We talk about getting old. Kisstopher insists that because she’s 50 and Chad is only 44, they’re in different generations. Lots of talk about gray hair, and some about Japanese working and aging culture.

**Transcript**

K: So, lately I’ve been thinking a about aging because we’re doing this exciting new project called The Writers’ Triangle, which is a new podcast about writing. And it’s me, you, and our son, Rasta. And I feel like they get the benefit of hearing three generations discussing writing whereas you feel like they get two. So, explain and justify how you and I are in the same generation, please, because I am a woman in her fifties. I am a woman of a certain age. And you are a young man barely in his forties. And so, for me, that puts us in different generations. I am almost, like… if you round, now you could round my age to 100. (laughs)

C: (laughs) I don’t know what to say to that. Yeah, I could round

K: It was stunning. What I just said was stunning. It was so beautiful. It was stunningly beautiful.

C: Yes.

K: I literally stunned you with the brilliance of my logic.

C: You did.

K: Exactly.

C: If we round your age to 100, we have to round my age to zero because we’re rounding to the nearest hundred.

K: Yes.

C: And then we’re like five generations apart.

K: So why don’t you feel like you and I are in different generations? I feel like, when it comes to our educational paths and all of that, I don’t know. It feels like- I just feel like I’m in a different generation than you. I really do.

C: So when it comes to our educational paths…

K: Yeah.

C: We met at college.

K: (laughs) But that was not my first go-round.

C: It wasn’t mine either.

K: Okay, but I think that was like my third or fourth go-round. I don’t remember exactly which. Listen to the old episodes where we talk about education if you want to know how many times I went to college. But- I can’t think about it right now. Seriously, my mind is going blank. I think I went to college five times, but I’m not sure.

C: Okay, I’m starting to feel more and more like you are a different generation. You just, senility is starting to set in.

K: Yes, I do have signs of aging that you don’t have. Although you are way more gray than I am. And I have gray envy. I’m just going to put it out there because you’re almost completely graybeard. And I have a few strands of gray, like my temples aren’t even silver, although I am really happy with the color of my gray. Another reason- ooo, another reason I’m glad I don’t smoke anymore.

C: I thought that when you said, “I’m happy with the color of it,” I thought “because they’re silver, not yellow.”

K: Yeah, so I’m really happy that my smoking and living in a smoky environment hasn’t stained my gray with nicotine. So I’m really happy with that. And then I don’t even know if that’s true, but I have seen people with like yellow fingers from nicotine and yellow fingernails and yellow teeth. So I just assume that has to stain gray hair as well.

C: Well, and you see it on paint on walls in places that people smoked, so.

K: Yes, that is so gross.

C: So yeah, I would assume that it would stain hair.

K: Yeah, me too. And so I’m really really happy. Ooh, the other day, I was watching YouTube. I have one of my favorite YouTube channels, man I wish I could give her a shoutout. I can’t remember the name of the YouTube channel. But she had a hot press- so her flat iron broke, and she got a new flat iron and it discolored her gray.

C: Mmm.

K: I felt so bad for her because she had really beautiful, silver gray, and she had to end up dying her hair because it turned it yellow. So for all the beautiful ladies rocking their natural gray, I rock natural hair so I don’t put heat on my hair anyway so I’m not worried about that but be forewarned that flat ironing could damage your gray.

C: Yup.

K: I do know that- I feel like my gray hair is more delicate than my brown hair. I don’t know. I don’t know the texture and all of that, I wonder if my curls are going to change texture.

C: I don’t know.

K: I knew a gal who was gray in her thirties and had curly hair, and I just so envied her hair. I just every time I would see her, I would just drool. It’s so beautiful. Just really gorgeous. And my hair is taking forever to gray. I feel like it’s just lying, you know.

C: It’s almost like you’re in a younger generation than me.

K: It is, if you just look at our hair and our gray. And also you have beautiful laugh lines at the corner of your eyes. I just have bags under my eyes, but I don’t have any crinkles. And I feel like your labia fold is more pronounced than mine, so I feel like physically you are in an older generation than I am.

C: Yeah.

K: But emotionally, I feel like I’m in a different generation than you.

C: Okay. So I’m broke down but immature, is that what you’re saying?

K: (laughs) Basically.

C: Okay.

K: But you know I love that youthful glow about you. Like, your eternal youthful glow.

C: Yes.

K: (laughs)

C: Turn off the light, you can still see it.

K: Yes. So, no, I do- I feel like you do have a youthful glow inside, emotionally. But I feel like intellectually, you’re super super smart. But, your intellect- your genius is so different, your intellect, is so different from mine. Because math is a challenge for me, and math is your genius. Like, where you excel.

C: Yeah.

K: So, I feel like for cultural references, though, because you grew up in Alaska, we’re kind of in the same generation. Because I feel like I really came into my prime in the 80s, and all of your cultural references were in the 80s because you grew up in Alaska and there was that cultural lag.

C: And I was in high school during the 80s.

K: Okay, what grade were you in?

C: I was in ninth grade in ‘89.

K: Okay, so I dropped out of high school my sophomore, junior year? I think at the beginning of my junior year of high school I dropped out.

C: You dropped out in 1988.

K: How do you know that?

C: Because I know that you were 16.

K: Yeah. So, but, I think that I dropped out before my 16th birthday.

C: You think you dropped out when you were 15? You can’t do that.

K: Yes you can.

C: Oh, okay. So maybe ‘87 or ’86.

K: Yeah I was 15 because I had to get a special permit to work. And so I was in school when I was 15, but I didn’t finish my sophomore year. I dropped out at the end of my sophomore year. I never entered my junior year of high school.

C: Gotcha.

K: So it was like three months before the end of the year or something like that. My sophomore year. So, yeah. There’s that. (laughs) Which I think was the best choice I ever made. It was a really great choice for me. I think that having to finish high school at the high school I was at would have been sheer torture.

C: Yeah.

K: So, I’m really really happy. So I feel like being on my own because when I was 16 I emancipated, but I was almost 17 by the time I emancipated, and I had already been on my own for a year.

C: Mhm.

K: And so that happened before my 16th birthday.

C: Yeah, and I graduated high school at 16, so.

K: But something I think is really cool is I got to go to prom, and so shout out to the dude who took me to his prom. I owe him a big thanks of appreciation. All around good person back then, don’t know if they’re still a good person, but I always wish I could find them. I don’t know how people find people on Facebook. I can never find anybody from my past on Facebook.

C: You don’t just look through the pictures and pick all the people you know?

K: What do you mean?

C: Just like the big wall of pictures, that’s what Facebook is right? It’s just a big wall of pictures, and you just point at the people you know.

K: No, like, even people that I know, like I can go into Facebook and scroll through all of the possible people with that name, and it won’t be any of them.

C: No?

K: None.

C: Because it should just be like a big book of faces. You just look through it and pick out the faces that

K: So how do people find people on Facebook? I don’t know. Hey, if you guys know how to look people up on Facebook and find them, hit me up because I know what high school dude graduated from, and I’d rally like to say thank you for taking me to prom. So if you know how to do it, hit us up on twitter or on Facebook.

C: Okay, shout out to all the internet stalkers out there.

K: Not internet stalkers. I think of them as internet investigators.

C: Mmm. Detectives.

K: I don’t know how to investigate anybody on the internet. Like, I can’t even find blood relatives on Facebook. For real, if I want to look up my own siblings, I’m really close with one of my nieces, and she’s not even Facebook friends with all of my- oo, I feel like I’m telling tales about my family.

C: (laughs) You are.

K: (laughs)

C: I hear that happens when people get older.

K: (raucous laughter) That’s what it is. I’m a woman in my fifties. You can’t expect me to be discreet about family stuff anymore. But I find it interesting that my niece is not Facebook friends with all of my brothers and sisters. And I also find it interesting that my cousins that I’m close to have no interest in being Facebook friends with me. Or maybe they can’ find me. I don’ know.

C: I don’ know either.

K: Yeah. So, yeah. If you guys know how to find people on Facebook. If you’re a good Facebook investigator, please let me know because there are people who I’d like to reach out and say “hey, how’s it going.” But people find me all the time. Like, I have people I haven’t talked to in literally over twenty years find me on Facebook, and I don’t know how they do it.

C: I don’t know because your name changed.

K: Yes. So when we got married, my last name changed, but they didn’t even know my last name to begin with.

C: Kisstopher is not entirely unique, but it’s an unusual name.

K: Yeah it is.

C: And if you limit it to women of a certain age, it’s basically only you.

K: But I don’t think they even knew my age at the time.

C: But most often we see Kisstopher listed as a man’s name now.

K: Yes. Because it is a very common name in Russia and the Ukraine.

C: Yes. So, you’re not a Russian sleeper agent.

K: (laughs)

C: But of course if you were, we would say that, so. Believe what you want. The truth is out there.

K: (laughs) The truth is out there. I’d be the laziest sleeper agent ever in the world. But, you know. Hey. But maybe that is like a sleeper agent. They don’t do anything, right?

C: Thank you.

K: Because they’re waiting to be activated.

C: Right. Because they’re not awaker agents.

K: But, hey, you were recruited by the CIA.

C: I was not recruited by the CIA. I was asked by the CIA if I’d like to work for them, and I said no. It’s not the same as being recruited.

K: Okay. And that was back during the cold war.

C: Let me think. That was not during the cold war because

K: Because you were too young to have been recruited during the cold war. Aha! A-ha! I was out of high school when the Berlin wall came down. You were not. Aha!

C: I was not. I was studying German in high school when the Berlin wall came down.

K: Yes. Evidence that we are from different generations.

C: Yes. So, all of you people out there

K: I was old enough to vote in the election where Bush Sr. and Mondale ran against each other. You were not. Different generations. Proof.

C: Bush Sr. and Mondale would be 1988

K: Receipts. I got receipts that we’re from different generations.

C: Yes.

K: Proof. Evidence.

C: You do. So, new generation is every four years, so you and your siblings- there’s like six generations between you and your oldest sibling right?

K: (laughs) Oh my gosh. So the sibling that’s closest to me in age, there’s a five-year difference.

C: Yes. So you’re a different generation, and the sibling that’s furthest from you in age is like 20 something years older than you?

K: No, I think more than that. They passed away

C: They can’t be more than that or your father would be in his hundreds.

K: My father started having kids when he was 19.

C: Okay.

K: Is my understanding.

C: If he had a kid when he was 19, let’s say he’s 90 now which we know he’s not or his father would have only been 12 when he had him.

K: Okay, I don’t know how old my grandfather was when he had him, but I know he was their second child. I don’t know how old my grandmother was when she started having babies, but I know my grandfather and grandmother both lived to be 92.

C: Yeah.

K: And so I believe that my father’s in his 80s. I believe.

C: Probably early 80s.

K: Yeah because my grandfather died 13 years ago, and so… 13 plus 92 is 105.

C: Yeah.

K: I don’t know why his age now means anything.

C: I don’t either.

K: Because I don’t know how old he was when he had my father. (laughs)

C: I don’t know.

K: So, yeah. So, okay, I have no idea how old my oldest sibling- the sibling furthest from me in age would be. I do believe that they passed on, and I do believe that the one that is next oldest is still living. So, as you can see, my family is not tight knit at all, but if you follow us on twitter and you follow the cast, you know that’s no surprise. Because you know being a product of the foster care system means hey, not a close-knit family.

C: Yes. It came unraveled at some point.

K: Yeah, but I think some families do stay close through all of that. I have been tripping lately off of, like… people being old. Like, recently, I was like “wow, the brother that I know best is 55 now.” Or will be 55 in September. And it seems like he should be much older than that for me. It feels like he should be in his 60s if he’s even alive. Like, I don’t even know if he’s alive or dead.

C: Well, it’s like one of those math questions. You know. When you were five, he was double your age, now you’re 50, how old is he. The answer is not 100. Right?

K: Okay. Why is the answer- I don’t- I totally- I’m sorry, I just stopped listening when you said it was like a math problem. (laughs)

C: Okay. There’s this math problem and they always say two siblings, and they always say when this sibling was this much younger, the other was double their age, now this sibling is this much. So when you were five.

K: Are you saying like Facebook math?

C: Yeah, I’m saying like Facebook math.

K: Okay.

C: When you were five, your brother was ten.

K: Yes.

C: So he was double your age. So now that you’re 50, he should be 100.

K: Oh, okay. For doing like..

C: Double your age.

K: Yeah. Well, he’s not double my age, and he should be over- he should be older than 100 because I am IN my fifties.

C: Okay, but you are not yet 51, so

K: But I am in my fifties.

C: Yeah.

K: I have passed the threshold of fifty, and I am older than fifty.

C: Okay.

K: So I am in my fifties. See what I did there?

C: I did.

K: (laughs)

C: I am older than 40.

K: Yes, you are.

C: But also I am older than 30, so I am in my thirties.

K: (laughs)

C: See what I did there?

K: If you want to be anti-aging, that’s fine. You know I have always celebrated and supported any age you want to say you are.

C: Yup.

K: as long as it’s not older than me.

C: Yes, I know you’re like, so jealous of- jealously guard that.

K: Yes. You can be anything under 45. Like, you can be 45 or under. See, I will even let you be 45 because I am generous like that.

C: Oh yeah? Thank you for letting me be 45.

K: Yeah, you’re welcome. (laughs) That would be aging you. I would let you age up because I understand not wanting to be a boring age. Like, I found 47, 48, and 49 to be supremely boring ages. I also found 46 to be boring, so I’ve been 50 for about four or five years. Well, I didn’t say I was fifty. I would say I’m almost fifty.

C: Yeah.

K: Which was true. So I was almost fifty. I would say I’m almost fifty, I’m approaching fifty because fifty has such gravitas. It does.

C: It does, yes.

K: But my life now is more than half over.

C: Unless they invent life extension technologies.

K: Who’s to say I would partake in that?

C: Mmm. Good point.

K: So, I feel like okay, my life is more than half over, so I’ve got to get cooking on things. I can’t be messing around. I’ve got to get cooking on retirement.

C: Yeah.

K: But I feel like retirement, I feel like I’m always taking retirement seriously, so I’m not panicked or freaked out about that. I got retirement- a retirement plan in place and all of that kind of stuff. I think I’ve done really good in picking non-physical jobs and having a non-physical life.

C: Mhm.

K: But now I’m starting to wonder about early-onset Alzheimer’s. Although I don’t have early-onset Alzheimer’s, I have watched several shows on it. And you know if I’m porphed out, I get paranoid, and I start thinking okay if I see something I’m going to get it, and also it’s a legacy of the way my mom abused me with psychics.

C: Mhm.

K: Emotionally, I don’t understand whether or not psychics exist, but cognitively, I don’t believe in psychics.

C: Right.

K: But emotionally, I feel like I don’t know how exactly Alzheimer’s works. And so it could be, you watch a show on early Alzheimer’s, and you get Alzheimer’s.

C: It’s like The Ring.

K: exactly. Thank you. I don’t know. It could be.

C: Yeah. If you didn’t understand that cultural reference, you’re in a different generation than us.

K: (laughs) That was awesome. Air high-five. That was awesome. So, in Japan, I find that I really really enjoy people treating me like I’m mature. Like, I love the fact that everybody who is 38 and under knows that I’m obasan. They know I am an older woman to be treated with deference and respect, and I love it.

C: Well, the age distribution in Japan, I think 20% of people now are at least 70. In Japan.

K: Okay. Really?

C: Yeah.

K: Wow, did not know that.

C: So in terms of women in Japan, you’re not at the older end.

K: No, I’m not at the older end, but I’m at the you should respect me end. I’m not old enough to get- I’m not visibly old enough to sit in the disabled seat even though I’m disabled.

C: Yeah.

K: And so I’m wishing my hair would just go gray, man. I’m wanting more gray. Because if I had more gray, there’s so much stuff that I would get in Japan that I’m not getting that I’m finding challenging.

C: Just go gray overnight, be like “thank you, I will collect my gifts now.”

K: I would love that, yes. I would love that. Because I like the fact that there is a respect for the aged day.

C: Yeah.

K: I like that.

C: It’s a national holiday.

K: Yes. And I like the fact that all of the people in our son’s generation, all of his friends in his generation- most of his friends are from our generation, but his friends that are in his generation really do treat me with respect. And feel really uncomfortable because I’m really casual and say, “just call me Kisstopher.”

C: Mhm.

K: And it kind of makes them feel weird because they want to call me Musick-san, or in English call me Mrs. Musick, which I’m fine with that. Just, you can not call me Kisstopher-san because that just sets my teeth on edge. But I also don’t like Miss Kisstopher. So- but I do have some southern families that I allow them to “Miss Kisstopher” me because that is a southern thing. And I get it. But I don’t like it.

C: Yeah.

K: But I do like the deference, and I do like- I do free intakes for my therapy practice, and I tell every single intake that I’m in my 50s.

C: Yeah?

K: Yeah, I do. And it’s so funny because they respect me more. Like, my opinions matter more. It does give me so much gravitas, and I love a good gravitas.

C: They’re not like “I can’t see you. You’re being abusive about your age.”

K: (laughs) No you feel like I’m abusive about my age because I tout it.

C: You do tout it.

K: And I don’t feel like that’s abuse. I feel like that’s recognition.

C: Yeah, you wander around the apartment “I’m in my fiiiifties. I’m in my fiiiifties.”

K: And you are not. And you are not. (laughs)

C: You obviously know the end of that song.

K: (laughs) That does not happen. That does not happen. Oh my gosh. (laughs) Oh my gosh. That’s from another jingle, but you know I was going to have to do the end of it. You know we have never done that before. Not ever.

C: Yup. I knew you’d have to end it.

K: I knew what you were going for. I knew that I had been completely set up. (laughs) I can’t not do it. Anything with that rhythm. So, we make up jingles in our family, and it’s something like… “I have a cookie. I have a cookie. And I’m going to eat it up. I’m going to eat it up.” So anything, like you could just say anything with that tempo.

C: Twice, and then you’ve got to repeat it.

K: Yeah, so you sing it twice, and then there’s always something, a refrain that comes after it. And you knew that I was going to say, “and you are not.”

C: I was using the mental agility that comes with my youth.

K: Taking advantage of the senior woman that I am.

C: Yes.

K: The woman of a certain age that I am. And I get to say that now. I often say that too, to people. “I’m a woman of a certain age” and they always look at me like “what are you saying” like what does that have to do with anything?

C: Okay.

K: Because I say it randomly. Like, if something happened, “oh, I’m a woman of a certain age.” Just for no reason. No reason at all.

C: Apropos of nothing.

K: Yes. So if I feel hot, I fan myself. “I’m a woman of a certain age.” If I’m thirsty, I might get a bottle of water and be like “I’m a woman of a certain age. I need to stay hydrated.” (laughs) Everybody’s just looking at me like “What are you on about, Kisstopher?” And I’m like I’m on about my age. I’m a woman of a certain age. I made it to fifty.

C: Yeah, you’re like I know when I was born, I’m not a person of uncertain age because I know when I was born. I’m a person of certain age.

K: And I feel like in Japan now, I need to have- I need to have, I don’t know. Get a hobby, like ikebana and kimono wearing and calligraphy. I need to do the senior stateswoman hobbies. I need some of those.

C: I think so. I think you’d look good wearing a kimono, doing calligraphy with one hand while you arranged flowers with the other.

K: (laughs) Recently, well not recently, over the summer, I taught our son how to tie an obi. Which I am super super proud of.

C: So what’s an obi?

K: So an obi is the sash that goes around the waist when you wear a yukata or kimono, and a yukata and kimono is a robe-like fabric. So, basically it looks like a robe- I think everybody kind of knows what a kimono is.

C: Yeah.

K: So a kimono, there- they have different layers, and a seven-layer kimono is the wedding kimono. And then there’s the yukata, which is one layer. And it’s really thin, and it’s usually worn for festivals over the summer. And I felt really proud of myself that I taught him how to tie an obi, and I taught him how to teach his partner how to tie her obi because she didn’t know how, and I was like “dude, here’s how you do that one, too.” So I am now an obi aficionado because I know how to tie the obi three different ways. Two ways for men, one way for women because there’s an advanced way for women that has this thing you wrap it up in, and goes over- it’s a thing, man. So I can just do the simple bow in the back. I can’t do the big bustle in the back.

C: I once went to a cultural event, that’s what it was called, in which they had somebody come

K: did you just do air quotes for cultural event?

C: I did.

K: But you did them down by your knees.

C: Yeah.

K: Like, down by your knees.

C: It’s not worthy of lifting my hands for that one.

K: Okay, so why was it an air quote cultural event?

C: Because really it was just a chance to sell overpriced drinks.

K: Okay.

C: But they had somebody come and demonstrate how to tie a kimono by yourself. And you have to use several extra strings and things to do it. And this person who’s an expert in tying kimonos.

K: No, you don’t have to use several strings. Rasta didn’t have

C: For the traditional kimono

K: No, there’s a sashimi, like a string that you tie underneath it to keep your kimono in place, but Rasta’s able to do his obi without the underneath string.

C: This was a whole thing; she’s been certified by the imperial family as knowing how to do it. She’s performed in Carnegie Hall tying it by herself. It’s a whole cultural thing.

K: So she’s doing like the traditional female with the bustle in back, not the bow.

C: Correct, yes.

K: Yeah, no, that thing is a thing. It’s a four-piece, it’s not just the obi. I don’t know what the thing for the women underneath is called.

C: And it’s normally done by two people, but there was a method invented to do it with one person involving some extra strings and things.

K: Yeah, it’s a thing.

C: So a kimono is to a yukata what a tuxedo is to a suit for men.

K: Yeah.

C: Men wear kimono and yukata as well as women do.

K: Yes. So, as a woman of a certain age, I do feel like at some point in time, I’m going to need to have a kimono that is, you know, equal to my standing in society. But I feel like, you know, being the young whippersnapper that you are, you don’t necessarily need a kimono. I feel like you could get by with a yukata.

C: Yeah, and I’ll probably just wear a suit.

K: (laughs) Yeah, I’m not going to do a kimono. I’m just making a joke. Because we were recently talking about when our son gets married, that I’m not doing the kimono. I’m not even going to wear heels. I’m wearing flats to the ceremony.

C: Whenever he gets married, I will be a man of a certain foreignness.

K: (laughs) I will absolutely be a woman of a certain foreignness. And I feel like, for me, I hope that I can get to the age where I don’t have to learn how to speak really formal Japanese.

C: Mmm.

K: Because keigo, which is super formal Japanese, like I’m struggling. I’m in the second grade still in Japanese. Maybe I’ve advanced to grade three, but I doubt it. I feel like I’m solidly second grade. Like, I can speak- because I have kids that speak to me in Japanese that I work with, and when they express anything emotive- like their emotional truths- I’m like “okay, we need to translate that emotional thing.” I love, I learned a Japanese word from one of the kids I work with, they felt “herohero” and that means they just felt flustered and exhausted and overwhelmed. And I was like right on. Glad that you let me google that because I don’t want you feeling flustered and overwhelmed.

C: Yeah.

K: And so, I know- so, I’m learning Japanese from third through fifth graders because I have some kids that are bicultural, and they feel more comfortable saying emotive things. So I’m learning some emotive words. I think after I finish my current book of Japanese- so my goal is to be fluent in Japanese by the time I’m 55. That’s my goal. So, the next five years I want to really buckle down. The next four and a half years, I want to really buckle down and get serious about my Japanese.

C: I think that’s a good goal.

K: Yeah?

C: My goal is to only ever have four emotions, so that I can

K: (laughs) There’s a bunch of different words for happiness in Japanese, and I only know one.

C: Yeah. Ureshii.

K: Yeah. That’s it.

C: So that’s the adjective, and then the same kanji, same writing, shiawase is the noun.

K: Yeah, and like… I can’t.

C: So for me, I just always want to be Ureshii, Kibishii, Sabishii, or Isogashii, and that’s happy, sad, lonely, or busy.

K: So, why do you only want to be happy, sad, lonely, or busy. Why would you pick sad and lonely?

C: So I can talk to you and not be sad or lonely, and if I’m talking to you I’m obviously not busy. Therefore, I’m happy.

K: Okay. So every time you’re not talking to me, you’re busy, sad, and lonely?

C: I’m one of them.

K: (laughs)

C: Not necessarily all of them at the same time.

K: Why wouldn’t you pick more happier words?

C: Okay, I can also be sleepy.

K: yeah. Sleepy definitely has to be one of your adjectives. Because you are of nap age.

C: Yes, I am of nap age.

K: Yes, you’re a very nappy person. You are the nappiest Caucasian I have ever known. (laughs)

C: Wow. I saw that headed my way.

K: High five me. Ksshh. See, now I did a sound effect for that high-five because that was awesome. Because you are super nappy.

C: I saw that headed my way, and I thought “mmm, I’m too old to dodge.”

K: (laughs) You lost that dodgeability.

C: I did.

K: So how do you feel about aging in Japan? For me, I feel like women are not as stereotypically sexualized in Japan. Or maybe they are, and I just miss it because I’m on the outside of the culture, but I don’t feel hypersexualized by age. I feel like- okay, I feel like the schoolgirl is fetishized in Japan, and then after that there is this mandate to be married, and I feel like once I became married, they stopped sexualizing me, and I became a womb for birthing children. And then once I birthed my child, it feels like that’s the time that Japan stops sexualizing women is when they become mothers.

C: Yeah.

K: So, I didn’t feel like any age stigma attached to sexuality in the way that it is in the United States. And so, like, I love on Netflix there’s a show – I think it’s Frankie and Johnny – not Franky and Johnny.

C: Frankie and Grace?

K: Yeah. Grace and Frankie?

C: I don’t remember which order.

K: It’s the Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin show.

C: Yeah.

K: And so, sorry gals, I love you. Grace and Frankie, I’m pretty sure. Anyway, look it up you guys. You know we don’t Google stuff on this show. So, they’re really talking about women’s sexuality in their sixties and seventies and eighties and that women are always sexual beings and all of that. And I don’t find that I value being sexualized, and I think that’s because when I was young, I was really hypersexualized. And I feel like I rode that till the wheels fell off kind of thing, and now I’ve neve- I just don’t want to be sexualized. So, being a sexual being or not being seen as a sexual being by anyone other than you, I feel like it’s none of their business. And I don’t want them to see me as that. I like being more matronly.

C: Mhm.

K: And I feel like in Japan, as soon as you become a mom, you become matronly.

C: Yes.

K: is that your experience of women’s aging in Japan?

C: That is how my experience of how they talk about it, yeah. Everybody I meet who is older than thirty talks about how old they are.

K: Yeah, and there’s no stigma or shame.

C: Yeah.

K: And age is just very openly talked about. And I feel like in my forties, they were like “okay you almost know what you’re doing.” Is kind of like the vibe in Japan. “Eh, you’ve almost got there, you’ve almost arrived.“ But when I started saying I’m almost I’m almost fifty, people were like “oh, okay. You’re knowledgeable. You’re well-seasoned.” And that’s how I feel like being fifty in Japan, people see me as well-seasoned, they see me as being very vital. They see me as being very active. And activity level seems to be more- intellectual activity level seems to be more the focus in Japan.

C: I think, too, it relates back to the traditional employment system because you get promotions and things according to your age not according to how good you are.

K: Yeah. For a lot of companies, that’s still the case.

C: Yeah. For a lot of companies that’s still the case that there are no rising stars.

K: Yeah, no, it’s really hard to be a rising star in Japan.

C: If you’re going to be a senior manager, they’re all going to be old.

K: Yeah. It’s really hard to be a hotshot in Japan.

C: Yeah.

K: And Japan doesn’t tend to value the hotshot because to be a hotshot, you have to be an upstart, and Japan does not value the upstart. At all. They’re like “put your head down, do the work, pay your dues.” I feel like Japan is a really pay your dues kind of culture.

C: Definitely and so

K: At least on the surface, I think when you delve deeper that’s not the case, but surface-wise and popular culture-wise.

C: So in English we say the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

K: Yeah.

C: But the equivalent Japanese saying is “the nail that sticks up gets hammered down.”

K: Yes.

C: So yeah it’s not valued to excel. But, I find in American companies sometimes, too, particularly at entry-level type jobs, people would be like “don’t work so hard, you’re making us look bad.”

K: Yeah, and I know in Japan it is very much about setting realistic expectations.

C: Mhm.

K: And doing things in a way that the person who comes behind you can still meet that level.

C: Right.

K: And I know people complain that- what I find it interesting is the mix. There are people that feel like Japan has crappy work-life balance and then there are people who feel like Japan has amazing work-life balance. And I feel like the companies I’m most familiar with are Mitsubishi Jet, or Mitac, and Toyota because I work with a lot of clients that work for those two companies. I’m also familiar with NGK and NHK and Daiso and Buffalo. So I feel like I’ve actually had a pretty good mix. And Panasonic. Of the various companies. And some foreigners come over here, in the United States they’re not used to working any overtime whatsoever

C: Right.

K: And so they feel that overtime season is really oppressive, and that people are working themselves to death. And then you have other people that come over who are used to working massive amounts of overtime who are like “ah, it’s not so bad here.” And I find that an 8-hour workday is not typical in Japan, so it’s usually a nine to ten hour – in between nine to twelve hours is the typical workday in Japan.

C: Yeah.

K: And then you get set vacation time.

C: When I was working, my workday was supposed to be a 9-hour workday, sometimes I’d end up working more than that, but the expectation was nine hours. And I always took an hour for lunch because that was supposed to be included. It was supposed to be eight hours for work and an hour for lunch.

K: Yeah.

C: But a lot of people in the office didn’t take lunch at all, so they worked nine hours every day.

K: But that’s their poor self-care.

C: Yes.

K: And I think if any company, if you’re willing to overextend yourself, and you’re willing to grind yourself into dust, that they’re going to take it because you had a colleague that habitually worked sixteen hours.

C: Yes.

K: And it didn’t have to be that way.

C: No.

K: They didn’t have to work sixteen hours to be effective. And now there’s like- in Japan, there’s a big movement to stop people from working the 16-hour workday, and I think that that’s really positive. And I think that also something that is changing in Japan is the alcohol culture.

C: Yes.

K: In that it used to be okay, we worked really hard together, and then we party really hard together, and that we do everything together as monolith. That companies were monolithic in terms of you only associate with people from that company, and you do everything with people from that company.

C: Yeah, when you’re 22 you start work on the same day, you live in the same dorm. You go to the same, you know.

K: Yeah. They’re trying to create a tight family culture. And that was with the lifetime employment culture. Something that I think is really cool about Japan is Japan really does have a lot of alternative employment options that people are unaware of. And people are not so shocked anymore by the fact that I’m not an English teacher. People aren’t so shocked anymore that I’m a therapist. And I feel like my generation in Japan, which is of course different from your generation in Japan

C: Of course.

K: I feel like my generation really started a movement to kind of revolutionize the work life in Japan. And homelife in Japan, and work life balance. And I feel like Rasta’s generation is really picking up the mantle and saying, “we want to start our own businesses, we want to have alternative work opportunities.” Because I’ve met a lot of Japanese nationals in their thirties doing really cool and exciting startups. And now there are huge conventions in Japan for angel investing.

C: Mhm.

K: An angel investor is basically someone that has a lot of money that is looking for investment opportunities. And I know five or six people now that I know that is what they want their life to be. They want their life to be an investor where they invest in startups.

C: So you’re describing a venture capitalist, and an angel investor is one type of venture capitalist.

K: Yeah.

C: Who mostly keeps their hands off the business.

K: Yeah. And so looking at the convention movement in Japan, there’s like a lot- now instead of just one work convention a year, in Tokyo there’s a work convention- a job fair rather, every three months. And in Nagoya, there’s a job convention every two months. And they’re looking for people, how this ties into aging, is that they’re looking for mid-career people who want to make a switch. And that’s something really recent and new in Japanese culture- I want to say in the past ten years- where they are doing these job fairs for people who are mid-career.

C: I see ads on the subway for Doda, which advertises itself as one of the oldest “tenshoku” which is job change services, and they’re twenty years old, so. You’re talking about only over the last twenty years has there really been a lot of opportunity for changing jobs.

K: Yeah, and so I think it’s really- I think it’s a really exciting time to live in Japan, and a really dynamic time. And I think it’s an exciting time to be someone in their fifties doing something that’s not the standard in Japan. Because I find people being really open to me, and I feel like the openness to me and what I do has really changed in about the past five years. And it might be because the company has really great visibility. So, I don’t know if that’s partially because of the visibility of my company or if that’s to do with my age, or if that’s to do with the mix of the company and my age, but I know that when people know that, like, the Japanese government works with me, and that I’ve testified in court more than once now, and that I’ve worked with the child guidance center, which is the child protective services in Japan, and the ward office – now that all these government entities know of me, I think it really has kind of changed people’s understanding of what I do. And their understanding of who I am. And I just feel like I’m still on the outside of things, but I feel more0 a little bit more on the inside of things.

C: Mhm.

K: and I think that would change- I hope that between now and when I’m 55 to fully integrate into Japanese culture.

C: Yeah, by learning Japanese more, and

K: Yeah, and so- like today, you know, before we did the podcast, I did a chapter in my kanji book and did my kanji reading practice, and thank you for helping me with that, supporting me with that. And so for me, I feel like it’ll be really cool because now we have this thing like a time capsule- I feel like the podcast is a time capsule for us. And in five years’ time, we can look back and see could I do a podcast in Japanese. Not that I would but is my Japanese level that. Because I really do want to integrate into Japanese culture and society, and I feel like I’m not.

C: Yeah.

K: I really feel on the outside of things, and so now I’m finding now that I’m fifty just looking at what I want the next- it kind of feels like this is the halfway point of my life even though I know I’m probably to going to live to be 100. But I’m really more focused on the quality of my life and being more fully me and living in my body and standing in my truth.

C: Yes.

K: and part of my truth is I really do want to be bilingual. And I think I’ve been kind of afraid to set that goal before now. How do you feel about your aging process and where- like, how are you setting your ae goals?

C: I’m just hoping to age better than I think I am.

K: what do you mean by that?

C: I mean like I feel like I’m getting really old really quickly. Because the arthritis has just been kicking up the last couple of years.

K: Your AS.

C: Yeah. Ankylosing spondylitis. Which is a kind of arthritis. It’s just been getting worse, so I don’t know- I feel like my body is kind of just falling apart. And I don’t want to do that, so I’m trying to take better care of my health.

K: Yeah.

C: which is making me go gray more quickly, I feel like eating better is making me go gray.

K: I think you’ve made some really great health changes.

C: Yeah.

K: I think that your diet is much better, and I think that now- my hope is that we can both transition to where we’re doing podcasting for a living, which is why we’re launching the new podcast, The Writers’ Triangle, we have some other ones

C: Yeah, because I also want to write, so podcasting and writing and that kind of thing, yea.

K: Yeah. And having a sustainable life.

C: Yes.

K: I think now being fifty, I really am thinking about the aging process more deeply and how long I can be mobile and expected to leave the house every day, and it really would be nice to be able to stay indoors in the summer months because I know this past summer was one of the worst summers for me in terms of my hereditary coproporphyria and my lupus.

C: Yeah.

K: and I think, you know, being cognizant of the fact that hours spent in the sun leads to inflammation and physical deterioration for me. And looking at how to limit that and how to have a life that’s more sustainable. And so I’m really enjoying podcasting. I really love us sitting down and talking, and I’m really enjoying the process of doing a podcast with Rasta and kind of thinking about okay where can we take this vehicle that we’re doing now

C: Well, and my understanding is most of your clients don’t want to sit in the dark, so you have curtains at least open with sheers.

K: Yeah.

C: Your office is a fourth-floor walkup, so.

K: yeah.

C: Yeah. I think aging is going to be a matter of figuring out how to make certain things easier while still continuing to have a rich intellectual life.

K: I’m speaking it into existence. I want to be a full-time podcaster. That’s what I want to do. So I don’t know if that will be, you know, in five years’ time. I think it would be really awesome if in five years’ time, I was a full-time podcaster because I love it.

C: Yeah, I like it too.

K: I absolutely love podcasting. This is like so much fun. And so I do want to give a shout out to everybody who listens to our podcasts. We’re in over fifteen countries now that we have listeners, and I really appreciate everybody- I love, love, love everyone who tunes in every week. I so totally and completely appreciate you guys taking times out of your busy lives to listen to our digressions and rambles and thoughts. It really is gratifying, and I feel so connected to each and every listener. I really, really just love you guys. Thank you so much for making this possible for us. It really does make my heart sing to sit down and record episodes every week and see the response that we’re getting, so thanks for that. You guys are awesome.

C: Yeah, thank you.

K: And we hope you come back next week and do it again, and so that’s our ramble and digression for today. How are you aging? Hit us up on social medias and let us know what you think about aging. And you know, just hit us up with #TeamKisstopher if you know that I’m actually a generation older than Chad. (laughs) I’m always pandering.

C: Use #TeamReality if you know she’s not.

K: Team reality? Ouch. (laughs) Bye. Talk to you guys next week.

C: Bye-bye.