We talk about finding happiness at work, which can mean taking an unconventional view of a conventional job or taking an unconventional job altogether.

**Transcript**

K: So, lately I’ve been thinking about work happiness and, like, doing what you love, I guess. Or loving your work. What are your thoughts?

C: My thoughts are that I love my work.

K: (laughs)

C: I feel like…

K: What do you- like, do you seriously love your work?

C: Most of the time, yeah. I mean, most of the time when I’m writing, I love it.

K: Okay.

C: There are days that I get up and I drag words out of myself, and there are days that I get up and they just flow out of me like a magical rainbow.

K: (laughs)

C: But, when I look back, and when I read over it, I can’t tell the difference between which day was which. So, I think that the quality of work I produce is the same on most days.

K: So, I know that I loved your work because the amount of availability that it gives me. So, just, if you don’t know, Chad’s an author, and I’m a therapist. So, Chad, you also do like editing and other stuff, but mostly you’re an author.

C: Right.

K: And caretaker of Kisstopher (laughs)

C: Yes. So the only thing that’s time sensitive is caretaker for Kisstopher because if you’re like “I need some water” I know that I have about thirty seconds before you perish of thirst.

K: Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh. You are not fetcher of things for Kisstopher. Just today, I got my own salad.

C: Oh my goodness.

K: Yes.

C: I didn’t even notice you eating a salad, I was so busy writing.

K: Thank you. Thank you. So don’t act like you are beck and call because you are not beck and call.

C: No.

K: You temperamentally sometimes like to pretend that that’s your existence, which I always find interesting because it would drive me just, ugh, just drive me to irritation. I wouldn’t like it at all. Like if you ever expected me to just constantly get up and get you things. But there days that, like, you just ask me and ask me and ask me, so I’m like “okay, if I want something and Chad’s in the other room, today he’s in the mood to go get stuff for me.”

C: Yeah. So, sometimes I can be interrupted without any disruption to my workflow. And other times, it’s a disruption to my workflow. But everything that I do aside from things that are time-sensitive for you is not time-sensitive. So, when I edit, I edit so far in advance of the deadlines that I can usually turn things back days early if I wanted to. I don’t because that creates bad expectations on the part of clients.

K: Yes, it does. And we’ve worked really, really hard on you understanding that.

C: Yes.

K: So I’m super, super happy that you don’t turn them in as soon as you’re done. So if you’re an editing client of Chad’s and you give him a deadline, no, you will not get it early. Even- because, here’s the thing with that, is that you are not able to consistently beat a deadline.

C: Right.

K: There are sometimes that you are like working straight up until the deadline, and we can’t tell until you get the editing job how it’s going to shake out. Because sometimes there have been jobs where you’ve actually- the English translation has been so bad that you had to go back in and read the Japanese to try and figure out what they’re saying in the English. And those are super, super time consuming.

C: There have been those, and usually the translation is really bad in that it’s fake. Where the translator didn’t quite know what it meant – it could be one or it could be the other, so they just chose both.

K: Yeah.

C: Which in academic editing, which is most of what I do, that’s not helpful. You really want to specify one or the other.

K: Yes. And then too, books are so variable because you do also edit books.

C: Yes.

K: Books are so variable in the editing because some people pack a lot in to a few amount of pages and then other people just like leave it really airy, is how I think of it.

C: Yeah.

K: So we can’t predict, like, when somebody tells you what a job is and even when they tell you how many words a job is, that doesn’t tell us anything about their grammar ability.

C: No. I have to admit, I’m a little bit jealous of the people who can do really airy writing.

K: Yeah?

C: Yeah. If they don’t make it sound padded. Like, there was one series that I read a while ago, came out more than a decade ago, where there was one page that- just literally the entire page was a list of the different foods. And it’s the Redwall series for anybody who’s read it. There are just pages and pages where all it is is a list of the like eighty different foods that the mice were eating at the feast.

K: I would not enjoy that.

C: I did not enjoy that, so the Redwall series is one I didn’t finish. I liked the story, but the pages and pages and pages of foods just seemed like filler to me.

K: Mhmm.

C: But I do edit people who can just write in a really loose and long style, but it doesn’t seem like filler.

K: Mmm.

C: And I envy that because once I get to a certain number of words, I just stop the book when I write novels.

K: Yeah.

C: I’m like “I hit 80,000 words, the story’s not done, but I am, so this is the end of the book.”

K: Yes. So

C: I don’t really do that.

K: (laughs)

C: I finish the story.

K: From my experience, you wrap it up.

C: I

K: Like, you’re always, so the way that you write, the system that you write it in. You know how many words that you’re getting to because we had this experience with the- the first draft of one of my favorite books of yours. It has two titles right now, Sometimes Enkidu Wins or Imaginary Friends, or some other title if, knock on wood, hopefully you’ll get an agent and it’ll sell and all of that, or we might decide to self-publish. That’s a whole other podcast, like what we’re doing with your books. (laughs) Right now we’re just having you write books and I feel like we’re hoarding them until we decide which direction you’re going to go. Because I still don’t know if we’re doing, like, traditional publishing or if we’re doing self-publishing. It’s a whole thing.

C: Yes. I have a hoard of books.

K: (laughs) I feel like you do have a hoard of books.

C: If you’re a literary agent and you’re listening, I do at this point have a hoard of books.

K: Yes.

C: And so, you know, if you want to be traumatized, or if you want to be entertained, or whatever you want.

K: Yeah, because you have a book that you titled Not My Ruckus that I call the trauma book.

C: Yup.

K: Because that thing traumatized me, and it has traumatized everybody except for one beta reader.

C: Yes.

K: It’s a really good book. It’s really well written, but it’s traumatizing to read for me. Some people like to be traumatized by their books, I am not one of them.

C: There’s a whole horror genre of movies…

K: So, I know that you think because of my- my love of splatterpunk and torture porn movies that I should be able to read those types of books, but there is like a whole genre of torture that I don’t touch. But that’s for a different podcast because- like, the digressions, we’re just totally

C: We’re talking about finding enjoyment at work.

K: Yes, and I feel like we just came in out the gate getting off the beaten path.

C: Well, I’m a writer. So…

K: (laughs)

C: We’re not off the beaten path, this is a side plot.

K: Okay, so I feel like the process for you to become a writer was extremely fraught.

C: Yes, it was.

K: And I feel like it was complicated by the fact that we’re immigrants. I think that because, in the United States, just for full disclosure, when we were living in the U.S. you did start to write a book that I feel owed.

C: I know you feel owed.

K: I do. I feel owed. So, it was this really, really great story about a… well, I’m not going to give anything away because if you write it, I want them to be surprised and enjoy it. But it was a really good book, just trust me on it. And you had like the first three pages, I mean your first three chapters.

C: Yeah.

K: and then you just stopped writing.

C: I did, yeah.

K: So, I feel like we’ve known for- at least, I’ve known for the entire time I’ve known you because very early on in the relationship, I read some of your writing in high school, and I’ve always felt very passionately about you being a writer. And you resisted it for a long time. Why did you resist it?

C: I think because, after high school, I graduated high school at 16, there was no way I could make a living writing. So I applied for a job at the local newspaper.

K: So did you- you wanted to be a writer? Because I don’t know anything about this local newspaper jazz.

C: Yeah, I wanted to be a writer. So I applied for a job at the local newspaper, and I aced their spelling test. But I was only 16, so they were like “no, we’re not going to hire anybody who’s under 18” and I applied to some other things

K: Ageism.

C: Right. I applied some other places for data entry, which I know it isn’t writing, but it was that, and I think those were mostly scams to get people to enter their data. Because I was applying through the unemployment office.

K: Mhmm.

C: So they were sending me various places. So I ended up working at a carpeting store out of that.

K: As a data…

C: No, I was doing warehouse and deliveries, and all of that.

K: Okay, so how did you go from data entry to working at a warehouse?

C: Because somebody that I knew had a job opening for a warehouse and a retail store. So sometimes I’d be at the retail store and sometimes I’d be at the warehouse.

K: So why couldn’t you write and work at the warehouse?

C: Because I was working.

K: Like, how many hours?

C: Like, 8 hours a day.

K: Oh, okay. It was a full-time job.

C: It was a full-time job, yeah.

K: But were you wanting to write at that time?

C: Yeah, I’ve always wanted to write

K: So how come when I met you and I was like “you should be a writer” you were like “nope”?

C: Because I didn’t think that I could make any money writing.

K: Okay.

C: Because the other thing was that when I was 16 and graduated high school, I started playing MUDs on the internet. Multi-user dungeon or multi-user dimension depending on who you ask. Where, it’s interactive storytelling.

K: (laughs) And I think that that’s just going to start- you say depending on who you ask. Like, who’s asking anyone? Every time you say that phrase, it’s like one of your favorite phrases. I think “but I’m asking you” it doesn’t depend on who I ask. I was asking you.

C: I feel like it is it’s own word that does not need a further description, but it started in the acronym.

K: Okay.

C: But I learned to program computers on that game.

K: Okay.

C: and then people on that game who lived in Silicon Valley were like “you’re actually really good at programming computers”

K: yeah.

C: “So you should move down to Silicon Valley, and you can make money” and at the time, I was working at McDonald’s, and I’ve been good at pretty much every job that hasn’t fired me, so… kind of fall in two categories. Either I’m really good at the job, or they fire me. So, I was good at McDonald’s. They promoted me to one of the assistant managers.

K: But were you happy at that work?

C: I was happy at that work until I knew there were other options. And I find that that’s often the case for me is that I’m content with work until I know that there are other options.

K: So do you find that that’s… more of a personality trait, or do you find that that’s through the lens of autism?

C: I think that’s more of a personality trait and more to do with having endured homelessness and other things because of my father’s own employment choices. That I make myself happy with whatever work situation I have as long as I feel I have no options.

K: So, for you, does contentment come from knowing you have other options?

C: Yeah.

K: And now that you’re an adult man, because this is not Chad’s work history podcast, sorry if you guys want to hear Chad’s work history, then you should hit us up on Patreon and check out the take two, Chad’s take, because I’ve heard his work history. He’s giving me a look like “you might be bored, but everybody else Is enthralled, and you are robbing people of something” well, hey, that’s what Patreon is for.

C: You don’t know how many emails I get a week saying “I’ve read your resume with intense interest, but you’re missing decades of work history, please tell me more about the time you were 16 and had a job.”

K: (laughs) So now I feel like this is- this is what the take twos are for.

C: Yes.

K: Like for you to put, because you like to explain- you’re an explainer.

C: I am an explainer.

K: and so the point is, like, why are you content and happy now? Because basically you’re telling people the way to be happy at work is to just (laughs) not know your options.

C: Yes, I think that is the way to be happy at work.

K: Really?

C: Or to choose the thing you like best and find a way to make money.

K: (laughs) You’re not giving out any advice. You’re like “I have no secrets to share.” (laughs)

C: Between the two of us, one of us is a therapist. And it’s not me.

K: Yes. But you like… you’re not giving any- any direction whatsoever. This is just like the most random, like, on topic ramble. It’s so random and on topic at the same time. It’s bizarre for me. It feels surreal.

C: I write surrealism, so

K: Yes you do.

C: That’s appropriate.

K: Yeah. So, no, like, why are you… so, here’s the thing that I always wonder, that I want to know. Is you are not content being a writer, like I don’t feel that you’ve found happiness at work. I feel like your happiness at work is tied to money. I feel like, for every job that you do, you have a price point and until you hit that price point, you’re completely unhappy.

C: My happiness at work is tied to money and recognition. And if nobody’s making money, then I’m content with recognition, but if people are making money and I’m not, then I’m really discontent with that.

K: Okay.

C: So, like, when I was working at McDonald’s… to go way, way, back.

K: (laughs) And to prove Kisstopher wrong that you are- to prove to Kisstopher that you’re being super relevant.

C: Right.

K: Okay, because you are, baby. You are super relevant.

C: I was making six seventy five as a shift manager.

K: Six dollars seventy five cents USD.

C: Correct. Per hour.

K: And this was, gosh, over twenty five years ago now?

C: Yes, this was over twenty five years ago.

K: Okay. Because I’m pretty sure the minimum wage has gone up in Alaska by now.

C: Yeah, well the federal minimum wage is like seven dollars an hour, so.

K: Mmm. Still way below a living wage.

C: Yeah, still way below a living wage.

K: But that’s for another podcast.

C: Yes. Um, and so, I knew that the store was making a lot of money, and I wasn’t… like, I had trouble paying my bills, my electricity sometimes got shut off because I couldn’t pay it, the only way I could afford to eat was eating at work.

K: So if you could’ve been making twenty five dollars an hour at McDonald’s, would you have been happy?

C: I think I would have been. So

K: Because I freaking loved it when I worked at Burger King.

C: Yeah.

K: It was a fun job to me, but I don’t think it would be a fun job to me now, as somebody who’s…. in her fifties. (laughs)

C: Yes, you are in your fifties.

K: Yes. Because for me, my favorite thing to do was to do the salad bar at, uh… Burger King. Because, if you do the shake machine and salad bar, you could work drive through. The register. And for me, that was like the sweetest gig during lunch. I didn’t want to have to be the one doing deep fryer. And so, I would always say “I will open, I will do the salad bar, and I will do the shake machine, but I don’t want to fry anything” and so I never had to be the runner or anything. I always got to hang out in the drive-through, and I always thought the drive-through was way fun. Because it had to be super fast, and I can be super fast. But if I wasn’t super fast, it wasn’t my fault, it was the runner’s fault. Because they were timing the runners.

C: Yeah, I liked doing the drive-through, and I worked at two different places. I worked at Wendy’s and I worked at McDonald’s.

K: But do you think right now today, as a man in his forties, that you would be happy even if you were making, like, fifty bucks an hour at McDonald’s? Do you think you could be happy working that job?

C: I don’t think that I could be happy working at a retail McDonald’s. I do think that I could be happy working at McDonald’s helping them improve their systems, helping them treat their employees better.

K: Okay, so you think that you could be happy in the corporate structure, but not happy at the store level.

C: Correct, just because of the physical demands of it. I don’t think that I could handle those physical demands anymore.

K: Yeah, I don’t think so either. But I just don’t think that for me- because I want my work- for me to be happy at work, I know that I need variety. And working fast food did give me variety to a certain extent, but I also need intellectual challenge. I like to problem solve. I like planning. And I really like giving advice. Like, stating like

C: Yeah you do like giving advice.

K: I do.

C: Yeah, I don’t like that so much. I like explaining things, which is different than giving advice.

K: But see, and I think that’s something you don’t realize. As a therapist, I spent most of my day explaining my opinions.

C: Is that advice or an explanation?

K: Huh?

C: Are you explaining that now or are you giving me advice about becoming a therapist?

K: I’m not giving advice, I’m explaining because I didn’t say “you should be a therapist, I think you’d be good at being a therapist.” I’m explaining that a major part of being a therapist is explaining things.

C: Oh, okay.

K: Because people don’t realize how creative my job has to be.

C: Yes.

K: Because you see, sometimes I see as many as twelve different people in a day, which is not my favorite. And each one of those people have their- has their own way of thinking. And has their own way of understanding. And so I have to- don’t you do it Chad Musick. You’re about to yawn, do not make me yawn.

C: I’m not yawning.

K: Don’t you do it. Don’t do it.

C: No, no. You’re just putting me in a relaxed state.

K: (laughs) So, you have to explain, and you have to be creative. And because people come to you, and you have to have, like for… each thing people want about- between five to ten different suggestions on ways to deal with it. That’s a lot. That’s a lot of different suggestions.

C: That is a lot of different suggestions.

K: Yeah. It takes creativity to generate those.

C: So, I like being an advisor in that I like explaining options.

K: Mhmm.

C: But I don’t like telling people which option they should choose.

K: Well, I don’t tell them which option to choose.

C: Yeah.

K: Because it’s their life. I can recommend which option I think would work best. At the end of the day, it’s their life, and they have to live the consequences of their choice.

C: So, even though what I do now is writing, for mos- and editing makes most of my money. Every once in a while, people will ask for business consulting, which I really like. I have, you know, a graduate’s certificate in business, and I have the math thing, and… I feel I’m well-qualified to give advice. And I really like that because I go in and I just tell them all their options, and then it’s up to them which one they choose, and I don’t take any responsibility for how it turns out. Like, I tell them the likely outcomes: “if you do this, this is likely to happen”

K: So, you like to be a therapist for jobs- for companies.

C: I like to be a therapist for companies, yes.

K: (laughs) It’s how I think of it is part of it. Like, consulting, you’re kind of going in and listening to everybody’s problems, and then coming up and generating different options and solutions, explaining those options, and telling them which one you think is the best fit. That’s therapy.

C: And then I write characters in novels and be a therapist for my characters.

K: (laughs) No, you do not do therapy for your characters. Your characters, they do not get fixed. You do not fix anybody in your books. Nobody gets fixed. It’s one of the things I like about your books. Nobody gets fixed.

C: Well they’re still people. Some of their problems get fixed

K: Because you don’t write inspiration porn. Your books are not meant to inspire or have that good feel feelgood thing. Like “oh, I feel so good reading the book” you feel satisfied, you feel entertained

C: Yes.

K: You feel interested.

C: I like it if people cry with relief at the end of my books.

K: (laughs) That’s not true. That’s true for one of them. One of the books you’ll cry with relief after you’ve read it, but the other ones no, I don’t think so.

C: And I write poetry, too, which poetry is just, you know, it only takes you a couple minutes to read a poem, so

K: Yes, and you are published. You are a published poet.

C: Yes, I am a published poet.

K: You have quite a few poems that have been published.

C: Yeah, and creative nonfiction, and fiction, and straight nonfiction. So

K: So how did you come to terms with… deciding to write because in the decision to write, you were deciding to give up money, you were deciding to give up prestige, you were- you were deciding to give up the things that you had previously thought make you happy in a job.

C: I think I didn’t decide to write so much as I decided not to do the job because I wrote two of the books while I still had a full-time job.

K: Yeah.

C: So, I had- the decision to write, I’ve always felt compelled to write. I think the earliest I remember writing a story was… like, second grade, where there was a garden, and the lettuce was emeralds, and the carrots were amethyst, and like… all the vegetables were made of different gems, and I don’t remember anything more about the story. I don’t know how anybody didn’t starve to death in that world. Just that I like to write little stories. So, I think, for me, the- the hard part wasn’t deciding to write. It was deciding to give up the guarantee of- of a paycheck. And that’s still sometimes a hard decision.

K: Yeah.

C: Because with writing, there’s not, usually, immediate feedback from anybody except other writers, and other writers are like “oh, this is wonderful” or “oh, this is terrible but here’s how you can fix it” but it’s been a long process of writing these books, and I don’t know when they’ll get published. I know eventually they will because self-publishing is an option if I just cannot find another way to get them published.

K: Yeah.

C: But then I don’t know if anybody will read them, and if they read them, I don’t know if they’ll respond to it. But these are just things that I feel compelled to express, so rather than talk to myself, I write.

K: So, living in Japan, Japan does not welcome non-traditional and alternative. Like, all of Japan’s society, I feel like, crushes down on people and says “you can’t- you shouldn’t be alternative. The nail that sticks out gets the hammer” those kinds of things.

C: Right.

K: For me, I feel like being a foreigner, that more so than the United States, I’m invited to do something unusual. Although I’m not doing anything unusual. But I feel like I could. I feel like society would give me permission and would applaud me and almost see me as heroic for like being in Japan in this hard conservative country, where like sameness and homogeneity is valued, that not only are you the brave foreigner, but you’re also doing something nontraditional. And the reason I think that is (laughs) they lowkey treat me like that now, and there are tons and tons of Japanese psychologists. And therapists. Like, but, I have Japanese nationals tell me all the time there are no Japanese psychiatrists or therapists. And I’m like “I work with a Japanese psychiatrist who prescribes for my clients, and you could go to any hospital in Japan and ask to speak with a psychiatrist.”

C: But I think that what you’re running into there is a self-selected set.

K: Yeah.

C: So you’re running into people who are comfortable with foreigners.

K: Yes, I am.

C: So, I run into people who are not comfortable with foreigners in my work.

K: So you go to, I think it’s important for people to know you do like, not just the American Chamber of Commerce Japan, but you also go to talk at like… different- you have, because you have like a lot of connections from graduating from Nagoya University, and so you go and you do talks at Nagoya University, you give talks at other universities, and you also talk to other different business groups in and around Nagoya, and different educational groups in and around Nagoya, so sometimes you go into a completely Japanese environment where you are the only foreigner in the room.

C: Right.

K: And everyone else is Japanese.

C: Right, and so sometimes they don’t want to hear about this novel idea, there’s kind of a very conservative bend in Japanese business especially that “this is just the way we do things” you know, it made national news earlier this year that companies are considering not hiring every single employee on April 1st.

K: Yeah.

C: That was national news.

K: Yeah, because freshman employees are hired April 1st, and then they do their three month- they do a month-long training gig, and then they get which site that they’ll work at, then they do three months there…

C: Yeah, and the keidanren, which is the Japanese Business Association of the largest companies kind of- they have rules like you can’t recruit students until July of their last year of school.

K: Yeah.

C: And so July 1st is interview season, everybody goes out in their interview suit, which it’s like a literal suit, it’s the same one as the funeral suit. Which I think says a lot. And they do mass interviews and job fairs and things, so it’s really, really tough. And what happens is that if you don’t get a job during that cycle, you never get a full-time job. For Japanese people.

K: That’s not true. That is

C: It’s true for the larger companies. You- you can

K: That’s not true, that’s not true. It depends, like, for freshman employees, it can be a struggle, but do not have people believing that if you don’t get hired in July, you’ll never get a full-time job as a Japanese national. That is just completely untrue.

C: Not hired in July. Hired before you graduate from university.

K: And that’s not true, that’s not true. So, you can say that the ass- so, to me, this shows the contrast between the information that you get going to traditional institutions in Japan because that’s what they would have you believe versus me, who worked with a lot of people who are doing novel things because I’ve worked with Japanese nationals who are game designers and Japanese nationals who are manga writers and who are tennis pros and have non-traditional jobs.

C: So, and that’s what I’m saying about the self-selected set, so within traditional Japanese business culture, if you don’t get a job- if you don’t have a job upon graduation, then you are basically rejected from ever working at those companies.

K: Yes, the companies that complete buy into that system and do all their recruiting- it’s like law firms that only, you know have Harvard graduates working for them, like stuff like that. But, I think that’s against the law in the United States now. Like, you can’t say you only hire people from a certain university.

C: No, you can still do that.

K: Okay. So, but how does that impact your happiness with being a writer, when you go into these traditional spaces, and you’re an extremely nontraditional thing because you’re a foreigner, you’re bearded, you’re a writer, you don’t work for a company, like… what does that do to your self-image?

C: It reminds me that as a writer, I have a lot of freedom that I wouldn’t have elsewhere, so it kind of reduces any nostalgia I have about working in that system.

K: Mmm.

C: Like, okay, in that system, because I’m, you know, in my mid-forties, here’s the salary I would make no matter how good or bad I am at my job…

K: So, let’s get back to happiness, because I think we should do a whole other cast on Japanese work, because you’re wanting to go in on the whole thing, and so I want to focus on, because I feel like you’re skirting the question I keep asking you. Why are you happy being a writer? Because for me, as your wife who’s like… really being pro-you being an author, there are some times that I really- I don’t know why you’re happy doing it. Because it’s such a struggle for you, and it’s so hard. It’s not the easy job. So it’s not like you picked the easiest job you could.

C: No.

K: Writing is hard.

C: I think it’s the same reason that I’m happy doing math, and that is because it’s hard.

K: Okay.

C: Because there’s a sense of accomplishment in writing something down and expressing something in the way that I want it done. And writing novels, there’s a real sense of accomplishment in taking the character through this journey that I want them to have in a way that seems natural, that doesn’t seem like I’m just the puppetmaster pulling the strings. Like, I know how much work and how much foundation goes into what I write, so I know that, you know, I know a lot more than my characters- about my characters, than I say in my books.

K: Mhmm.

C: And I think this is something that people who write science fiction and fantasy sometimes know- some of them will put all of that information in their book, but some of them will develop entire world systems and all kinds of things and like, you know, Tolkien developed entire languages just to be able to write a few poems in those languages.

K: Yeah.

C: In his books. And I think there’s a sense of satisfaction in knowing that I have this well-constructed world and that the characters are living in it, and you’re only seeing what the characters are doing, but the world is there. And the world is there for me to draw on in future books if I want.

K: Mmm.

C: So

K: So you’re a very creative person.

C: I try to be. I-I create things.

K: And there’s a satisfaction in that creative process?

C: Yeah, there’s a satisfaction in the creative process.

K: So, do you find that you have happiness in work now because it’s satisfying?

C: Yeah, it does feel very satisfying. And it’s- it’s not always very gratifying, but it’s always very satisfying.

K: And do you find that over time, as you’ve aged, that you look more for satisfaction rather than gratification?

C: I find that when I feel safe, I work- I look more for satisfaction rather than gratification.

K: Mmm. So, for me, I have a love-hate relationship with my job. I absolutely love working with my clients, I absolutely hate managing my schedule.

C: Mmm.

K: Like, so I send out- how I do my scheduling is that I have twelve hours in a day that I’m available. My most comfortable days, like, a really sweet, nice day, is about six clients. That feels great. But limiting my schedule to only six clients in a day is really, really challenging. And I have days where I’m working 14 hours, and those days, I don’t mind them because they’re in with clients, but it reflects the difficulty in scheduling. Because I’m really fortunate and blessed and happy and honored and all of that good stuff because my Tuesdays and Wednesdays are booked through 2021 currently. And so I find that, like, right now, for the year 2019, that I have a… group of clients that schedule in a predictive enough way that most of my evenings are booked and most of my mornings are booked and right now, it’s that mid-afternoon hustle that I’m trying to book. So, like, the 3’oclock and 5’oclock appointment times are the two most challenging appointments to book because at 3:30 the kids get out of school.

C: Mhmm.

K: And people don’t get off work until 5.

C: Right.

K: And so like 6 o’clock- the 6 o’clock time, those go fast. Like, as soon as a 6 o’clock opens, it’s full. And, like, for example, like, my 6 o’clock time on Fridays is booked through, I think, 2022. So… I have, like, some six, every once in a while, a 6 o’clock on a Thursday, but 6 o’clock on a Saturday is open. See all of that memory that I have to do

C: That’s a lot of calculating.

K: Yes, calculating and thinking, and I’m like going through my list of clients, and like who wants to book what, and then I have clients that I know want certain appointments, but their temperament and energy is such that they cannot commit to more than one appointment at a time, but they’re very particular about the time of day that they come to see me, and they think of it as their time, but they want to contact me on a Monday to get an appointment on a Friday, and that’s tough.

C: Well, and you run a much different schedule than I’m used to for a therapist. So, I had a therapist for a while in the U.S. and they always ran an hour actually means fifty minutes.

K: Yeah, no, an hour for me means 60.

C: Yeah, and that there are ten minutes between appointments, so they have an appointment at 2, at 3, at 4, at 5, at 6 if they’re fully booked.

K: Yeah, no, I don’t do that. I like thirty minutes in between clients because I have to go to the bathroom. I have to eat. I have to answer emails. And I have to tweet.

C: Well, there’s that, yeah, that’s an important thing.

K: Yes.

C: And there’s also a thing where it gives your clients a lot of privacy. To where I’ve had people who come up because I’ve said this before, people come up and be like “I’m your wife’s client” and some of them will say “I don’t understand how she makes any money because I think I’m her only client”

K: (laughs) It’s an illusion. It’s a craft. Yeah, most of my clients tell me “I feel like I’m your only client” and I say “then I’m doing it right” because I also have a waiting room that’s not in my office, it’s across the hall. So people can come in early, go across the hall, a lot of people like to come and eat and relax in my waiting room.

C: What I don’t understand is how people think this because you’ve been in business for years and years

K: Yeah.

C: And, you know, someone who comes let’s say once a week, which is super frequent, they’re giving you less than 400 dollars a month.

K: Yup.

C: How do they think that you can keep, you know, two spaces plus pay an office manager and all of that on that amount of money?

K: But I don’t think that they’re actually thinking abut where the money they pay me goes.

C: Mmm.

K: I feel like they all just view that as that going straight into my pocket, and I just get to do whatever with it, and that’s not the case. I have to pay taxes, I have to pay insurance, I have to pay rent. Electricity, um, I offer everybody a beverage and a snack, I have to pay for those beverages and those snacks. I have staff that I have to like, that I have to pay. I have a lot of overhead.

C: I’ve gone on your toy runs with you every once in a while.

K: Yes, and for the kids, I have to keep the toy box full because I have a prize box because I like to bribe them to talk to me. (laughs)

C: Yeah. And so I know that one of the discussions that we have is, like, how much time do you have available that you don’t have to charge for because I know you do compassionate billing, you do sliding scales, and some people the sliding scale is that they don’t pay anything.

K: and my sliding scale and compassionate billing, those slots stay full because I have a waiting list.

C: Right.

K: So, most often if somebody needs that, they go on the waiting list and then when availability- when somebody rotates off, I rotate somebody in.

C: Yeah. So, I’m not saying you can contact Kisstopher for free therapy. That’s not at all what I’m trying to say.

K: (laughs) Yeah, no.

C: Just that, I think, the finances of it are interesting to me. Like, I enjoy working on that part of it, and that’s the kind of problem solving I like. And writing lets me do that kind of problem solving. Writing lets me invent situations, like, say “okay, this character only has this much money available to them, what do they do with it?” or “this character’s time is structure in this way, how do they find time to enjoy themselves?” or to have whatever wonderful or horrible thing happen to them that I need to happen to them.

K: So, I think that for both of us, it took courage to find happiness and work. Because for me the traditional work in Japan would be English teaching because that’s the only other thing I’m qualified to do.

C: Mhmm.

K: And I was fortunate enough that I could make, like, a really good living English teaching because the type of English teaching that I can do. Um, and… so, if you have a master’s in Japan, you can teach at universities and become a regular university staff instructor. And once you have your PhD, you can actually get tenure as an English teacher. Those jobs are difficult to get, but because of connections and the people I know, I could get that level of English teaching if I wanted it but I don’t. It just doesn’t make me happy. I don’t- I enjoy teaching reading. Love, love, love teaching people how to read. But I don’t enjoy teaching language.

C: Mhmm.

K: And, so, for me, that was really unfulfilling, and at the end of the day, I want to feel like I’ve made a difference. And…

C: Yes.

K: And, I, with English teaching, there were some places that I could go that I feel like I was making a difference and teaching English for the class that I was teaching it, and other places I just felt like I was entertainment.

C: Mhmm.

K: And something to do. And I didn’t really enjoy that feeling.

C: Yeah, sometimes- sometimes the business is called edutainment here.

K: Yeah, and I didn’t feel valued. And most of my clients, I’m really fortunate, most of my clients value me and tell me that they value what I’m doing. And I can always see the value added, even if they’re not, you know, gushing praise at me.

C: Right.

K: I can see the value added because I’m also very fortunate in that my clients stay with me, usually, for years. And, so, I’m really- which is why my Tuesdays and Wednesdays are booked so far in the future, I’m really fortunate that I make long-term relationships. Yeah, I have some clients that just spot-check and just come in every once in a while every couple of months.

C: Well, and you have some clients that are just there for a short course of CBT or something. I know that you’re not pushing CBT on everybody, but for some people, that is

K: Yeah, I do- I rarely do CBT. Rarely, rarely, rarely. It’s such a small- like, it’s rare that I, like every once in a while I’ll do a short course run of cognitive behavioral therapy, but it’s really gone out of fashion.

C: Oh, okay.

K: And it’s just really, like, and there’s advancements that are saying that CBT is not the way to go for most people. So people have to come in requesting that, and then we have to discuss whether or not it’s right for them.

C: I know you keep up on all of that kind of stuff.

K: Yeah, so it’s okay that you don’t know. So, for me, what makes me happy at my job, and why I enjoy being in session is because I can see the difference.

C: Mhmm.

K: and I take really great noes, and I look back and forth, you know, between “okay what did we talk about last session, what did we talk about this session?” and to see that they’re developing, and to see that they’re growing, it’s super gratifying to be there at those moments of epiphany or have somebody come in and share an epiphany that they had off of something that you guys talked about. And that keeps me going. That’s what makes me passionate, and that’s what makes me happy in my job is that it’s different, there’s tons of novelty, um, it’s exciting, it’s challenging, it’s rewarding… and emotionally fulfilling.

C: So, do you think you’ll keep doing it forever? Because I do see days where you come home just wrung out.

K: Yeah. It’s hard. It’s hard. So, for me, I don’t think that I will do this forever.

C: Mhmm.

K: I don’t think that I’ll be a therapist forever. And I’m also aware that, as a woman in her fifties, that I do have to start looking at- yes, yes Chad, I am going to continue calling myself a woman in her fifties because I am.

C: Yes.

K: I am a woman in my fifties.

C: Well, as the husband of a woman in her fifties…

K: (laughs)

C: I feel like I can keep writing forever.

K: I don’t feel like I can keep doing therapy forever because it is so high intensity, and it really takes a lot of cognition. And I don’t know what my brain’s going to do. I don’t know how my brain’s going to age. And if I find myself slipping, mentally or cognitively, I don’t think that I could be of service at the level that my clients need.

C: Mhmm.

K: And that’s the main thing, is that I want to make sure that I’m always able to function at the level that my clients need cognitively.

C: Yeah.

K: And then there’s also emotionally… and I don’t know how my emotions will change over time. Because there’s a lot of things in my life yet to experience, like I have no idea who I’ll want to be as a grandmother.

C: Mhmm.

K: And I don’t know who I’ll want to be as a mother-in-law, and so I may- I don’t know, I may reduce my hours, I don’t know. It’s all up in the air, like I’m digging what I’m doing now, and I’m just kind of staying in the moment. I don’t really think about the future and longevity.

C: I think that if you can stay in the moment while you’re working, that’s part of work satisfaction.

K: Yeah.

C: Because, I know that, like, for me at least, suffering and pain and all of that takes me out of the moment.

K: Yeah.

C: And so if I’m in the moment, it means that those things are either not happening or that what I’m doing is so much more interesting that I can ignore them.

K: yeah.

C: So, I know that if I’m crafting a scene because I try to write a scene a day, I don’t always make it, but I try to write a scene a day. Then I know what I want to happen, and then putting in all of the details to dole for later, I feel like “ohh, I’m doing this” and then after all of my scenes are written, I get to go back through and say “okay, well this one I’m going to take out this bit, but I’m going to add a little bit because this is stronger.” And I find a lot of satisfaction in craft.

K: So, I think finding happiness at work, for me, takes courage but it also takes knowing yourself. Knowing what you value and knowing what happiness means to you. Because when I was younger, happiness meant to me, money. And respect.

C: Right.

K: Now that I’m older, I find that I still really, really like money, but money isn’t the root of my happiness. I find that a job well done, knowing that I’m good at the job, makes me really happy. And having a positive impact on the world makes me- that’s always made me happy. I’ve always prided myself on being pro-social, and now I see myself really giving back to the world on a daily basis and in my work, so I feel like my work gives back. It’s a giving profession. Which I really enjoy.

C: I feel like writing is a giving profession, too. I feel like art is a giving profession.

K: Art?

C: Yeah. I feel like

K: Like, all of the arts?

C: Yeah, all of the arts. I feel like creating art is a giving profession.

K: So, we kind of took a meander through- I don’t know if we really answered happiness at work.

C: Well, I’m happy at work, and you’re happy at work.

K: (laughs)

C: I guess that’s the answer.

K: Well, I think we kind of unpacked and dug in a little bit deeper on work, and I think we’re both really happy at work, and I think we’re both really happy in our personal lives.

C: Yeah, and so if you have something different that makes you happy at work, let us know.

K: Yeah, keep the conversation going on twitter, like we say in our outro. I think that’s what we say in our outro.

C: Probably.

K: Yeah, I don’t know, you should listen to our outro more often. We do listen to each podcast that we record, because I find that doing the take twos, which is pa- so, I just want to tell everybody what the take twos are because I think I mentioned them a couple times in the podcast. So, what the take twos are is, that’s what I call the Patreon exclusive content that we create. After each podcast, I don’t think Chad has to relisten, but I relisten to it, and then I write Kisstopher’s Take on the podcast, and it might be supplementary information on the actual content of the cast that day, or something I wish I had included in the podcast or something that just gives you a deeper understanding of what we were talking about, but it’s always related to whichever episode number that the take two’s for.

C: Well, I read the transcript to do, so I know sometimes you need to do it before I’m able to do the transcript, so that’s why you listen.

K: Yeah.

C: And then I read the transcript, which also transcribing involves listening, so I do listen to it again.

K: Yeah, and I enjoy listening to it because I always listen to it to see if- if the episode entertained me. (laughs)

C: Yes.

K: To see whether or not I thought it was entertaining.

C: Are you not entertained?

K: (laughs) So yeah, we’re happy in life, and we’re happy in work, and if you want to be happy at work, figure out what makes you happy. And then find work that ties into that. So if it’s about being pro-social, find work that’s about being pro-social kind of thing.

C: Yup.

K: And don’t let society tell you what you’re supposed to do. Find those answers for yourself.

C: Yes.

K: Alright, so, that’s us for today. Thanks for listening, and we hope you tune in again next week.

C: Bye-bye.

K: Bye.