We talk about timekeeping in Japan and Korea (even though we're bad at the Korean stuff), pensions, and (not) speaking Japanese in public.

**Transcript**

K: So, lately I’ve been thinking a lot about the date.

C: Yeah? Like our date?

K: (laughs) No, like the date in Japan because I don’t know- some people probably know and some people maybe don’t know – but japan has two different dates. It has the Emperor date, and that’s the era, and then it has the solar calendar date. And so the solar calendar date is January through December and pretty much how we keep track of time in the United States.

C: Yes.

K: That’s the solar calendar. And then it has the emperor calendar, and I don’t know how to write Heisei at all. But that’s the previous era. I knew how to read it. And so, I don’t know, it was a trick of my mind making me feel good about my ability to read, and now the Reiwa era that just started, it’s Reiwa 1, I can’t read it. I know what it is, but I can’t read it. It’s not natural to me, and it’s making me feel like the illiterate person I am.

C: Mmm.

K: Yes, I’m illiterate. I’m just embracing that. I’m illiterate.

C: But nobody knew how to read it until they came out and announced how it would be read.

K: Yeah. And I watched the fanfare and all of that, but now everybody- it just like becomes a part of their thing. And I don’t know. The new era, there was so much fanfare, and it was a big deal, I thought it was going to be a year-long thing, and it wasn’t. It only lasted for a month. I- like- so I just feel personally let down by it.

C: Yeah. So it was interesting- the issue with introducing a new era, which is supposed to happen when a new emperor ascends the throne

K: Yeah.

C: Which happened either the end of May or beginning of June. I don’t remember exactly the date.

K: Yeah.

C: And they announced what the name of who it would be about a month before that. But all of the government forms in Japan have the era names on them for like your birthdays and everything. And so you have to fill that out. So they had to reprint tons and tons of government forms and company forms.

K: My phone interestingly enough for like three months had no date. (laughs)

C: Mmm. “I don’t know what year it is.”

K: Yeah, for three months it just didn’t have a date, and I thought “That’s weird.”

C: Yeah, so for month and day of the month, Japan uses the Common Era system. Which in Japan, it’s called- they have a kanji for it. It means the Western system.

K: But isn’t that the solar calendar?

C: Technically, it’s the lunar-solar calendar.

K: What do you mean?

C: It’s got both the month- it accounts for both the moon and the sun.

K: What are you talking about?

C: Some cultures use a lunar-solar calendar that doesn’t align perfectly with the- a lunar-solar calendar that doesn’t align with Current Era.

K: I thought that’s the lunar calendar. I thought that the Middle East and China use the lunar calendar. And that Europe, the United States, Canada, Southern Africa, and Australia New Zealand use the solar calendar.

C: So China uses a lunar-solar calendar so that the year- one year is the time for revolution around the sun one time. It just doesn’t set New Years at the same time. So it’s slightly shifted. The lunar

K: But what about Eid in all of that?

C: Yeah. The lunar calendar rotates because they do twelve lunar months, and there are really about thirteen lunar months in every year. So, Eid and Ramadan rotate throughout the year.

K: Yeah.

C: So they occur at a different time of- a different season over several years.

K: Yeah. I think something that’s really cool in Korea; you’re one when you’re born.

C: The Korean aging system, I’ve got an explanation of it. You are one when you are born, then you increase it when you have your birthday. And then it resets at the year so that- it’s a whole thing, but basically

K: What are you talking about? I think this is you being half-baked. So I just have to- sorry, I’m going to out you to our listeners. Chad likes to make stuff up.

C: Okay, I’m not making stuff up but I don’t

K: Chad likes making stuff up, so if he drops any facts or spins any knowledge- I don’t know. I just feel like he reads random google and random news all day and gets all this random information and then spins it like it is a factual thing.

C: Oh completely.

K: Yeah, I’m not trusting you at all. But go ahead. I’m warning everybody: don’t take this as a real thing. Take this as Chad knowledge. And Chad knowledge is its own thing. But go ahead babe, I totally want to hear Chad knowledge.

C: So

K: (laughs) If you guys could see the look on his face right now. Oh my gosh. It is like “you so know I’m right, and I’m about to school you, but I love you and so I am going to be gentle with my schooling.” Because he thinks he can school me, but it never works. Okay, babe, I want you to have your moment. I want you to shine. Okay? So, here’s your moment to shine for our listeners. Tell us about Korean aging.

C: The Korean system for counting your age

K: How old are you on the day of your birth?

C: On the day of your birth, you’re one because in English we would say you’re on your first year. So that doesn’t seem so odd to me.

K: Okay.

C: But then what happens also is at the- when the end of the calendar year comes around, everyone is immediately considered one year older so it’s like this staggered thing.

K: Okay.

C: So, I don’t completely understand it. I read about it. I understood it at the time, but it’s a lot of math stuff. When I’m teaching people math, they say “I read about this. I understood it.” Did you practice any problems on it? “Well, no, I understood it.” You can’t do that with math. You’ve got to practice it. I did not practice calculating Korean ages.

K: Okay.

C: But I do know they’ve been talking about doing away with that system in Korea because it’s confusing for dealing with the rest of the world.

K: Okay.

C: Just like in Japan everybody knows it’s 2019.

K: Yeah.

C: Because they have to know that to deal with the rest of the world.

K: And something I really, really appreciate because we deal with a lot of bureaucratic stuff. I thought being a permanent resident that I would deal with less bureaucracy, but then I don’t. And then I thought “well, duh, Kisstopher. You still have to pay your taxes. You still have to pay your social security.” You still have to do all of these

C: You have all these social obligations.

K: Yes. And somehow in my mind, I had equated having to go with all of these different offices and do all of this paperwork- I had just felt so up under and so woe is me, poor immigrant Kisstopher on her visa, has to make sure she does all of these things. But no, that’s just living in Japan. It’s daily living stuff.

C: And all of these have signs saying “you can do this online” or “you can do this by mail, why are you coming here?”

K: Yeah, but no, I can’t because I’m illiterate.

C: Yeah, but everybody’s really polite. Nobody ever mentions that when you’re talking with them in person, but there are signs saying you can e-file.

K: Yeah, but if everybody stopped coming to the office, they’d be unemployed.

C: Right.

K: But I love the fact we have- I think of them as our OGs. Like we have our OG at the pension office that knows me and knows what I’m doing because I don’t do anything by mail, which I could do by mail because it’s really convenient. You go to the conbini and take care of- the convenience store- and take care of everything at the convenience store.

C: Yes.

K: Or the post office, and we live literally right down the street from the post office. So I do take care of some things at the post office. I feel like I have my OG there. They kind of treat me like a Rockstar when I go there. They always give me a beverage and a fan. They treat me really nice, so maybe

C: Because it’s a local post office. It’s not a big central branch. So we live maybe fifteen minutes’ walk from a central branch, and nobody knows us there. We’re just, you know, one of many people lining up for one of the eight counters. But there’s only one counter at our local post office that’s for

K: There’s one counter and there’s three or four employees.

C: Well, there’s three counters, so there’s one counter for mail. There’s one counter for banking, and there’s one counter for insurance. So

K: But it’s all one counter. I think there’s three windows. Because it’s just one counter.

C: Yes. Correct.

K: So I like going there because they treat me like a Rockstar.

C: You are a Rockstar.

K: Yeah. And then at the pension office, I feel like we’ve got our one OG that always sees us. I don’t know how it always ends up being him because it’s a randomized system, but it’s always him. Every time we go. And I know he’s not the only one because the very first time we went, we had someone else. I like going to the pension office, and I don’t know why- so, here’s the thing, I don’t pay my pension every month. I like to pay my pension in groups, so I like to go down and talk to them about when they can expect money from me because I don’t like them calling me and harassing me.

C: Right.

K: So I feel like going down in person stops the phone calls, and the only reason I don’t like the phone calls is because they insist on talking to me even though I say “sumimasen, zenzen wakarimasen.”

C: Which means “I don’t understand at all.”

K: Yeah. Like… I have- “zenzen” when you put it with a negative. I love “zenzen.” It is like “nothing at all.” Like absolutely nothing. Less than zero. Not a single thing.

C: I thought “she is going to say less than zero.”

K: Yes. You know whenever I do “zenzen” I’m saying “less than zero” baby. And they still want to have these full-on conversations with me, and I am like ”I do not understand you.” But the problem is that I’m saying all of this in Japanese. I tell them “I’m sorry, I don’t understand you, my Japanese is very poor. I can only speak English. Is there anyone in the office who can speak English? Can you call me back and have someone speak English? Can you hold on a minute, my office manager can speak Japanese, but I don’t know where they are. They’re not in the building. I’m so confused right now. Can you please have someone call me back?” And I’m doing all of this in Japanese.

C: Yes.

K: While professing to them that I don’t speak any Japanese. And then at the end, after they say everything, they say “do you speak English?” And I was like “yes, thank you.” And they said “we’ll call back” and hang up.

C: (laughs)

K: So I feel like if I go down and speak to OG, you know, our OG pension dude. Because I feel like he’s our OG pension dude, then I don’t get harassed.

C: Mhm.

K: And then I love our city tax dude. So, okay, they’re not our people, they’re just like the people who work at the office, but they feel personal to me. They feel like my people.

C: I mean, for city tax, we got to our ward office.

K: And they’re always so happy to see me. I feel like they’re happy to see me. I feel like I’m super entertaining for them.

C: Yeah. We go to our ward office, and we’ve been living in the same ward for more than ten years. And the same guy’s been working there, and will work there until retirement. So we always talk to the same person for city tax.

K: So I feel like- I don’t know what it is because I always go with our son Rasta.

C: Right.

K: and anytime Rasta and I move around together in Japan, people treat us like we’re semi-famous.

C: It’s interesting.

K: Yeah, it happens even at our local Aeon. Our local mall. But when he and I go separately, nobody notices us. It’s like we’re completely invisible.

C: So you know what’s interesting is I went to the unemployment office back in July because I had to get a stamp that I was unemployed even though I wasn’t asking for unemployment insurance because I voluntarily quit, and I wasn’t looking for new work. So. If you’re not looking for new work, then you have to be disabled if you want unemployment. I am disabled but not with the right certificates and all of that. It’s a whole thing. But I had to get a stamp

K: Wait. Japan is the hardness when it comes to what they consider able to work and unable to work. Japan doesn’t mess around. It expects everyone to work.

C: Yeah, but it’s different because if you get a disability pension, it’s not actually based on your ability to work. That’s a whole other podcast because the Japanese system is actually a lot more humane in my opinion, but it’s really bad for foreigners because it’s basically impossible to get disability pension if you become disabled in Japan.

K: But do they treat you like graybeard when you’re out in the world?

C: They do treat me like graybeard, but what was interesting is that I was there with Rasta because it’s way out in the middle of nowhere, so he had driven me there.

K: Did they treat you guys like you’re semi-famous?

C: No, they treated me like I had brought my Japanese interpreter. And they peeked around me to ask him if I speak Japanese.

K: (laughs) Oh my gosh. (laughs) That is so funny because they do not- so, I have the opposite thing. Like, they still keep talking to me even though Rasta’s the one speaking Japanese. And they keep checking to see whether or not I approve of his Japanese when we go out together. So everybody in Japan, they’re just so convinced I speak Japanese.

C: Yeah.

K: They will not believe that I don’t speak Japanese. It is so bizarre to me.

C: And they were so convinced I didn’t, and they were right for that particular case because I didn’t know any of the right terminology.

K: But your Japanese is really digressing.

C: Yeah, my Japanese is really digressing. So, what I wanted to say

K: You’re like- sometimes, I hear your Japanese and I’m like “whoa babe, that was really word salad.”

C: Oh, you’re saying degrading.

K: Yeah.

C: It’s getting worse.

K: Yeah, what did I say?

C: Digressing like our usual digressions.

K: (laughs) Oh my gosh. That was my stomach.

C: Oh, poor tummy. So, the interesting thing that I found was that I went to the pension office on the same day, back in July, and the date only changed in June- to the new era- but the forms all had Reiwa on it for the current date.

K: Did they?

C: Yeah. But for your birthday, they only had Heisei and Showa, which was the era before it. Despite there being people alive from five different eras.

K: Yeah.

C: I was like “so why don’t they have Reiwa on the form for your birthday, or from the older eras?”

K: Because no one year old is paying pension.

C: Exactly. I figured that out really quickly.

K: (laughs)

C: IT was like five seconds of thought. I figured out “okay, yeah.”

K: (laughs)

C: Nobody who is not even one yet is not paying pension.

K: Oh my gosh that is so incredibly pressure.

C: And anybody born before the Showa era is so old that they are not paying pension either.

K: So I love when the pension office sends me the notification of how much I’m going to get when I retire because I’m getting millions, yo. Millions and millions. And it just feels good. It’s just thousands, but it feels good to see like “oh, you go girl.”

C: Okay.

K: And then I’m like “Wait a minute. I have spent millions on pension? What the hell Japan?”

C: “Alright, I’m going t get 6000 dollars a year. We’re living it up.”

K: Yeah, I don’t know what the monthly was because I didn’t pay attention to the monthly because it’s like- yeah, I don’t remember, but I just remember seeing millions. Like, seeing all those zeros on a notification. And I can’t help it. I’m so American. My heart skips a beat, and I’m like “whoo, I’m in the money.” And then I stop and do the conversion and I’m like wahh wahh.

C: Well, because you’re self-employed, you’re not on the employee insurance pension, you’re on the national insurance pension, which is not very much money every month. It’s like 400 dollars a month.

K: I think it’s more than 400. I’m not sure.

C: It depends on your age and a lot of different things.

K: Because we’re in- as previously discussed- because we’re in different generations

C: Mm. Good point.

K: My generation gets more money than yours.

C: Yeah. I think so.

K: Yeah. I think for yours, it’s really low, but mine I remember thinking it’s not that bad. Like to me it felt worth it.

C: You could live very frugally off of it if you were in a couple, I think.

K: Yeah. I think so too. So, for me, this whole era thing is tripping me out because I had- so, a lot of my Japanese clients came to me and made Reiwa era pledges of things that they were going to change and things that they weren’t going to tolerate anymore and different people that they were going to be. All this- all these different things. And recently, I had a spate of Japanese clients apologizing to me and asking for my forgiveness that they didn’t live up to their Reiwa promise.

C: Mmm.

K: And I had completely forgot, and I’m like “what are you talking about??” In my head. Like, “what are you on about?” But they’re speaking in Japanese, and Rasta’s interpreting. And I’m like- and then I’m catching up. “Ohh, snap.” They’re apologizing for not taking this opportunity for self-improvement

C: Yeah.

K: And so I think it’s so interesting to me that when my Japanese clients don’t have breakthroughs when they think they’re supposed to have a breakthrough or when they’ve committed to having a breakthrough, they’ll apologize. And I’ve gotten used to that over the years as something that’s kind of culturally odd to me. Because I feel like their breakthrough- it’s a collaborative process. I guide them to things that I think will help them have breakthroughs and growth, but they have to at the end of the day, it’s their life, they have to choose what advice applies to them and what advice doesn’t.

C: Mhm.

K: And I had gotten used to apologies, but I hadn’t gotten used to like… the intricacy of apologizing for not having the new era create a new them. Which to me, that whole concept- because it’s- so it’s similar to a New Year’s Eve promise, but it’s more than because it’s sort of like disrespecting the new emperor. Which that whole concept, because I don’t have fealty as part of my culture

C: Right.

K: So, I don’t know. It’s just so weird to me. It’s bizarre to me. Because I feel no change.

C: So I wonder how old these clients are- and I say that because

K: Because you don’t’ know anything about them.

C: No, I don’t know anything about them. The other thing is that the Heisei era ended in 31, so Heisei 31 and Reiwa 1 are the same year.

K: I can say without divulging anyone that it’s across the lifespan. Like, as young as 22 and as old as 70.

C: Interesting because I was wondering because the Showa era was more than 60 years, so you’ve got to be over a hundred to be beyond Showa. Over 90 at least.

K: Yeah.

C: So I was wondering were they people who had lived through the transition from Showa to Heisei or even younger people.

K: Yes and no. But I find it interesting just how deeply ingrained- when I see somebody in their twenties who are super, super traditionally Japanese. And to me what’s interesting bout it is because to have that level of Japanese culture- it’s interesting that they’re doing therapy because it creates cognitive dissonance for me because Japanese culture historically and traditionally doesn’t really value what I do.

C: Right.

K: And so to me, I think it’s very modern to come and see me. And then I’m always humbled and honored for the people who value seeing me to the extent of having an interpreter in the room to share their feelings.

C: Yeah.

K: And so that’s super, super just… mind-blowing.

C: That is interesting because most people in Japan, if they have a religion, are Shinto or Buddhist or both.

K Yeah.

C: and those aren’t confessional traditions.

K: What do you mean? Oh, like in the United States how Catholicism is a confessional religion.

C: Right. And Protestantism, even though it’s not strictly confessional, people are used to going and talking to their pastor about their problems.

K: Mmm. Yeah.

C: So there’s this idea that if you have problems, the thing to do is go talk to somebody.

K: But I happen to know a Buddhist priest woo has a temple and their family does take- the way that their family does Buddhism, you can actually go and confess. And they’re part of- their tradition is part of like honoring the fox and animal totems and doing fire walks and such. And they have one of the more famous fire walks in the area. And people do confess t o them and come to them for guidance.

C: Interesting.

K: And- remember when we lived over in Higashiyama, Nitaiji Temple. People would come and talk to the Buddhist priest.

C: Yeah, and I guess

K: So what are you on about?

C: I’m not sure

K: And people do retreats where they go

C: I guess when we were in California, there was the one-on-one time with the abbot if you wanted it

K: Yeah, so what are you on about?

C: I’m not sure what I’m on about. This new era has gotten me more confused.

K: Just most evidence of spotty Chad knowledge.

C: When it was Heisei, I knew what I was doing.

K: You’re all confused like “What is this era about?”

C: I’m like the newborn babe. It’s only year one.

K: I thought it would be like a party. I thought it would be a year-long party, and it’s not.

C: Yeah it’s not.

K: There were literally no parties. There was this weird challenge – because I watched a lot of it on- okay, I’ll be real, I watched a lot of it on t.v. in my doctor’s office while IW as waiting to see my doctor. Because I was waiting there for an hour. And they had this game show contest when they announced the name of the era that as soon as the era was announced, three people made songs. They had- I guess it was like a contest to see who would make the theme song for the era.

C: Mhmm.

K: And as soon as it was announced, they ran into the studio, and they made jingles for it, and they played it for a judge.

C: You should’ve been there because your jingles

K: (laughs)

C: As we heard on the last episode, your jingles are the jam.

K: Yes, but they habituate me so that you can set honey traps for me where you start the beginning of the jingle, and I have to finish it even if you’re perpetrating frauds. Because you perpetrated a fraud on me.

C: (laughs)

K: So, I don’t make New Year’s Eve- I don’t do New Year’s Eve resolutions.

C: Yeah. They’re supposed to be New Year’s resolution, not just supposed to be New Year’s Eve.

K: What are you talking about?

C: A New Year’s Eve resolution would be like “I’m not going to get wasted on New Year’s Eve.”

K: Okay.

C: A New Year’s resolution would be like “in this new year, I’m going to”

K: Has that been driving you crazy for over twenty years?

C: No, you usually don’t say it. You usually just say New Year’s resolution. If we ever talk about them at all because neither one of us does them.

K: I think of them as New Year’s Eve resolutions.

C: Interesting.

K: Because you make them on New Year’s Eve.

C: Most people don’t.

K: Yes, most people do. You make the resolution on New Year’s Eve.

C: I’ll admit, I don’t know anything about anyone.

K: You don’t what?

C: I don’t know anything about anyone.

K: (laughs)

C: The passage of time is a mystery to me.

K: And so, I think that- okay, this is interesting. Hit us up on twitter and let us know. Do you make your resolutions on New Year’s Eve, on Christmas Eve, on Christmas day, or on New Year’s day. Because I had a spate of friends – I love that phrase a spate of friends – who would make their New Year’s resolution on New Year’s Eve- I mean on Christmas Eve. Like, on Christmas Eve they would make a pledge to baby Jesus.

C: Mm.

K: And I always thought that was interesting, like why are you making a pledge to baby Jesus?

C: Because adult Jesus could probably kick their ass for not

K: (laughs) I have some friends

C: If they’re going to fight Jesus, they want to fight baby Jesus.

K: Yeah. I have some friends who are like seriously into baby Jesus. Like, on Talladega Nights into baby Jesus.

C: Yeah, no. I… I vaguely remember that movie, but I remember your friends more clearly.

K: And they were super into baby Jesus.

C: Yes.

K: We have friends that- well, I guess I haven’t spoken to them in over fifteen years- between fifteen and seventeen years, I can’t remember, time’s a mystery to us today. But- so, could I still call them friends? I don’t know their phone number. I don’t have their facebook. I don’t contact or talk to them in any way, but I still think of them as friends. Isn’t that weird? So, I used to have friends? Are they my old friends? Are they people who used to be my friend? What do I call them?

C: Friends with dormancy.

K: Friends of dormancy or friends of **26:11** or friends of another era.

C: Yeah. Friends of another era. There you go.

K: High five on that.

C: That’s a good one. They are literally friends of another era.

K: Right? Okay, so I have friends of another era that are totally into baby Jesus, and they do a Christmas resolution kind of thing. And then I have friends of another era who don’t do New Year’s Eve, but they do Lent. And so Lent is the month before Easter, and you’re supposed to give something up as sacrifice and then fast the week before.

C: It’s the 40 days before Easter.

K: Yeah. So, I should say it’s family not friends. My grandmother who was a super-duper Catholic.

C: So how do I more about Lent than you do and you grew up Catholic?

K: You don’t know more about Lent than me. I was being lazy and not saying the whole thing. But you didn’t know anything about Ash Wednesday. And you don’t know anything about Good Friday.

C: I know about Ash Wednesday. I know what the day before Ash Wednesday is called, and I don’t think you do.

K: I don’t. What’s the day before Ash Wednesday?

C: Shrove Tuesday.

K: What?

C: Shrove Tuesday.

K: What? This is Chad knowledge.

C: Shrove. Tuesday.

K: I don’t believe you.

C: Yeah. Shrove is a different form of the verb shriven. You are shriven of your sins, so Shrove Tuesday.

K: I don’t believe you, though.

C: I know. You seem very doubtful today.

K: I am always doubtful because we have had a spate – I am stuck on that word, I don’t know why I’m loving that word today – we have had a spate of Chad knowledge that got proved to not be completely accurate.

C: I’m glad it was only a spate and not a gaggle.

K: Yeah. And you know I’m super naïve when it comes to you saying things. Because I’ll just be like “yup, Chad said it, it’s a fact.”

C: (laughs)

K: See, you know that.

C: “Chad said it, I believe it, that settles it.”

K: Yes. And so I’ve been recently burnt by that. And so now I’m feeling really skeptical. I it will take some time for me to heal. And then once I’ve healed, I will be less skeptical, but right now today, I am skeptical.

C: Okay.

K: Color me skeptical.

C: Okay.

K: Yeah. And so that’s just- you have to live in that reality. It’s just the legacy. The legacy of my skepticism. You speak of things with so much conviction. Like, you can talk about so many movies and t.v. shows you have never seen with so much conviction, and then I’ll be talking to you about it, and then you’ll say something off, and I’ll be like “wait a minute. Have you seen that movie?”

C: I feel like that was a defensive mechanism that I developed. A defense mechanism that I developed from childhood because I so often can’t remember what I’ve watched on t.v. or movies because if it’s got flashing lights, I’m going to have a seizure, and I’m not going to remember it.

K: Yeah.

C: So, people don’t like to hear that. They don’t want you to be like “I don’t remember what I just watched”, so I got in the habit when I was a teenager. They used to put out books every year of all the movies that were released in the year.

K: Mhm.

C: With the plots and the cast and all the things that happened. This was before the internet. Technically not before the internet, but before the web. Before websites like IMDB. So you couldn’t just look things up.

K: Yeah.

C: So I could become very knowledgeable about movies and t.v. by reading these annual guides that they had put out.

K: Mm.

C: Because my parents had subscribed to t.v. guide for years

K: I loved t..v. guide man. I miss not having t.v. guide. T.v. guide’s the bomb.

C: Yeah, so I remember all kinds of things about t.v. guide.

K: (laughs) So I just shocked you with my passion for t.v. guide.

C: You did.

K: You were like “Wat?” T.v. guide was one of my favorite magazines. I used to read it for like entertainment. I found reading t.v. guide more entertaining than watching some of the t.v. shows.

C: Okay.

K: And I was always excited about who was going to be on the cover of t.v. guide. I loved t.v. guide. It was one of the first magazines I ever read.

C: So for me, the most exciting thing about t.v. guide was that if you folded each of the pages to a triangle, then it would make a Christmas tree and you could spray paint it and have a Christmas tree decoration.

K: That sounds incredibly poor and incredibly sad.

C: It was both of those. Okay.

K: And I’m skeptical. Like, what- so, actually, my first thought was “what the fuck you say?”

C: (laughs)

K: What are you talking about? I can’t even picture this. I can’t imagine this. This is one of the crazier things you have ever said to me. That you can fold each of the pages into a triangle and make a Christmas tree and then spray paint it. What are you saying? IF you fold each page into a triangle, how is that a Christmas tree? You have just a triangle.

C: No, you don’t have a triangle because it wasn’t square. So, imagine a regular piece of paper.

K: So it’s a rectangle.

C: It’s a rectangle. You’re doing like the first origami fold on the rectangle so it’s mostly sloped, but then it’s got a little bit at the bottom so you end up with a trapezoid.

K: Yes.

C: You with me?

K: I’m with you.

C: Okay. Without tearing out the pages or cutting them out or anything, you do that to each page of t.v. guide, and then it’s sloped.

K: But then you still end up with like- they’re all at the same level, you’re not getting tiers.

C: You’re not getting tiers. It’s a very sad Christmas tree.

K: It’s a freaking triangle.

C: It’s not a triangle because there’s a very flat part at the bottom that goes straight down.

K: Oh my gosh. This is- no. This is just some crazy… your whole arts and crafts upbringing is so bizarre to me. You did a whole bunch of arts and crafts I have never even heard of. What you’re saying to me is, I don’t know.

C: So the thing I remember about t.v. guide

K: I’m finding it disturbing on a personal level.

C: Is my parents making like- they were super excited when t.v. guides started printing codes for each show that you could put into certain VCRs to program them to automatically record that show.

K: Okay, so, see, your life growing up is this dichotomy. Like, you had a VCR, but you had to make Christmas trees out of used t.v. guides. Like, what are you talking about? That’s so bizarre to me.

C: Because my parents were really bad wit money. My dad was an attorney, and when he was in the military he was an officer.

K: Mhmm.

C: So he made decent-ish money. But he also had five kids.

K: Mhm.

C: But housing was paid for. So, it’s weird. When I was in

K: Ooh. What era was your- did your father come to Japan? Because your father- you grew up Mormon- your father was a missionary, sorry to interrupt your really sad story, but I’ve heard all your sad stories. Gosh this is making me sound so heartless. (laughs)

C: It would’ve been Showa.

K: It would’ve been Showa?

C: Yeah.

K: Really?

C: Yeah.

K: How old is your dad?

C: He’s… 70.

K: Do you think your dad knows that there’s been a changing of the era?

C: I think he’s probably

K: Because your dad was very showy about his whole Japanese-ness. Like the fact he could speak Japanese. He used to cook with chopsticks and all that rigamarole.

C: Yeah.

K: So do you think he knows that the new era changed? Can he read kanji, is he illiterate? Or was he literate?

C: He was semi-literate.

K: Okay. So, I’m sorry, I interrupted. You grew up really poor because he was really bad with money. That’s like the gist of it right?

C: Yeah, that’s the gist of it.

K: (laughs)

C: And then after my mom died of cancer, we ended up homeless because of medical bankruptcy.

K: Oh my god. So, everybody probably thinks I’m heartless because every time you say this kind of stuff, I eyeroll. But we have been together for over twenty years.

C: (laughs)

K: And I know that these things don’t upset you, like actively upset you. And so when we’re- you know- just shooting the breeze on the podcast, you’re not crying bitter, salty tears. You’re just wanting me to- I feel like you’re trying to manipulate me into getting on board with the whole t.v. guide Christmas trees. And that’s not happening.

C: So I’m guessing you’re more like a National Geographic t.v. guide- a National Geographic

K: I’ve never made a Christmas tree out of a magazine.

C: You are missing out. You’re not missing out on anything good, but you’re missing out.

K: So what era was the Korean war?

C: The Korean war was the 1950s, so that would have still ben Showa because 1925 was the start of Showa.

K: Because my father was here during that era.

C: That would have been Show because your father was not here in 1925. Because I know that your grandfather was born in 1914.

K: Yeah.

C: Because he and I have talked about it.

K: Yeah, and he was too old to fight in World War 2.

C: Yeah, he was too old to be drafted for World War 2. He wasn’t too old to have enlisted, but he was too old to be drafted.

K: Yeah.

C: Because he was 30, he was too young to fight in World War 1.

K: Well, and he had kids.

C: Yeah, he had kids.

K: So he didn’t fight in the war because he had to provide for his family.

C: Yeah. And I know my grandfather- my mother’s father- was on the 1944 Olympic team as a swimmer.

K: Did he medal?

C: Well, the 1944 Olympics didn’t happen.

K: Oh, snap, because of the war.

C: Because of the war, yeah.

K: Right on. Caught it.

C: So the U.S. had formed the Olympic team

K: Yeah.

C: Even though my grandfather was British, he was an American citizen, but he had been born in England. So I’m never quite sure how people determine what country they’re competing for. Like, is it the country of your birth, the country of your citizenship- obviously for him, it was the country of his citizenship.

K: And luckily you’ve never had to make that hard choice.

C: I have not had to make that hard choice. They have not called upon me to compete in the Olympics.

K: (laughs)

C: And I’m not a citizen, so I think

K: So you wouldn’t have that awkwardness.

C: Yeah. That’s why I haven’t gotten citizenship and have stuck with permanent residency.

K: Because you don’t want that Olympic fraughtness.

C: I don’t want that hard choice, yeah.

K: Like, who do I represent. What do I do? Who do I medal for? (laughs)

C: Yeah.

K: Okay, so my father- our fathers were here during the Showa era.

C: Yeah.

K: We came over in the Heisei era.

C: Right.

K: We became permanent residents in the Heisei era.

C: Right.

K: And Rasta will get married in the Reiwa era.

C: Correct.

K: Even though- see I feel kind of dicey saying this. I’m so scared because, I want to talk about his current girlfriend, but what if she’s not the one that he marries and then we have the issue of

C: Yeah, don’t- don’t talk about his girlfriend. Let him talk about it on our other thing that we’re doing if he wants to.

K: Yeah, but no. The other thing we’re doing- don’t be mysterious. Everybody knows we’re doing the Writer’s Triangle.

C: Yeah, we said it last episode.

K: We talked about it last podcast. And the Writer’s Triangle, we are not going to be talking about his personal life. I don’t think so.

C: What if he’s talking about writing romance?

K: We’re going to be talking about his writing life.

C: What if he writes about romance?

K: He’s not writing romance.

C: No. Writing romance and writing about romance are two different things.

K: He’s not going to write about romance.

C: Okay. Because it’s not the age of romance?

K: Yeah. So, I- so, okay. His current girlfriend doesn’t speak English, but one day she’s going to be fluent in English- because, well, she kind of speaks English and she can read and write in English. So I wonder if she’s going to- because he’s the thing. Because it’d be super sweet if this is the one he ends up marrying and super painful if this is not the one he ends up marrying so I always feel so dicey

C: Mmm.

K: But I guess it doesn’t matter either way because I don’t know her.

C: Yeah.

K: Like, I haven’t met her. So I don’t think it would be painful to be like “Rasta was dating.” And I don’t think it should be painful for them to hear that Rasta would be married in the Reiwa era. Because, like, he’s going to get married in the next 40 years, right? I’m just guessing the next era will be like- well I guess it won’t be 40 years because the Heisei era was 31 years.

C: Yeah.

K: How long is the average era?

C: I don’t remember how long the average era is.

K: How long was Showa?

C: Showa was 60 something years.

K: What?

C: Yeah.

K: What are you saying to me? Like… from birth to death kind of thing?

C: Okay, so… 2019 was Heisei 31 before it changed.

K: Yeah.

C: Let’s add a year. 2020. Would have been Heisei 32.

K: Yeah.

C: We take 30 years off of that, so 1990 would have been Heisei 2. So 1990- 1988 was the start of Heisei.

K: Yeah.

C: 1925 was the start of Showa, so Showa was 63 years.

K: And when did the era change- like how old was the emperor when they changed the era?

C: The emperor was- had died when they changed the era. That’s why they changed the era.

K: No, when they changed it to Showa, how long was the emperor who was reigning during Showa

C: Oh, how old was the new emperor? I don’t know.

K: Because how old is the emperor now?

C: I actually

K: Not the one- not- so his name is Akihito?

C: Yeah.

K: So emperor Akihito is in his 80s.

C: I think so.

K: And abdicated. And how old is the new emperor?

C: I think in his 60s.

K: Yeah, and

C: Or his late 50s.

K: And the new emperor doesn’t have a son, right?

C: I am not up on court politics, so I don’t know all about that.

K: Because I remember they were talking about making some sort of special exemption because there was a crisis that there wasn’t a male heir.

C: Yeah, and there have been empresses in Japan before. So, this is all decided by the royal household, and then it has to be approved by parliament. So, when the emperor stepped down

K: It was a whole thing. The emperor was begging for like five years to please let him retire.

C: Yeah because

K: But he was so beloved. Japan was like “no, we love you so much, we don’t want you to retire until.”

C: So the royal household, because constitutionally, it’s the new constitution, the emperor has no official power, but the royal household had to propose that he be allowed to retire. And then the parliament had to approve him retiring because usually the era ends when the emperor dies. And then there was a whole discussion on Japanese twitter about what do you call the retired emperor.

K: What do you call the retired emperor?

C: I don’t remember what was decided. Like, it’s a Japanese word, but I don’t remember it.

K: Because he’s still making like limited appearances and stuff because he’s so beloved.

C: Yeah.

K: And he’s really short. So when I taught English, why I know what I know about the emperor is because it was a way to talk about short in stature but high in esteem

C: Mmm.

K: And so, to get that concept when teaching it, I could just show a picture of the emperor. “Short in statue, but high in esteem.” And they would be like “ohhhh. Short in statue means height.” Yes.

C: Yes.

K: And they would completely get it and whenever we would have to do talking about attributes of different people, because that was a whole lesson, I had this printout that I made of different famous Japanese figures so that we could talk about the differences in height and weight and size and hair color and all of that.

C: So that’s interesting because you would say “short in statue” and “tall in stature” in Japanese. The equivalent. So, if you want to say somebody is tall, you say “sei ga takai” which is “their stature is tall.”

K: Yes.

C: If you said a person was “takai” you’d be saying they’re expensive.

K: Yes.

C: You’d be calling them, like… expensive for whatever it is they do.

K: Well also it was great for teaching idioms. Salt and pepper hair.

C: Mmm. Yeah.

K: And explaining that salt is the gray hair and also explaining that it’s gray hair, not white hair.

C: Right.

K: Like you call this gray, and we call this hair salt and pepper. And then also because he has a full- he’s rocking a full head of hair, and so saying a full head of hair versus receding hairline and all of those kinds of things.

C: Yeah. My hairline is not receding. It’s staying where it is.

K: (laughs) It has receded.

C: It has receded.

K: But you’re not bald unless you shave your head.

C: Correct.

K: And so you are still balding.

C: I have a tonsure.

K: You have a what?

C: A tonsure.

K: A what?

C: A fringe of hair like the monks.

K: Yeah.

C: No,

K: So I think you have a fringe of hair, but it’s a tonsil?

C: Tonsure. T-o-n-s-u-r-e.

K: Tonsure.

C: Yeah.

K: Okay, right on. Drop your word knowledge.

C: I will.

K: And so, what do you call your beard?

C: Friend.

K: (laughs) There’s not a specific word for a long beard rather than a shorn beard?

C: Well, shorn means you have no beard.

K: See, and I thought shorn is like close-cut.

C: Nope. Because shear is to cut.

K: I thought shorn is like 5’oclock shadow.

C: Mm.

K: Like you know that look that they’re doing. Like that’s all the rage right now is the 5’oclock shadow.

C: Yeah. It’s all the rage. It has been my entire lifetime. The 5’oclock shadow.

K: Has it been?

C: 5’oclock shadow has been a phrase my entire lifetime, yes.

K: Yeah, but been a phrase versus being a popular are two different things. I feel like the faded 5’oclock shadow has become hugely popular in the past decade.

C: Okay. I remember watching 80s t.v. shows, and further my mother watching 80s t.v. shows.

K: But then it was a lot rarer. Now it’s like a lot, a lot of famous people have it.

C: Because I know my mom was Magnum PI fan number one.

K: But Magnum PI he didn’t have a 5’clock shadow. He had a mustache and was clean shaven.

C: I know he had a mustache. It’s clean shaven? See, I can’t remember anything. This is where I am exposed as fronting on actually knowing.

K: (laughs)

C: As actually haven’t seen the shows.

K: I don’t think you watched.

C: I did not.

K: And the big thing was macadamia nuts.

C: Mm.

K: His butler was super into macadamia nuts.

C: I didn’t know he had a butler.

K: So you didn’t watch a single episode of Magnum PI then.

C: No. I know all the shows my mother watched, but I did not

K: He wasn’t actually his butler. He was his keeper. Because Magnum PI was kept by some mysterious really rich person. And like the butler would sort of- I don’t know if he was a butler or executive assistant or what he was, but he was somebody that was always watching over Magnum’s hijinks.

C: Okay.

K: And Magnum was always giving him grief because he stayed- he sort of had long-term housing in this French person’s really expensive house.

C: Oh okay.

K: And really expensive car.

C: So maybe that’ something to talk about another time because I know the shows my mother watched, but I didn’t watch most of them. I think I watched Heir Wolf. The one about the helicopter.

K: Yeah, no you didn’t watch Heir Wolf.

C: And Night Rider. The one about the car.

K: No, you didn’t watch any of these shows. We’ve talked about it before.

C: Okay.

K: So in our family, we have experienced, through our parents and ourselves, three eras. And we personally know someone who has been here for 3 eras now because they’re super proud of that.

C: Yeah.

K: And now we can say that we are permanent residents from an era past.

C: Well, and I feel like for us we have different eras. I feel like the era of living in Japan is different form the era of living in the U.S.

K: Yeah, I think so too. So the changing of the era was all this fanfare, and I have to say Japan let me down because I thought it was going to be a year-long party.

C: Okay, I have one final comment on this.

K: Okay.

C: Just imagine if the Y2K thing could happen at any particular time.

K: So like the changing of the era?

C: Yeah, can happen at any time. So, within the U.S. when everybody’s freaking out about Y2K.

K: Yeah.

C: That could happen at any time. At any time, the dates that are produced by Japanese computer programs could be wrong. Because the era changed.

K: Okay. Right on. So, thank you for sharing your thoughts on that. And thank you again for listening to our digressions and what we wanted to talk about, and I just had the new era on my mind because I have Japanese on my mind. And I’m feeling super illiterate, but I’m working on it. I really am studying, and this year I am trying to get to the third grade because I’ve been stuck in second grade for my literacy forever. So I guess I’m making a Reiwa era pledge.

C: Yeah, I was just thinking that.

K: By the next era, I will be literate in Japanese. (laughs) I feel like that’s a safe commitment to make. Before the next era. If I’m even alive then because I’m old as dirt now.

C: Wishing good health on you and the emperor.

K: Yeah, as a woman of a certain age, who is in her 50s, who knows if I’ll be around by then? But this lifetime, I will be literate.

C: Yes.

K: So, yeah. You know. Thanks for listening to this digression. We appreciate everybody who listens, and I just want to give a shout out to all of our listeners in the United States and Japan. Well, all over the world because we’re in over 15 countries at this point, which has me super jazzed, but our American and Japanese listeners who have been holding us down since the beginning, and that’s an American turn of phrase – “holding us down” means giving us a good foundation and providing us with a good, steady stability and all of that.

K: And we really appreciate all the love you guys give us on social media and everything. And thank you for tuning in every week. We love- whatever country you’re in, we absolutely appreciate the listens, but I wanted to give a special shout out to the people who have been there from the beginning.

C: Yup. Shout out.

K (laughs) So we hope to add more countries, and we hope you keep listening, and I have no idea what we’re going to talk about next week, but I’m sure it will be as interesting or more interesting than this podcast? Than this episode. And talk to you then. Bye.

C: Bye-bye.