entire life, I was in and out of hospitals with surgeries. Until we moved to Japan and I stopped having surgeries.

C: Because around the same age that you got sick, um, the age that he was when you got sick

K: Well, you’re talking about like there was a few years when I was just having surgery after surgery after surgery

C: Yeah.

K: But before that, I was having about one surgery a year.

C: Right, right.

K: I was having a surgery about every one or two years.

C: Right.

K: And so he’s always- and, and, I’m a nudist, so he grew up with being naked at home.

C: Yeah.

K: You’re not a nudist, so he didn’t grow up with you being naked at home, but I am, he grew up with me being naked at home. And he grew up here it was okay for him to be naked. I think he was like eight or nine years old, and I’d still have to tell him “dude, when people come over, you have to put on underwear, and you have to put on your shirt. You can’t just be running around naked with everybody.” Like, you know, “you’ve got to put on chonies, and you’ve got to put on your shirt. Come on.”

C: Yeah.

K: Work with me here. (laughs) Like, “mom has to put on some clothes, so do you.”

C: And when I was like eight or nine, my mom started having surgeries for various things, and she died when I was thirteen. But it was always taboo to talk about it. So, I knew that I did not want that for our son.

K: Yeah. And so, for him to- he’s- to me, he’s the closest to pristine I’ve ever seen a person be.

C: mhmm.

K: But he still has that core pain and trauma of “my mom almost died and I was up close and personal for it.”

C: Yeah.

K: And so to see him come through that and as a result of that, he had a few like really angry years because like, the doctors and everybody were saying “you’re going to die, you’re going to die, you’re going to die” and so when we moved to Japan, part of when we moved, it was like okay, I thought I was coming to Japan to die.

C: Right.

K: And then, I got healthy, and I had a couple healthy years. And then I got really sick again.

C: Mhmm.

K: and we were like “oh man, is this it?” And then I rebounded from that, so like right after he healed, right after I was strong and back and good, I got super sick again.

C: Right.

K: and I was sick for about six months, I think.

C: Mhmm.

K: And then, so, and then I know how to manage my health a lot better, and I know how to manage all my conflicted illnesses that pile on each other a lot better. So, he did have a couple of like really hard, hard years in his life.

C: Yes.

K: And I think having- also having an autistic parent, when the emotional center- so, I do believe that you having autism makes it sort of a pre-requisite that I be the emotional center of the family.

C: Yeah. I think so. Because I just… and more research is showing this, I have different ways of relating emotion than he does.

K: Yeah.

C: New research is showing that autistic people do relate emotion, which anybody who is autistic knows. But that, between two autistic people, it’s related differently than between an autistic person and an allistic person, non-autistic person.

K: Yeah, and I think for him too, the contrast between the two of us… has been quite stark for him.

C: I think so.

K: And now that he’s an adult, we’re like working for him to like really understand what it means to have an autistic parent. Like, I know that I’m extremely touch-averse.

K: So, just for anybody out there, Chad would cringe if I said “a parent with autism” he would cringe. It would be like nails on a chalkboard. So, when we’re talking about Chad, we’re using language that Chad prefers and that he likes. So, don’t come for me.

(laughter)

K: Well, I don’t want the- because some people- everybody has the way that they want autism to be spoken about, and I think that what we have to be really respectful of is that each person gets to choose.

C: Yeah, and I know that you got your start with speech therapy and working with autistic kids, and that on a professional level, you know, that children with autism

K: Person first. Person first language. Which you do not like at all.

C: I don’t, and you know, surveys of the autistic community say most of us prefer autistic person rather than person with autism. That’s a different podcast. Our son does not have autism.

K: Yeah, no he does not.

C: He is not autistic. But that, so, we’ll talk about that some other time.

K: I think we spent, and also something that changed is when he was younger, I would just tell you what to do to make him feel loved.

C: Yes.

K: And, looking back now, you know, when you know better, you do better. Now, I see what an ableist point of view that was.

C: Mhmm.

K: And I’ve apologized to you privately for my ableist ways. I didn’t get that I was being ableist at the time. You know. And because you came into our lives when he was five.

C: Right.

K: And so we were already a family, we already had a way of doing things. And so, I wasn’t teaching you how to love him in a way that wasn’t autistic, that’s not what I was doing. I was teaching you how to do things our way, which means my way. And I didn’t know how to be a co-parent because I had been a single mom for five years. Biodad was in and out, but he was never Dad, you know.

C: Because we met when he was four, but I didn’t meet him until he was five.

K: Yeah, because we were friends.

C: Yeah.

K: And, so, for me, I felt like… okay, you’re coming into our family, we’re going to do things our way. And then- and you were in the process of being diagnosed and just discovering that you were autistic, so you being autistic was new to you. It was new to me. And then you were also becoming a dad and you were 23. It was really a complex time, and I think that, had I known then, you know hindsight’s 20-20, what I know now I would’ve said “hey, let’s figure out how you show love” because I’ve always felt very loved by you. I’ve always felt very cherished by you. I’ve never- I tweet abut this all the time, but I think you’re one of the most loving, supportive, kind person I’ve ever met in my life.

C: Yeah, I keep a calendar. She doesn’t tweet about it, I’m like “why aren’t you tweeting about it?”

K: (laughs) “Where is the tweet about how awesome I am”

C: Yeah.

K: “Or you don’t get the whip” – no, that’s not appropriate for a podcast about our son. Be appropriate, Chad, come on. Clean it up.

C: I was going to say you get a demerit, you’re the one-

K: Yeah, clean it up. Clean it up.

C: Okay.

K: So, looking back then, being so controlling and so overprotective of him really came out of my mother taking me through every single relationship because from the time that I was small until the time I was 9, because I left the family home permanently at 9. Everybody knows if you listen to the podcast that I entered childcare before my first birthday.

C: Foster care.

K: Yeah, foster care. Childcare. Everybody has childcare. So, foster care. Yeah. And I was in and out of it, and at 8 I made the decision to never go back into my mother’s home. But, at 9, my mother had taken me through three or four relationships at that point. And some people that I was really close to and I became really attached to were gone out of my life. And I don’t think that she was always careful with me when she was doing her relationships. So I wanted to be really careful with Rasta when I was doing mine. And one of the things that drove people, just, wild about me was the fact that they would never meet my son.

C: Mhmm.

K: People were like “that is so… amazing” and some people were just like “I want to meet your son. I want to meet your son.” When they started bugging me about that, I’m like “Mmm.”

C: “Mmm, we’re not going to be dating anymore.”

K: Yeah, something’s not right about you. You shouldn’t be more into my kid than me that you haven’t even met. You know. So, I- having abuse in my history, I wanted to keep abuse out of his history

C: Right.

K: So, good intentions and all of that, right? But, now I see with him being 25 that you guys don’t have a natural language of love. A natural way of expressing language. And Rasta explained it to me that- because I pulled back when he was 12 and stopped doing that for you guys, but we were still doing bedtime stories even when he was 12. We would read together as a family. Rasta would read to us and we would read to him. At 12 you guys were still playing video games together. And then around 13, we stopped doing bedtime story. But you guys were still playing video games together, and you were sharing books.

C: Yeah, and we still share books. And we sometimes play video games together. I think that’s kind of waning because I’m getting more and more sensitive to video games. Because I really need slow games without a lot of action.

K: And I think, too, I’ve gotten a lot stricter.

C: Yeah. And you have gotten a lot stricter on that. And he’s also gotten a lot more into action games and things that I’m just not good at. But he’s pretty good at.

K: Well, and Rasta’s really strict too. Because Rasta vets games. And I’ll tell him “nope, Dad can’t play that.” And so we do censor- pre-censor stuff. And then if I see you, you know- when I say I’ve gotten a lot stricter, when I see you sitting in front of a screen that’s just flickering at you, strobing or has moments of strobe, I’m like “so, are you just deciding to have seizures today?”

C: Mhmm.

K: And then you’re like “no, I’m never making that decision” and I’m like “do you see that strobe? Do you see that it’s flickering?” And sometimes you don’t even see it.

C: Yeah.

K: And there have been instances where you have had, like, major seizures and been like “whoa, what happened?”

C: Yeah, so I have to pick my games carefully. Which is a different podcast.

K: (laughs) So, I think that now you and Rasta are doing the good work of figuring out “okay, how do we love each other, and how do we treat each other like family?” And what that looks like. Because I facilitated for a lot of years, and then when I stopped facilitating, you guys have shared interests in common.

C: Mhmm.

K: And then he moved out of the house, and I kind of feel like you guys have really grown apart in the years that he’s been out of the house.

C: I think to some extent. I think to some extent, it’s natural to grow apart from your parents when you move out of the house. But, you know

K: Yeah, and he works for me, so I see him at least five times a week.

C: Things like LINE, online communication and texting, because even though we’re doing a podcast, which is all about words, I’m not a person of many words otherwise.

K: Yeah, but… when Rasta sends you a big ol long text, and then you’re like “I’m going to take a nap now” what does he do with that?

C: He knows that I took in his text, and now I need to sleep.

K: (laughs) No, he needs something going back out.

C: Ah, okay. I’ll work on that.

K: (laughs) Yeah. “Dude, I just wrote you a book” and you send “Okay, I’m going to take a nap now.” So, I’ve come to understand that outpourings of love overwhelm you and make you sleepy. That when you feel safe, and loved, and comfortable, you feel sleepy. And so I’ve been kind of explaining how you’ve been expressing, so I told Rasta “If Dad sent me that text, I would hear ‘I’m completely happy with what you wrote, I agree with everything you said, you didn’t ask me any questions, and I feel loved, cared for, and honored. And I’m going to go to sleep now.’” And then our beautifully egocentric son responded “But what about me?” Okay. Fair point.

C: Mhmm.

K: So, I think that he- I’ve told him, for me, I think he needs to increase how often he contacts you.

C: Yeahh.

K: Because I think that the sparsity of it, it makes it like we have to both get our needs met in the same conversation. And I don’t think that’s natural. I think, because he has a mother who’s a therapist, I’m always tending to his needs in almost every conversation. And if I don’t, like, I know if I want him to be interested in me, I start by tending to his needs. Then I sandwich in the stuff about me, and then I finish with tending with his needs. And that’s not realistic.

C: Well, and this is not how you and I interact.

K: No, not at all.

C: W have a lot of conversations where my needs get met or your needs get met, and that’s it. And we have a lot of conversations where neither of us is seeking to meet needs. We’re just chatting.

K: Yeah, so I’m trying to get him to the place where he just chats with you.

C: Mhm.

K: And so we’ve started a new tradition where he comes over and learns how to cook.

C: Yeah.

K: And we’ve hung out that way a couple of times. How’s that working for you?

C: Um. It’s hot.

K: (laughs) Like, it’s hot because he’s like a living furnace. Oh my god.

C: No, I just meant it’s hot because we were standing near the stove.

K: But, no, he’s a living furnace.

C: Yes, he does run a little bit hot.

K: Yeah, and he’s no bigger than a minute. He’s like super thin. He wears slim clothing. In Japan. He is like, super skinny. I think it was up until five years ago we could see his heartbeat because he has no fat or muscle over his heart.

C: So, do you think he’s skinnier than I am?

K: (laughs) I think he’s skinnier than you were as a kid.

C: No, he’s not skinnier than I was as a kid.

K: Okay. So, he looks like he’s been starved.

C: Yeah, no. Because when I was sixteen, I weighed less than half of what I weigh now, so.

K: So, if he eats like a whole bag of doritos, he’ll look like he has a little food baby.

C: Yeah, except little food babies aren’t all spiky. You can’t see the corners.

K: (laughs) And, like- how much curry does he get? Because he’s like super proud of his curry order.

C: He orders 500 grams of rice.

K: Yes. (laughs)

C: Like, yeah, just give me a pound of rice and then a couple more ounces.

K: Yeah, he’s like “I want 500 grams of curry” and he, like, tells me all the time “I ate 500 grams of curry.” (laughs) I’m like, okay, his fixation- like his pride with his curry.

C: So, this is from a place called Coco-ichiban.

K: Yeah.

C: And the standard order is 300 grams, so, then a large order is 400 grams, so he’s getting the extra-large order. And you can order 200 grams if you don’t want the full order.

K: Yeah, but who’s proud of their curry order? Like, how does that become a thing?

C: I mean, I’m proud of my curry order.

K: Are you?

C: Not the amount I get. I just get the standard 300. But my spice level. Don’t disrespect the spice.

K: Okay, what’s your spice level? I don’t’ know, is it like- it’s not the hottest.

C: No, I get 4. I tried the hottest, and it’s just- that’s all you taste.

K: Yeah, it’s the heat.

C: It goes up to ten.

K: What do I get?

C: You get zero.

K: No, do I really?

C: Yeah, you do.

K: Okay, that would explain why it’s not spicy at all.

C: Yeah.

K: Because there’s like no spice in it. And then I have to pick out the onions because my GERD does not like the onions.

C: Right.

K: So, yeah. So I have like a whole GI thing going on where I have to be really careful. But now I’m craving curry.

C: No, you’re not. You- you so are not. You would regret that.

K: No, I’m telling you, I am. I’m craving curry.

C: Okay, I’m just predicting by the end of this podcast, you and I will have a conversation about it, and you will not be craving curry because you will remember what it does to you.

K: No, I will not remember because Rasta can go to the grocery store for us and he can get me the curry packs.

C: Oh, yeah.

K: Or he could go, not- not the grocery store, he can go to coco-de-ichi and he can get me the curry packs so I don’t get the onion, but I can get everything else.

C: Good point. So, one of the benefits of having an adult son is that he has a car and can drive.

K: Yes. But he’s been my legs since so, he’s one of the most giving people that I know. He will ride his- he used to ride his bike, like he would ride his bike a mile away to go get me something and bring it back if I asked him to.

C: Yeah.

K: So he’s always been- we joke in the family and call him my legs.

C: Yes.

K: And, like, it’s so- it’s like such a pervasive joke that I can just be like “Legs!” And he’ll come, because he knows I’m talking to him. Like “legs!” And he takes pride in being my legs. When I call him that, he actually beams with like pride.

C: Yeah, I’m not your legs.

K: No, you are not my legs.

C: There’s a restaurant down the street from us that sometimes, Kisstopher wants to meet at after therapy sessions. And she’s like “do you want us to swing by and pick you up?” And I’m like “no, I’ll just walk there.”

K: Yes. Because what are you doing? What are you thinking?

C: “What are you thinking?”

K: You have mobility issues.

C: I do, and I use a cane. And my cane makes it feel good to walk.

K: Well, that’s a beautiful thing. You need new shoes. I’m just putting it out there in the world.

C: I know I need new shoes

K: You need new shoes.

C: I’ve needed new shoes my entire life.

K: (laughs) So, I am hoping that you allow me to get you new shoes before 2020.

C: I would say yes, before the Olympics.

K: Ooh. Before the Olympics.

C: Yes.

K: You’re throwing down the gauntlet?

C: Yeah.

K: The Olympic gauntlet?

C: Yeah.

K: You’re lighting the torch?

C: Yeah, because that gives me an extra six months or so.

K: Yeah. No, no. It’s going to happen sooner than that. It’s happening to you.

C: Mmm.

K: New shoes are happening to you. Tell the people why you don’t want new shoes. I’m not the villain. I’m not the villain in this story.

C: I don’t want new shoes because although they were great, they were an 80s band.

K: Oh my gosh. That was like a double eyeroll.

C: (laughs)

K: Like, deep in my soul double eyeroll. Oh my gosh. So, why don’t you want new shoes?

C: Every time I get new shoes, I get blisters. So, no matter whether they fit right or not, I get blisters and I get calluses from the way that they rub.

K: Mmm, yeah. I forgot about the calluses.

C: And my gait is all screwed up, which is why I use a cane.

K: Yeah. But, if you got an insert, for your new shoe.

C: Yeah, so I’d have to go back to the orthopedist. And because I broke my heel about a year ago, and they said it can take up to several years to heal. So, like, right now, I walk around the apartment, sometimes barefoot, but with one slipper on because it provides enough padding that I’m not stepping directly onto that heel.

K: Yeah.

C: So, it isn’t just a matter of comfort, and finding shoes can fit because my feet are bigger than Japanese feet- typical Japanese feet. Japanese sizing is weird. There are lots of people- Japanese people- with feet my size, but they are not catered to in regular apartment stores, so.

K: But we’ve had good luck with buying you trainers.

C: Yeah, we’ve had good luck with New Balance specifically because they’re a little bit wide, and there is a store downtown. And I know Rasta could drive me down there, and I could get new shoes. But

K: Yes.

C: I get very sentimental about my shoes. So, part of that is

K: So, then, can we say that you will get new shoes by your birthday?

C: You are blackmailing me right on the podcast. Right out in open.

K: (laughs) Yes, I am.

C: Yes, fine. We can get new shoes by my birthday.

K: Thank you. I’ll take it. I’m loving you. I’m not blackmailing you. I’m showing my heart to you.

C: I hear you, by October 28, 2020, I will get new shoes.

K: No, 2019. 2019 baby.

C: (sighs) Fine.

K: Yes. So, I’m showing how loving I am

C: I guess I’ll be getting new shoes very soon.

K : Yes. Yes. Thank you. Because this has been over a year-long conversation. Don’t act like I just had this conversation today. We’ve been having this conversation for a year, babe. A year.

C: So, for context, because nobody can see my shoes, there’s a hole over the big toe, there’s a hole over the pinky toe. The sole is worn through completely on the tip of my toe, so they- if I step in a puddle, my socks get wet. So, they are raggedy.

K: Yes. So, you like… you rode them till the sole wore off. Like, they’re toast.

C: They’re not as bad as some of my previous shoes have been.

K: Correct, that’s true.

C: So, I think eventually

K: Incremental improvements.

C: Eventually, you and Rasta will have me replacing my shoes before they’re even completely worn out. Like, what’s that about.

K: Like, or we could just buy two pair.

C: I have two pairs, but they’re two different sizes, which I didn’t realize. So, one of them is too small.

K: Yes. Two pairs- so, we did go last time, we got you to get two pairs. But if we get you two pairs, you won’t have to buy shoes again for like, what, ten years? Five years?

C: About five years, yeah.

K: Yeah. Well, if we buy two pairs, because I think this one pair has lasted you, I think about, six years?

C: Yyy…. Yeah. That sounds about right. Yeah, so it might be ten years. Because I don’t do a lot of walking. I like to walk, but I don’t’ do a lot of walking just because I do have mobility issues.

K: Because, in comparison, I bought- before we came to Japan, I bought four pairs of Adidas shoes, all the same style, different colors. Two the same color, and then two with a different style, with the Velcro. Because I knew being in Japan, I wanted shoes that were Velcro on and off. And I haven’t had to buy new shoes. I’ve bought new shoes since then, but I haven’t had to.

C: You admit it. You admit you didn’t need those shoes.

K: No, I didn’t.

C: Ooohh.

K: After all these years. So, at the time when I was working, the one pair of shoes I did need. But the second pair that I bought because the one pair hurt my feet and my back, those I needed because it hurt my feet and my back. So, the two pairs of shoes I have purchased since moving to Japan I did need.

C: So, contribute to the million dollar beard-shaving fund so that she can have the extra pair of occasional shoes she doesn’t need.

K: (laughs) I don’t buy shoes. I am not fancy like that. I do not need more shoes. I don’t.

C: Okay.

K: Do not earmark those beard funds.

C: Oh. Oh, I will earmark them.

K: No. Do not earmark them. I don’t want people getting their hopes up that we’re going to use the beard fund for anything in particular.

C: Okay.

K: Because if they do make this beard fund come through, like if it happens, I don’t know. It might happen.

C: Yeah.

K: If it does happen, I don’t want them having any signs of what we do with the money afterwards.

C: Mmm. Yeah.

K: I know there’s going to be some healing.

C: Now, if you think we’re really serious about the beard fund, just ask us and we’ll tell you who you think you should give money to, because there’s lots of good causes and lots of people who are in much more need than a million dollars. But if you’ve got a million dollars to give away like that…

K: So, wait. Eeerrr. Boop, boop, boop. If they’re going to pay money, there is no charity that I would want money given to that would be worthy of you shaving your beard.

C: No, I wouldn’t shave my beard, that’s-

K: Like, I am so for real about the beard, so.

C: I understand that. No.

K: No, like y’all need to hear me. I am so for real about the beard. Like, the only way that you are shaving your beard is if someone gives us or a group of people give us a million dollars. I am not playing. I am not playing. I get upset when you trim your beard.

C: Yes you do.

K: I love every strand. I love every millimeter. I love your beard.

C: Yes.

K: I absolutely love it.

C: It loves you too.

K: Yeah. So, no. No. Nobody can donate to charity and get you to shave.

C: I wasn’t suggesting that. I wasn’t suggesting that.

K: And if people are feeling generous and in a giving place, they can visit our Patreon.

C: Yes.

K: Because, you’re acting like we got it like we don’t need any help but love.

C: No, no, no. I’m saying if they’ve already gone to our Patreon, they’ve given us some Kofi, and they’re just like “I don’t want to give you guys any more money unless Chad’s going to shave his beard” then we can suggest other places.

K: Then they should get a group of compatriots together

C: Ah yeah.

K: And see if they can raise the funds. I’m not trying to limit people.

C: Okay.

K: Like, if they make it come through, then, you know. I put it out there, we keep it one hundred on the podcast. We’re keeping it real, baby.

C: Okay, so let’s keep it real, so it’s 2 million if you want a photo.

K: (laughs)

C: If you want photo proof.

K: A photo of the chin?

C: Yeah.

(laughter)

K: But no, we have to give them some kind of proof. So, I say for 2 million, we’ll mail them the beard.

C: Wow. Wow, okay.

K: (laughs) That took a dark and creepy turn.

C: Yeah, I’m going to end up cloned.

K: Well, on that happy and bizarre note, maybe sometime we’ll talk about what it’s like to have a grown son.

(laughter)

C: Yeah.

K: But that was not today. But we did talk about the boy.

C: Yes.

K: We did talk about it. I know he’s a man, but I will always be 25 years older than him, and he knows I call him the boy. He’s been The Boy his whole life.

C: Just like he still calls you Mom.

K: Exactly, thank you.

C: He still calls me Dad.

K: Yeah, I still call him Son.

C: Like, except in professional situations, he doesn’t call you Kisstopher.

K: Yeah. He doesn’t call me anything in professional situations when we’re like in the same room. But when I’m not in the same room, he calls me Kisstopher. I don’t think I’ve ever heard him say, like, call me Kisstopher to someone. Huh. Food for thought. Okay, anywho, thank you so much for tuning in this time. This is just a beautiful, lovely, ramble on around and about our son. But If eel like we mostly talked about your relationship with him.

C: Yeah, I think so.

K: And the beard fund.

C: Yes, exactly.

K: So, hashtag beard fund.

(laughter)

C: Alright, bye-bye.

K: Bye, thanks for listening.